Sold under Sin: Echoes of Exile in Romans 7.14-25*

JOHN K. GOODRICH
Moody Bible Institute, 820 N. La Salle Blvd, Chicago, IL, USA.
email: john.goodrich@moody.edu.

Although Romans has been heavily mined for scriptural allusions in recent years, the influence of Isaiah 49–50 on Rom 7.14-25 has gone largely unnoticed. Building on Philonenko's work on the allusion to Isa 50.1 in the phrase 'sold under sin' (Rom 7.14), this study seeks to identify additional echoes from LXX Isa 49.24–50.2 in Rom 7.14-25 and to interpret Paul's discourse in the light of the sin–exile–restoration paradigm implied by both the source's original context and Paul's own strategic use of Isaiah in his portrayal of the plight of ἐγώ. The identification of these echoes, it is suggested, aids in interpreting the story of ἐγώ by connecting the allusions to Israel's *early* history in Rom 7.7-13 to images of the nation's *later* history in 7.14-25, thus showing the speaker's plight under sin to be analogous to Israel's own experiences of deception, death, and exile.

Keywords: Romans 7, Deutero-Isaiah, intertextuality, sin, exile, restoration

1. Introduction

The identity and storyline of the speaker (ἐγώ) in Rom 7.7-25 have been the center of enormous debate in modern scholarship. Provoking much of the exegetical work on Romans 7 in the past century, these topics have been the principal focus of numerous studies while being of ancillary importance in countless others.[1] Several issues, to be sure, contribute to the controversy, not least of which is Paul's use of certain historical-scriptural allusions,[2] particularly in

---

1 For these topics in recent debate, see, e.g., Terry L. Wilder, ed., *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: Three Views of Romans 7* (Nashville: B&H, 2011). This text and these topics were also quite important in Krister Stendahl's seminal essay, 'The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West', *HTR* 56 (1963) 199–215.

2 While some interpreters maintain a strict distinction between *allusions* and *echoes*, in this essay these terms are used interchangeably to refer to 'the nonformal invocation by an

476

vv. 7-13.[3] Receiving far too little attention, however, is the influence of Scripture on vv. 14-25.

Seeking to help fill this lacuna, the present study investigates Paul's scriptural allusions in Rom 7.14-25 as a means to advance our understanding of the speaker's identity and storyline. More precisely, in this essay we attempt to demonstrate that one of the primary influences on Paul's use of various terms and images in Rom 7.14-25 is Isaiah 49–50. The article begins by briefly surveying the intertextual interpretative history of the phrase 'sold under sin' (πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, Rom 7.14) in order to show that our proposal for the influence of Isaiah (esp. 50.1) on Paul's discourse, while remaining mostly unnoticed, is not without precedence in NT scholarship. But rather than restricting our study to Rom 7.14, we argue that the influence of Isaiah on Rom 7.14-25 is, in fact, more pervasive and plausible than has been previously demonstrated. Indeed, Rom 7.14-25, it is suggested, echoes several terms and themes from LXX Isa 49.24–50.2. Taken together, these Isaianic echoes evoke notions of Israel's Babylonian captivity—including the sin–exile–restoration paradigm—and aid in telling the story of ἐγώ by connecting the allusions to Israel's *early* history in Rom 7.7-13 to images of the nation's *later* history in 7.14-25.

2. The Intertextual Interpretive History of Romans 7.14

It is difficult to overstate the rhetorical and theological importance of the phrase 'sold under sin' in Rom 7.14. Building on the already pejorative σάρκινος (cf. 1 Cor 3.1), the phrase serves to intensify the desperation of the speaker by showing his plight to be not only internal (ἐν, ἔσω), but positional (ὑπό). For sin, as a power, is here shown to render ἐγώ powerless while he remains under sin's dominion (cf. 3.9; 6.14-23; Gal 3.22). Moreover, the ensuing γάρ connects the phrase directly to the conflict described in vv. 15-20, which illustrate the moral failures that necessarily arise from being sin's captive. Thus, the statement 'sold under sin' plays a significant role in the

---

author of a text (or person, event, etc.) that the author could reasonably have been expected to know' (Stanley E. Porter, 'The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology', *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals* [ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; JSNTSup 148; SSEJC 5; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997] 79–96, at 95).

3 On the importance of Scripture in Rom 7, see Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (London: T&T Clark, 2004) 357–8: 'If scriptural interpretation is of secondary importance elsewhere in Romans 5–8, this cannot be said of chapter 7. Many of the well-known problems of this chapter are resolved when it is understood as a highly distinctive reading of scriptural texts.'

argumentation of Romans 7,[4] contributing much to the debate over the identity and storyline of the speaker in vv. 14-25. In fact, some even find this verse decisive for their reading of the passage. As Peter Stuhlmacher remarks, 'The apostle's profound conception of baptism…forbids one from characterizing the Christian in 7:14 as still "sold under sin".'[5] And according to Douglas Moo, the statement 'clinches the argument for a description of a non-Christian here'.[6]

Given the phrase's impact on the debates over the interpretation of Romans 7, it is surprising how little attention has been paid to its origin. Although the precise phrase appears nowhere in the LXX (or other non-Christian literature),[7] it is quite likely that Paul's employment of πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν, together with several other terms in Rom 7.14-25, echoes the Jewish Scriptures. To be sure, scholars have proposed several scriptural sources for the origin of the phrase. For instance, Adolf Schlatter, James Dunn, Gary Shogren, and Colin Kruse argue that it is derived from the expression 'sold to do evil' used on several occasions in the LXX (πέπρασαι ποιῆσαι τὸ πονηρόν, 3 Kgdms 20.20, 25; 4 Kgdms 17.17; 1 Macc 1.15).[8] Otto Michel, on the other hand, suggests that Paul drew on the aforementioned idiom as well as additional scriptural uses of πιπράσκω (e.g. Deut 32.30), creating the phrase through a conflation of several Septuagintal texts.[9] At a more thematic level, Christian Grappe speculates that the phrase evokes the figure of Adam, while N. T. Wright suggests an allusion to Israel's pre-exodus enslavement.[10] But despite these few efforts to identify a

