5. The Other from the wilderness

5.1. An ever threatening wilderness and its inhabitants

One of the primary criteria of zoological classification in the *Bible* is that of habitats.[1] It gives a framework to the story of creation (as water, air and land animals are created separately) and it has also permeated the languages of prophetic narratives and psalm texts, as it is evidenced by the often repeated *hendiadys* "I will cast thee forth upon the open field, and will cause all the fowls of the heaven to remain upon thee, and I will fill the beasts of the whole earth with thee."[2]

As far as the terrestrial habitat is concerned, this categorization is further partitioned in the *Hebrew Bible*. A profound distinction is established between animals coexisting with humans and those that live beyond the boundaries of human civilization. The latter group occupies the domain of the "wilderness" (a region typically presented as harmful and destructive). The two regions, wilderness and (in lack of a better term) "human lands"[3] are in a binary opposition. Although the domain of the wilderness can be further divided into harmful, detrimental and poisonous animals (wolves, snakes etc.) on the one hand, and harmless creatures of the night (hyenas, owls, bats) on the other hand, it can be said that creatures belonging to the wilderness are generally perceived as being in opposition with the fauna of human lands, and with domesticated animals.

In the *Hebrew Bible*, this opposition is also depicted on a more particular level. The Land of Canaan is often identified with the benevolent region of domesticated animals, while its immediate surroundings, and sometimes even the wider region is construed as belonging to the domain of the wilderness. Such a geographical consideration is presented in narratives elaborating on the difference between the Sinai desert *vis-à-vis* the abundance of Palestine in narratives concerning the Exodus story[4] and in frequent prophetic accounts describing the threat

[1] Richard Whitekettle, "Where the Wild Things Are: Primary Level Taxa in Israelite Zoological Thought," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament,* 93 (2001):17-37, here 17-22.

[2] Ezek 32:4. Cf. also Ezek 38:20; Dan 2:38; Ps 8:7-8 etc. These Biblical loci correspond to a concept of a tripartite structure of the world. Cf. Luis I. J. Stadelmann, *The Hebrew Conception of the World* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute Press, 1970) 9-10.

[3] As for the mutually exclusive natures of the concepts wilderness and human lands, cf. Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, "'The Mountain, a Desert Place': Spatial categories and mythical landscapes in the *Secret Book of John*," in *Wilderness in Mythology and Religion Approaching Religious Spatialities, Cosmologies, and Ideas of Wild Nature*, ed. Laura Feldt, 95-113 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012) here 95-97.

[4] Cf. Laura Feldt, "Wilderness and *Hebrew Bible* Religion – Fertility, Apostasy and Religious Transformation in the Pentateuch, " in *Wilderness in Mythology and Religion Approaching Religious Spatialities, Cosmologies, and Ideas of Wild Nature*, ed. Laura Feldt, 55-95 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), here 55-63. Cf also Hans-Jürgen Zobel,

of the incursion of wilderness into the Land of Israel.[5] Moreover, since human lands of Palestine are not presented as a coherent region, but rather as patches of domesticated areas interlaced with protrusions of the wilderness,[6] the concept arising from the Biblical tradition is not that of two strictly demarcated regions, but rather a sense of a transitional region,[7] in which the presence of friendly, domesticated animals often hangs by not more than a thread. They can be easily destroyed and, thus, substituted by wild beasts and the once friendly environment might turn into wilderness itself.

5.1.1. The *Old Testament*'s *Verwilderung*

This possibility is most precisely captured in the concept of *Verwilderung*, which describes the devastatation of human lands by wild forces of nature. In accounts describing this Verwilderung forces of the wilderness reclaim lands owned once by humans, often in the wake of divine punishments killing humans or forcing them to leave their homelands. This narrative is used to describe the fate of the Land of Israel after the Israelites are brought into captivity (e.g. Jer 2:14-15, Jer 9:11 etc.) but also to describe the ultimate fate of the enemies of Israel (such as Assyria in Zeph 2:12-15, Babylon in Jer 51:37 or Edom in Isa 34:7-17). The animals that feature in these narratives (hyena, bat jackal, ostrich, lion, owl) represent a wide spectrum of possible connotations. Some of them (such as owls or bats) act shyly and do not signify aggression. Others (jackals and hyenas) betoken scavenging, while some (lions, wolves, leopards) even indicate open aggression and destruction.[8] Somteimes the *Verwilderung* is part the punishment itself, and not just a result of it:

> And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the splendor and pride of the Chaldeans, will be like Sodom and Gomorrah when God overthrew them. It will never be inhabited or lived in for all generations; Arabs will not pitch their tents there, shepherds will not make their flocks lie down there. But wild animals will lie down there, and its houses will be full of howling creatures; there ostriches will live, and there goat-demons will dance. Hyenas will cry

"Der frühe Jahwe-Glaube in der Spannung von Wüste und Kulturland," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 101, (1989): 342-365, here: 342-344.

[5] Cf. Isa 13:21-22; Jer 50:39 etc. Cf. Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (The Anchor Bible) (New York: Doubleday, 2000) 280.

[6] Cf. Shemaryahu Talmon's extensive discussion: Shemaryahu Talmon, "The 'Desert Motif" in the Bible and in Qumran Literature," in *Biblical Motifs; Origins and Transformations*, ed. Alexander Altmann, 31-63 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), here 40-42.

[7] Cf. Feldt, "Wilderness and *Hebrew Bible* Religion," 61-63.

[8] See also Ken Stone, "Jackals and Ostriches Honoring God: The Zoological Gaze in the Isaiah Scroll" in *Focusing Biblical Studies: The Crucial Nature of the Persian and Hellenistic Periods, Essays in Honor of Douglas A. Knight,* ed. Jon L. Berquist and Alice Hunt, 63-83 (New York: T&T Clark, 2012) here 71-72.

> in its towers, and jackals in the pleasant palaces; its time is close at hand, and its days will not be prolonged.[9]

There are several other types of discourses in the *Hebrew Bible* in which the opposition between domesticated and wild animals and the two respective domains is depicted. Some of these discuss the hostility between predators and the flock of sheep (see e.g. 1Sam 17:34); while others focus on the bringing of domesticated animals into the wilderness (1Kings 13:24-25) or on the representation of wilderness as a particularly poionuous area (e.g. Isa 30:6). But wild beasts could also be perceived as free, self-determinant agents. In the Biblical tradition of a well-organized natural world established by divine principles,[10] such behavior is – naturally – either attributed to divine intention (e.g. in prophetic texts describing punishment through the incursion of the animals of the wilderness) or to the rebellious intention to fight against divine will (as in Daniel's vision of the four beasts). In the latter case, the "wild nature" of beasts might be ascribed to their strength, power and ferocity. But these qualities are regularly used in the Biblical corpus not only to describe the oppression of the enemies of Israel, but also the supremacy of God the Israelites over that of other nations or the strength of Israelites themselves over their enemies. Therefore, animals of the wilderness are quite often employed in symbolic representations of a powerful God[11] or a battle-ready Israel as well.[12] And although these discourses are far less regular in the *Hebrew Bible* itself than the discourse about the incursion of the wilderness, they are picked up and elaborated in the *New Testament*, and, consequently, become fundamental for the Christian understanding of the opposition of wild and domesticated domains.

Common in all these variations concerning the opposition between the wilderness and human lands is that the region of wilderness and its inhabitants are depicted in a liminal state. Wilderness and human lands are not static entities, but two extremes in constant struggle with each other. Sometimes, the wilderness devastates and invades human lands (*Verwilderung*), and sometimes (although it is far less explicit in the *Hebrew Bible*), areas belonging previously to the wilderness are domesticated by humans and their beasts. The liminality characteristic of the

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[9] Isa 13:19-22.

[10] Cf. Howard, Eilberg-Schwartz, "Creation and Classification in Judaism: From Priestly to Rabbinic Conceptions," *History of Religions.* 26 (1987) 357-362.

[11] Jer 49:19; Amos 3:4-5; Hos 11:10; Hos 13:8 etc. Cf. further M. C. A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1990) 538-540; Kristen Nielsen "I am Like a Lion to Ephraim / Observations on Animal Imagery and Old Testament Theology" *Studia Theologica* 61 (2007): 184-197; and lately Britanny Kim and Charlie Trimm, "Yahweh the Dragon: Exploring a Neglected Biblical Metaphor for the Divine Warrior and the Translation of 'Ap" *The Bible Translator* 65 (2014): 165-184.

[12] Deut 33:20; Mic 5:8; etc. On the most frequent image of a leonine Israel, see Brent A. Strawn, *What is Stronger than a Lion? Leonine Image and Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck&Ruprecht, 2005) 47-49, 58-65

wilderness and its inhabitants, is also manifest in temporal aspects. The disourse of *Verwilderung* depends upon the binary opposition of domesticated animals and human lands on the one hand and wilderness and wild beasts on the other. The destruction and desolation of human lands is – as the above example shows – often depicted as an irreversible scenario. But the *Hebrew Bible* is not entirely consistent in this regard. Perhaps due to a vague recollection of the thousands year long process of domestication[13] as a historical phenomenon instead of the notion of a pre-ordained divine separation of wild and tame animals,[14] the idea of a possible change was presented with regards to the nature of wild beasts. Thus, the liminality of the ferocious beasts of the wilderness has not only a spatial manifestation, but it even translates into temporal categories. The oscillation between the wilderness and human lands as stages of divine-human relations, is also interpreted in a grandiose historical perspective: there is a possibility for a permanent change in the behavior of wild animals, as presented in the *pre-lapsarian* peace[15] of the *Book of Genesis* (under Adam, lord of "all the animals", as a past situation)[16] and envisioned in Isaiah's eschatological description of a peaceful coexistence of wild beasts and domesticated animals (as a hope for the future). The pre-lapsarian and eschatological scenes are connected in a particular aspect (namely that they both grasp the peaceful nature of coexistence by claiming that every animal follows a herbivore diet)[17] and, more importantly, also on a structural level. By describing the situation in an unreachable paradise and in an equally unattainable eschaton,[18] both present an atemporal version of the natural world, preceding on the one hand, and succeeding on the other hand, the world of a human's everyday experiences. The message, these two scenarios of temporal "hereafter"

[13] See Brian Hesse, Paula Wapnish, "An Archeozoological Perspective on the Critical Use of Mammals in the Levant," In *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Billie Jean Collins, 457-491 (Brill: Leiden, 2002), here 465-466.

[14] The Genesis-accounts are contradictory in this regards. Whereas in the first creation story, no clear distinction is made between wild and domesticated land animals, the second chapter mentions them separately (see Gen 2:19). But even with this, it is only after the fall of mankind that any hostility between mankind and *certain types* of animals manifests (See Riede Peter Riede, *Im Spiegel der Tiere* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002) 168.) See also Rüdiger Bartelemus, "Die Tierwelt in Der Bibel II. Tiersymbolik im Alten Testament - exemplarisch dargestellt am Beispiel von Dan. 7, Ez 1/10 und Jes 11:6-8," in *Gefährten und Feinde des Menschen. Das Tier in der Lebenswelt des alten Israel*, ed. Bernd Janowski, Ute Neumann-Gorsolke, Uwe Gleßmer, 283-306 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1993) here 305-306.

[15] Cf. Gen 2:19, which distinguishes between wild and domesticated animals (חית השדה - בהמה). However, this distinction bears no consequence on the relationship between mankind and animals belonging to separate groups. Cf. Riede, *Im Spiegel der Tiere*, 168 and M-L. Henry, s.v. "Behemot" *Biblisch-Historisches Wörterbuch; Landeskunde, Geschichte, Religion, Kultur, Literatur* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 1984-1987. Cf. also Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, "Evidencing the Eschaton: Progressive-Transformative Animal Welfare in the Church Fathers," *Modern Theology* 27 (2011): 121-146.

[16] Cf. Bernd Janowski, P. Riede (ed.), *Die Zukunft der Tiere. Theologische, ethische und naturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1999) 114-127.

[17] Cf. Walter Pangritz, *Das Tier in der Bibel* (München: E. Reinhardt, 1963) 63-64. Also Riede, *Im Spiegel der Tiere,*159-160.

[18] See Pangritz, *Das Tier in der Bibel*, 62-63.

communicate serves as a frame for a concept of development in the opposition of wild and domesticated animals.

Wilderness and its inhabitants, the wild animals are seen as representatives of an unsettled and never permanently delimited, hostile area contrary to human lands and their domesticated animals. This is why predators identified as creatures of the wilderness are presented as capable of changing from their aggressive, behavior (their essence in many accounts)[19] to a docile one. The chronological and spatial liminality of wild beasts was exploited by both exegetical traditions. And since the production of community boundaries between Jews and Christians is produced in an ever changing environment of shifting emphases and a feeling of threatening proximity, the concept of an always menacing wilderness as opposed to human lands and the ambiguity of animals of the wilderness themselves made this framework of zoological classification into an extremely fertile topic of expressing community-boundaries.

In the present chapter, I am presenting how this aspect of liminality was exploited in a variety of ways, enabling the identification of wild beasts with not only others, but also with members of the ingroup. Furthermore, I will discuss the ways in which the narrative of liminal, wild-beasts was used to depict the respective other in an eschatological scenario, and how the opposition between docile and wild others was finally solved in two divergent, but similar eschatological scenarios.

5.1.2. The wild beasts of the *New Testament* and early Christian tradition

The broad variety of *Old Testament* narratives depicting the opposition of the wilderness and the human domain is not reproduced in the *New Testament* in its entirety. Many of the animals featuring in relation with the theme of "Verwilderung" are never even mentioned in the *New Testament* corpus.[20] But the detailed treatment of a few, select wild beasts more than makes up for the meager amount of animals treated in the corpus. More importantly, the narratives that actually feature in the *New Testament*, occupy a central role in its treatment of the theme of identity and alterity-representation. And since this becomes an essential theme in the writings of Church fathers, the overall idea of the threat of fierce, non-domesticated and most importantly dangerous wild animals is still an important theme in various discourses of patristic literature.

[19] Cf. Riede, *Im Spiegel der Tiere,* 153-154.

[20] Despite their frequent treatment in the patristic literature, one does not encounter ostriches, hyenas, owls, bats and the rest of the wild animals so typically representing the incursion of the wilderness into human domains in the *Old Testament* corpus.

A good starting point for presenting the treatment of wild animals and the wilderness in patristic literature is the ophid metaphor that Jesus uses several times in the Matthean Gospel and once in Luke's account, chastising his Pharisee interlocutors. The context of the somewhat unclear appellation, "brood of vipers[21] and a restricted number of parallels in Greek and Latin literature,[22] helps understanding the general direction of the outburst, even though some connotations might be lost. One can safely assume that the metaphor focuses on corruption, lying or even matri/patricidal intentions of the scribes.[23] Thus, despite the lack of a direct parallel in the *Hebrew Bible*, Jesus' exclamation can be tied to a number of *Old Testament* loci, in which serpents, but specifically vipers feature as embodiments[24] of various moral vicissitudes.[25] The polysemy behind the meaning of the term manifests itself in patristic literature.

While Origen, for example did not venture beyond restating the Gospel-context:[26] "it was not these people [who came to be baptized] who heard from the Baptist any word of rebuke or refutation, but only those many Pharisees and Sadducees whom he saw coming,"[27] later authors mapped out other possibilities. In his *Cathecheses*, a century later, Cyril of Jerusalem used the saying as a general term for heretics and among them primarily Manicheans:

> Since he desires to become the special one among evil men, taking all together and combining them into one heresy, filling it with blasphemies and lawlessness, he maltreats the Chuch (or rather those who are outside the Church), as a stalking lion that devours. Do not approach their nice speeches, neither their seeimng humility, for they are "snakes … brood of vipers" (Mt 23:33).[28]

And there is a tradition, which interprets the statement in a generally anti-Jewish sense. According to the late fourth century Church father, John Chrysostom, viper is an appropriate appellation for the Sadducees, for they have betrayed their true Jewish identity by fighting against Jesus:

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[21] Mt 3:7, Mt 12:34, Mt 23:33, Lk 3:7, see Michael P. Knowles, "Serpents, Scribes and Pharisees," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 133, 1 (2014): 165-178, here 165-170.
[22] Cf. Craig S. Keener, " 'Brood of Vipers' (Matthew 3.7; 12:34; 23.33)," *Journal for the the Study of the New Testament* 28, no. 1 (2005): 3-11, here 6-8.
[23] Cf. Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 10:170
[24] Job 20:16; Ps 140:4 etc.
[25] James H. Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent: How a Universal Symbol became Christianized* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) 275-281.
[26] See Knowles, "Serpents, Scribes and Pharisees," 165-167.
[27] Origen, *Commentarii in Evangelium Ioannis* 6:14.
[28] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 6:20: Φιλοτιμούμενος γὰρ ἐν κακοῖς ἐξαίρετος γενέσθαι, τὰ πάντων λαβὼν, καὶ μίαν αἵρεσιν πεπληρωμένην βλασφημιῶν καὶ πάσης παρανομίας συστησάμενος, λυμαίνεται τὴν ἐκκλησίαν, (μᾶλλον δὲ τοὺς ἐκτὸς τῆς ἐκκλησίας) ὡς λέων περιπατῶν καὶ καταπίνων. Μὴ πρόσεχε αὐτῶν τῇ χρηστολογίᾳ, μηδὲ τῇ νομιζομένῃ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ· ὄφεις γάρ εἰσι γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν.

> He called them: "brood of vipers", since they boasted themselves on behalf of their ancestors. With this, he shows that they do not gain any profit from it. Through that, he expels them from their relationship with Abraham, and gives them a progenitor fitting to them: thus, stripping them of their glory.[29]

In the words of Cyril and that of Chrysostom, serpents become a tool for describing the dangerous entity of otherness. One should not be surprised that the latter author seems to use a harsher tone than the context of the Gospel-narrative itself,[30] for it is certainly expected of him. In a number of accounts and – as I will shortly prove – not only in his anti-Jewish orations, he uses a wide variety of non-domesticated animals in reference to Jews. The Antiochean father, intent on exploiting the theme of wild beast-otherness beyond the meager opportunities presented in the *New Testament*, readily drew upon the much deeper pool of wild animal-narrratives of the *Old Testament*. Thus, he shows not only the interrelation between Old and *New Testament* notions of the opposition of wild and domesticated domains, but also that Church fathers noticed and exploited this possibility.

One of the themes, Chrysostom avails himself of regularly in his writings is the opposition between animalistic instincts (in this case, that of wild animals) and cultivation.[31] In his first oration against the Jews, he claims:

> But the synagogue is not only a brothel and a theater; it also is a den of robbers and a lodging for wild beasts. Jeremiah said: "Your house has become for me the den of a hyena". He does not simply say "of wild beast", but "of a filthy wild beast", and again: "I have abandoned my house, I have cast off my inheritance." But when God forsakes a people, what hope of salvation is left? When God forsakes a place, that place becomes the dwelling of demons.[32]

The first Biblical reference is, in fact, a conflation of two verses (Jer 7:11, Jer 12:9),[33] the first of which refers originally to the Temple in Jerusalem,[34] whereas the second is part of a longer narrative of *Verwilderung*.[35] By blending these verses, Chrysostom achieves two goals. First,

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[29] John Chrysostom, *In Mattheaum Homilae* 42:1: Γεννήματα δὲ ἐχιδνῶν αὐτοὺς εἴρηκεν, ἐπειδὴ ἐπὶ τοῖς προγόνοις ηὔχουν. Δεικνὺς τοίνυν, ὅτι οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς ἐντεῦθεν τὸ κέρδος, τῆς μὲν πρὸς τὸν Ἀβραὰμ ἐξέβαλεν αὐτοὺς συγγενείας, δίδωσι δὲ αὐτοῖς προγόνους ὁμοτρόπους, τῆς ἐκεῖθεν περιφανείας γυμνώσας αὐτούς.

[30] Knowles, "Serpents, Scribes and Pharisees," 168-9.

[31] Benjamin H. Dunning, "Chrysostom's Serpent: Animality and Gender in the Homilies on Genesis," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 23, 17 (2015): 71-96, here 76-80.

[32] John Chrysostom, *Adversus Iudaeos* 1:3:1: Μᾶλλον δὲ οὐχὶ πορνεῖον καὶ θέατρον μόνον ἐστὶν ἡ συναγωγὴ, ἀλλὰ καὶ σπήλαιον λῃστῶν, καὶ καταγώγιον θηρίων· *Σπήλαιον* γὰρ, φησὶν, *ὑαίνης ἐγένετό μοι ὁ οἶκος ὑμῶν·* οὐδὲ ἁπλῶς θηρίου, ἀλλὰ θηρίου ἀκαθάρτου. Καὶ πάλιν, *Ἀφῆκα τὸν οἶκόν μου, ἐγκαταλέλοιπα τὴν κληρονομίαν μου.* Ὅταν δὲ ὁ Θεὸς ἀφῇ, ποία λοιπὸν σωτηρίας ἐλπίς; Ὅταν ὁ Θεὸς ἀφῇ, δαιμόνων κατοικητήριον γίνεται ἐκεῖνο τὸ χωρίον.