---

4   Several scholars consider 'sold under sin' to be the thesis of Rom 7.14-25. Cf. Günter Bornkamm, 'Sin, Law and Death (Romans 7)', *Early Christian Experience* (trans. P.L. Hammer; New York: Harper & Row, 1969) 87–104, at 97; Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (trans. G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981) 204; Heikki Räisänen, *Paul and the Law* (WUNT 29; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2d ed. 1987) 112.

5   Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (trans. S. J. Hafemann; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 115. Cf. Jean-Noël Aletti, 'Rm 7.7–25 encore une fois: enjeux et propositions', *NTS* 48 (2002) 358–76, at 361; Lane A. Burgland, 'Eschatological Tension and Existential Angst: "Now" and "Not Yet" in Romans 7:14–25 and 1QS11 (Community Rule, Manual of Discipline)', *CTQ* 61 (1997) 163–76, at 166; Hae-Kyung Chang, 'The Christian Life in a Dialectical Tension? Romans 7:7-25 Reconsidered', *NovT* 49 (2007) 257–80, at 273–274.

6   Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 454.

7   Robert Jewett, *Romans* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007) 461.

8   Adolf Schlatter, *Romans: The Righteousness of God* (trans. S. S. Schatzmann; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995) 164; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8* (WBC 38a; Dallas: Word, 1988) 388; Gary S. Shogren, 'The "Wretched Man" of Romans 7:14–25 as *Reductio ad absurdum*', *EvQ* 72 (2000) 119–34, at 125; Colin G. Kruse, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012) 306.

9   Otto Michel, *Der Brief an die Römer* (KEK 4; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 11. Aufl. 1957) 150 n. 4.

10   Christian Grappe, 'Qui me délivrera de ce corps de mort? L'Esprit de vie! Romains 7,24 et 8,2 comme éléments de typologie adamique', *Biblica* 83 (2002) 472–92, at 488 n. 71; N. T. Wright,

possible scriptural source of the phrase, very little evidence has been advanced in their defense.[11]

In a frequently overlooked article, however, Marc Philonenko capably argues that the Pauline expression 'sold under sin' (πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν) is a 'complex allusion' to Isa 50.1: 'Behold, for your iniquities you were sold' (MT, הן בעונתיכם נמכרתם/ἰδοὺ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν ἐπράθητε, LXX).[12] The proposal finds immediate support from the observation that LXX Isa 50.1, like Rom 7.14, is metaphorical and employs a collocation of ἁμαρτία with a passive form of πιπράσκω. Beyond this, Philonenko constructs his case entirely by attempting to establish what Richard Hays refers to as the echo's *historical plausibility*— that Paul's modifications to the Isaianic text are conceivable in the light of 'how other Jews in Paul's time read Isaiah'.[13]

Philonenko concentrates primarily on two Qumran parallels echoing Isa 50.1. The first is the *Words of the Luminaries* 4Q504 2.15: '[Behold, for] our [in]iquities were we sold (הן בע[ונותינו נמכרנו), but in spite of our sins you did call us'.[14] According to Philonenko, the subject change introduced to the verb מכר ('sold')— from the second person in the MT to the first person here—demonstrates that it is entirely conceivable for Paul to have made a similar adjustment in Rom 7.14. The second text Philonenko analyzes is 11QPs^a 19.9-11: 'I was near to death because of my sins, and my iniquities have sold me to Sheol [ועוונותי לשאול מכרוני], but you YHWH saved me [ותצילני], according to the abundance of your compassion and the abundance of your just acts'. Here Philonenko notes several modifications to Isa 50.1 that parallel Rom 7.14, including a first-person-singular author self-

---

'The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections', *NIB* (ed. L. E. Keck et al.; 12 vols.; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002) 10.393–770, at 566, 571.

11 Against the allusion to 3 Kgdms 20.20 et al., see John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) 261; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988) 291.

12 Marc Philonenko, 'Sur l'expression "vendu au péché" dans l' "Epître aux Romains",' *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 103 (1986) 41–52; followed by Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AYBC 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993) 474; John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55: A Literary-Theological Commentary* (London: T&T Clark, 2005) 396. Mark A. Seifrid, who shows no awareness of Philonenko's work, agrees that the phrase 'reflects the language of Isa. 50:1' ('Romans', *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* [ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007] 607–94, at 615; cf. 612-13); cf. Mark A. Seifrid, 'The Subject of Rom 7:14-25', *NovT* 34 (1992) 313–33, at 326 n. 42.

13 Richard B. Hays, '"Who Has Believed Our Message": Paul's Reading of Isaiah', *The Conversion of the Imagination* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 25–49, at 41. Cf. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University, 1989) 30-1.