[33] Cf. John Chrysostom, *Discourses against Judaizing Christians,* The Fathers of the Church (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1979) 11, ff. 40-41.

[34] Cf. also Mk 11:17 and see Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 467-468.

[35] Cf. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 654-656.

hyena is considered a par excellence impure animal, since the earliest Greek patristic tradition.[36] Thus, its inclusion implies not only the ferocity of the Jews, but also their (moral) impurity.[37] Second, the divine desolation of the land is presented in a way that the incursion of the wilderness is equated with the appearance of demonic forces. Thus, without even having to explicitly claim that the Jews are like wild beasts, or demons, Chrysostom subtly establishes this exact notion. In a subsequent passage of the oration, the demonic nature is identified with the attempt to seduce Christians to participate in worship in synagogues,[38] an accusation regularly made by Chrysostom. So, ultimately, the comparison between Jews and the hyena is part of the broader narrative that seeks to depict them as devious, seductive agents. Additionally, the opening statement of comparing the synagogue to a den of wild beasts (θηρίων) refers to another important characteristic of wild animals: a desertion of human morals and social standards and an accompanying brutality of action. It is this aspect of wild beasts that Chrysostom emphasizes in a further passage of the first oration:

> They sacrificed their own sons and daughters to demons. They refused to recognize nature, they forgot the pangs, of birth, they trod underfoot the rearing of their children, they overturned from their foundations the laws of kingship, they became more savage than any wild beast.[39]

Chrysostom does not merely identify Jews with wild beasts, but even claims that they are worse than average animals. While wild animals might be capable to act mercifully or to show willingness for self-sacrifice despite their obviously irrational nature,[40] Jews are not even capable of doing that. He goes on to say:

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[36] Cf. Mary Pendergraft, "'Thou Shalt Not Eat the Hyena,' A Note on 'Barnabas' Epistle 10.7," *Vigiliae Christianae.* 46, 1 (1992): 75-79, see also **%**

[37] See chapter **%** fn **%** for an interesting example of contracting the aspects of wilderness and immoral sexual behavior, see Pseudo-Chrysostom, *De Susanna* 1, analyzed by Drake, *Slandering the Jew*, 75.

[38] Cf. Adversus Iudaeos 1:6:3: For, tell me, is not the dwelling place of demons a place of impiety even if no god's statue stands there? Here the slayers of Christ gather together, here the cross is driven out, here God is blasphemed, here the Father is ignored, here the Son is outraged, here the grace of the Spirit is rejected. Does not greater harm come from this place since the Jews themselves are demons? In the pagan temple the impiety is naked and obvious; it would not be ease to deceive a man of sound and prudent mind or entice him to go there. But in the synagogue there are men who say they worship God and abhor idols, men who say they have prophets and pay them honor. But by their words they make ready an abundance of bait to catch in their nets the simpler souls who are so foolish as to be caught of guard. Cf. Drake, *Slandering the Jew*, 82-83.

[39] John Chrysostom, *Adversus Iudaeos* 1:6:7: ἔθυσαν τοὺς υἱοὺς αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς θυγατέρας αὐτῶν τοῖς δαιμονίοις· τὴν φύσιν ἠγνόησαν, ὠδίνων ἐπελάθοντο, παιδοτροφίαν κατεπάτησαν, τῆς συγγενείας τοὺς νόμους ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν βάθρων ἀνέτρεψαν, θηρίων ἁπάντων γεγόνασιν ἀγριώτεροι.

[40] Animals putting themselves in harm's way or even sacrificing themselves to save members of their species was a recurrent topic in natural historical lore. Chrysostom's slander might be based – in part – on Pliny or Plutarch. See Stephen T. Newmeyer, *Animals in Greek and Roman Thought: A Sourcebook* (New York: Routledge, 2011) 48-53.

> Wild beasts oftentimes lay down their lives and scorn their own safety to protect their young. No necessity forced the Jews when they slew their own children with their own hands to pay honor to the avenging demons, the foes of our life. What deed of theirs should strike us with greater astonishment? Their ungodliness or their cruelty or their inhumanity? That they sacrificed their children or that they sacrificed them to demons? Because of their licentiousness, did they not show a lust beyond that of irrational animals?[41]

Seemingly, Chrysostom even denies Jews the lowly stature of animals. But I would propose to read his tirade against the background the context provides. As an oration intended *against Jews* it expectedly implements a number of rhetorical figures, which need not be read literally. The entire narrative of animalization functions on the basis of the premise that Jews are humans, and it is only in comparison to this implicit assertion that a claim of animalization would function as slander. And it is only in the backdrop of such a context, that through the use of a hyperbole, Chrysostom goes further, and reaches the conclusion that Jews are not even animals, but below them. Therefore, I claim that, on the whole, the argument remains the same: Jews behave like animals, and are – accordingly – symbolized by them. Indeed, in the end of his argumentation, Chrysostom returns to this very argument:

> Hear what the prophet says of their excesses. "They are become as amorous stallions. Every one neighed after his neighbor's wife" (Jer 5:8). He did not say: "Everyone lusted after his neighbor's wife", but he expressed the madness which came from their licentiousness with the greatest clarity by speaking of it as the neighing of brute beasts.[42]

It has been noted that Chrysostom was witness to a period in which Judaism was regarded as a highly enticing entity present on the horizon of many Christian communities.[43] For him, it was important to make a clear distinction between the two communities, for he believed the threat of Jewish missionary activities[44] to warrant desperate measures in polemics. Two major themes in this novel view of the Jewish threat was the seductive potential of an ancestral and

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[41] John Chrysostom, *Adversus Iudaeos* 1:6:8: Τὰ θηρία μὲν γὰρ καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν ἐπιδίδωσι πολλάκις, καὶ τῆς οἰκείας καταφρονεῖ σωτηρίας, ὥστε ὑπερασπίσαι τῶν ἐκγόνων· οὗτοι δὲ οὐδεμιᾶς ἀνάγκης οὔσης τοὺς ἐξ αὐτῶν φύντας ταῖς οἰκείαις κατέσφαξαν χερσὶν, ἵνα τοὺς ἐχθροὺς τῆς ἡμετέρας ζωῆς, τοὺς ἀλάστορας θεραπεύσωσι δαίμονας. Τί ἄν τις αὐτῶν ἐκπλαγείη πρότερον, τὴν ἀσέβειαν ἢ τὴν ὠμότητα, καὶ τὴν ἀπανθρωπίαν; ὅτι τοὺς υἱοὺς ἔθυσαν, ἢ ὅτι τοῖς δαιμονίοις ἔθυσαν; Ἀλλὰ ἀσελγείας ἕνεκεν οὐχὶ καὶ τὰ λαγνότατα τῶν ἀλόγων ἀπέκρυψαν;

[42] John Chrysostom, *Adversus Iudaeos* 1:6:8: Ἄκουσον τοῦ προφήτου, τί φησι περὶ τῆς ἀκολασίας αὐτῶν· Ἵπποι θηλυμανεῖς ἐγένοντο· ἕκαστος ἐπὶ τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ πλησίον αὐτοῦ ἐχρεμέτιζεν. Οὐκ εἶπεν, ἕκαστος τῆς γυναικὸς τοῦ πλησίον ἐπεθύμει, ἀλλ' ἐμφαντικώτατα τῇ τῶν ἀλόγων φωνῇ τὴν ἐκ τῆς ἀσελγείας ἐγγινομένην αὐτοῖς μανίαν ἐνέφηνεν.

[43] See Robert Louis Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the late 4th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 46-47, and 66-79. And also Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines, The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004) 202-210.

[44] In this respect, it is quite irrelevant whether Chrysostom's assessment of a threat of Jews proselitizing was even waarranted (cf. Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995) 27-29).

authoritative tradition on the one hand, and the aggression toward representatives of a new community encapsulated in its presence in Christian *space*, the notion of a Jewish religion that breaks into and disrupts newly established Christian communities.[45] As both seductive and destructive members of a community that is close enough to be similar, but different enough to be false, Jews – in the words of Chrysostom – are beings of a liminal nature. Thus, the liminality of wilderness – an aspect that is presented and highlighted in both the Old and the *New Testament* – serves as an appropriate characteristic to describe the threatening otherness of Jews. The surprisingly harsh tone of Chryostom's orations against the Jews can and have been understood, as a result of this specific socio-historical situation.[46] It is, however, important to distinguish between animalization of otherness and the specific notion that the other is a wild beast. The former was a more general phenomenon without clear historical, geographical or even religious boundaries.[47] Thus, I would suggest to pay close attention to the way wilderness and its inhabitants come to dominate Chrysostom's use of language. It is not the general animalization of otherness that results from their challenging presence, but the subtopic of their wild animal nature, as opposed to domesticated beasts. The identification of Jews with wild animals matched, as the above examples show, both the narrative of a seductive enemy and that of a destroyer of human communities. Thus it was a particularly fitting metaphor for depicting intercommunity relations from Chrysostom's vantage point

Also pointing toward the historical reasons behind this change is the fact that the shift in the language of animalization of otherness is present not only in Chrysostom's writings, but in the writings of many of his contemporaries as well. At the end of his long treatise concerning the six days of creation, Basil the Great, for example, claimed:

> Thus the Jews, a race hostile to truth, when they find themselves pressed, act like beasts enraged against man, who roar at the bars of their cage and show the cruelty and the ferocity of their nature, without being able to assuage their fury. God, they say, addresses Himself to several persons; it is to the angels before Him that He says, Let us make man.[48]

[45] See Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World, Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 369-375.
[46] See e.g. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, 68-73.
[47] See **%**
[48] Basil, *Hexaemeron* 9:6:60: οὕτω καὶ τὸ ἐχθρὸν τῆς ἀληθείας γένος οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι στενοχωρούμενοι, πολλὰ, φασὶν, ἐστὶ τὰ πρόσωπα πρὸς οὓς ὁ λόγος γέγονε τοῦ Θεοῦ. Τοῖς ἀγγέλοις γὰρ λέγει τοῖς παρεστῶσιν αὐτῷ, Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον.

This passage was not written in a polemic situation similar to that of Chrysostom's orations, but it was composed in the same period.[49] The tone and the argument is strikingly similar, and I believe this similarity was due to the the major historical shift in the perception of Judasim and Jewish-Christian relations in the period. As much as one can see, Basil's only altercation with Jews is over a difference on their respective interpretations of the plural used in the creation narrative. And although this question is crucial for Christian theology,[50] it would have hardly warranted the tone, had it not been for the strong desire to clearly distinguish between Jewish and non-Jewish positions in a process of disentanglement.[51]

Wild animals and the liminality of the wilderness was a fitting depiction of a perceived danger for more than one reason. Although the ferocity and aggression that these animals exhibit is certainly important in the overall appeal of the metaphor, another recurring topos is seduction. In several of the above passages wild beasts pose both the external danger of destruction and the internal danger of corruption to their prospective prey. And the notion of seduction, or more properly the possibility of successful seduction (against which Chrysostom warns his audience) implies the possibility of an internal change. That is to say: wild beasts are not only dangerous because they can physically destroy their domestic and docile counterparts, but also as they are capable of seducing, corrupting, and ultimately changing them. I believe that this is a quintessential aspect of their liminal nature. By being at the border of the two domains, wild animals maintain a bridge to the other side, enabling a *Verwilderung* of not only human lands, but also its inhabitants. The metaphorical wild beast, the Jew – in the words of Chryosostom – or the heretic – in Cyril's treatment – is feared because it might transform the Christians to something similar to itself, into being wild beasts themselves. There is an important implication underneath this possibility: if wild beasts can exert an influence on domesticated agents, then the boundary between the two domains is very much traversable

[49] As for the context in which Basil's text was written, and especially for his reference on Jews, and their exegesis, cf. David T. Runia, "'Where, Tell Me, is the Jew...?': Basil, Philo and Isidore of Pelusium," *Vigiliae Christianae* 46 (1992): 172-189.

[50] The importance of this topic in interreligious polemics was recognized and discussed by Segal (Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity (Leiden: Brill, 1977) esp. 220-234). For a very recent overview of the topic, see Stephen Waers, "Monarchianism and Two Powers: Jewish and Christian Monotheism at the Beginning of the Third Century," *Vigiliae Christianae*, 70 (2016):401-429.

[51] Christine Shepardson, *Anti-Judaism and Chrisitain Orthodoxy Ephrem's Hymns in Fourth-Century Syria* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008) 144-145.

5.2. The porous boundary between wild and domesticated animals

With a traversable boundary, the *Old Testament*'s notion of the *Verwilderung* of human lands is taken and elaborated into a complex argument, in which it is not anymore the land that is changing, but its inhabitants themselves. As Church fathers interpret animal figures of the Biblical texts as symbols of human agents, the stakes of the notion of transformation are raised substantially. But, even in the *Old Testament*, it is only the *Verwilderung* that is possible. Contrary to this direction, there is a less frequent prophetic tradition, according to which wild animals can, and in the end of times will be domesticated. This notion is encapsulated in the tradition of messianic peace between wild and domesticated animals, as presented in the Book of Isaiah. Here, wild and domesticated animals do not meet halfway, but the former become completely similar to the latter, giving up their carnivorous diet. Thus, the *Old Testament* offers a narrative according to which the proximity of domesticated and wild animals results not in the destruction of the former, but in the domestication of the latter. With this second possibility, the binding nature of the boundary between the two groups: wild and domesticated animals is weakened, as there is transition through it in both directions.

By virtue of one of its most most influential narratives dealing with the theme of the opposition of wild and domesticated beasts, that of the wolf and the sheep,[52] the *New Testament* shows how much problem the porous nature of the border had posed even before the formulation of mutually exclusive definitions concerning Jewish and Christian communities. Similarly to the case of the viper, the narrative of opposition between wolves and sheep is also based on *Old Testament* tradition. A discourse that represents Israel's relation to the Divine in a metaphorical way as a relationship between sheep and shepherd,[53] and in doing so emphasizes the vulnerability and dependence of the Israelites on their divine leader is very prevalent in prophetic texts.[54] It capitalizes on a primary opposition between wild and domesticated animals for it continually reminds the readers of the existence of dangers threatening sheep, and other domesticated animals of the household.[55] This aspect of the otherwise much broader shepherding-topos[56] became so emphatic in *New Testament* tradition that it fundamentally influenced the way Church fathers dealt with the concept of a hostile wilderness and its representatives in symbolic use.

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[52] E.g. Mt 7:15; 10:16; 23:33; Lk 10:3; 10:19 etc.
[53] See chapter **%**
[54] E.g. Ps 23:1, Isa 40:11, Am 3:12 etc. See also Silvia Schroer, *Die Tiere in der Bibel: eine kulturgeschichtliche Reise* (Freiburg: Herder, 2010) 32-35.
[55] See Elijah Judah Schochet, *Animal life in Jewish tradition: attitudes and relationships* (New York: Ktav, 1984) 60-61.
[56] See more in chapter **%**

The two major narrative-clusters in which this opposition are treated in the *New Testament*, are the one describing wolves pretending to be sheep (clad in sheep's clothes, extant only in the Matthean Gospel)[57] and the the one recounting the sending out of disciples, appearing in both Luke and Matthew. Apparently, both describe the relationship between the two types of animals with a particular focus on the boundary between them. In the first, wild animals come into the domain of domesticated ones, pretending to be similar to them. In the second, it is domesticated animals that – contrary to agricultural conventions – are sent among the wild beasts, not in order to become prey, but to change them!

Thus, the first one – although it is certainly novel, as it presents wild animals not as openly destructive, but as cunningly hiding among sheep – does not contradict the direction of contact presented in the *Old Testament* inasmuch as wild beasts are moving toward domesticated ones, even if covertly. The second, however, is innovative in this respect as well. In Jesus' sending out of disciples, the oppoisition is not presented through the movement of wilderness and wild animals into domesticated terrains, but by an opposite direction. In Mt 10:16, for example, Jesus sends his disciples among the wolves, and in Lk 10:3 and 10:19 the sheep representing the disciples also approach wild animals.

The notion of domesticated animals approaching wolves and other wild beasts is a major shift from *Old Testament* precursors (including even Isaiah's eschatological prophecy). The prospect of the future is not anymore only an incursion of wild animals into the domesticated territories (and the danger of ruining not only the environment but also its inhabitants), but also a move of domesticated animals toward their wild counterparts. In accordance with the Gospel-message of turning larger masses to believe in Christ with the help of the sheep-disciples,[58] the idea also arises that the domestication of wild animals into mild ones can not only be expected from divine intervention, but it can be actively facilitated through the intercession of domesticated animals. Thus, the *Old Testament* narrative of *Verwilderung* is countered with a process of domestication in which an initially vulnerable group of tame animals change the behavior of their wild "enemies".

5.2.1. Who are the sheep?

The importance of Gospel-texts describing the sending out of sheep-disciples and the one warning about wolves hiding among sheep is matched by the attention Church fathers' give to

[57] See Mt 7:15.
[58] Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (New York: Scribner, 1951-55) 67-82.

these narratives. For them, the primary task was to securely identify the parties of the narratives and to harmonize their interpretation with Christian claims. Thus, they had to counter a more restrictive Judaizing interpretation, according to which, both sheep and wolves represented Jews, and come to an interpretation, in which sheep symbolized any Christian (regardless of Jewish or Gentile origins), while wolves represented anything not Christian (again, regardless of origin).

In their attempt of claiming that the sheep of the synoptic narratives were symbolic representations of the earliest Christians, they were aided by the tenth chapter of the Gospel of John, describing the formation of the true flock of God.[59] Although the two were separate in the Gospels, Christian interpreters read them together, thereby widening the consequences of the idea of transformation with far-reaching consequences, for it enabled a complete reversal of roles between Jews and Christians, and by that a powerful argumentation for the appropriation of the role of *Verus Israel*.[60] In his commentary on the *Gospel of John*, Augustine captures this possibility:

> Those who did hear [the voice of the Shepherd[61]], were they sheep? Judas heard, and was a wolf: he followed, but, clad in sheep-skin, he was laying snares for the Shepherd. Some, again, of those who crucified Christ did not hear, and yet were sheep; for such He saw in the crowd when He said, "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He." Now, how is this question to be solved? They that are not sheep do hear, and they that are sheep do not hear. Some, who are wolves, follow the Shepherd's voice; and some, that are sheep, contradict it. Last of all, the sheep slay the Shepherd. The point is solved; for some one in reply says, But when they did not hear, as yet they were not sheep, they were then wolves: the voice, when it was heard, changed them, and out of wolves transformed them into sheep; and so, when they became sheep, they heard, and found the Shepherd, and followed Him.[62]

By arguing that the original sheep (the Jews) did not all hear the voice of their shepherd, whereas others, who were not sheep (gentiles) did, Augustine argues for the reversal of roles. By reading the *Gospel of John* (the calling of the sheep) in light of the saying from the synoptic Gospels

[59] Jn 10:1-17

[60] On the use and importance of this particular argument, see Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 84-90.

[61] Cf. Jn 10:16, Jn 10:27.

[62] Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* 45:10: Qui audierunt, oues erant? ecce audiuit iudas, et lupus erat; sequebatur, sed pelle ouina tectus pastori insidiabatur. Aliqui uero eorum qui christum crucifixerunt, non audiebant, et oues erant; ipsos enim uidebat in turba, quando dicebat: cum exaltaueritis filium hominis, tunc cognoscetis quia ego sum. Quomodo enim ista soluitur quaestio? audiunt non oues, et non audiunt oues; sequuntur uocem pastoris quidam lupi, et ei quaedam contradicunt oues; postremo pastorem occidunt oues. Soluitur quaestio; respondet enim aliquis, et dicit: sed quando non audiebant, oues nondum erant, tunc lupi erant; uox audita eos mutauit, et ex lupis oues fecit; quando ergo factae sunt oues, audierunt, et pastorem inuenerunt.

(wolves clad in sheepskin): namely, that sheep are those, who listen to the voice of the Shepherd (irrespective of their origin) and wolves are those, who act contrarily to him, he demolishes the image that Jews are the flock, and Jesus is their shepherd, and shifts the interpretation of the narrative of identity from an ethnic to an ethic level.

The same argument – although not as explicit concerning the "past" change of roles – occurs in writings of various Greek-speaking Church fathers interpreting the narrative of Jesus sending out his twelve, or seventy/seventy-two[63] disciples. Chrysostom, for example, writes:

> He says: "Even thus setting out, exhibit the gentleness of "sheep," and this, though ye are to go unto "wolves;" and not simply unto wolves, but "into the midst of wolves." … Let us then be ashamed, who do the contrary, who set like wolves upon our enemies. For so long as we are sheep, we conquer: though ten thousand wolves prowl around, we overcome and prevail. But if we become wolves, we are worsted, for the help of our Shepherd departs from us: for He feeds not wolves, but sheep.[64]

There are two interesting elements in the two above commentaries. On the one hand, they do not present beastliness as a static position, but as a dynamic one. This means: domestication of one's beastliness (and of course also losing one's domesticated nature) is a question of choice, and not of divine arbitration. On the other hand, the process of becoming tame is presented as dependent upon one's relationship with Christian faith. And although the authors present the situation from a retrospective vantage point, and focus on the results, they inevitably discuss a past situation: if gentile Christians *turned into* sheep, then they had been wolves, that is to say, wild beasts before that. This claim features in several writings,[65] perhaps most explicitly in Eusebius' *Demonstratio Evangelica*:

> By showing very clearly that the birth of Christ should be from the root of Jesse, who was the father of David, it explains upon what birth the call of the Gentiles should follow, which it had previously only given obscurely in the prophetic manner. For "the wolf shall feed with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid," and such passages, are only intended to show the

[63] In the *Gospel of Matthew* (Mt 10:16) the metaphor is used in relation to the twelve apostles, whereas in the *Gospel of Luke* (Lk 10:3) the same saying (cf. Christopher M. Hays, *Luke's Wealth Ethics: a Study in their Coherence and Character* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 99) is referred to seventy or seventy-two apostles. For a clarification of the number as well as an explanation of the two variants, cf. Stephen G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile-mission in Luke-Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973) 45-47.

[64] John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Mattheaum*, 33:1: φησί·Καὶ οὕτως ἀπιόντες, τὴν προβάτων ἡμερότητα ἐπιδείκνυσθε, καὶ ταῦτα πρὸς λύκους ἰέναι μέλλοντες· καὶ οὐχ ἁπλῶς πρὸς λύκους, ἀλλὰ καὶ εἰς μέσους λύκων … Αἰσχυνώμεθα τοίνυν οἱ τἀναντία ποιοῦντες, οἱ ὡς λύκοι τοῖς ἐχθροῖς ἐπιτιθέμενοι. Ἕως γὰρ ἂν ὦμεν πρόβατα, νικῶμεν· κἂν μυρίοι περιστοιχίσωνται λύκοι, περιγινόμεθα καὶ κρατοῦμεν· ἂν δὲ γενώμεθα λύκοι, ἡττώμεθα· ἀφίσταται γὰρ ἡμῶν ἡ τοῦ ποιμένος βοήθεια. Οὐ γὰρ λύκους, ἀλλὰ πρόβατα ποιμαίνει.

[65] Cf. Also Augustine, *Expositio in Psalmorum* 104:13, Ephrem, *Hymns on the Nativity* 3:7.

> change of savage and uncivilized nations in no way differing from wild beasts to a holy, mild, and social way of life.[66]

On the surface, this exegetical concept serves the purpose of legitimizing the Christian aspiration on appropriating *Old Testament* expressions concerning the flock of God and to buttress their self-representation as a tame and peaceful community. An additional, and perhaps more important element is, however, that by intertwining the turn from wild into tame with the process of conversion, the image of the Christian Church also effectively counters external claims identifying them with wild beasts and might also help refuting the concerning notion (so emphatic in Jewish tradition[67]) that characteristics of wild animals do feature even in "us" and that sometimes even the ingroup must be identified as a wild beast. if Christians are represented by domesticated animals, that became tame (out of wilder origins) due to their conversion to or acceptance of the Christian faith, then the tame nature will be preserved as long as one keeps with the faith. In other words: if conversion is domestication, than proper faith is a safeguard against a possible *Verwilderung* of the individual.

Notably, it is contrary to the *Old Testament* tradition (in which sheep are depicted as vulnerable and defenseless animals) that the flock of the *New Testament* is willing to approach wild and furious animals. With regard to this aspect of the Gospel-passage, Cyril of Alexandria said:

> And how could sheep gain the upper hand, and how could the tame prevail over the wild beasts? For indeed he says: 'I will be with you, and i will be at your side, and I will remove all the wicked things.' I will turn the wolves into sheep. For I will change everything, and nothing will resist my will.[68]

The mission of the seventy is a peaceful one. Jesus does not ask them to try and convert the wolves, but to "cure the sick ... and say to them [those welcoming the apostles], 'The kingdom of God has come near to you'".[69] Although in the *New Testament*, the metaphor is not explained any further, the seemingly counter-intutive nature of the symbolism used[70] urges Cyril to

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[66] Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 2:3:111: σαφέστατα τὴν ἐκ ῥίζης Ἰεσσαὶ (πατὴρ δὲ ἦν οὗτος τοῦ Δαβὶδ) γένεσιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ παριστάς. ἐφ' ᾗ γενέσει τὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν κλῆσιν πρότερον μὲν δι' αἰνίγματος προφητικῷ τρόπῳ ἀναφωνεῖ· τὸ γὰρ «συμβοσκηθήσεται λύκος μετὰ ἀρνός, καὶ πάρδαλις σὺν ἐρίφῳ συναναπαύσεται», καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα, οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ τῶν ἀγρίων καὶ ἀπηνῶν τὸν τρόπον καὶ μηδὲν θηρίων διαφερόντων ἐθνῶν τὴν ἐπὶ τὸν εὐσεβῆ καὶ ἥμερόν τε καὶ κοινωνικὸν τρόπον μεταβολὴν ἐδήλου.

[67] See note **%**

[68] Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarii in Lucam* 10:3: Καὶ πῶς ἂν πρόβατον κατισχύσειε λύκου καὶ τῆς τῶν θηρῶν ἀγριότητος κρατήσῃ τὸ ἥμερον; Ναί, φησίν, ἐγὼ συμπαρέσομαι καὶ συνασπιῶ καὶ παντὸς ἐξελοῦμαι κακοῦ, ἐγὼ τοὺς λύκους εἰς πρόβατα μεταβαλῶ· ποιῶ γὰρ πάντα καὶ μετασκευάζω καὶ οὐδὲν τοῖς ἐμοῖς θελήμασι τὸ ἀντιστατοῦν.

[69] Lk 10:9.

[70] Namely that sheep, animals which are traditionally (in the *Old Testament* and in other places in the New Testament as well) considered to be vulnerable and defenceless are sent among predators without any reference for an undertone of self-sacrifice.

propose an explanation, claiming that Christ will ultimately turn the wolves into sheep. The possibility of a change of natures ensconced in the Gospel-verse becomes a compelling idea and – as I will present in the final part of the present chapter [71] – also serves as a core-concept for the Church fathers' treatment of wild-beast eschatology as a description of the fate of the outgroup.

In a way similar to that of Cryil, Chrysostom also argues that sending out disciples in the form of docile animals was an intentional choice. He, moreover, goes on to explain yet another transformation (and by that proving further that the boundary between wild and tame animals is very much traversable within the context of conversion) in which those sent out are not simply tame, but also wise, as symbolized by the figure of serpents.[72]

> "Be not troubled" (so He speaks), "that sending you among wolves, I command you to be like sheep and like doves. For I might indeed have done the contrary, and have suffered you to undergo nothing terrible, nor as sheep to be exposed to wolves; I might have rendered you more formidable than lions; but it is expedient that so it should be. This makes you also more glorious; this proclaims also my power." This He said also unto Paul: "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." "It is I, now mark it, who have caused you so to be." For in saying, "I send you forth as sheep," He intimates this. "Do not therefore despond, for I know, I know certainly, that in this way more than any other you will be invincible to all." … "Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."[73] "But what," it might be said, "will our wisdom avail in so great dangers? … For let a sheep be ever so wise, when it is in the midst of wolves, and so many wolves, what will it be able to do? Let the dove be ever so harmless, what will it profit, when so many hawks are assailing it?" In the brutes indeed, not at all: but in you [humans] as much as possible.[74]

Emphasizing that Christ could have turned his followers into mighty and savage wild beasts, Chrysostom goes further than Cyril and gives three – partly contradicting – answers: the

[71] See **%**

[72] Charlesworth observes the relationship between Greek mythological tradition and the Biblical notion of serpents as symbols of wisdom. See Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent*, 246-247 and 394-5.

[73] Mt 10:16

[74] John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Mattheaum* 33:3: Μὴ θορυβηθῆτε, φησὶν, ὅτι μεταξὺ λύκων πέμπων, ὡς πρόβατα καὶ ὡς περιστερὰς εἶναι κελεύω. Ἠδυνάμην μὲν γὰρ ποιῆσαι τοὐναντίον, καὶ μηδὲν ὑμᾶς ἀφεῖναι δεινὸν ὑπομένειν, μηδὲ ὡς πρόβατα ὑποτεθῆναι λύκοις, ἀλλὰ λεόντων ἐργάσασθαι φοβερωτέρους· ἀλλ' οὕτω συμφέρει γενέσθαι. Τοῦτο καὶ ὑμᾶς λαμπροτέρους ποιεῖ· τοῦτο καὶ τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνακηρύττει δύναμιν. Τοῦτο καὶ πρὸς Παῦλον ἔλεγεν· *Ἀρκεῖ σοι ἡ χάρις μου· ἡ γὰρ δύναμίς μου ἐν ἀσθενείᾳ τελειοῦται.* Ἐγὼ τοίνυν οὕτως ὑμᾶς ἐποίησα εἶναι. Ὅταν γὰρ εἴπῃ, *Ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω ὑμᾶς ὡς πρόβατα,* τοῦτο αἰνίττεται· Μὴ τοίνυν καταπέσητε· οἶδα γὰρ, οἶδα σαφῶς, ὅτι ταύτῃ μάλιστα πᾶσιν ἀχείρωτοι ἔσεσθε … *Γίνεσθε οὖν φρόνιμοι ὡς οἱ ὄφεις, καὶ ἀκέραιοι ὡς αἱ περιστεραί.* Καὶ τί δύναιτ' ἂν ἡ ἡμετέρα φρόνησις, φησὶν, ἐν τοσούτοις κινδύνοις; … Ὅσον γὰρ ἂν γένηται φρόνιμον πρόβατον μεταξὺ λύκων ὄν, καὶ λύκων τοσούτων, τί δυνήσεται πλέον ἀνύσαι; ὅσον ἂν γένηται ἀκέραιος ἡ περιστερὰ, τί ὠφελήσει, τοσούτων ἐπικειμένων ἱεράκων; Ἐπὶ μὲν τῶν ἀλόγων, οὐδέν· ἐπὶ δὲ ὑμῶν, τὰ μέγιστα.

vulnerability of the disciples[75] highlights Christ's power, but it was also the only way for victory. And, by a sudden twist at the end of his commentary, Chrysostom shifts back to a fully metaphorical interpretation and points out the intellectual superiority of Christian humans as opposed to their gentile persecutors.

Augustine, who reads the two major Gospel-verses (Mt 7:15 and Mt 10:16) explicitly together, even arrives to an ultimate reversal of the idea of transformations: Christ could have presented his disciples as wolves so that their lupine persecutors would receive them more favorably. In light of this possibility, the choice of assuming the vulnerability of a sheep is not only a declaration of the non-aggressive nature of Christianity, but also a sign of courage on the part of the disciples:

> But you will say, "we more easily penetrate their concealment if we pretend to be ourselves what they are." If this were lawful or expedient, Christ might have instructed his sheep that they should come clad in wolves' clothing to the wolves, and by the cheat of this artifice discover them: which He hath not said, no, not when He foretold that He would send them forth in the midst of wolves.[76]

5.2.2. And who are the wolves?

As we have seen, for the Church fathers, the dominant issue was to establish and maintain a satisfying answer concerning the identity of the sheep. For them, the identity of the wolves was less relevant, and of course, less stable, as it could represent a number of hostile forces. Rabbis, however, who did not have to face the immense task of harmonizing *Old* and *New Testament* narratives, also did not have to elaborate on the identity of sheep, which – according to the unanimous testimony of prophetic passages and Psalms, symbolizes Israelites. Thus, they could focus much more on identifying wolves. As the opposition of wolves and sheep was already present in the *Old Testament*,[77] even though it was not thematized as much as in *New Testament* tradition, it proposed the basis for an important symbolic framework for presenting ingroup-outgroup relations. The rabbis did not simply comment on the *Old Testament* precursors, but formulated a tradition that is in many details strikingly reminiscent of the *New Testament* passages discussed above and the Church Fathers' interpretations of them. The first of these

[75] Doves are clearly regarded just as vulnerable animals, and also apt for sacrifice as sheep. See Pangritz, *Das Tier in der Bibel,* 83-4, and Vilhelm-Møller Christensen, *Biblisches Tierlexikon* (Konstanz: Christl. Verl.-Anst, 1969) 135-138.

[76] Augustine, *Contra Mendacium* 6:11: Sed multo facilius, inquies, eorum latibula penetramus, si quod sunt nos esse mentiamur. hoc si liceret aut expediret, potuit christus praecipere ouibus suis, ut lupinis amictae pellibus ad lupos uenirent et eos huius artis fallaciis inuenirent: quod eis non dixit nec quando eas in medium luporum se missurum esse praedixit.

[77] See Isa 11:6, Isa 65:25.

similarities is that the rabbis expressed a narrative in which the nations of the world are considered to be seventy wolves,[78] among whom the solitary Israel is standing alone, as symbolized by a sheep. This narrative is present in several midrashic collections and also in the *Talmud*[79] and it is attributed to various historical figures, among them David:

> David said: One sheep among seventy wolves, what can it do? Israel among seventy strong nations, what can Israel do, unless you stand by them every single hour? Hence, "You deliver the weak from those too strong for them — that is, you deliver Israel."[80]

The earliest rabbinic authority, to whom the notion is related is R. Yehoshua b. Hanania, but it is first recorded in a late midrashic collection, *EstherR*:

> The Emperor Hadrian said to R. Joshua: 'How great is the sheep that preserves itself among seventy wolves!' He answered him: 'Great is the shepherd who rescues her and crushes them before her': and so it is written, No weapon that is fashioned against you shall prosper (Isa 54:17)'[81]

The opposition of wolves and the sheep is twisted in an intriguing way in this midrash. Whereas the *Old Testament* image of hostile animals threatening the flock[82] is based on the implicit notion that a large number of sheep (hence flock) is threatened by a much smaller number of wolves or lions this assumption is refused in this midrash. Similarly to Chrysostom's interpretation of the *Gospel of Matthew* (*Homiliae in Mattheaum*, 33:1) the opposition of sheep and wolves is not only an opposition of natures but also of numbers. Here, Israel, as a solitary sheep, faces a much larger number of wolves. By doing so, the midrash comes to the same counter-intuitive concept of an overpowering number of predators that is behind the Gospel-narrative of sending out a few disciples among the hordes of wolves ("See, I am sending you out like sheep in the midst of wolves").[83] If one gives credit to the claim of *EstherR*, a midrash-compilation of the sixth century, the concept has already been formulated by a tanna of the early second century. If that is the case, R. Yehoshua's comment might have originated from the same parable that gave birth to Jesus' logion. Taking into account that in the midrash, the security of

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[78] On the scriptural origins and structure of this argumentation see Stern, *Jewish Identity*, 8, and fn 41.

[79] Cf. E.g. *bSukkah* 55b, *GenR* 39:11. See James M. Scott, *Paul and the Nations: the Old Testament and Jewish Background of Paul's Mission to the Nations with Special Reference to the Destination of Galatians* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1995) 128. See also Stern, *Jewish Identity*, 8.

[80] (*PesR* 9) אמר דוד כבש בין שבעים זאבים מה יכול לעשות, ישראל בין שבעים אומות חזקים מה הם יכולים לעשות אילולי אתה עומד להם בכל שעה ושעה הוי מציל עני מחזק ממנו אילו ישראל.

[81] (*EstherR* 10:11) אנדריאנוס קיסר אמר לו לר' יהושע גדולה היא הכבשה שעומדת בין שבעים זאבים, אמר לו גדול הוא הרועה שמצילה ושוברן לפניהם הה"ד (ישעיה נ"ד) כל כלי יוצר עליך לא יצלח וגו'

[82] E.g. Ezek 34:5, 1Sam 17:34 etc.

[83] Mt 10:16. Here, the Greek phrase (ἐν μέσῳ λύκων) implies that the wolves can surround the sheep, consequently their numbers must be greater than that of the disciples

the solitary sheep is warranted by its special relationship with God, its shepherd, whereas the apostles are promised suffering *due to* their relationship[84] with Jesus, the shepherd,[85] on whose behalf they would be persecuted (thus, a direct opposite of the midrash' argument) the rabbinic dictum almost seems like an ironic commentary. If the midrash truly originates from R. Yehoshuah, then the two traditions (the Gospel-logion and the midrash) do not only share an origin, but the latter, was formulated in awareness of the Gospel-text.[86] Comparing the midrash with Luke's text, where seventy sheep are sent out among the wolves, one might even surmise that R. Yehoshua's comment was a subtle parody. Applying the number to the wolves, he might be referring to a fabled number of Christian missionaries threatening the lamb of Israel, which can only expect salvation from God. Thus, the rabbis could take a chance to turn the exploit the Church fathers' decreased interest in identifying the wolves and used the narrative scenario to present a polemic interpretation opposing that of Christian interpreters.

[84] Cf. Mt 10:19.

[85] Mt 10:22-23. Cf. L. Ann Jervis, "Suffering for the Reign of God. The Persecution of Discipleship in Q," *Novum Testamentum* 44, 4 (2002): 313-332, here 322-326.

[86] On the puzzling issue of whether the rabbis knew the text of any Gospel-text first-hand, see Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2007) 122-125.

5.3. The wild nature within

The treatment of the opposition of wolves and sheep showed that the Church fathers took the possibility of a change of natures very seriously, emphasizing the fact that if wild beasts can become domesticated (through conversion) than an opposite movement must also be possible: an individual can become wild, there is room for personal *Verwilderung*. This is clearly a problematic discovery, on the one hand, as it jeopardizes the stability of identifying one's ingroup with tame and peaceful animals. On the other hand, it is very much in accordance with the ambivalent and unsettled nature of wilderness as a habitat and of wild animals as its representatives.

The oscillation between the two states (being wild and being like a domesticated animal) was a generally recognized ambiguity of human existence in both traditions, and the opposition of wild and domesticated animals was an appropriate discourse for handling this observation in a comprehensible manner. Thus, the difficulty of finding an appropriate place for wild animals in the symbolic menagerie of Jewish and Christian traditions could be settled. This way, the ambiguity of wild animal symbolism (namely, that they represented both the uncultivated, wild, ferocious and dangerous outgroup and the free, mighty and unstoppable forces within the human nature manifesting in physical or spiritual prowess) was put to good use.

Such a solution is exemplified by the Church fathers' treatment of the scene in which Jesus sends out his disciples with the words, be "wise as serpents and innocent as doves".[87] The inherent opposition between these two animals was less of a problem for the Gospel-text,[88] than for Church fathers, who tended to identify serpent with the devil or at least attribute demonic powers to it.[89] But, by claiming that the represent two equally available aspects of human existence, their opposition can be reconciled. Gregory of Nyssa, who argues for a balance between the characteristics of the two, phrases this possibility:

> It is clearly contained in that passage where our Lord says to His disciples, that they are as sheep wandering among wolves, yet are not to be as doves only, but are to have something of the serpent too in their disposition; and that means that they should neither carry to excess the practice of that which seems praiseworthy in simplicity, as such a habit would come very near to downright madness, nor on the other hand should deem the cleverness which most admire to be a virtue, while unsoftened by any mixture with its opposite; they were in fact to form another disposition, by a compound of these two seeming opposites, cutting off its silliness from the one, its evil cunning from the other; so that one single beautiful character should be created from the two, a union

[87] Mt 10:16.
[88] Cf. also Jn 3:14-16, Charlesworth, *The Good and Evil Serpent*, 356-7.
[89] Cf. Robert M. Grant, *Early Christians and Animals* (London: Routledge, 1999) 4-5.

> of simplicity of purpose with shrewdness. Be, He says, wise as serpents, and harmless as doves[90]

A similar argument is presented by Chrysostom in relation to a number of *Old Testament* texts:[91]

> And this we ought to observe in all cases, that we are not to take the illustrations quite entire, but after selecting the good of them, and that for which they were introduced, to let the rest alone. As, for instance, when he says, "He couched, he lay down as a lion" (Num 24:9) let us focus [ἐκλαμβάνομεν] only on the the indomitable and fearful part, not the brutality, nor any other of the things belonging to a lion. And again, when He says, "I will meet them as a bereaved bear" (Hos 13:8), let us focus on vindictiveness.[92]

Of course, with such a reconciliation of opposites, one had to risk a lot. Whereas, the anthropocentric, and mostly demythologized world of the *Bible* could tolerate an oscillation between the meaning of wild animal symbols (referring both to fearful enemies and to the – similarly fearful – power of God or that of Israel), the situation in which interpreters were forced to make sense of Biblical narratives was fraught with intercommunal polemics and an ongoing struggle for the appropriation of symbolic Biblical imagery. Thus, the power and destructive force ensconced in both aspects of the metaphor, rendered the image of wild animal at the same time alluring and perilous. Jewish and Christian interpreters were rightfully uncomfortable with the ambivalence of animal symbols that could be used both as representations of a feared and disliked other and of a powerful self.