14 DSS texts and translations are from Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1998).

identifying as a sinful object of purchase, as well as the addition of an indirect object who makes the purchase. Furthermore, Philonenko suggests that the author's confession of sins leading to a declaration of the Lord's deliverance resembles the speaker's desperate cry and anticipated rescue in Rom 7.24-25.[15] While it is difficult to be certain about the influence of Isa 50.1 on these Qumran texts, their shared use of עון ('sin') and מכר ('sold'), together with the Qumran community's high regard for Isaiah, suggests that these echoes have been identified correctly, and thus support Philonenko's case.[16]

Some interpreters, however, remain suspicious of attempts to link Paul's phrase specifically to Isaiah, or to any other scriptural source for that matter. Ernst Käsemann, for example, remarks, 'It is more than doubtful to try to derive the figurative expression in v. 14c from 1 Kgs 21:25…or other OT passages'.[17] Moreover, Robert Jewett complains that in Isa 50.1 'there is no suggestion that sin itself is the slaveholder', while John Byron observes how in Isaiah 'it is God who is doing the selling whereas Romans does not identify the seller'.[18] Such interpreters are therefore normally content, after grouping πεπραμένος with the participles in Rom 7.23 (ἀντιστρατευόμενον, αἰχμαλωτίζοντα), to consider them all generic allusions to warfare and slavery (cf. ἀφορμή, 7.8, 11)[19]—images all too familiar to the Roman church.

But while it is true that these terms have military connotations and that there are significant syntactical differences between the texts under consideration, there remains weighty yet hitherto neglected evidence in support of the view that 'sold under sin' in Rom 7.14 is an echo of Isa 50.1. As we shall show, πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν is just one of several echoes of LXX Isa 49.24–50.2 bookending Rom 7.14-25.

---

15 Philonenko, 'vendu au péché', 47.

16 Cf. James R. Davila, *Liturgical Works* (Eerdmans Commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001) 256; Eric D. Reymond, *New Idioms within Old: Poetry and Parallelism in the Non-Masoretic Poems of 11Q5 (=11QPsa)* (Early Judaism and its Literature 31; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011) 159, 167, 190 (Reymond's latter two references mistakenly cite Isa 50.11).

17 Käsemann, *Romans*, 200. Cf. Don B. Garlington, 'Romans 7:14-25 and the Creation Theology of Paul', *TJ* 11 (1990) 197–235, at 215.

18 Jewett, *Romans*, 461; John Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity* (WUNT 2/162; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003) 223.

19 Ulrich Wilckens, *Der Brief an die Römer* (EKK 6/2; Zürich: Benziger; Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1980) 86 n. 352; Byron, *Slavery Metaphors*, 223–6; Jewett, *Romans*, 462, 471; J. Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006) 17–33, esp. 28–30; Jason Maston, *Divine and Human Agency in Second Temple Judaism and Paul: A Comparative Study* (WUNT 2/297; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 144. Emma Wasserman reads the participles, and most of Rom 7, in light of Platonic moral psychology (*The Death of the Soul in Romans 7: Sin, Death, and the Law in Light of Hellenistic Moral Psychology* [WUNT 2/256; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008] 83, 96, 145).

3. Establishing the Echo: Isaiah 49.24–50.2 in Romans 7.14-25

The methodologies employed for detecting scriptural echoes in the NT have improved considerably since Philonenko's original proposal. No single approach has won the unanimous approval of biblical scholars, but those (like us) principally interested in re-establishing the thought patterns of an author such as Paul are generally favorable to the criteria developed by Richard Hays.[20] Although not without their limitations, the most valuable of Hays's criteria for our purposes are those he refers to as *recurrence, volume, thematic coherence,* and *historical plausibility*. In this section we seek to establish the intertextual relationship between Isa 49.24–50.2 and Romans 7 by employing these four criteria, and in this sequence.

3.1. *Recurrence*

According to Hays, *recurrence* (or *clustering*) takes into consideration the use of the same passage elsewhere by an author, especially in the document under investigation.[21] However, one should resist the urge to be myopic; according to Hays, we are interested in 'not just a particular verse quoted explicitly on more than one occasion...but also larger units of Scripture to which Paul repeatedly refers'.[22] The assumption here is that, if it can be established that Paul cites or alludes elsewhere to a source text, it increases the plausibility that the same text is being evoked in our target passage.

Considered in these terms, Philonenko's case for the use of Isa 50.1 in Rom 7.14 seems quite believable—more so than the other explanations for the origin of Paul's phrase—once it is realized just how influenced Romans is by Isaiah in general and by Deutero-Isaiah in particular. It is widely recognized that Deutero-Isaiah had a profound impact on numerous Pauline epistles, and none more than Romans.[23] In addition to fifteen direct quotations from Isaiah,

---

20 For opposition to the author-centered approach, see Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Steve Moyise, *Evoking Scripture: Seeing the Old Testament in the New* (London: T&T Clark, 2008). Stanley Porter supports an author-oriented approach, but has considerable reservations about Hays's criteria ('Use of the Old Testament', 83–4). Cf. Florian Wilk, 'Paul as User, Interpreter, and Reader of the Book of Isaiah', *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (ed. R. B. Hays et al.; Waco: Baylor University, 2009) 83–99, at 86.

21 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 30.