5.3.1. The individual and the communal wild beast

It seems that one solution for this problem was to distinguish between individual and communal symbolism. In order to maintain both claims (namely that wild beasts are symbols of a

[90] Gregory of Nyssa, *De Virginitate* 17: τὸ δόγμα φανερῶς γὰρ τῆς τοῦ κυρίου διδασκαλίας ἔστιν ἀκοῦσαι, ἐν οἷς διδάσκει τοὺς μαθητάς, ὡς ἄρνας λύκοις συναναστρεφομένους, μὴ περιστερὰς εἶναι μόνον, ἀλλ' ἔχειν τι καὶ τοῦ ὄφεως ἐν τῷ ἤθει. Τοῦτο δέ ἐστι μὴ τὸ κατὰ τὴν ἁπλότητα δοκοῦν ἐπαινετὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις εἰς ἄκρον ἐπιτηδεύειν, ὡς τῇ ἐσχάτῃ ἀνοίᾳ τῆς τοιαύτης ἕξεως πλησιαζούσης· μηδ' αὖ πάλιν τὴν ἐπαινουμένην ὑπὸ τῶν πολλῶν δεινότητα καὶ πανουργίαν ἀμιγῆ τῶν ἐναντίων καὶ ἄκρατον ἀρετὴν νομίζειν· ἐκ δὲ τῆς δοκούσης ἐναντιότητος μίαν τινὰ συγκεκραμένην ἤθους κατάστασιν ἀπεργάζεσθαι, τῆς μὲν τὸ ἀνόητον, τῆς δὲ τὸ ἐν πονηρίᾳ σοφὸν περικόψαντας, ὡς ἐξ ἑκατέρων ἓν ἀποτελεσθῆναι καλὸν ἐπιτήδευμα ἁπλότητι γνώμης καὶ ἀγχινοίᾳ συγκεκραμένον. «Γίνεσθε γάρ», φησί, «φρόνιμοι ὡς οἱ ὄφεις καὶ ἀκέραιοι ὡς αἱ περιστεραί.».

[91] For further examples, see also Gregory of Nazianzos, *Orationes* 18:27, Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 10:3.

[92] John Chrysostom, *In Epistulam ad Romanos* 16:20: Καὶ τοῦτο πανταχοῦ δεῖ παρατηρεῖν, ὅτι τὰ ὑποδείγματα οὐ πάντα καθόλου δεῖ λαμβάνειν, ἀλλὰ τὸ χρήσιμον αὐτῶν ἐκλεξαμένους, καὶ εἰς ὅπερ παρείληπται, τὸ λοιπὸν ἅπαν ἐᾷν. Ὥσπερ οὖν ὅταν λέγῃ, Ἀναπεσὼν ἐκοιμήθη ὡς λέων, τὸ ἄμαχον καὶ φοβερὸν ἐκλαμβάνομεν, οὐ τὸ θηριῶδες οὐδὲ ἄλλο τι τῶν τῷ λέοντι προσόντων· καὶ πάλιν ὅταν λέγῃ, Ἀπαντήσομαι αὐτοῖς, ὡς ἄρκτος ἀπορουμένη, τὸ τιμωρητικόν.

dangerous other and that there is a dormant wild beast in every human) Christian (and Jeiwsh interpreters) established a distinction between the two *tenors*. By admitting that the individual can be and is rightfully depicted by a wild animal at times, they could maintain that on the communal level, wild beast symbolism still refers exclusively to others. Thus, a personalized reading of passages describing the us in the symbol of a ferocious animal were understood on the level of the individual, and the claim of depicting otherness in the form of wild animals was still substantiated.

Such a strategy is visible in the above examples of Gregory of Nyssa and Chrysostom, but even more apparently in the writings of the rabbis, where the admission that being a wild beast is a not a distant possibility, but an ever threatening alternative of remaining a tame and obedient animal fuelled a more intimate, and therefore more profound understanding of the concept of wilderness than a mere exploration of a hostile wilderness would have made possible.

Encapsulating the idea concisely, *ARN*, for example, writes:

> Rabbi Yose the Galilean says: Whatever the Holy One, blessed be He, created in the world, He created in man ... in His wisdom and understanding created the whole world, created the heavens and the earth, the beings on high and those down below, and formed in man whatever He created in His world[93] ... He created evil beasts in the world and He created evil beasts in man: to wit, the vermin in man;[94]

As the beginning of a long physiological description of the limbs of man, and their correspondent in the created world, R. Yose, declares that the microcosmos in humans reflects even the presence of evil(!) beasts (חיה רעה). In light of the rest of R. Yose's comparisons (wind – breath; the sun – forehead; salt water – tears, kings – heart etc.), the observation that vermin dwell in men is clearly not a medical statement, but one of anthropologico-psychological nature: despite all intentions to the contrary, there is a tidbit from the nature of wild beasts within each individual. The Palestinian R. Yose's statement corresponds to that of a Babylonian amora, Rami b. Hama:

> Rami b. Hama said: A wild beast has no dominion over man unless he appears to it as a brute, for it is written. Men are overruled when they appear as beasts.[95]

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[93] The idea of a microcosm created in mankind is prevalent in both traditions. See Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* vol 1. (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2013 [orig. 1909]) 49.

[94] רבי יוסי הגלילי אומר כל מה שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא בארץ ברא באדם משלו ... אבל הקדוש ברוך הוא יהא שמו הגדול מבורך לעולם לעולמי עולמים בחכמתו ובתבונתו ברא את כל העולם כולו וברא את השמים ואת הארץ עליונים ותחתונים ויצר באדם כל מה שברא בעולמו ... ברא חיה רעה בעולם וברא חיה רעה באדם זה הכנימה של אדם (*ARN A* 1:31)

[95] אמר רמי בר חמא: אין חיה רעה שולטת באדם אלא אם כן נדמה לו כבהמה, שנאמר נמשל כבהמות נדמו. (*bSanhedrin* 38b)

This Baraita is more general than the tradition of the *ARN*. In line with the wide-spread notion of Late Antique Greco-Roman notion that humans bear animalistic and specifically savage features, characteristic of undomesticated animals,[96] Rami b. Hama reflects upon the possibility of becoming a wild beasts. Several passages show that this notion was not envisaged as a fate of only non-Jews, but as a general anthropological feature threatening Jews and gentiles alike. Discussing the sequence of historical oppressors, *GenR* claims:

> For the Lord God will do nothing, but he reveals his consuel unto his servants the prophets. Jacob procreated two against two, and Moses procreated two against two. Jacob blessed Judah with the Babylonian empire in mind, for each is likened to a lion. The former: *Judah is a lion's whelp*, the latter: *the first was like a lion*. By whose hand shall the empire of Babylon fall? By the hand of Daniel, descended from Judah. Benjamin in allusion to the empire of Media, the former being likened to a wolf and the latter being likened to a wolf. The former is likened to a wolf: *Benjamin is a wolf that ravens*. And the latter is likened to a wolf: *And behold another beast, a second, like to a wolf*… That is R. Johanan's view, for R. Johanan said: *Wherefore a lion out of the forest does slay them* alludes to Bablyon. *A wolf of the deserts does spoil them* to Media… Joseph is opposed to the Kingdom of Edom [Rome]. The one has horns and the other has horns. The one has horns: His firstling bullock, majesty is his and his horns are the horns of the wild-ox. And the other has horns. And concerning the ten horns that were on its head: the one refrained from immorality whereas the other embraced immorality ... By whose hand will the kingdom of Edom fall? By the hand of the one anointed for war, who will be descended from Joseph.[97]

This midrash is a variation of the exegetical tradition interpreting Daniel's vision.[98] The words of Rabbi Johanan and similar midrashim[99] are governed by the notion of *simila similibus*. Arguing from the direction of correspondences, it is claimed that only a lion can take it up with another one. Therefore, the lion of Judah (Daniel) is the one responsible for the fall of the leonine Babylonian Empire; Benjamin (the wolf) is the nemesis of the lupine Media; and the messianistic descendant of Joseph (a bullock) is going to defeat the apocalyptic horned beast of Daniel's vision. In the case of Daniel, the military power of Babylon is vanquished by a superior

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[96] Cf. Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Ideas* (London: Routledge, 2006) 205-226.

[97] (*GenR* 99:2) כי לא יעשה ה' אלהים דבר וגו', יעקב זיווג שנים כנגד שנים, ומשה זיווג שנים כנגד שנים, יהודה כנגד מלכות בבל, זה נמשל באריה וזה נמשל באריה, זה נמשל באריה גור אריה יהודה, וזה נמשל באריה קדמייתא כאריה, ביד מי מלכות בבל נופלת ביד דניאל שהוא בא משל יהודה, בנימין כנגד מלכות מדי, זה נמשל בזאב וזו נמשלה בזאב, זה נמשל בזאב בנימין זאב יטרף וגו', וזו נמשלה בזאב (דניאל ז)... היא דעתיה דרבי יוחנן דא"ר יוחנן (ירמיה ה) על כן הכם אריה מיער, זו בבל... יוסף כנגד מלכות אדום, זה בעל קרנים וזה בעל קרנים, זה בעל קרנים (שם /דברים ל"ג/) בכור שורו הדר לו, וזה בעל קרנים (דניאל ז) ועל קרניא עשר די בראשיה, זה פירש מן הערוה וזה נדבק בערוה ... ביד מי מלכות נופלת ביד משוח מלחמה שהוא בא משל יוסף.

[98] See below **%**

[99] See EstherR 10:13; *Tanhuma Wayhi* 13.

intellectual/spiritual one,[100] whereas against the Roman Empire the rabbis could only muster the hope of a militaristic messiah, a character in which inherent beastliness is channeled against an enemy of seemingly unsurpassable military power. Thus, the beastliness of the Mesiah of the house of Joseph is presented as a prerequisite of vanquishing the wild beast adversary, and it is emphasized that unlike the Roman Empire, the messianistic beast's intentions are pure ("the one refrained from immorality"). Notably, this tradition only superficially fits the strategy of restricting wild-beast identification to individual levels. Indeed, Daniel, Benjamin and the Messiah are singular individuals, but they clearly represent the entirety of the people of Israel. Thus, the rabbis slip into a dangerous trap, where the wild-beast identification can be understood as a general trait of the people of Israel. In certain exegetical traditions, even the mitigating factor of a militant opposition is missing: Israel is identified with wild beasts, without – at the same time – arguing for a similar correspondence between beasts and the enemies of Israel:

> "And the midwives said unto Pharaoh, Behold the Hebrew women are not as the Egyptian women etc." (Ex 1:19) What means *hayoth*? If it is to say they were actually midwives, do you infer that a midwife does not require another midwife to deliver her child! — But [the meaning is] they said to him, This people are compared to an animal - Judah [is called] "a lion's whelp"; of Dan [it is said] "Dan shall be a serpent"; Naphtali [is called] a "hind let loose"; Issachar a "strong ass"; Joseph a "firstling bullock"; Benjamin a "wolf that ravines" (Cf. 49:9-22). [Of those sons of Jacob where a comparison with an animal] is written in connection with them, it is written: but [in the instances where such a comparison] is not written, there is the text: What was thy mother? A lioness; "she couched among lions" (Ez 19:2) etc.[101]

Once again, capitalizing on the words of Jacob's blessing, the anonymous tradition translates Jacob's symbolic language into an argument concerning vigor of the newly born Israelites in Egypt. Failing to explain the wild nature of Israel in relation to the savagery of the kingdoms, creates the impression that being symbolized by lions, wolves, serpents can serve as a positive individual symbol as well. The text interprets Jacob's blessing in accordance with its positive overtone in the Biblical original. Thus, the ferocity of wild animals is turned into a lauded trait. The savage nature of lions, wolves or snakes is interpreted as an expression of physical vigour.

[100] Although there was considerable rabbinic debate on whether Daniel can be rightfully called a prophet, the notion that he disposed primarily over spiritual powers was never subject to question. See Carol A. Newsom and Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel a Commentary* (Louisville KY: John Knox Press, 2014) 52-53.

[101] (*bSotah* 11b) ותאמרן המילדות אל פרעה כי לא כנשים וגו' - מאי חיות? אילימא חיות ממש, אטו חיה מי לא צריכה חיה אחריתי לאולודה? אלא, אמרו לו: אומה זו כחיה נמשלה, יהודה – (בראשית מט) גור אריה, דן - יהי דן נחש, נפתלי - אילה שלוחה, יששכר - חמור גרם, יוסף - בכור שור, בנימין - זאב יטרף, דכתיב ביה - כתיב ביה, ודלא כתיב ביה - כתיב: (ביה) (יחזקאל יט) מה אמך לביא בין אריות רבצה וגו'.

An interesting expression of this concept features in rabbinic descriptions of the harshness of sages. Wild animals are likewise symbols of positive features, however, not in a physical but – once again – in an intellectual sense. According to tractate *Avot* of the *Mishna*, R. Eliezer argued that sages can be compared to various wild animals:

> They said three things. R. Eliezer said: let the honour of thy friend be as dear to thee as thine own. And be not easily provoked to anger, and repent one day before thy death. And warm thyself before the fire of the wise and beware of their glowing coal, that you mayest not be singed. For their bite is the bite of a fox and their sting is the sting of a scorpion. And their hiss is the hiss of a serpent, and all their words are like coals of fire.[102]

The representation of the intellectual acumen of the sages in the form of various wild beasts is an easily intelligible metaphor.[103] The emphasis of the passage on the pain of the verbal acerbities through the metaphors of bite/sting/hiss focuses the reader's attention on the sages' educational activity. And yet, the passage of the *Mishna* is baffling, for it is in clear opposition with the notion that the same wild beasts are symbols of wicked, and idolatrous figures.

In light of the great number and variety of traditions using wild-animal symbolism in such a sense and the more meager amount of narratives[104] similar to *bSotah* or *mAvot*, I conclude that the altogether positive understanding of wild-beast imagery as a power-symbol is rather the exception than the rule in the rabbinic tradition. And this observation holds true even in the case of the lion, which is generally accepted as a representative of Israel's royal power by the rabbis. The example of a passage from *EstherR* shows that the rabbis often felt uncomfortable even with the leonine imagery:

> The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities... And no man could withstand them; for the fear of the Jews was fallen upon all the peoples (9:2). Israel were mighty like a lion attacking a flock of sheep and simitng without let or hindrance, there being none to deliver; and so it says, And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the nations, in the midst of many peoples, "as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep" (Micah 5:7); and they slew the sons of Haman and hanged them. The Emperor Hadrian said to R. Joshua: 'How great is the sheep that preserves itself among seventy wolves!' He answered him: 'Great is the shepherd who rescues her

[102] הם אמרו שלשה שלשה דברים רבי אליעזר אומר יהי כבוד חברך חביב עליך כשלך ואל תהי נוח לכעוס ושוב יום אחד לפני מיתתך והוי מתחמם כנגד אורן של חכמים והוי זהיר בגחלתן שלא תכוה שנשיכתן נשיכת שועל ועקיצתן עקיצת עקרב ולחישתן לחישת שרף וכל דבריהם כגחלי אש. (*mAvot* 2:10)

[103] For a further version cf. *bBaba Kama 117a.*

[104] See also *GenR* 99:2.

> and crushes them before her': and so it is written, "no weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper" (Isa 54:17)'.[105]

The anonymous midrash starts with the image of a fearful – leonine – Israel waging war against the nations incapable of defending themselves. The author of the text goes even as far as to compare these "victims" of the Israelites to sheep. But this image is perhaps the last one the rabbis wanted their audience to formulate about Israel, depicted more regularly as an elected nation resisting the onrush of numerous gentile enemies threatening their existence. Not only does it contradict Israel's Biblical association with the image of the sheep of God, it also draws an unfavourable picture about Israel as an aggressor. In an attempt to mend the blemished reputation of a "persecuted chosen nation", the author or authors of the passage add a contrary narrative, in which Israel is again the sheep, and the nations play their usual role as wolves.

5.3.2. The hunter and the hunted

One further way of harmonizing the two images (that of the fearful wild beasts of otherness and the inevitably admitted possibility that there is a wild beast in all humans, even in members of one's own ingroup) was to call attention to the liminality of the situation of hunting, a narrative that is closely related to the opposition of wild and domesticated beasts. In a hunting, the roles of being a hunter or being hunted are often unstable and subject to exchange. The ambiguous nature of the notion of wilderness and wild animals themselves allows for a duality in the interpretation of their seclusion from human habitats. On the one hand, as it is traditionally presented, wild animals pose a threat to domesticated ones and to humans and that is the reason for the separation between them and the the human domain. On the other hand, from the perspective of human society, wild animals are beings without protection. They are not only hunters but also hunted. The duality of their existence is particularly palpable in the Roman practice of wild beast fights in the arenas.[106] During these spectacles (well known to the rabbis[107]), human gladiators had to fight against various wild beasts, becoming either their

[105] נקהלו היהודים בעריהם וגו', ואיש לא עמד בפניהם כי נפל פחדם על כל העמים וישראל מתגברים כאריה שנפל (EstherR 10:11) בעדרי צאן ומכה והולך ואין מציל מידו הה"ד (מיכה ה') והיה שארית יעקב בגוים בקרב עמים רבים כאריה בבהמות יער וככפיר בעדרי צאן וגו', והרגו בניו של המן ותלאום, אנדריאנוס קיסר אמר לו לר' יהושע גדולה היא הכבשה שעומדת בין שבעים זאבים, אמר לו גדול הוא הרועה שמצילה ושוברן לפניהם הה"ד (ישעיה נ"ד) כל כלי יוצר עליך לא יצלח וגו'

[106] See Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 31-35.

[107] See K. William Whitney Jr., "The Place of the 'Wild Beast Hunt' of Sib. Or. 3,806 in Biblical and Rabbinic Tradition," *Journal of the Study of Judaism* 25 (1994):68-81, here 79-80. See also Mark Zvi Brettler and Michael Poliakoff, "Rabbi Shimeon ben Lakish at the Gladiator's Banquet: Rabbinic Observations on the Roman Arena," *The Harvard Theological Review*, 83, no. 1 (1990): 93-98, here 97.

victims or their slayers.[108] With this ambiguity in mind, one can make good sense of the sequence of midrashim in *EstherR* as an expression of a similar logic, especially since identifying with a wild beast that is hunted and persecuted by humans is a topic recurrent in *EstherR*:

> "And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate" (Esth 3:2). R. Jose b. Hanina opened with the text: "the proud have hid a snare for me" (Ps. 140:6). Said the Community of Israel before the Holy One, blessed be He, 'Sovereign of the Universe', the idolaters have spread a snare for me to overthrow me. They say to me: 'Practise idolatry.' If I listen to them I am punished, and if I do not listen to them they kill me.' She is in the position of a wolf which is thirsting for water and finds a net spread over the mouth of a well. It says: 'If I go down to drink, I shall be caught in the net, and if I do not go down, I shall die of thirst.'[109]

R. Jose's midrash is a convincing example of wild beast-symbolism used in order to highlight the loneliness and the resulting distress of being a wild animal. In this comparison, the usually hostile, yet fearsome force of the wolf threatening its victims is not emphasized at all. Instead, Israel (the hunted wolf) is presented as a cornered, defenceless creature hesitating between two wrong choices. *BSanhedrin*, and a number of midrashim[110] offers a variant of this narrative, commenting on Num 22:7 ("So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and gave him Balak's message."):

> And the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed. A Tanna taught: There was never peace between Midian and Moab. The matter may be compared to two dogs in one kernel which were always enraged at each other. Then a wolf attacked one, whereupon the other said, If I do not help him, he will kill him to-day, and attack me to-morrow; so they both went and killed the wolf.[111]

Even though Israel is presented as the initial aggressor in this baraita, the loneliness of wild beasts are even more emphatic, as the wolf is not contrasted with humans, but with their counterparts in the domesticated realm: dogs. The initial predator, Israel the hunter is becoming the hunted as its enemies form an alliance dedicated to Israel's annihilation. Notably, this self-

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[108] Although the two outcomes were nominally separated (*venatio* and *damnatio ad bestias*), the possible result of the fighting human getting killed during the spectacle by an enraged animal was definitely a possibility. ee Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 33-34 and 183-187.

[109] (EstherR 7:6) וכל עבדי המלך אשר בשער המלך וגו', רבי יוסי בר חנינא פתח (תהלים ק"מ) טמנו גאים פח לי אמרה כנסת ישראל לפני הקב"ה רבונו של עולם מצודה פרשו לי עובדי כוכבים להפילני, אומרים לי עבוד עבודת כוכבים אם אני שומעת להם נענשתי ואם אין אני שומע להם הן הורגין אותי, משל לזאב שצמא למים ופרשו לו מצודה על פי המעין אמר אם ארד לשתות הריני ניצוד ואם לא ארד הריני מת בצמא

[110] The same tradition surfaces in *Sifre Numbers* Matot 157; *DeutR* 20:4; *Tanhuma* Balak 4.

[111] (*bSanhedrin* 105a) וילכו זקני מואב וזקני מדין תנא: מדין ומואב לא היה להם שלום מעולם. משל לשני כלבים שהיו בעדר והיו צהובין זה לזה, בא זאב על האחד, אמר האחד: אם איני עוזרו - היום הורג אותו, ולמחר בא עלי. הלכו שניהם והרגו הזאב

representation is very much echoed in Christian tradition, most remarkably by Chrysostom, who famously used the hunting narrative in his second oration against the Jews, describing himself and Christian missionaries as dogs, who lay a net for the wild beasts, the lupine Jews. And perhaps even Augustine's commentary on the *Book of Psalms*, according to which Jews are wolves, who – in the course of their conversion – will finally turn into domesticated dogs themselves is not detached from the general notion of a shift between hunter and hunted.[112]

And although it hardly makes the evaluation of rabbinic materials any easier, one is tempted to believe that the similarity between these Jewish and Christian interpretations is not accidental. If that is the case, it seems more likely that Church fathers were those who accepted and reused rabbinic exegetical materials. Not only is the alternative (namely that the rabbis would have willingly accepted the hostile appellation of wolves and used it to describe their own situation *vis-à-vis* gentiles) difficult to fathom, but it also contradicts the chronology that the rabbinic texts themselves present. Although it is impossible to date these traditions with any certainty,[113] both *EstherR* and the *Babylonian Talmud* introduce their respective traditions as tannaitic material. If this is to be believed, the rabbinic interpretations originate from before the end of the second century. It is reasonable that due to their apparent popularity, these texts could have even reached representatives of the Christian exegetical tradition.[114]

This observation still does not provide an answer to the troubling question as to why the rabbis used such an ambivalent picture to describe Israelites. In lack of a more conclusive answer, I propose to read these texts as rabbinic expressions of two separate themes. For one thing, they fit in the rabbinic anthropological observation of a wild beast residing in every human. More importantly, they help solving the puzzling difficulty of certain Biblical passages, in which a clear identification of Israel with wild beasts are present. And apparently, the rabbis approached certain Biblical passages (such as Gen 49:9-27 or Hos 8:9) with a totemic mindset, explaining identifications with wild animals in a way that wild and ferocious aspects of the animal in question was not mitigated, but even emphasized. These totemic interpretations were however problematic inasmuch as in several narratives (e.g. Ezek 22:27, Zeph 3:3 etc.) Israel or its leaders are presented as wild beasts turning away from the faith of God and preying on he weak. With regard to these, rabbis might have felt the need to act preventively and propose

[112] Cf. %

[113] As for the problems of dating rabbinic materials and especially aggadic texts, cf. Günter Stemberger, "Dating Rabbinic Traditions," *The New Testament and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Riemund Bieringer, Florentino García Martínez et al., 79-97 (Leiden: Brill, 2010) 90.

[114] On the difficulties of estimating such connections, see Günter Stemberger, "Exegetical Contacts between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire," *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation* vol I., ed. Magne Sæbø, 569-586 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996) here 576-586.

interpretations highlighting the loneliness and persecuted stature of wild animals. This was all the more appropriate, since it matched the general self-representation of a chosen and hated Israel oppressed by the rest of the world. Thus, rabbis managed to explain away otherwise concerning identifications of savage beast and at the same time succeeded in reestablishing one of their core messages concerning Isarel and its place in the world.

The problem was slightly less significant in the Christian tradition, where the notion of a possibility for a fundamental, ontological change in the life of the individual (conversion) was an important part of anthropology.[115] Church fathers could always admit the existence of a wild nature within mankind, just to balance it by adding that being a Christian or converting to Christianity constitutes a domestication of this very nature, and thus, Christians are not *anymore* wild animals. This possibility was essential for the Church fathers' understanding of the Gospel-story of sheep-apostles being sent among wolves. Moreover, it played a major role in their understanding of the eschatological fate of wild animal others, a theme to which I will turn in the end of the present chapter.

[115] **Possibility of Change in Christian Anthropology %**

5.4. Daniel's kingdoms: the climax of the threat of wild beasts

We have seen that the liminaility of the wilderness that enabled both wild animals to be domesticated and domesticated ones to undergo a process of *Verwilderung* was a major source of insecurity in using wild and domesticated animals for identity-construction. Any instance of domestication or *Verwilderung* is a further weakening of the border between the two domains and – with it – one more reason to emphasize the opposition between them. Thus, the liminality of the concept of wilderness is, in fact, a feature contributing to the usage of wild-domesticated opposition in tense intercommunal polemics. And although the *Old Testament* notion of wild beasts, as representatives of the threatening wilderness, a danger for the existence of the human habitat is captured in prophetic narratives describing the destruction of individual locations (Jerusalem, Babylon etc),[116] the concept is worked out to its greatest extent in apocalyptic literatures. In Apocalyptic scenarios, the concerning aspect of non-clear borders is finally resolved by pointing to a historical period in which the difference will either be dissolved altogether (this is the vision of Isaiah 65, according to which all animals will be domesticated in the messianic age), or established clearly before the destruction of wild beasts. Many literary pieces from the second century BCE[117] venture into this, second scenario, but none of them is more relevant for both Jewish and Christian interpreters, than the "four beasts" of the *Book of Daniel*. Daniel's status as an authoritative piece of literature was secured by the end of the first century CE (that is: the beginning of Jewish and Christian exegesis),[118] and it was, thus, bound to be interpreted in both early Jewish and Christian exegetical circles. Moreover, the huge amount of paraphrases of and references to it in both apocryphal and pseudepigraphical literature[119] show that the vision of the four beasts was one of the center-pieces of the entire *Book of Daniel*. The scene, depicting four, more-or-less fantastic,[120] but emphatically wild and

[116] Cf. Stone, "Jackals and Ostriches," 69-77.

[117] The most notable parallel is of course the so-called Animal Apocalypse of Enoch, a part of 1Enoch, in which human history is depicted as a process of continuous deterioration through the medium of animal symbols. See Patrick A. Tiller, *A Commentary on the Animal Apocalypse of I Enoch*, Early Judaism and its Literature (Atlanta: Scholars, 1993) 18-19. For a recent commentary and analysis of this text, see Daniel C. Olson, *A New Reading of the Animal Apocalypse of 1Enoch With a New Translation and Commentary*, Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha (Brill: Leiden, 2013). For an extensive list and analysis of apocalyptic texts functioning in a similar fashion from the period, see Bennie H. Reynolds, *Between Symbolism and Realism: The Use of Symbolic and Non-Symbolic Language in Ancient Jewish Apocalypses 333-63 B.C.E.* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011) 161-225.

[118] See Klaus Koch, "Stages in the Canonization of the Book of Daniel," in *The Book of Daniel Composition & Reception Volume Two,* ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, 421-447 (Brill: Leiden, 2001) here 441-444.

[119] Cf. Mireille Hadas-Lebel, Robyn Fréchet, *Jerusalem against Rome* (Leuven: Peeters, 2005) 422-423. See further James J. G. Dunn, "The Danielic Son of Man in the New Testament," *The Book of Daniel Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, vol II, 528-550 (Brill: Leiden, 2001) here 537.

[120] For a detailed anaylsis of the literary and cultural background of the beasts themselves, cf. Paul A. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters: A Literary-Critical Study of Daniel 7 and 8* (Toronto: Paul A. Porter, 1985) 34-37.

ferocious animals, was understood *in loco* and expounded as representing four subsequent empires, ruling over the people of Israel. Since the concept of representing empires and their strife for power through the medium of animal symbols reached far beyond the *Book of Daniel*,[121] and was present both in apocryphal traditions such as the so-called Animal *Apocalypse of Enoch*[122] and in Targum-versions[123] of the *Book of Daniel* itself, rabbis and Church fathers referring to the beasts of Daniel could rely upon a widespread awareness of such a tradition of animal symbolism,[124] and quite often did not bother to give explicit reference to their base-text. Thus, in order to enable a better understanding of the complex structures of interpretations, I shall revisit Daniel's vision and add a minor observation:

> The first was like a lion and had eagles' wings. Then, as I watched, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand on two feet like a human being; and a human mind was given to it. Another beast appeared, a second one, that looked like a bear. It was raised up on one side, had three tusks in its mouth among its teeth and was told, "Arise, devour many bodies!" After this, as I watched, another appeared, like a leopard. The beast had four wings of a bird on its back and four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the visions by night a fourth beast, terrifying and dreadful and exceedingly strong. It had great iron teeth and was devouring, breaking in pieces, and stamping what was left with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that preceded it, and it had ten horns … As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth.[125]

The text does not only depict four empires in the form of wild beasts, it also presents these animals as striving for world-domination.[126] Consequently, the passage is not merely a list of kingdoms of otherness, it is a list of *dominating* others, constantly threatening the well-being of the community of Israel. The *Book of Daniel* itself gave little room for maneuvering concerning the identity of the four beasts. The undeniable similarities between Nebuchadnezzar's own dream in chapter two and Daniel's vision in chapter seven[127] did not leave much doubt that the first one must represent the Babylonian Empire.[128] The two

[121] Cf. Amos 5:19; Hos 13:8 etc. Cf. Schroer, *Die Tiere in der* Bibel, 90-103. Cf. Also Collins, *Daniel*, 280-291.
[122] Cf. Porter, *Metaphors and Monsters*, 43-60
[123] Concerning the Targum-versions of Daniel, cf. Uwe Glessmer [sic], "Die 'Vier Reiche' aus Daniel in der Targumischen Literatur," in *The Book of Daniel Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, vol II, 468-489 (Brill: Leiden, 2001).
[124] See Collins, *Daniel*, 311-312.
[125] Dan 7:4-7, 17.
[126] See Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome,* 422.
[127] As for the similarities between chapter 2 and seven cf. John Goldingay, *Daniel* (World Biblical Commentary) (Dallas TX: Word Books, 1989) 148.
[128] Although the identification of the animal symbols was in itself not necessarily self-evident for the prospective audience from the text itself, ample and extensive use of identical or very similar animal symbolism for depicting empires and hostile kingdoms can be found in prophetic books and among the Psalms. The existence of these

subsequent creatures were, thus, symbols of Media and Persia[129]. This identification of the first three beasts was all the more likely, since the topos of an Assyrian-Median-Persian *translatio imperii*[130] was well known from the earliest layers of Greek historiography.[131] A product of the second century BCE, [132] Daniel's vision matched and (with the addition of a fourth beast) further elaborated on this tradition. Perhaps even the fact that the author of the *Book of Daniel* failed to divulge the exact names of these empires were less due to requirements of the genre,[133] than to the fact that the narrative was wide-spread and known to most in the era in which the *Book of Daniel* was written. As a witness of the rise of Greek Empires, the author of the *Book of Daniel* argued logically that the fourth empire was, in fact, that of Macedonia, and the kingdoms of the *diadochoi*.[134]

But as – following the writing of the Biblical book – the height of Greek power has waned in the region, and the Seleucid Empire had lost its hold on Palestine – that is to say – by the middle of the first century BCE.[135] The distinction between Medes and Persians has gradually faded in hindsight (a process the beginnings of which can already be observed in the *Book of Daniel*[136]) and the third beast has "inherited" an identification with the Greeks, so as to make room for yet another empire in the symbolic representation. By the beginning of extensive Jewish and Christian interpretations of the *Book of Daniel*, this threefold identification was settled, and largely uncontested. Therefore, interpretations directed at the vision of the four beast were in part limited. Although some minor variations occur concerning the distinction between Medes and Persians (and an accompanying lack of the Medes in some interpretations),[137] but the first

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Biblical parallels excluded any possible uncertainty concerning their identification as subsequent empires. Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel,* 148-150 and Hartman, *The Book of Daniel* , 212.

[129] Cf. Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome* 422.

[130] The term "translatio imperii" denotes the idea of a linear transfer of power, in which subsequent political structures (empires) inherit the mantle of power one from the former. As for Daniel's role in the formation of this idea see Reinhard Gregor Kratz, *Translatio Imperii: Untersuchungen zu den aramäischen Danielerzählungen und ihrem theleologiegeschichtlichen Umfeld* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991) **%.** Daniel's tradition of *translatio imperii* has been the basis for a wide variety of political traditions claiming Greek and Roman predecessors. See Jacques Le Goff, *La Civilisation de L'Occident Médiéval* (Paris: Arthaud, 1964) 145-148.

[131] Joseph Ward Swain, "The Theory of Four Monarchies Opposition History under the Roman Empire," *Classical Philology* 35, no. 1 (1940): 1-21, here 4-6.

[132] According to wide-spread scholarly consensus, the Book of Daniel was written at ca. 165 BCE. Cf. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1929) 16.

[133] Cf. John J. Collins, *Daniel: a Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 54-55

[134] Hartman, *The Book of Daniel* , 208-214.

[135] Peter Schäfer, *The History of the Jews in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2003) 44-58; cf. Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome* 423.

[136] A convincing case is that of "Darius the Mede", which was apparently another appellation for Cyrus the Persia. Cf. Brian E. Colless, "Cyrus the Persian as Darius the Mede in the Book of Daniel," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 17, 56 (1992): 113-126.

[137] Cf. Ephrem, *Commentarii in Danielum*, 7:4-6

three animals are securely identified with empires ranging from the Babylonian captivity to the beginning of Roman rule in the Middle East.[138]

This was a problematic situation for both the rabbis and the Church fathers. While the former had to harmonize Daniel's linear vision of *translatio imperii*[139] with a contradictory experience of an oscillation between Roman and Persian dominance,[140] Church fathers living under the sway of a Christian Roman Empire had to find a way to dull the edge of the implications of the vision, namely that the fourth Empire, the one following that of the Greeks, the Romans are represented by the fourth, most terrible beast. The results of these struggles are the two extensive traditions of interpretation that I am going to present below.

5.4.1. The rabbis read Daniel's vision into the present

The locus classicus for the study of rabbinic exegesis concerning the four beasts of Daniel is offered by *LevR,* in which rabbis (mostly 3-4th century Palestinian amoraim) explore Daniel's sequence of beasts and comment extensively on the possible reasons for their respective identifications. In these interpretations, one observes two ways in which Daniel's vision defined the exegetical discourse of identifying non-Jewish others as wild beasts. On the one hand, there is a vertical shift: the rabbis interpret Daniel's references to individual kingdoms in a generalizing manner, claiming that these texts denote any given gentile political structure. On the other hand, there is also a horizontal shift: Daniel's vision is taken as a base text for the reading of various other passages from the *Hebrew Bible*, claiming that any list of wild beasts must also refer to it, and – by implication – to gentile kingdoms. With this, the rabbis construct an image in which the wild beasts are generally identified with gentile political power, and – by extension – with gentiles.

The first, vertical shift is apparent from the beginning of the lengthy passage of *LevR*:

> 'Different from one another' (Dan 7:3). Do not read it as different (שנין), but as hating (סנין), one more than the other. It teaches you that every nation that governs the world, hates Israel and puts them into slavery.[141]

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[138] Perhaps the strong commitment to such an interpretation that post-Biblical Jewish exegesis expressed was also a factor contributing to its widespread acceptance (see Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome*, 421-424).

[139] See Kratz, *Translatio Imperii*, **%**

[140] See e.g. bYoma 10a, bAvoda Zara 2b etc. For an excellent interpretation of these traditions, see Alexei Sivertsev, *Judaism and Imperial Ideology in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011) 37-38.

[141] (LevR 13:5) שנין דא מן דא. אל תקרי שנין אלא סנין דא מן דא. מלמד שכל אמה ששולטת בעולם היא שונאה לישראל ומשעבדא בהן.

Prior to even claiming a correspondence between the four beasts of Daniel's vision and the four evil kingdoms, the rabbis remark that the prophet's statement concerning the difference of the beasts from each other, should be read in reference to the entirety of the world: The claim of universal hatred aimed against Israel qualifies all subsequent interpretations (concerning the identity of the individual beasts) and decontextualizes the beasts of the vision themselves. The kingdoms of Babylonia, Persia and Greece cease to function as references to one-time political structures, and turn into symbols themselves, as they represent the ever worsening attitude of ruling powers toward the people of Israel.[142] The message conveyed is that the ruling gentiles (whichever kingdom they might belong to) were announced through Daniel's beasts. As this interpretation was placed at the very beginning of the rabbinic treatment of Daniel's vision, the reader is forced to read subsequent passages in light of the rabbinic claim that Daniel's beast are representatives of any oppressive, gentile power.

In subsequent interpretations, rabbis invoke various Biblical narratives, mostly due to their display of sequences of wild animals similar to the one found in Daniel's vision. Subjecting these narratives to the structure of the vision of Daniel, they use the latter as an interpretive tool for strengthening the image of oppressive gentiles, identified with wild beasts. The discourse of *LevR* continues with a horizontal shift:

> "The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings" (Dan 7:4), that refers to Babylon: Jeremiah saw it both as a lion and as an eagle, as it is written, "A lion is gone up from his thicket" (Jer 4:7) and, Behold, he shall come up and swoop down as the eagle (49:22). People said to Daniel: 'In what form do you behold them?' He answered: 'The face is like that of a lion and wings like those of an eagle,' as it is written, The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings … "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear" (ib. 7:5): the last word is written defectivum, so that it may be read (*deb*) referring to Media. This is the view of R. Yohanan, for R. Johanan said: Wherefore a lion out of the forest doth slay them (Jer 5:6) refers to Babylon: A wolf of the deserts doth spoil them refers to Media. A leopard watches over their cities refers to Greece. Everyone that goes out thence is torn in pieces refers to Edom. Why? Because their transgressions are many, their backslidings are increased.[143]

[142] Cf. Jacob Neusner, *Judaism and Christianity in the Age of Constantine, History, Messiah, Israel and the Initial Confrontation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) 29-58.

[143] (*LevR* 13:5) קדמיתא כאריה, זו בבל, ירמיה ראה אותה ארי וראה אותה נשר, דכתיב (ירמיה ד, ז) עלה אריה מסבכו (שם מט, כב) הנה כנשר יעלה וידאה, אמרין לדניאל את מה חמית להון. אמר להון חמיתי אפין כאריה וגפין די נשר, הדא הוא דכתיב (דניאל ז, ד) קדמיתא כאריה וגפין די נשר לה... וארו חיוה אחרי תנינא דמיא לדב, לדב כתיב זה מדי, הוא דעתיה דרבי יוחנן דאמר רבי יוחנן (ירמיה ה, ו) על כן הכם אריה מיער, זו בבל. זאב ערבות ישדדם, זו מדי (שם) נמר שקד על עריהם, זו יון (שם): כל היוצא מהנה יטרף, זו אדום, למה, (שם) כי רבו פשעיהם עצמו משבותיהם.

After the identification of the second animal, as Persia, R. Yohanan offers a secondary opinion. Relying on a defective reading of the consonants, he claims that the second beast is not a bear (דוב), but a wolf, as written in Aramaic (דב). Based on such an etymological argument, he can turn to a verse from Jeremiah, describing a plunder of the abandoned city of Jerusalem by wild beasts. Since in Jeremiah's description, three wild animals (a lion, a wolf and a leopard) are named, R. Yohanan could compare the two Biblical passages, and transfer the interpretation of Daniel's vision to the verse of Jeremiah. The second animal, this time a wolf, takes the place of Persia. Important in this argument is that – at least for R Yohanan – the major point is not an exact correspondence between the three animals of Daniel and the respective kingdoms. By quoting a verse depicting the desolation of Jerusalem through the incursion of the wilderness and by casually replacing one symbolical beast with another one, he points to an identification based on the hostility between these animals/these kingdoms and the Israelites. For him, it is of lesser importance whether the text names a wolf or a bear, as the sequence of wild beasts surely directs him toward the discourse of *translatio imperii*.

Representatives of the next generation of Palestinian amoraim argue in a similar fashion. In reaction to a joint claim of the rabbis that the numerical value of Greece[144] (יון - sixty) indicates that each of the Greek rulers appointed sixty commanders over the people of Israel, they claim:

> R. Berekiah and R. Hanin discussed the decision of the rabbis: 'who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions' (Deut 8:15): the term 'snakes' refer to Babylon, the term 'poisonous' refers to Perisa, and the expression 'scorpions' refers to Greece. They [R. Berekiah and R. Hanin] add: just as a scorpion lays sixty offsprings, so does the Kingdom of Greece appoint sixty [generals].[145]

The Mosaic verse, the rabbis quote is located in a framework of divine admonition: even in the safety of their houses, Israelites should not forget about the afflictions of the wilderness, God enabled them to survive.[146] The only link of this midrash to the larger narrative of the chapter (of *LevR*) and the only reason for its inclusion seems to be the topic of "sixty offspring". Thus, relying on a "natural historical observation" and without quoting Daniel's vision,[147] R. Hanin and R. Berekiah manage to include a verse not only referring to the wilderness and its opposition

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[144] In rabbinic parliance the Macedonian Empire is often expressed metonymically as Greece (cf. James M. Scott, *Exile, Old Testament, Jewish, and Christian Conceptions* (Leiden: Brill, 1977) 277-278).

[145] (LevR 13:5) ורבי ברכיה ורבי חנין על הדא דרבנן (דברים ח) המוליכך במדבר הגדול והנורא נחש שרף ועקרב נחש זה בבל שרף זה מדי עקרב זה יון מה עקרב זה משרצת ששים ששים כך היתה מלכות יון מעמדת ששים.