22 Hays, 'Who Has Believed', 37.

23 Hays refers to Deutero-Isaiah as Paul's 'parade example' of recurrence ('Who Has Believed', 37). Relying on the NA 27 list of OT allusions, Hays remarks, '[O]ut of the 50 allusions to Isaiah in the seven-letter [Pauline] corpus, 21 point to Isaiah 49–55' (26). Cf. Shiu-Lun Shum, *Paul's Use of Isaiah in Romans: A Comparative Study of Paul's Letter to the Romans and the Sibylline and Qumran Sectarian Texts* (WUNT 2/156; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002); Florian Wilk, *Die Bedeutung des Jesajabuches für Paulus* (FRLANT 179; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998); J. Ross Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul 'in Concert' in the Letter*

Romans contains a dozen or more allusions to the prophet, and among those Isaianic passages Paul cites and alludes to, none are more central to Paul's theologizing program in Romans than those from Deutero-Isaiah.[24] As J. Ross Wagner observes, 'Paul has integrated the story of Isaiah 51–55 into the particular theological story which lies beneath the argument of Romans'.[25] Paul's integration of Isaiah is especially apparent in those citations where unbelieving Israel is expressly in view.[26] Such cases show how Paul, seeking to underscore both the nation's current rebellion and its future restoration, not infrequently 'draws on passages from Isaiah whose wider contexts portray Israel as idolatrous and unfaithful, suffering under God's discipline in the form of foreign oppression or exile'.[27] This, it shall be argued below, is precisely how Paul portrays ἐγώ (a representative of Israel) through echoes of Isaiah 49–50 in Rom 7.14-25.

It is also significant that Paul draws on Isaiah 49–50 elsewhere in his letters. For example, Paul once cites Isa 49.8 (2 Cor 6.2), while alluding elsewhere to Isa 49.1 (1 Cor 15.10; Gal 1.15), Isa 49.3 and 6 (Gal 1.24), Isa 49.4 (1 Cor 15.10; 2 Cor 6.1; Gal 2.2; 4.11; Phil 2.16), and Isa 50.8 (Rom 8.33-34), the latter appearing in the chapter adjacent to that which is our focus here.[28] Given, then, Paul's considerable reliance on (Deutero-)Isaiah in Romans, especially in cases where unbelieving Israel is in view, together with his numerous allusions elsewhere to Isaiah 49–50, it seems quite conceivable for Paul to have derived the phrase 'sold under sin' from Isa 50.1.

3.2. *Volume*

Volume is primarily concerned with the 'degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns' between a source and target text.[29] Beyond the

---

to the Romans (NovTSup 101; Leiden: Brill, 2002). For elsewhere in Paul, see, e.g., Mark Gignilliat, *Paul and Isaiah's Servants: Paul's Theological Reading of Isaiah 40–66 in 2 Corinthians 5:14–6:10* (LNTS 330; London: T&T Clark, 2007); Matthew S. Harmon, *She Must and Shall Go Free: Paul's Isaianic Gospel in Galatians* (BZNW 168; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010).

24 J. Ross Wagner, 'Isaiah in Romans and Galatians', *Isaiah in the New Testament* (ed. S. Moyise and M. J. J. Menken; The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel; London: T&T Clark, 2005) 117–32, at 117.

25 J. Ross Wagner, 'The Heralds of Isaiah and the Mission of Paul: An Investigation of Paul's Use of Isaiah 51–55 in Romans', *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources* (ed. P. Stuhlmacher and B. Janowski; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004) 193–222, at 221. Citations include Isa 52.5 (Rom 2.24); Isa 52.7 (Rom 10.15); Isa 52.15 (Rom 15.21); Isa 53.1 (Rom 10.16); cf. Isa 52.11 (2 Cor 6.17). Allusions include Isa 51.1 (Rom 9.30-31); Isa 53.6, 11-12 (Rom 4.25; 8.32).

26 Isa 52.5 (Rom 2.24); Isa 10.22-23/28.22/1.9 (Rom 9.27-29); Isa 28.16 (Rom 10.11); Isa 65.2 (Rom 10.21); Isa 59.20-21/27.9 (Rom 11.26-27).

27 Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 353.

28 For Paul's allusions to Isa 49–50, see Wilk, *Die Bedeutung des Jesajabuches*, 444; Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 349; Harmon, *She Must and Shall Go Free*, 265.

29 Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 30.

employment of key words, this criterion also concerns the 'distinctiveness, prominence, or popular familiarity' of the precursor text within Scripture and the 'rhetorical stress' the echo receives in Paul's own discourse.[30] Once more, Philonenko's proposal finds considerable support once it is realized just how many terms and themes in LXX Isa 49.24–50.2 are echoed in Rom 7.14-25, and with emphasis. Isaiah's text reads as follows:

> [49.24] Will anyone take spoils from a mighty one?
>   And if one should take a captive [αἰχμαλωτεύσῃ] unjustly, shall he be saved?
> [49.25] Thus says the Lord:
> If one should take a mighty one captive [αἰχμαλωτεύσῃ],
>   he will take spoils,
> and by taking them from a strong one,
>   he will be saved.
> And I will judge your cause,
>   and I will rescue [ῥύσομαι] your sons.
> [49.26] And those who afflicted you shall eat their own flesh,
>   and they shall drink their own blood like new wine and be drunk.
> Then all flesh shall perceive
>   that I am the Lord who rescued you [ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ ῥυσάμενός σε],
>   who assists the strength of Iakob.
> [50.1] Thus says the Lord:
> Of what kind was your mother's bill of divorce
>   with which I sent her away?
> Or to which creditor
>   have I sold you [πέπρακα ὑμᾶς]?
> Look, for your sins you were sold [ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν ἐπράθητε],
>   and for your acts of lawlessness I sent away your mother.
> [50.2] Why was it that I came and no man was there?
>   I called, and there was none to answer?
> Is not my hand strong to deliver [τοῦ ῥύσασθαι]?
>   Or am I not strong to rescue?
> Look, by my threat I will make the sea desolate,
>   and the rivers I will make deserts,
> and their fish shall be dried up because there is no water,
>   and they will die by thirst.[31]

There is an impressive amount of verbal repetition from LXX Isa 49.24–50.2 in Rom 7.14-25, even if Isaiah's specific syntactical patterns are largely missing in Romans. The key repeated terms include πιπράσκω, αἰχμαλωτίζω, ῥύομαι, and ἁμαρτία. Both texts also share an occurrence of ῥύομαι in the future tense (Isa 49.25; Rom 7.24), πιπράσκω in the perfect tense, as well as the collocation of ἁμαρτία with the passive form of πιπράσκω observed earlier (Isa 50.1; Rom

---

30 Hays, 'Who Has Believed', 36 (original emphasis).
31 Translation from Albert Pietsersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2007).

7.14). Moreover, these terms feature quite prominently in their respective contexts. In the first place, they do not appear collectively elsewhere in the LXX in such close proximity,[32] and the three verbs occur at least twice in Isa 49.24–50.2. The volume of the echo then becomes louder once it is recognized that the key verbs/participles, while separated in Romans 7 by up to ten verses (vv. 14, 23-25), form an inclusio around the ethically concentrated section of the passage (vv. 15-22) and rarely occur elsewhere in Pauline literature.[33] In fact, πιπράσκω is a hapax legomenon in Pauline literature, while αἰχμαλωτίζω occurs only once elsewhere in the undisputed letters (2 Cor 10.5).[34] Furthermore, ῥύομαι appears in only four other verses in the undisputed letters (Rom 11.26; 15.31; 2 Cor 1.10 [3 ×]; 1 Thess 1.10),[35] and its nearest occurrence, ὁ ῥυόμενος in Rom 11.26, is a citation from Isa 59.20. In short, Paul's deployment of this collection of Isaianic terms in Rom 7.14-25 is quite conspicuous, suggesting that he has been influenced here by his reading of Scripture.[36]

3.3. *Thematic Coherence*

Thematic coherence seeks to demonstrate how well the proposed precursor text fits together with the point Paul is making. As Hays asks, 'Is his use of the Isaiah texts consonant with his overall argument and/or use made of other texts?'[37] Indeed, Paul's discourse in Rom 7.14-25 displays close thematic appropriation of Isaiah's message. Both passages deploy a narrative generally following the sin–exile–restoration paradigm[38]—although in Romans 7 Paul places particular emphasis on the sin and exile components (largely suspending the restoration theme until Romans 8), while Isaiah's stress falls on restoration. This narrative is

32 Note, however, the collective use of πιπράσκω, αἰχμαλωτίζω, and ῥύομαι in LXX Isa 52.2-9, where the sin–exile–restoration paradigm is also present.

33 For the inclusio, see, e.g., James W. Thompson, *Moral Formation according to Paul: The Context and Coherence of Pauline Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011) 147: 'The inclusio of 7:14, 23-25 frames the bleak assessment of the human situation'. Note also how Rom 7.14 and 23-25 stand apart from the intervening verses by their use of these Isaianic terms and their absence of the key verbs repeated in verses 15–22 (θέλω [6×]; ποιέω [5×]; κατεργάζομαι [4×]).

34 Cf. 2 Tim 3.6; αἰχμαλωτεύω αἰχμαλωσίαν, Eph 4.8. Andronicus and Junia (Rom 16.7), Epaphras (Philm 23), and Aristarchus (Col 4.10) are described as Paul's συναιχμάλωτοι, though these are probably non-metaphorical.

35 Cf. Col 1.13; 2 Thess 3.2; 2 Tim 3.11; 4.17, 18.

36 Admittedly, Paul's servile imagery begins at Rom 6.6, escalates at 6.16-23, and resurfaces at 7.6 and 25. Paul, therefore, hardly needed to draw on Isaiah to be supplied with captivity language in 7.14-25. But, as discussed above, the specific terms used in 7.14 and 23–25 are rare in Paul. This, together with the deployment of fresh scriptural imagery (Eden and Sinai) beginning at 7.7-13, strongly suggests that the captivity language of 7.14-25 builds mostly on the storyline of 7.7-13, rather than on the servile imagery climaxing at 6.16-23.

37 Hays, 'Who Has Believed', 38.

38 For this scheme in Jewish eschatology, see Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 29–31.

apparent in Isaiah's and Paul's shared use of key verbs/participles. In both passages the verb αἰχμαλωτίζω denotes involuntary captivity (exile),[39] complements πιπράσκω,[40] and underscores the power of an enemy (Babylon in Isaiah; sin in Romans).[41] Moreover, the cause of captivity in both is the subject's disobedience (ἁμαρτία, ἀνομία, Isa 50.1; ἁμαρτία, Rom 7.7-25; cf. κακός, ὃ μισῶ, ὃ οὐ θέλω).[42] Accordingly, the Lord is the only one capable of restoring (ῥύομαι) these captives from their enemies (Isa 49.25-26; 50.2; Rom 7.24-25).

Beyond this, both texts feature rhetorical questions seeking to expose the Lord's exclusive restorative power. In Romans 7, the speaker famously bemoans his inability to thwart sin and keep the law, before finally crying out, 'Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue [ῥύσεται] me from this body of death?' (v. 24). He then emphatically identifies his deliverer as none other than 'Jesus Christ our Lord' (v. 25). Similarly, in Isa 49.14–50.3 the prophet offers an exchange in which Yahweh's promise to restore Israel is brought into question. After introducing the Servant of the Lord in 49.1-13 as the means of Yahweh's restorative plan, Zion cynically complains, 'The Lord has forsaken me; the Lord has forgotten me' (v. 14),[43] provoking Yahweh in vv. 15-23 to reassure the Israelites of his intention for them to re-inhabit the land: 'soon you will be built by those by whom you were destroyed, and those who made you desolate will go forth from you' (v. 17). But reassurance of Yahweh's goodwill does not displace Zion's pessimism. As John Oswalt remarks, 'The question of God's desire to save was fully addressed in vv. 14-23. God had not rejected his people; he could not forget them. But what about his ability?'[44] It is, then, Yahweh's *ability* to restore Israel that becomes the focus of the exchange in Isa 49.24–50.3.