[146] Cf. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1-11* (The Anchor Bible) (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991) 394-395.

[147] Cf. L. Lewysohn, *Die Zoologie des Talmuds. Eine umfassende Darstellung der rabbinischen Zoologie, unter steter Vergleichung der Forschungen älterer und neuerer Schriftsteller* (Frankfurt am Main: L. Lewysohn, 1858) 299.

with the human world,[148] but also identifying its poisonous inhabitants with some of the traditional "enemies" of rabbinic tradition. This variability of wild animals as symbols of the gentiles, is perhaps most apparent in a midrash from *EstherR*:

> R. Judah b. R. Simon opened with the text: "As if a man did flee from a lion" (Amos 5:19). R. Huna and R. Hama in the name of R. Hanina said: "As if a man did flee from a lion" – this refers to Babylon, which is designated by the words, The first was like a lion (Dan 7:4). "And a bear met him", this refers to Media, designated in the words, "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear" (Dan 7:5)… "Wherefore a lion out of the forest doth slay them" (Jer 5:6): this refers to Babylon. "A wolf of the deserts doth spoil them" (ib.), this refers to Media. "A leopard watches over their cities" – this refers to Greece. "Everyone that goes out thence is torn in pieces" – this refers to Edom. "And he went into the house" (Amos 5:19) – this refers to Greece, in the era in which the Temple was still standing. And a serpent bit him (ibid.)– this refers to Edom, of which it says, "The sound thereof shall go like the serpent's" (Jer 46:22)[149]

It is worth reconstructing the associative structure underlying this midrash. Authors of this passage are presented as making a claim about the symbols (not only animals) representing the kingdoms inimical to Israelites. The midrash commences with a quotation from the *Book of Amos*,[150] describing the situation after divine punishment. The verse refers to three animals (lion, bear, snake). The first two, and the order in which they are mentioned presents an opportunity for invoking Daniel's vision (lion, bear). Having this text in mind (and that Daniel's third beast is (similar to) a leopard), they can jump to Jer 5:6,[151] a verse referring to three wild beasts (lion, wolf, leopard). Influenced by the framework of Daniel's vision (namely, that the sequence must contain four symbols of hostile forces), the author deems it necessary to distinguish between *leopard*, and the agent of the passive term "everyone who goes out of them shall be torn in pieces", and claim that the latter one (the "one" tearing those who go out) is Edom. In turn, the same idea is implemented in the interpretation of the passage of Amos: the

[148] Perhaps, there is a further opposition implied here. The reference might not be simply to the hostility between the human world and the wilderness. According to a tannaitic tradition, these representatives of the harmful wilderness, serpents and snakes have never harmed anyone in Jerusalem (cf. Pirke Avot 5:5).

[149] (*EstherR* Introduction 5) ה רבי יודא בר"ס פתח (עמוס ה') כאשר ינוס איש מפני הארי, רבי הונא ור' אחא בשם ר' חמא בר' חנינא כאשר ינוס איש מפני הארי וגו' זו בבל, על שם קדמיתא כאריה ופגעו הדוב זו מדי על שם (דניאל ז') וארו חיוה אחרי תנינה דמיה לדוב, ר' יוחנן אמר לדב כתיב, דא היא דעתיה דר' יוחנן דאמר ר' יוחנן (ירמיה ה') על כן הכם אריה מיער זו בבל (שם /ירמיהו ה'/) זאב ערבות ישדדם זו מדי, נמר שקד על עריהם זו יון (שם /ירמיהו ה'/) כל היוצא מהנה יטרף זו אדום, ובא הבית זה יון שהיה הבית קיים, ונשכו הנחש זו אדום, שנאמר קולה כנחש ילך.

[150] "As if someone fled from a lion, and was met by a bear; or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall, and was bitten by a snake" (Amos 5:19).

[151] "Therefore a lion from the forest shall kill them, a wolf from the desert shall destroy them. A leopard is watching against their cities; everyone who goes out of them shall be torn in pieces-- because their transgressions are many, their apostasies are great" (Jer 5:6).

"house" is understood as a reference to Greece,[152] thus, the snake must be taken as a reference to Edom. Seemingly, Daniel's vision is used here as a governing pattern for the interpretation of various sequences of threatening wild animals in the *Old Testament*. The presence of wolf and snake as symbols of evil kingdoms marks a rabbinic tendency of reading Daniel's vision into other passages to such an extent, that even the establishment of a generic symbolic relationship between wild/poisonous animals and the gentile kingdoms is achieved. A further example of this development is preserved in *GenR*:

> Now the Community [of Israel] was assembled in the plain of Beth Rimmon; when the [royal] dispatches arrived, they burst out weeping, and wanted to revolt against the [Roman] power. Thereupon they [the Sages] decided: Let a wise man go and pacify the congregation. Then let R. Joshua b. Hanania go, as he is a master of Scripture. So he went and harangued them: A wild lion killed [an animal], and a bone stuck in his throat. Thereupon he proclaimed: 'I will reward anyone who removes it.' An Egyptian heron, which has a long beak, came and pulled it out and demanded his reward. 'Go,' he replied, 'you will be able to boast that you entered the lion's mouth in peace and came out in peace. Even so, Let us be satisfied that we entered into dealings with this people in peace and have emerged in peace.[153]

The narrator presents R. Joshua b. Hanania in an attempt of placating Jewish masses that planned to revolt against Roman imperial power.[154] In the fable, Rome is compared to a lion searching for prey (טרף אריה) the power of which reaches such an extent that Israelites should consider themselves lucky not to have been brutally slaughtered. It is important that the correspondence between Rome and the lion is – in this case – not explicitly supported with a Biblical quotation. Apparently, the author did not have to find an excuse for attributing a leonine symbol for Rome and not preserving the wolf of the original fable of Aesop,[155] an animal usually reserved for a reference to Media in other midrashic texts. The *Babylonian Talmud* provides a similar example, when it says:

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[152] Capitalizing on the notion that under Greek rule, Temple worship continued uninterrupted. There is even a baraita of the *Babylonian Talmud* featuring Alexander being convinced by Simon the Just to revoke his earlier promise to the Samaritans and refrain from destroying the Temple. Cf. *bYoma* 69a, see also Shaye D. Cohen, *The Significance of Yavneh and other Essays in Jewish Hellenism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 163.

[153] (*GenR* 64:10) הוון קהלייא מצמתין בהדא בקעתא דבית רמון, כיון דאתון כתביא שורון בייכין בעיין ממרד על מלכותא, אמרין יעול חד בר נש חכים וישדך ציבורא, אמרין יעול ר' יהושע בן חנניה דהוא אסכולוסטיקה דאוריתא, על ודרש אריה טרף טרף ועמד עצם בגרונו, אמר כל דאתי מפק ליה אנא יהיב ליה אגריה, אתא הדין קורה מצרייה דמקוריה אריך ויהיב מקורה ואפקיה, אמר ליה הב לי אגרי, אמר ליה אזיל תהוי מגלג ואמר דעלת לפומיה דאריא בשלם ונפקת בשלם, כך דיינו שניכנסו באומה זו בשלום ויצאנו בשלו.

[154] The midrash text itself does not reveal that the "power" is Roman, but the person of R. Joshua b. Hanania, a second century Palestinian Amora and the location (Beth Rimmon), which according to *LamR* 1:45 was the site of a mass murder of Jews preceding the events of the Revolt, all point to the Bar Kokhba-period as a context of the midrash. Cf. Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome,* 408.

[155] The tale itself is apparently a variant of Aesop's fabled story about the wolf and the heron. See Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999) 205-206.

> This does not mean that the name Jacob shall be obliterated, but that Israel shall be the principal name and Jacob a secondary one. And so it says: "Remember ye not the former things, neither consider the things of old" (Isa 43:18-19) 'Remember ye not the former things': this refers to the subjections to the other nations; 'Neither consider the things of old': this refers to the exodus from Egypt. Behold I shall do a new thing; now shall it spring forth. R. Joseph learnt: This refers to the war of Gog and Magog. A parable: To what is this like? To a man who was travelling on the road when he encountered a wolf and escaped from it, and he went along relating the affair of the wolf. He then encountered a lion and escaped from it, and went along relating the affair of the lion. He then encountered a snake and escaped from it, whereupon he forgot the two previous incidents and went along relating the affair of the snake. So with Israel: the later troubles make them forget the earlier ones.[156]

In R. Joseph's words, neither the order of animals (wolf, lion, snake) is identical to the one in Daniel, nor does any of the traditional four empires appear. And yet, the midrash clearly identifies Israel's enemies with a number of wild animals. Seemingly, Daniel's vision was a model for identifying various gentile "kingdoms" with wild animals and, thus, claim non-Jewish political powers to be beast-like in their nature. The horizontal and the vertical shifts of the rabbinic narrative enabled a generalization of the four beasts to be represented by a larger pool of wild animals and also to refer to a larger number of gentile enemies. Thus, Daniel's vision became a tool helping rabbis in their attempt at generalizing a generic identification of gentiles and wild animals.

Naturally, relying on a solitary Biblical passage to such an extent has its cost as well. Daniel's vision was of political nature, and therefore, it imposed an important boundary on Jewish interpreters: it made it difficult for the rabbis to propose an identification of individual gentiles with wild animals, and focused attention on arguing for a similarity between wild animals on the one hand and gentiles *qua* Empires or gentiles *qua* rulers on the other hand. Even in those cases where a reference to the vision of Daniel is missing, the symbolic expression is still done with regards to a notable political figure[157] or to a political structure engaged in relations with the Israelites *qua* political unity and not on an individual level. Thus, irrespectively of its acerbity, all their statements are referring to power relations and not to the individual

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[156] שיעקר יעקב ממקומו, אלא ישראל עיקר ויעקב טפל לו; וכן הוא אומר: (ישעיהו מ"ג) אל תזכרו ראשנות וקדמניות אל תתבוננו, אל תזכרו ראשנות - זה שעבוד מלכיות, וקדמניות אל תתבוננו - זו יציאת מצרים, (ישעיהו מ"ג) הנני עשה חדשה עתה תצמח - תני רב יוסף: זו מלחמת גוג ומגוג. משל, למה הדבר דומה - לאדם שהיה מהלך בדרך ופגע בו זאב וניצל ממנו, והיה מספר והולך מעשה זאב; פגע בו ארי וניצל ממנו, והיה מספר והולך מעשה ארי; פגע בו נחש וניצל ממנו, שכח מעשה שניהם והיה מספר והולך מעשה נחש; אף כך ישראל - צרות אחרונות משכחות את הראשונות. (*bBer* 13a)

[157] E.g. *GenR* 16:4, in which Haman is taken as a leader of the Persian Empire, and compared to a snake as such: "'And the name of the Second river is Gihon'. This alludes to Media, whose eyes Haman inflamed [with hate] like a serpent, [so called] in allusion to the verse, 'Upon thy belly shall thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life'".

characteristics of gentiles. And although in a few cases, rabbis do identify the average gentile with a wild animal, that is – almost exclusively – done concerning the Persians, and even in their case, with notable hesitancy. This caution is well captured in the *Babylonian Talmud*:

> Resh Lakish introduced his discourse on this section with the following text: "As a roaring lion and a ravenous bear, so is a wicked ruler over a poor people." (Prov 28:15) 'A roaring lion': this is the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, of whom it is written, A lion is gone up from his thicket. 'A ravenous bear': this is Ahasuerus, of whom it is written, "And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear'" (Dan 7:5). And R. Joseph learnt: These are the Persians, who eat and drink like bears, and are coated with flesh like bears, and are hairy like bears, and can never keep still like bears.[158]

It is important to notice the covert disagreement between the opinions of the two amoraim. The compiler of the passage contrasts Resh Lakish' argumentation with that of R. Joseph, for the identification of bear and the average Persian. Resh Lakish builds upon a verse of *Proverbs*[159], in which lion and bear are used as metaphors of unjust rulership.[160] Thus, according to his view, the identification of rulers and wild beasts is based upon a similarity of behaviour and not upon a similarity of outlook. His interlocutor, the Babylonian R. Joseph, in turn, argues for a physical similarity and avoids claiming a tyrannic interpretation based on the savage nature of bears. Thus, at the price of claiming that any Persian is a wild beast, he avoids accusing his sovereign of being a wild beast. Resh Lakish – living under Roman rule – was free to claim the Persians to be tyrannic[161], but the Babylonian R. Joseph (exposed to Sassanian rulers)[162] had to be more cautious, and – thus – decided for a less harmful identification of external similarities, which could even be understood as a positive acknowledgement of Persian prowess. So even in this case, the identification of individual gentiles with one of the beasts of Daniel's vision is done in order to avoid a transgression of a more serious nature, and perhaps further examples of this tradition have also been constructed with this view in mind.[163]

Regardless of this limitation, the vision of Daniel was a powerful narrative, and one that was used by the rabbis in order to establish a generic identification of gentile political structures

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[158] (bMeg 11a) ריש לקיש פתח לה פתחא להא פרשתא מהכא: ארי נהם ודב שוקק מושל רשע על עם דל. ארי נהם - זה נבוכדנצר הרשע, דכתיב ביה עלה אריה מסבכו, דב שוקק - זה אחשורוש, דכתיב ביה וארו חיוה אחרי תנינה דמיה לדב. ותני רב יוסף: אלו פרסיים, שאוכלין ושותין כדוב, ומסורבלין בשר כדוב, ומגדלין שער כדוב, ואין להם מנוחה כדוב.

[159] Prov 28:15.

[160] Cf. Roland E. Murphy, *Proverbs* (World Biblical Commentary) (Nashville: T. Nelson, 1998) 216.

[161] In any case, his position seems to be the minority opinion. Cf. bAvoda Zara 2b; EstherR 10:13 Cf. Jason Sion Mokhtarian, *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings and Priests: the Culture of the Talmud in Ancient Iran* (Oakland CA: University of California Press, 2015) 71-73.

[162] As for the positively benign opinions Babylonian sages tend to occupy with regards to Persians cf. Mokhtarian, *Rabbis, Sorcerers, Kings and Priests*, 50-51 and Stern, *Jewish Identity,* 6-7 and ff. 33.

[163] A similar statement is attributed to another Babylonian amora, R. Ammi, from the same period (the 3rd century CE) in bKid 72a.

with wild beasts. By doing so, they also created an opportunity for the creation of an even more powerful apocalyptic message. In light of the strong *Old Testament* tradition of the electedness of Israel and the promise of an ultimate preservation of this people, despite all hardships, the perceived reality of an Israel surrounded by a multitude of wild animal gentiles, must incite a notion that the distresses of Israel will finally be lifted and the opposition of the wild and domesticated beasts will be brought to an end. The apocalyptic message of a final reckoning with wild beasts was however different from its Christian counterpart. The major reason for this difference was the different way in which Christian exegetes interpreted Daniel's vision. Thus, before coming to the final solutions of the opposition of the two types of animals, we must first review the Christian approach to Daniel's text.

5.4.2. The Church fathers reading Daniel's vision into the past

The vision of the four beasts posed serious problems for many Christian interpreters. Whereas exegetes of the first two centuries could gladly identify the fourth beast with the Roman Empire, which was – from their point of view – the greatest of oppressors possible, and they often did so, the rise to power of Christian emperors and the transformation of the Roman into a Christian empire in its wake during the fourth century, disrupted this identification in particular and repudiated Daniel's historical perspective of ever worsening forms of oppression in general. Thus, interpreters living under an already Christianized Roman Empire did not only have to deal with the problematic implications of Daniel's vision, namely that the Empire following that of the Greeks would be represented by the worst wild beast, but they also had to effectively counter two centuries of accepted patristic interpretations, which could still unproblematically claim that Rome was the worst oppressor in history. Consequently, from the fourth century onward, it became increasingly difficult for Church fathers to find a way to harmonize the interpretation of Daniel's vision with their actual experiences.

The task was all the more strenuous, since claiming that the Roman Empire was not depicted as an evil force in the Holy Scriptures or that it had nothing to do with the fourth beast was not only contradicting Daniel's vision (and the interpretations of previous fathers) but also that of the *Book of Revelations*. Inspired by a number of topics of the *Book of Daniel*, [164] the author of *Revelations* drew a concise image of the fourth beasts, unifying Daniel's four beasts into one: "And I saw a beast rising out of the sea ... And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet

[164] Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: a New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014) 572-573. Also Hadas-Lebel, *Jerusalem against Rome* 471-477.

were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth".[165] There can be little doubt that according to the author of *Revelations*, the Roman Empire was indeed the most terrible of beasts.[166] Church fathers, interpreting Daniel's vision could not disregard the textual tradition codified in the *Book of Revelations*, and their commentaries were, accordingly, limited by the fact that the *New Testament* canon defined even the final beast, and with it, the outcome of the interpretation of the vision.

As I said, this posed little or no problems for early interpreters of the passage. For example, the first Christian interpreter to deal with the theme extensively[167] and the one, who most probably also set one general course of interpretation for later generations, Hippolytus of Rome claimed without hesitation that the sequence of beasts should be interpreted as Babylonia, Persia, Macedonia, and finally Rome:

> As various beasts then were shown to the blessed Daniel, and these were different from each other, we should understand that the truth of the narrative deals not with certain beasts, but under the type and image of different beasts, exhibits the kingdoms that have risen in this world in power over the race of humankind. For by the great sea he means the whole world ... He said, then, that a lioness comes up from the sea, and by that he meant the kingdom of the Babylonians in the world ... The three nations he calls three ribs. The meaning, therefore, is that beast had the dominion, and these others under it were the Medes, Assyrians and Babylonians ... In mentioning the leopard, he means the kingdom of the Greeks, over whom Alexander of Macedon was king. And he likened them to a leopard, because they were quick and inventive in thought and bitter in heart, just as that animal is many-colored in appearance and quick in wounding and in drinking human blood ... That there has arisen no other kingdom after that of the Greeks except that which stands sovereign at present is manifest to all ... And the little horn, which is antichrist, shall appear suddenly in their midst and righteousness shall be banished from the earth, and the whole world shall reach its consummation.[168]

The frame of Hippolytus' commentary was accepted in subsequent tradition, and – as I have explained above – this was also the major framework of rabbinic interpretations. Greek

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[165] Rev 13:2.

[166] Koester, *Revelation*, 580.

[167] Although, occassional comments appear already in the writings of Irenaeus, his treatment of the vision of Daniel is only superficial. Cf. Gerbern S. Oegema, "Die Danielrezeption in der Alten Kirche," in *Europa, Tausendjähriges Reich und Neue Welt Zwei Jahrtausende Geschichte und Utopie in der Rezeption des Danielbuches,* ed. Mariano Delgado et al., 84-105 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2003) here 85-86.

[168] As Hyppolitus' commentary on Daniel in full is only extant in Old Slavonic, **I do not present the original here (SOURCES CHRÉTIENNES 14?)**. The translation is taken from Kenneth Stevenson, Michael Glerup, Thomas C. Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on the Scripture, Ezekiel, Daniel* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2008) 222-228. As for a brief introduction on the text, cf. Charles Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis* vol I. (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 530-531 and Marcel Richard, "Les difficultés d'une édition du commentaire de saint Hyppolyte sur Daniel" *Revue d'histoire des textes* 2 (1972): 1-10.

speaking Church fathers (such as Theodoret of Cyrus[169]) subscribe to the concept of Hippolytus just as much as Latin-speaking ones (such as Jerome[170]). In fact, the version of *translatio imperii* codified in Hippolytus' commentary was so wide-spread, that in his *Catecheses*, Cyril of Jerusalem declared it to be "Church tradition"[171]:

> The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall surpass all kingdoms. And that this kingdom is that of the Romans, has been the tradition of the Church's interpreters. For as the first kingdom which became renowned was that of the Assyrians, and the second, that of the Medes and Persians together, and after these, that of the Macedonians was the third, so the fourth kingdom now is that of the Romans.[172]

The general acceptance of the Jewish tradition concerning the identity of the first three animals among Church fathers was perhaps also due to the physical and chronological distance from the Empires of Babylonia Persia and Macedonia.[173] For early Christian interpreters, who – often similarly to their rabbinic counterparts – regarded themselves as suffering under the rule of the Romans,[174] the identification of the fourth beast was largely unproblematic.[175] Their successors, however, and especially those, who were esteemed citizens of an already Christian empire, had to tread carefully in their interpretations concerning Daniel's fourth beast. Consequently, only Syrian exegetes[176] had ever contested the identification of the fourth beast as the Roman Empire. In the second and third centuries, Rome still dominated most of the Mediterranean basin, and laid significant emphasis on communicating such a position about herself.[177] For

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[169] Cf. Theodoret, *Interpretatio in Danielem* 7:2-7. Cf. Gerhard Podskalsky *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie; die Periodisierung der Weltgeschichte in den vier Grossreichen (Daniel 2 und 7) und dem tausendjährigen Friedensreiche (Apok. 20) Eine motivgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (München: W. Fink, 1972) 23-26.

[170] Cf. Jerome, *Commentarium in Danielem Prophetam*, 7:3-8. Cf. Oegema, "Die Danielrezeption in der Alten Kirche," 95-97.