39 The verb αἰχμαλωτίζω and its cognates are used widely in Jewish literature for exile (e.g. LXX Deut 28.41; 4 Kgdms 24.14; Ezra 2.1; Neh. 1.2-3; Esth 2.6; Isa 45.13; 52.2; 61.1; Jer 1.3; 20.6; Ezek 1.1-2; Bar 4.10, 14; 1 Esd 2.11; 5.7, 54, 64; Ep Jer 1.1; Jdt 4.3; Tob 1.2, 10).

40 C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans 1–8* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975) 357, 365; James D. G. Dunn, 'Rom. 7,14-25 in the Theology of Paul', *TZ* 31 (1975) 257–73, at 268; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998) 390. For πιπράσκω implying exile, see, e.g., Deut 28.68; Isa 48.10; 52.3; Bar 4.6; Jdt 7.25.

41 For sin as a power in Romans, see Simon Gathercole, 'Sin in God's Economy: Agencies in Romans 1 and 7', *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and his Cultural Environment* (ed. J. M. G. Barclay and S. J. Gathercole; LNTS 335; ECC; London: T&T Clark, 2007) 158–72; Joseph R. Dodson, *The 'Powers' of Personification: Rhetorical Purpose in the Book of Wisdom and the Letter to the Romans* (BZNW 161; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008); Günter Röhser, 'Paulus und die Herrschaft der Sünde', *ZNW* 103 (2012) 84–110.

42 Although sin is cast in Romans 5–8 as a power that comes to life, deceives, kills, and enslaves, it retains an ethical component throughout (cf. 5.12-13, 16, 20; 6.15; 7.7, 13).

43 Here Zion serves as 'an embodiment or symbol for Yhwh's people' (Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55*, 385).

44 John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40–66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 313. Cf. Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55*, 392.

The new section begins with two rhetorical questions from Zion: 'Will anyone take spoils from a mighty one? And if one should take a captive [αἰχμαλωτεύσῃ] unjustly, shall he [the captive] be saved?' (49.24).[45] Zion's questions expose her doubts about Yahweh's power and faithfulness to free captive Israel. Yahweh, however, confidently responds in the affirmative: 'he [Yahweh] will take spoils... he [the captive] will be saved' (49.25).[46] The passage also closes with a pair of questions, this time from the mouth of Yahweh: 'Is not my hand strong to deliver [τοῦ ῥύσασθαι]? Or am I not strong to rescue?' (50.2). Again, Yahweh's ensuing remark affirms that he in fact possesses such strength, for if he so chooses, Yahweh can (in exodus-like fashion) evaporate the sea and kill all its fish (50.2). The response implies what Yahweh has already stated: 'I will judge your cause, and I will rescue [ῥύσομαι] your sons' (49.25). In sum, both Isaiah and Romans employ rhetorical questions in order to contrast the cynicism and impotency of the captive with the confidence and power of the Lord, who alone is capable of rescuing his people from the custody of their enemies.

3.4. *Historical Plausibility*

Our final criterion, *historical plausibility*, seeks to demonstrate that Paul could have intended the proposed allusion, as witnessed by other scriptural readings of Paul and his contemporaries.[47] Philonenko has sufficiently shown how the grammatical and rhetorical adaptations made to Isa 50.1 in Qumran lend support to his proposal for Paul having made similar modifications in his allusion to the prophet in Rom 7.14. Nevertheless, certain scholars, as shown earlier, reject Philonenko's thesis due to the quite different roles ἁμαρτία plays in the two texts. As Jewett observes, while ἐγώ is 'under sin' in Rom 7.14, in Isa 50.1 'there is no suggestion that sin itself is the slaveholder'.[48] The matter that needs to be addressed, then, is whether there is warrant for believing that Paul, as a reader of Isaiah, took the hermeneutical liberty to personify and re-cast ἁμαρτία from the grounds of captivity in Isa 50.1 to the captor in Rom 7.14 (and 23-25).

---

45 For the identification of the 'mighty one' as Babylon, see John Goldingay and David Payne, *Isaiah 40–55* (ICC; London: T&T Clark, 2006) 195–9. The LXX departs from the MT at a few places here, supplying, e.g., ἀδίκως in v. 24 where the MT has צדיק (referring to Babylon). Klaus Baltzer explains, '"Righteousness" [in the MT] is being viewed ironically, as the equivalent of violence' (*Deutero-Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 40–55* [trans. M. Kohl; Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001] 331). See also Isaac Leo Seeligmann, *The Septuagint Version of Isaiah and Cognate Studies* (FAT 40; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004) 281.

46 The implied subjects of λήμψεται and σωθήσεται (LXX Isa 49.24-25 [2 ×]) are clearly different: it is Yahweh who *will take* spoils/sons (i.e. captive Zion); therefore it is Zion who *will be saved*. Cf. Oswalt, *Isaiah 40–66*, 314; Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 331–2; Goldingay and Payne, *Isaiah 40–55*, 198–9.

47 Hays, 'Who Has Believed', 41.

48 Jewett, *Romans*, 461.

In fact, such a hermeneutic is apparent in both the Qumran literature and elsewhere in Romans 7. To begin with, it should be noted that if Philonenko is correct to consider 11QPs[a] 19.11 to be an echo of Isa 50.1, then here is a text that demonstrates how other Jews read Isaiah in a manner similar to Paul. The Qumran author himself, for example, personifies and re-casts his sins as his seller: 'my iniquities have sold me to Sheol' (ועונותי לשאול מכרוני, 19.11). He even replaces Israel's creditor (Babylon) with a personified power (Sheol). Given, then, the use of personification and re-casting introduced by the Qumran author, it is conceivable for Paul to have enlisted Isaiah's 'sins' as the speaker's own creditor in Rom 7.14.

Beyond this, Paul himself uses a similar hermeneutic just three verses earlier in the discourse. In Rom 7.11, Paul alludes to Eve's deception in the garden: 'For sin [ἡ γὰρ ἁμαρτία], seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me [ἐξηπάτησέν με] and through it killed me'. The allusion to Eve—though scholars give it varying degrees of prominence—is most apparent through the use of the verb ἐξαπατάω, which Paul also uses in 2 Cor 11.3 when addressing how 'the serpent deceived Eve' (ὁ ὄφις ἐξηπάτησεν Εὕαν; cf. 1 Tim 2.14).[49] Paul's statement in 2 Cor 11.3 is quite similar to Eve's own admission in the garden: 'the serpent deceived me' (ὁ ὄφις ἠπάτησέν με, LXX Gen 3.13). What is striking about the allusion in Romans 7, however, is the new identity of the deceiver. Paul makes no mention of the serpent in Rom 7.11, as he does in 2 Cor 11.3, but replaces the serpent's role with sin. Such is in keeping with his hermeneutic in all of Romans 5–8, where Paul seeks to place the culpability for sin, not on the serpent, but squarely on the power of sin itself.[50]

This also explains Paul's change of Isaiah's dative-plural ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις to the accusative-singular τὴν ἁμαρτίαν. Besides the fact that the case change is controlled by ὑπό, which Paul commonly uses to underscore dominion (cf. Rom 3.9; Gal 3.22), Paul in Romans heavily favors the singular (personified) ἁμαρτία over the plural ἁμαρτίαι.[51] And when Paul does employ ἁμαρτίαι in his letters, it is often in direct quotations of Scripture or summaries of Jewish-Christian tradition (e.g. Rom 4.7; 11.27; 1 Cor 15.3; Gal 1.4; cf. ἁμαρτημάτων, Rom 3.25). Even so, neighboring verses show how Paul commonly interprets these mentions of 'sins' as references to an enslaving power (cf. Rom 3.9, 20; 1 Cor 15.56; Gal 2.17; 3.22). This is apparent, for instance, in Gal 1.4. As Martinus de Boer explains, 'Paul immediately interprets Christ's giving himself "for our

---

49 On these Pauline allusions to Eve, see Austin Busch, 'The Figure of Eve in Romans 7:5-25', *BibInt* 12 (2004) 1–36; Stefan Krauter, 'Eva in Röm 7', *ZNW* 99 (2008) 1–17.

50 While ἁμαρτία does not appear in the LXX Genesis account, Paul clearly understood the Edenic transgression as ἁμαρτία (cf. Rom 5.12-21). Compare also Wis 2.24 (where death is caused by the devil) with Rom 5.12 (where death is credited to sin).

51 ἁμαρτία (sg.) = 45× in Romans; 7× in the remaining Pauline letters; ἁμαρτίαι (pl.) = 3× in Romans; 9× in the remaining Pauline letters. Cf. James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999) 111–14.

sins" to effect not forgiveness but deliverance from an evil realm... Paul thus shifts the import of the phrase "for our sins" from a forensic (judicial) frame of reference (the divine lawcourt) to a cosmological one (a cosmic conflict between God and malevolent powers for sovereignty over the human world.')[52] One could say, then, that it is actually characteristic of Paul for him to read Isaiah's 'you were sold because of your sins' as 'you were sold to/under sin'.

In light of the changes introduced to the allusion to Gen 3.13 in Rom 7.11, together with his and other Jewish tendencies to personify sin, it seems quite plausible for Paul to employ the same hermeneutic in his adaptation of Isa 49.24–50.2 in Rom 7.14-25. In Isaiah, Babylon is the giant who purchases and captures Israel as a result of the nation's sins (49.25; 50.1). But seeking to show sin's ongoing control over ἐγώ, Paul modifies Isaiah's text, portraying sin as the creditor and captor (Rom 7.14, 23) who maintains control over ἐγώ following his initial encounter with sin and the law (7.7-13). Such a reading, while evincing a novel re-casting of the enemy captor, is quite plausible indeed.

3.5. *Summary*

We have in this section argued that Paul echoes Isa 49.24–50.2 in Rom 7.14-25. Utilizing several of Richard Hays's criteria for detecting scriptural echoes, we constructed our case on the following observations: (a) Paul quotes and alludes to Deutero-Isaiah frequently in Romans and elsewhere (*recurrence*); (b) numerous key terms from LXX Isa 49.24–50.2 bookend Rom 7.14-25 (*volume*); (c) several themes in Isa 49.24–50.2 (including the sin–exile–restoration paradigm) are also present in Paul's discourse (*thematic coherence*); (d) the same hermeneutic Paul employs to re-cast ἁμαρτία from the grounds of captivity in Isa 50.1 to the captor in Rom 7.14 and 23 is also apparent elsewhere by Paul and contemporary Jews (*historical plausibility*). Having made a case for these echoes, next we draw out their implications for Paul's argument in Rom 7.14-25.