[171] Cf. also Kannengiesser, *Handbook of Patristic Exegesis,* 322.

[172] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cathecheses ad Illuminandos* 15:13: τὸ θηρίον τὸ τέταρτον βασιλεία τετάρτη ἔσται ἐν τῇ γῇ, ἥτις ὑπερέξει πάσας τὰς βασιλείας. ταύτην δὲ εἶναι τὴν Ῥωμαίωνοἱ ἐκκλησιαστικοὶ παραδεδώκασιν ἐξηγηταί. πρώτης γὰρ ἐπισήμου γενομένης τῆς Ἀσσυρίων βασιλείας καὶ δευτέρας τῆς Μήδων ὁμοῦ καὶ Περσῶν καὶ μετὰ ταύτας τῆς Μακεδόνων τρίτης ἡ τετάρτη βασιλεία νῦν ἡ Ῥωμαίων ἐστίν.

[173] See for example Jerome's offhand blending of two empires (Media and Persia) in order to reach a proper number. Cf. Régis Courtray, "Der Danielkommentar des Hieronymus," in *Die Geschichte der Daniel-Auslegung in Judentum, Christentum und Islam: Studien zur Kommentierung des Danielbuches in Literatur und Kunst*, ed. Katharina Bracht and David S. DuToit, 123-151 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002) here 140-142.

[174] Cf. Nicole Kelley, "Philosophy as Training for Death: Reading the Ancient Christian Martyr Acts as Spiritual Exercises," *Church History* 75, no. 4 (2006): 723-747, here 726-729.

[175] Klaus Koch, *Europa, Rom und der Kaiser vor dem Hintergrund von zwei Jahrtausenden Rezeption des Buches Daniel* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1997) 54-59.

[176] Notably, in Syriac Christianity (e.g. in the commentaries of Ephrem), a more traditional interpretation of the four beasts flourished, the major difference being that the last, fourth animal was still identified with the Seleucid Empire. Cf. Podskalsky, *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie*, 14-16 and Jürgen Tubach, "Die Syrische Danielrezeption," in *Europa, Tausendjähriges Reich und Neue Welt Zwei Jahrtausende Geschichte und Utopie in der Rezeption des Danielbuches,* ed. Mariano Delgado et al., 105-139 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag, 2003).

[177] Rome was naturally interested in spreading a belief that its rule will continue forever uninterrupted. This is communicated by "Romae aeternae" coins from the second century onwards and in various other forms. Cf.

Church fathers living under Roman rule, the Empire's position was undoubtable, and despite difficulties, interpreters of the period could not debate the identification itself, but – as I will show – they tried to mitigate its negative overtones to such a level that the wild beast ceased to be evil, and turned into a simple symbol of power. The first signs of such a shift can already be observed before the Constantinian turn. Origen, who famously expressed a positive attitude toward the Roman Empire's capability to secure a peaceful environment for the spread of Christianity, paved a way for a not-so negative interpretation of Rome as the fourth beast in his treatise against Celsus:

> We would say in reply, that so He did; for righteousness has arisen in His days, and there is abundance of peace, which took its commencement at His birth, God preparing the nations for His teaching, that they might be under one prince, the king of the Romans, and that it might not, owing to the want of union among the nations, caused by the existence of many kingdoms, be more difficult for the apostles of Jesus to accomplish the task enjoined upon them by their Master, when He said, "Go and teach all nations." Moreover it is certain that Jesus was born in the reign of Augustus, who, so to speak, fused together into one monarchy the many populations of the earth. Now the existence of many kingdoms would have been a hindrance to the spread of the doctrine of Jesus throughout the entire world; not only for the reasons mentioned, but also on account of the necessity of men everywhere engaging in war, and fighting on behalf of their native country, which was the case before the times of Augustus, and in periods still more remote.[178]

Although there is no extant commentary of Origen to the *Book of Daniel*,[179] it does not seem far-fetched to argue on the basis of this text and similar ones[180] that he subscribed to an irenic view concerning Rome and its role in the unfolding salvific history.[181] Since the seventh chapter of the *Book of Daniel* enabled a distinction between the fourth beast itself and the horns rising

Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000) 209.

[178] Origen - *Contra Celsum* 2:30: Εἴποιμεν ἂν οὖν ὅτι καὶ πεποίηκεν· «Ἀνέτειλε» γὰρ «ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις αὐτοῦ δικαιοσύνη, καὶ πλῆθος εἰρήνης» γέγονεν ἀρξάμενον ἀπὸ τῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ, εὐτρεπίζοντος τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ αὐτοῦ τὰ ἔθνη, ἵν' ὑπὸ ἕνα γένηται τῶν Ῥωμαίων βασιλέα, καὶ μὴ διὰ τὸ προφάσει τῶν πολλῶν βασιλειῶν ἄμικτον τῶν ἐθνῶν πρὸς ἄλληλα χαλεπώτερον γένηται τοῖς ἀποστόλοις τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τὸ ποιῆσαι ὅπερ προσέταξεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἰπών· «Πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη.» Καὶ σαφές γε ὅτι κατὰ τὴν Αὐγούστου βασιλείαν ὁ Ἰησοῦς γεγέννηται, τοῦ, ἵν' οὕτως ὀνομάσω, ὁμαλίσαντος διὰ μιᾶς βασιλείας τοὺς πολλοὺς τῶν ἐπὶ γῆς. Ἦν δ' ἂν ἐμπόδιον τοῦ νεμηθῆναι τὴν Ἰησοῦ διδασκαλίαν εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην τὸ πολλὰς εἶναι βασιλείας οὐ μόνον διὰ τὰ προειρημένα ἀλλὰ καὶ διὰ τὸ ἀναγκάζεσθαι στρατεύεσθαι καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν πατρίδων πολεμεῖν τοὺς πανταχοῦ· ὅ τε ἐγίνετο πρὸ τῶν Αὐγούστου χρόνων καὶ ἔτι γε ἀνωτέρω.

[179] Koch, *Europa Rom und der Kaiser*, 58.

[180] Cf. e.g. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 5:25:3. See Koch, *Europa Rom und der Kaiser*, 58 ff. 89.

[181] R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970) 48; Gerbern S. Oegema, *Early Judaism and Modern Culture: Early Jewish Literature and Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010) 161-162.

from it,[182] Origen could settle with a less defamatory option, and refrain from identifying Rome with the last empire, standing under the direct rule of the Antichrist. Instead, he could present Rome as a political entity that is independent, or only providing the framework for the spiritual battle between Christians and their enemies.[183]

By accepting Roman secular rule as a framework in which the glorious history of the Church can develop, Origen undermined a more traditional identification of Rome with Daniel's fourth beast, in which it was seen as the absolute of evils. When in 325 CE Constantine suddenly and for many Christians unexpectedly[184] converted to Christianity, the path smoothed by Origen turned out to be an exceedingly advantageous one. Those interpreters (the first of whom was of course Constantine's most ardent Christian supporter and historian, Eusebius of Caesarea) who wished to argue in a chiliastic fashion that the Kingdom of God has arrived with the emperor's conversion, interpreted the relationship between the fourth beast and the arrival of the Son of Man as a transition and not as an opposition.[185] Unfortunately, Eusebius' explicit interpretation of the seventh chapter of the *Book of Daniel* (*Demonstratio Evangelica* 15) survived only in fragments,[186] and it is impossible to ascertain, how he managed to argue for a peaceful transition on the basis of the Biblical text itself.[187] In any case, he claimed that there is no further beast after the Roman Empire, and implied that the triumph of the Son of Man needed to happen under Roman power.[188] The praiseworthy view of the Roman Empire in the *Historia Ecclesiastica*,[189] and the identification of the rule of Constantine and his successors with the "everlasting Kingdom" of Daniel 7:27,[190] had a quite significant price. By arguing for a positive Rome, a fourth beast that turns into the Kingdom of God, Eusebius raised the stakes to an unbearable height. If the successors of Constantine failed to perform similarly to their predecessor, or if they simply seemed to be less pious or less suitable to match the eschatological expectations phrased in the *Book of Daniel*, then the chiliastic interpretation of Eusebius was inevitably destined to fracture. As this inevitably occurred in the post-

[182] Cf. Carol A. Newsom, Brennan W. Breed, *Daniel: a Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster and John Knox Press, 2014) 273-274.
[183] See Podskalsky *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie*, 11.
[184] See James Caroll, *Constantine's Sword: the Church and the Jews: a History* (Boston: Houghton Miffin, 2001) 176.
[185] See Brennan Breed, "What Can a Text Do? Reception History as an Ethology of the Biblical Text," in *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice,* ed. Emma England and William John Lyons, 95-111 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015) here 107-108.
[186] Podskalsky *Byzantinische Reichseschatologie*, 11.
[187] Distinguishing between them becomes exceedingly problematic in Daniel's own explanation of the vision (Dan 7:18-20).
[188] Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 15, fr. 1.
[189] Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 10:9:6-9.
[190] Eusebius, *De Laudibus Constantini* 3:2.

Constantinian era, Eusebius' successors were much less devoted to utopian readings of the *Book of Daniel*.[191] Nevertheless, Eusebius' commentary-tradition was quite influential in the Greek-speaking world. And although his successors – with experiences of ongoing wars, rebellions and usurpations behind them – had enough reason to doubt an altogether benign view of the Roman Empire as the fourth beast, one is hard-pressed to find Greek-speaking authors, who openly contradicted the Origenian-Eusebian concept of a fourth beast enabling the spread of Christianity. For most interpreters, the way out of a contradiction between the harsh words of the *Book of Daniel* and the aim of representing the Roman Empire in a mild tone was to focus on the prowess of the Empire in their interpretations.[192]

Thus, the Church fathers' interpretation of the four beasts – although it started from a similar ground-concept – gradually deviated from its rabbinic counterpart. The contrary directions of the two exegetical traditions concerning the vision of Daniel is nowhere clearer than in their comparisons between the four beasts. Whereas in the rabbinic tradition the primary concern was to show that the fourth beast was even more terrible than its predecessors between them, the Christian tradition followed an opposite direction and attempted to argue for a reverse development, an optimistic view of political history, in which Rome was less terrible than its predecessors, and its beastliness lies in its mighty force endorsing salvific history.

These two positions can be seen as vastly different solutions to the same problem. Whereas, in Jewish tradition, the threat posed by wild animals and the wilderness was seen in the historical-eschatological interpretation of the vision of Daniel as an ever-growing entity. As wild beast-others were seen more and more dangerous, there was less and less room for a conciliatory solution of the opposition between wild and domesticated fields, and the eschatological future was inevitably imagined without the presence of wild animals. As opposed to this view, the Church fathers' attempt at placating the fourth beast of the Roman Empire was a bridge toward implementing a different eschatological view, much more characteristic of Christian tradition, that of domestication. In the final segment of the present chapter, I will elaborate on these two views of the eschatological fate of wild animals and the two proposed solutions of the opposition of wild and domesticated domains.

[191] See e.g. Jerome, *Epistula* 121:11*:* Nec vult aperte dicere Romanum imperium destruendum, quod ipsi qui imperant, aeternum putant. Unde secundum Apocalypsim Joannis, in fronte purpuratae meretricis scriptum est nomen blasphemiae, id est, Romae aeternae.

[192] See e.g. Theodoret, *Interpretatio in Danielem* 7:7: Τὸ τέταρτον θηρίον τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν καλεῖ βασιλείαν· ὄνομα δὲ αὐτῷ οὐ τίθησιν, ἐπειδὴ ἐκ πλειόνων ἐθνῶν ἡ Ῥωμαίων συγκροτηθεῖσα πόλις τῆς οἰκουμένης ἐκράτησε· πρῶτον μὲν βασιλευομένη, εἶτα ὁτὲ μὲν δημοκρατουμένη, ὁτὲ δὲ ἀριστοκρατουμένη· ὕστερον δὲ εἰς τὴν προτέραν ἐπανελθοῦσα βασιλείαν.

5.4.3. The rabbinic solution: removal of the wild beast

In the rabbis' view of the eschatological fate of wild beast others, the influence of Daniel's vision of the four beasts is complemented by Isaiah's view of the peaceful coexistence of animals[193] and the divine promise of the removal of wild beasts from the Land of Israel from the *Book of Leviticus*,[194] and other *loci*.[195] As Peter Riede rightfully pointed out, Isaiah's Biblical prophecy, especially its first, longer version has a particular "Israel-perspective", insofar as the list of wild animals matches that of other prophetic texts, depicting divine punishment on Israel.[196] Therefore it is connected in its selection of animals to the divine promise of the removal of animals from Palestine.[197] The rabbis did not only recognize this link, but also made good use of it in harmonizing two seemingly contradictory scenarios. Using the vision of Daniel as a bridge between the two, the rabbis formulated the eschatological argument that the threat of wild beasts against the people of Israel (which became equated with gentile political structures in the interpretations of Daniel's vision) will ultimately be neutralized by divine decree through the removal of wild animals. Thus, the rabbis developed a model of the future, *the world to come* in which the specific power-relations between Jews and gentiles (expressed – according to the rabbis – through animal imagery in the *Bible*) will cease to function and gentiles (wild animals) will not rule over Israelites anymore. In this tradition, Isaiah's prophecy is juxtaposed to the promise of Leviticus, and the first is used as an interpretation of the latter. This idea is brought forth first in *Mekhilta*,[198] But since *Sifra* gives a much more detailed account, I will focus on that version:

> "And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one shall make you afraid; I will remove dangerous animals from the land, and no sword shall go through your land." (Lev 26:6). R. Jehuda says: he will remove them from the world. R. Simeon says: he will make them rest so that they do not cause harm. R. Simeon asked [R. Jehuda]: when is God praised more, if there is no-one to cause harm, or if there are harm-causers, but they do not cause harm. He answered: when there are harm-causers but they do not cause harm… and he says in accordance with that: "The wolf shall live with the

[193] Isa 65:25, see also Isa 11:6-8. Although these are the only explicit descriptions of a peace between wild and domesticated animals in the future, there are truncated versions of similar traditions in Isa 43:20 and Hos 2:18-20 Cf. Stone, "Jackals and Ostriches," 72-74.
[194] Lev 26:6 cf. also Ex 23:29.
[195] Cf. Ez 34:25, Isa 35:9
[196] Cf. Amos 5:19 and Jer 5:6. Cf. Riede, *Im Spiegel der Tiere,* 160.
[197] As for this link, see Richard Whitekettle, "Freedom from Fear and Bloodshed: Hosea 2:20 (Eng. 18) and the End of Human/Animal Conflict," *Journal for the Study of Old Testament* 37, no. 2 (2012): 219-236, here 231-234.
[198] Cf. *Mek* Pisha 12:1.

> lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them… (Isa 11:6)[199]

The dispute between the two second century tannaim, R. Simeon and R. Jehuda revolves around the exact meaning of the term "remove" (השבית), and represents the two major opinions concerning the fate of wild beasts in the Land of Israel. R. Simeon's argument (which coincides with the majority view in this midrash) is that wild animals will not be removed from Palestine, but they will cease to be ferocious, and will not present a danger to the inhabitants of the Land anymore. Thus, R. Simeon proposes a concept of "domestication". The discussion is presented as part of an interpretation on the divine promise detailing Israel's inheritance of the promised land.[200] However, by virtue of the quotation form the *Book of Isaiah*, R. Simeon gracefully navigates the disputation into the field of eschatologic ruminations. The majority opinion he represents, can be interpreted both literally and metaphorically. Unfortunately, the passage from *Sifra* is not clear in itself in this regard. But taking into account further rabbinic discussions of the intersection of the two Biblical passages, one might see more clearly. A text closely related to Lev 26:6, is Deut 11:22-25, which also describes the future reward for Israel's obedience, but instead of promising a removal of dangerous animals, it declares that hostile nations will be removed:

> If you will diligently observe this entire commandment that I am commanding you … then the Lord will drive out all these nations before you, and you will dispossess nations larger and mightier than yourselves … No one will be able to stand against you.

The divine promise of the future removal of "larger and mightier" gentile people from the Land of Israel inspired authors of *Sifre Deut* to construct the following discussion on the Biblical passage:

> "I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field multiply against you" (Ex. 23:29), the words of R. Jacob. Said to him Eleazar b. Azariah, 'But if they were righteous, should they have had to fear on account of wild beasts?' For so Scripture says, "For you shall be in alliance with the stones of the field and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with you" (Job 5:23)[201]

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[199] (*Sifra* Hukkotai 1) ושכבתם ואין מחריד, לא יריאים מכל ברייה, והשבתי חיה רעה מן הארץ, ר' יהודה אומר מעבירם מן העולם, ר' שמעון אומר משביתן שלא יזוקו, אר"ש אימתי הוא שבחו של מקום בזמן שאין מזיקים, או בזמן שיש מזיקים ואין מזיקים, אמור בזמן שיש מזיקים ואין מזיקים ... וכן הוא אומר וגר זאב עם כבש ונמר עם גדי ירבץ ועגל וכפיר ומריא יחדיו ונער קטן נוהג בם.

[200] See Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 23-27* (The Anchor Bible) (London: Doubleday, 2001) 2296, 2310.

[201] (*Sifre Deut* Ekev 50) לא אגרשנו מפניך בשנה אחת, פן תהיה הארץ שממה ורבה עליך חית השדה: דברי רבי יעקב. אמר לו רבי אלעזר בן עזריה או לפי שישראל צדיקים הם למה יראים מן החיה? והלא אם צדיקים הם אין יראים מן החיה שכן הוא אומר (איוב ה כג) כי עם אבני השדה בריתך וחית השדה השלמה לך.

Capitalizing on the prophetic topos of divine punishment through an incursion of wild animals against offenders,[202] the interpretation discusses the conquest of Palestine. The anonymous author of the text exploits the similarity of the two Biblical passages: Lev 26 and Deut 11. Noticing the similarity in structure (both promise the removal of hostile forces during the conquest of Canaan) as well as the similarity of conditions (removal depends on Israel's obedience), the author bridges them with Exod 23 and, with that, proposes a reading in which the two are one and the same, only expressed in different forms. Although Eleazar b. Azariah's statement is difficult to unwrap and vague at best, it seems to fit into a 2-3rd century Palestinian tradition of interpreting the wild beasts of Palestine in Biblical passages as symbols and ultimately metaphorical references to the nations. The clearest expression of this concept under the name of a Palestinian authority (although not a tanna, but an amora from the first generation) is preserved in *DEZ:*

> Rabi Yehosua b. Levi said: Peace is great. Peace to the Land of Israel is similar to swelling of the dough. If the Holy one did not give peace to the Land of Israel, the sword and the wild beasts would have destroyed the Land of Israel. What is the meaning of: "And I will grant peace in the land, and you shall lie down, and no one shall make you afraid; I will remove dangerous animals from the land, and no sword shall go through your land."? (Lev 26:6) There is no other Land than that of Israel, about which it is said: "Then all the nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight." (Mal 3:12). And he says: "The whole earth remains at peace" (Zec 1:11). And also: "A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever" (Eccl. 1:4). Kingdoms come and kingdoms go, but Israel stays forever. Solomon said: although generations come and go, and kingdoms come and go, and decrees come and go, and they are renewed [once and again] by the enemies of Israel, the earth remains forever. Israel stands forever. They are not lost and they do not cease [to exist].[203]

Yehosua ben Levi's argument is easier to understand than those of his predecessors. Commencing with the divine promise concerning peace in the Land of Israel, he claims that the removal of wild beasts from Canaan needs to be interpreted as a promise of Israel's future safety from harm caused by the nations. The apparently eschatological overtone of the passage re-contextualizes the removal of wild beasts. It is presented as a metaphor for the removal of gentile kingdoms (from Palestine) in the world to come. Emphatically the midrash does not go

202 Cf. Pangritz, *Das Tier in der Bibel*, 90-92.

203 (*DEZ Shalom 1*) אמר ר' יהושע בן לוי גדול הוא השלום, שהשלום לארץ כשאור לעיסה, אלמלא שנתן הקדוש ברוך הוא שלום בארץ היתה החרב והחיה משכלת את הארץ, מה טעם דכתיב ונתתי שלום בארץ ושכבתם ואין מחריד והשבתי חיה רעה מן הארץ וחרב לא תעבר בארצכם, ואין ארץ אלא ישראל שנאמר ואשרו אתכם כל הגוים כי תהיו אתם ארץ חפץ, ואומר והנה כל הארץ ישבת ושקטת, ואומר דור הולך ודור בא והארץ לעולם עמדת, מלכות באה ומלכות הולכת, וישראל לעולם קיים, אמר שלמה אף על פי שדור הולך ודור בא, מלכות הולכת ומלכות באה, גזירה הולכת וגזירה באה ומתחדשת על שונאי ישראל, הארץ לעולם עומדת, ישראל לעולם עומדין, לא נעזבין ולא כלין.

as far as to argue for an eradication of gentile political power from the entirety of the world, only from the Land of Israel. This way, the discrepancy between the promise of Leviticus and the prophecy of Isaiah is also resolved. Wild beasts will not be eradicated from the entirety of the world, only from Israel. But as Israel will live in peace, without being molested by the nations, an allegorical understanding of Isaiah's prophecy, namely that wild and domesticated animals (gentile kingdoms and the people of Israel respectively) will also come true. And although this spatial restriction mitigates the grandiosity of the promise of removal itself, a it fits the Promised-Land-oriented message of the Mosaic-tradition much better.

5.4.4. The Church fathers' solution: the final domestication of otherness

The Church fathers' approach to the eschatological fate of wild animals as symbolic representations of others was markedly different from the rabbinic perspective. Largely uninterested in a divine promise of the removal of wild animals from one specific region of the world, they were much more open to the idea of a systemic change in the behaviour of wild animals, and focused, therefore, on the topic of restoration of a peaceful coexistence between wild and domesticated animals. This concept was alluring to them, for it matched their interest in salvific history including Christians, Jews and Gentiles. Accordingly, Isaiah's brief narrative was turned into a cornerstone of their interpretation of the eschatological fate of wild beasts. From a mere description of a change of diet, the Church fathers gradually developed a narrative of domestication. The wild beasts becoming tame and herbivorous was interpreted as a metaphorical sign of their recognition of the exclusively redemptive nature of Christ's message. The chronologically earliest attestation of a concept of domestication, as a metaphorical description of conversion can be found already in the beginning of the third century. Tertullian writes in his treatise against Marcion:

> In like manner, when, foretelling the conversion of the Gentiles, He says, The beasts of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls.[204]

The off-hand comment belongs to Tertullian's lengthy attempt of highlighting the necessity of understanding Biblical texts in an allegorical and metaphorical manner.[205] As an argument against Marcion, he points out that the prophecy about the wild beasts honouring God[206] should

[204] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 3:5:3: Sicut et praedicans de nationum conversione, Benedicent me bestiae agri, sirenes et filiae passerum.
[205] Cf. further Geoffrey D. Dunn, "Tertullian's Scriptural Exegesis in de Praescriptione Haereticorum," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 2 (2006): 141-155.
[206] See Isa 43:20.

not be understood literally but as a metaphor referring to the future conversion of Gentiles. Tertullian does not elaborate on his interpretation, as if expecting his audience to not only share his opinion, but also to be familiar with the interpretation itself. And indeed, the casual identification of non-Christian (!) Gentiles with wild beast seems to have been a wide-spread tradition in the first centuries of Christian exegesis. A contemporary of Tertullian, the Greek-speaking Clement of Alexandria wrote:

> For rightly the Scripture says, that the ox and the bear shall come together. For the Jew is designated by the ox, from the animal under the yoke being reckoned clean, according to the law; for the ox both parts the hoof and chews the cud. And the Gentile is designated by the bear, which is an unclean and wild beast. And this animal brings forth a shapeless lump of flesh, which it shapes into the likeness of a beast solely by its tongue. For he who is convened from among the Gentiles is formed from a beastlike life to gentleness by the word; and, when once tamed, is made clean, just as the ox.[207]

Clement opens with the eschatological vision of Isaiah. And despite his emphasis on the opposition of pure and impure, he also considers the distinction between wild and domesticated animals. The yoke (ζυγὸν) under which the "Jewish ox" treads must be understood as the same thing that rendered it clean, the Mosaic laws.[208] The wild nature of the Gentiles, on the other hand, expresses their lack of faith. However, in accordance with Clement's supersessionist view[209] of the relationship between Jewish law and the teaching of Christ, the acceptance of the Christian faith will enable the wild beast to turn from impure into pure, and more importantly, from a wild into a domesticated creature:

> For example, the prophet says, The sirens, and the daughters of the sparrows, and all the beasts of the field, shall bless me. Of the number of unclean animals, the wild beasts of the field are known to be, that is, of the world; since those who are wild in respect of faith, and polluted in life, and not purified by the righteousness which is according to the law, are called wild beasts. But changed from wild beasts by the faith of the Lord, they become men of God, advancing from the wish to change to the fact[210]

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[207] Clement of Alexandria - *Stromata* 6:6: εἰκότως ἄρα βοῦν φησι καὶ ἄρκτον ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἔσεσθαι ἡ γραφή· βοῦς μὲν γὰρ εἴρηται ὁ Ἰουδαῖος ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ νόμον ὑπὸ ζυγὸν καθαροῦ κριθέντος ζῴου, ἐπεὶ καὶ διχηλεῖ καὶ μηρυκᾶται ὁ βοῦς· ὁ ἐθνικὸς δὲ διὰ τῆς ἄρκτου ἐμφαίνεται, ἀκαθάρτου καὶ ἀγρίου θηρίου· τίκτει δὲ τὸ ζῷον σάρκα ἀτύπωτον, ἣν σχηματίζει εἰς τὴν τοῦ θηρίου ὁμοιότητα τῇ γλώττῃ μόνον· λόγῳ γὰρ τυποῦται εἰς τὸ ἡμερῶσθαι ἐκ τοῦ θηριώδους βίου ὁ ἐξ ἐθνῶν ἐπιστρέφων, τιθασευθείς τε ἤδη καὶ αὐτὸς ὡς βοῦς ἀγνίζεται.

[208] The New Testament idea of a yoke of the Mosaic law (cf. Mt 11:26-28, Gal 5:1) seems quite prevalent in the second century both among Church fathers (e.g. Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 4:15), and even among the rabbis (cf. *mAbot* 3:5) cf. also Celia Deutsch, *Hidden Wisdom and the Easy Yoke: Wisdom Torah and Discipleship in Matthew 11:25-30* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1987).

[209] Cf. Eric Francis Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) 82-83.

[210] Clement of Alexandria - *Stromata* 6:6: αὐτίκα φησὶν ὁ προφήτης· «σειρῆνες εὐλογήσουσίν με καὶ θυγατέρες στρουθῶν καὶ τὰ θηρία πάντα τοῦ ἀγροῦ.» τῶν ἀκαθάρτων ζῴων τὰ θηρία τοῦ ἀγροῦ γιγνώσκεται, τουτέστι τοῦ

Clement's interpretation of the eschatological prophecy depicts a scenario in which the final stage is the peaceful coexistence of Jewish-Christians and Gentile-Christians.[211] This narrative is based on Clement's particularly mild *Weltanschauung*,[212] a perspective in which Jews and Christians are not only not conceived of as opposites, but are positively seen as parts of one entitiy. In this respect, Clement's commentary occupies a unique place between rabbinic and patristic tradition, for he does not try to argue that Jews would become wild animals due to their refusal of Christ's teaching.

It is important to notice that there is an implicit premise to Clement's argument, namely that the eschatological scenario described by Isaiah has not occurred yet. Thus, the peaceful coexistence of wild and domesticated animals and the view of harmony among Christians of different origins is not expected to occur before the second coming of Christ. But, as the commentaries of Clement's slightly earlier contemporary, Irenaeus indicate, retrospective interpretations were also present in early Christian tradition.[213] In the *Demonstratio,* Irenaeus writes:

> Now as to the union and concord and peace of the animals of different kinds, which by nature are opposed and hostile to each other, the Elders say that so it will be in truth at the coming of Christ, when He is to reign over all. For already in a symbol he announces the gathering together in peace and concord, through the name of Christ, of men of unlike races and (yet) of like dispositions. For, when thus united, on the righteous, who are likened to calves and lambs and kids and sucking children, those inflict no hurt at all who in the former time were, through their rapacity, like wild beasts in manners and disposition, both men and women; so much so that some of them were like wolves and lions, ravaging the weaker and warring on their equals; while the women (were like) leopards or asps, who slew, it may be, even their loved ones with deadly poisons, or by reason of lustful desire. (But now) coming together in one name they have acquired righteous habits by the grace of God, changing their wild and untamed nature. And this has come to pass already. For those who were before exceeding wicked, so that they left no work of ungodliness undone, learning of Christ and believing on Him, have at once believed and been changed, so as to leave no excellency of

κόσμου, ἐπεὶ τοὺς εἰς πίστιν ἀγρίους καὶ ῥυπαροὺς τὸν βίον μηδὲ τῇ κατὰ νόμον δικαιοσύνῃ κεκαθαρμένους θηρία προσαγορεύει. μεταβαλόντες μέντοι ἐκ τοῦ εἶναι θηρία διὰ τῆς κυριακῆς πίστεως ἄνθρωποι γίνονται θεοῦ, ἐκ τοῦ τὴν ἀρχὴν θελῆσαι μεταβάλλεσθαι εἰς τὸ γενέσθαι προκόπτοντες.

[211] Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* 36-37.

[212] On Clement's views see James Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish-Christians in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000) 97-99.

[213] Another example of reading Isaiah into the future is Origen, *De Principiis* 4:1:8. Cf. Also François Bovon, "The Child and the Beast: Fighting Violence in Ancient Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 92, no. 4 (1999): 369-392, here 373-374. Irenaeus is consistent in his retrospective understanding (see also *Adversus Haereses* 5:33) and even Tertullian shares his view (*Adversus Hermogenem* 11:3) McLaughlin, "Evidencing the Eschaton," 121-124.

> righteousness undone; so great is the transformation which faith in Christ the Son of God effects for those who believe on Him[214]

Although Irenaeus is not explicit in identifying what he means by wild animals, one can conclude that his perspective is closer to that of Tertullian than that of Clement.[215] The past tense, he employs excludes a Clement-like interpretation of Jews and Gentiles. Plausibly, the tame, domesticated calves and lambs must refer to Christians, who - in Irenaeus' description - find their peace with former enemies and oppressors, presumably gentile pagans.[216]

It seems that in early Christianity, the domestication was understood to refer primarily to gentiles. But, as I have pointed out above, a notable shift occurred around the middle of the fourth century,[217] laying emphasis on identifying wild animals as Jews specifically. In accordance with this change of tone[218], the focus of the notion of domestication was also altered. For example, in his second oration against Jews, Chrysostom discussed the fate of Judaizers with the following terms:

> So let us spread out the nets of instruction; like a pack of hunting dogs let us circle about and surround our quarry; let us drive them together from every side and bring them into subjection to the laws of the Church. If you think it is a good idea, let us send to pursue them the best of huntsmen, the blessed Paul, who once shouted aloud and said: "Behold, I, Paul, tell you that if you be circumcised, Christ will be of no advantage to you." When wild beasts and savage animals are hiding under a thicket and hear the shout of the hunter, they leap up in fear. The loud clamor drives them from their hiding and, even against their will, the hunter's cry forces them out, and many a time they fall right into the nets. So, too, your brothers are hiding in what I might call the thicket of Judaism. If they hear the shout of Paul, I am sure that they will easily fall into the nets of salvation and will put aside all the error of the Jews.[219]

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[214] Irenaeus, *Demonstratio* 61. There is no full Latin or Greek version of the text, and the only full version is in Armenian. The translation is taken from J. Armitage Robinson's translation from 1920. Cf. Iain M. Mackenzie, *Irennaeus's* [sic] *Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary and Translation* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2002) 19.

[215] On Irenaeus' eschatology see Andrew Chester, "The Pating of the Ways: Eschatology and Messianic Hope," *Jews and Christians The Parting of the Ways A.D. 70 to 135*, ed. James G. Dunn, 239-315 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992) 239-315, here 266-267.

[216] Cf. McLaughlin, "Evidencing the Eschaton," 124-125.

[217] Nevertheless, gentile-focused domestication-narratives still appear in this, later period. Cf. Ephrem, *Hymns on the Nativity* 3:7.

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[219] John Chrysostom, *Adversus Iudaeos* 2:1:5: Ὅσοι μὲν οὖν ἡλιεύσατε, καὶ εἴσω τῶν δικτύων ἔχετε μετὰ ἀσφαλείας, μείνατε ἐπισφίγγοντες αὐτοὺς τῷ λόγῳ τῆς παραινέσεως· ὅσοι δὲ μηδέπω τῆς καλῆς ταύτης ἐκρατήσατε θήρας, ἱκανὴν ἔχετε προθεσμίαν, τὰς πέντε ταύτας ἡμέρας, ὥστε περιγενέσθαι τῆς ἄγρας. Ἀναπετάσωμεν τοίνυν τὰ δίκτυα τῆς διδασκαλίας, περιστῶμεν κύκλῳ, καθάπερ κύνες θηρατικοὶ, πάντοθεν αὐτοὺς συνελαύνοντες εἰς τοὺς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας νόμους. Ἐπαγάγωμεν δὲ αὐτοῖς, εἰ δοκεῖ, ὥσπερ τινὰ κυνηγέτην ἄριστον, τὸν μακάριον Παῦλον βοῶντα καὶ λέγοντα· Ἴδε ἐγὼ Παῦλος λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι, ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει. Καὶ γὰρ πολλὰ τῶν ἀνημέρων ζώων καὶ ἐξηγριωμένων, ἐπειδὰν ὑπὸ θάμνον κρυπτόμενα τύχῃ τῆς τοῦ

The opposition between hunting dogs and wild and savage beasts hiding under the thickets refers directly to Christians and Jews or Judaizing Christians.[220] With the help of this narrative, however, the author is describing a process of conversion. Thus, the concept of hunting is fundamentally altered here. The end result will not be the death of the hunted (as it would be expected with edible wild animals) and not even a permanent confinement (as one could imagine with hunts for exotic carnivores in the Roman oecumene)[221], but a change in the wild beasts' behaviour. After falling into the nets of salvation, they will put aside their previous, erroneous behaviour. Translating this narrative back into the language of animal symbolism, one sees that Chrysostom describes – although only implicitly – a process of domestication. This twist of a hunting narrative reminds the audience of the original opposition between wild and domesticated animals, and more importantly, points out the reason for identifying Jews with the former.

Chrysostom's description of a future hunt for and domestication of the Jewish wild beasts fits into the conceptual framework of the prophetic tradition of an eschatological peace. The end of the conflict between domesticated and wild animals is not the destruction of the latter, but their domestication, as expressed most conspicuously through a change in their diet in the Biblical tradition, and through a change in their theological and religious convictions by Chrysostom. Chrysostom's Jewish-use of this narrative is not unique. A number of Church fathers from the late fourth or early fifth centuries implement similar argumentations. Augustine, for example, writes:

> "Let them be converted at the evening" (Ps. 59.6). Of certain men he is speaking that were once workers of iniquity, and once darkness, being converted in the evening ... They suffer from hunger just like dogs. It is the people of the Jews that are called dogs and impure ... "Let these be converted," therefore, they also "at evening." Let them yearn for the grace of God, perceive themselves to be sinners; let those strong men be made weak, those rich men be made poor, those just men acknowledge themselves sinners, those lions be made dogs. "Let them be converted at evening, and suffer hunger as dogs. And they shall go around the city." What city? That world, which in certain places the Scripture calls "the city of standing round:" that is, because in all nations everywhere the world had encompassed the one

κυνηγέτου φωνῆς ἀκούσαντα, ἐξάλλεται μὲν ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου, συνελαυνόμενα δὲ τῇ τῆς φωνῆς ἀνάγκῃ, καὶ ἄκοντα πολλάκις ὑπὸ τῆς βοῆς συνωθούμενα, εἰς αὐτὰ ἐμπίπτει τὰ θήρατρα· οὕτω καὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ οἱ ὑμέτεροι, οἱ καθάπερ ἐν θάμνῳ τινὶ, τῷ ἰουδαϊσμῷ, κρυπτόμενοι, ἂν τῆς Παύλου φωνῆς ἀκούσωσιν, εὖ οἶδ' ὅτι ῥᾳδίως εἰς τὰ τῆς σωτηρίας ἐμπεσοῦνται δίκτυα, καὶ πᾶσαν τὴν Ἰουδαϊκὴν ἀποθήσονται πλάνην.

[220] For the religious landscape in late fourth century Antiochia and Chrysostom's challenges cf. Robert Louis Wilken, *Chrysostom and the the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the late 4th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983) 66-94.

[221] See C. M. C. Green, "Did the Romans Hunt?" *Classical Antiquity* 15, 2 (1996): 222-260.

> nation of Jews ... Around this city shall go those men, now having become hungry dogs. In what manner shall they go around? By preaching.[222]

Augustine's interpretation of the Psalm follows a similar domestication narrative as that of Chrysostom. At the end of times, Jews will convert to Christianity, to which – according to Augustine – the text of the 59th Psalm typologically refer by the term of dogs. Jews, who are - implicitly - wild beasts at present, will become dogs. And although dogs are nowhere as positive symbols of moral superiority in the Christian – or for that matter in the Biblical – tradition, as sheep, the example of Chrysostom, who compared Christians fighting against Judaizers and Jews to hunting dogs, show that they can be implemented as symbols of faithful believers of Christ nonetheless.[223] Augustine's distinction between the former status as lions and the future position as dogs clearly belongs to the same use of the domestication narrative that Chryososstom epitomized.

In each of these interpretations, the opposition between wild and domesticated animals is emphasized only to be succeeded by a narrative of domestication. Thus, the primordial problem of the threatening presence of wild beast others is solved by claiming that their nature will change at the end of times, through divine interference. As it is based on the same prophetic vision of Isaiah, the solution of the Church fathers is structurally similar to that of the rabbis. It is however, not restricted in spatial dimensions.

[222] Augustine, *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 59:14: Conuertantur ad uesperam. nescio quos dicit quondam operatores iniquitatis, et quondam tenebras, conuerti ad uesperam ... et famem patiantur ut canes. canes gentes iudaei dixerunt, tamquam immundos ... conuertantur ergo et illi ad uesperam, et famem patiantur ut canes. desiderent gratiam dei, intellegant se peccatores; fortes illi fiant infirmi, diuites illi fiant pauperes, iusti illi agnoscant se peccatores, leones illi canes fiant. conuertantur ad uesperam, et famem patiantur ut canes, et circumibunt ciuitatem. quam ciuitatem? mundum istum, quem quibusdam locis uocat scriptura ciuitatem circumstantiae; id est, quia in omnibus gentibus undique circumfuderat mundus unam gentem iudaeorum ... istam ciuitatem circumibunt illi iam canes facti esurientes. quomodo circumibunt? euangelizando.

[223] As for positive canine-symbolism of the *Old Testament*, cf. Miller, "Attitudes toward Dogs," 498-500.

5.5. Conclusions

Wild beasts, representatives of a threatening domain, that of the wilderness are particularly alluring, and at the same time problematic symbols for an exegete. On the one hand, they propose a framework in which otherness and especially the proximate otherness of Judaism and Christianity can be described with great accuracy. The respective other is not only seen as destructive, but due to the liminal nature of wilderness as a habitat, and the resulting liminality of wild beasts themselves, others are also represented as seductive entities.

On the other hand, the same liminality makes it a constant challenge to implement such symbolic imagery. The existence of liminal entities means, by definition that the boundary between one's own group and the respective other is far from secure. Consequently, not only is the other subject to changes, but one cannot even be certain of the unchangeability of his or her own nature.

This ambiguity can be well observed in the Jewish and Christian implementation of wild-animal symbolism and – more broadly – in their understanding of the opposition of wild and domesticated animals. The two directions of changes (*Verwilderung* and domestication) are present in both exegetical traditions, and both the rabbis and the Church fathers reflect extensively on the poosibility of the inherent wild aspect of members of their respective communities.

Therefore, the opposition between wild and domesticated animals that interpreters invoke by using the former as symbols of otherness is not only a useful tool for describing unstable community boundaries appropriately, but also a source of constant troubles and transgressions of these same borders. Both communities are, thus, forced to look for a solution to this ambiguity. And as they are unable to claim convincingly that the appellations of wild beast and domesticated animals are secure, they both have to relegate their respective solutions to an eschatological future.

That is the point at which their narratives diverge. Rabbis, who are interested in explaining how and why their community is under the political sway of changing gentile political structures, recourse to the vision of Daniel, a narrative capable of describing such a volatile political status. In an attempt to harmonize their view of political realities with the repeated divine promise of a safe Israel, unharmed by the threat of the wilderness and its inhabitants, they solve the wild-domesticated opposition in the eschatological future, claiming – on a political level – that the community of the Jews will be once again free of oppression, with the removal of the wild

beasts. Thus ultimately, they find a way out of the problematic consequences of the traversability of the boundary between wild and domesticated domains: even if wild animals can become domesticated and (more importantly for the rabbis) domesticated ones can turn into wild beasts, this will not matter in the eschatological age, as the latter will be removed for good.

Christian interpreters, emphasizing the possibility of both individual change and the transformation of larger communities, which is a pre-requisite for any claim to a second covenant between God and the *verus Israel*, the *Ecclesia*, cannot follow the same path as their rabbinic counterparts. Instead, they rely on another *Old Testament* tradition, in which the opposition between wild and domesticated animals is finally resolved in an eschatological scenario of the domestication of the former.

But at this point, the two traditions arrive to the same vision. The routes might be different, but the end-result is the same: in the eschatological age, wild beasts will not anymore be present. The world will be populated only by domesticated and/or peaceful animals, that is: members of one's own community, and the ever-present threat of proximate otherness will be, thus, solved for good.