4. Ἐγώ and Israel's Exile in Romans 7.14-25

The forgoing case for the echo of Isa 49.24–50.2 in Rom 7.14-25 has significant implications for the perennial debate over the identity and storyline of ἐγώ in Romans 7. Although a number of scholars believe that Rom 7.7-25 narrates the story of Adam and/or Eve, and thus represents all humanity,[53] the echoes

---

52 Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (NTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011) 30. Ernst Käsemann, 'The Saving Significance of the Death of Jesus in Paul', *Perspectives on Paul* (trans. M. Kohl; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971) 32–59, at 44: '[F]or Paul, salvation does not primarily mean the end of past disaster and the forgiving cancellation of former guilt. It is...freedom from the power of sin, death and the divine wrath.'

53 For ἐγώ as Adam, see, e.g., Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 196; Otfried Hofius, 'Der Mensch im Schatten Adams: Römer 7,7-25a', *Paulusstudien II* (WUNT 143; Tübingen: Mohr

detected above suggest that at least part of the narrative being alluded to in Romans 7 is the history of unbelieving Israel. In what follows it is argued that ἐγώ, while standing first and foremost for Paul, represents any person who encounters the law and thus shares in Israel's experience of deception, death, and exile begun at Sinai (vv. 7-13) and resumed in the Babylonian captivity (vv. 14-25).[54]

4.1.   Ἐγώ and Israel in Romans 7.7-13

Despite modern scholarship's long history of interpreting ἐγώ in Rom 7.7-25 as somebody other than Paul, recent studies have shown convincingly that Paul's narrative functions as reconstructed autobiography (note especially how the first-person pronouns in vv. 4-6 feed into vv. 7-25).[55] Still, the narrative elicits numerous allusions to Israel's history and thereby represents all who likewise submit to the law. Here we argue that in vv. 7-13 Paul reconstructs his encounter with the law principally as a recapitulation of Israel's receipt of Torah at Sinai—even though Eve's deception also lies close to the surface.

 The identification of the primary allusion in vv. 9-11 as unbelieving Israel is most apparent through Paul's consistent use of the term νόμος in Romans 7 to refer to the Mosaic Law (notwithstanding the different nuances it takes on in 7.21–8.2). In Paul, νόμος almost always refers to the Mosaic Law, and it clearly does so in vv. 4-6, as demonstrated by the Spirit-Letter antithesis (cf. Rom 2.27-29; 2 Cor 3.6-7). One can only expect, then, that the Mosaic Law remains the referent of νόμος as the passage continues into Rom 7.7-13. This is apparent in v. 7 by Paul's quotation of the tenth commandment. The admission that ἐγώ would not have known sin had the law not said 'you shall not covet' (οὐκ ἐπιθυμήσεις) shows that Paul has in view the Decalogue (cf. Rom 13.9; LXX Exod 20.17; Deut 5.21). Accordingly, νόμος here refers to the Mosaic Law and the event principally being alluded to throughout Rom 7.9-11 is Israel's receipt of the Sinai legislation. The deception of Eve, as explained earlier, is evoked by ἐξαπατάω in v. 11 (cf. 2 Cor 11.3; 1 Tim 2.14; LXX Gen 3.13). Since, however, ἡ ἐντολή refers to the tenth

---

Siebeck, 2002) 104–54; Herman Lichtenberger, *Das Ich Adams und das Ich der Menschheit: Studien zum Menschenbild in Römer 7* (WUNT 164; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004). For Eve, see Busch, 'The Figure of Eve in Romans 7:5-25'; Krauter, 'Eva in Röm 7'.

54 For ἐγώ as Israel, see Douglas J. Moo, 'Israel and Paul in Romans 7.7-12', *NTS* 32 (1986) 122–35; Mark W. Karlberg, 'Israel's History Personified: Romans 7:7-13 in Relation to Paul's Teaching on the "Old Man",' *TJ* 7 (1986) 65–74; Jan Lambrecht, *The Wretched 'I' and its Liberation: Paul in Romans 7 and 8* (LTPM 14; Louvain: Peeters, 1992) 84–5; Daniel Napier, 'Paul's Analysis of Sin and Torah in Romans 7:7-25', *ResQ* 44 (2002) 15–32.

55 For the autobiographical view, see Gerd Theissen, *Psychological Aspects of Pauline Theology* (trans. J. P. Galvin; Philadelphia: Fortress) 201; Seifrid, 'The Subject of Rom 7:14-25', 314; Stephen J. Chester, *Conversion at Corinth: Perspectives on Conversion in Paul's Theology and the Corinthian Church* (SNTW; London: T&T Clark, 2003) 184.

commandment in v. 8, is synecdoche for νόμος in vv. 9-10 and 12-13,[56] and the same νόμος remains the focus of the discourse in v. 12, ἡ ἐντολή in v. 11 must also refer to the Mosaic Law (rather than the commandment given in the garden), and ἐγώ there stands as a representative of those principally in possession of the law—unbelieving Israel.[57] Thus, while Paul briefly echoes the garden incident in v. 11, that allusion is embedded in the grander allusion to Israel's initial encounter with the Mosaic Law, which serves to illustrate Paul's own (albeit representative) experience of sinning and dying under Torah.

To be sure, many continue to interpret ἐγώ as representative of all humanity, arguing that ἐγώ either is to be identified as Adam/Eve,[58] or is a conflation of Adam, Israel, and Paul, and thus stands for all people.[59] However, to bring the allusion to the garden to the forefront of the narrative, and thus to attach the experience of ἐγώ to all of Adamic humanity, is not only to ignore the specific referent of νόμος in this passage, but also to minimize the particularity of the period from Moses to Christ. The exceptional nature of that period in Paul's redemptive-historical storyline is apparent from insights Paul provides elsewhere. As Moo observes, 'Rom 5.13-14 characterizes the period from Adam to Moses as being "without law", while 5.20 portrays the law as an "intruder" in salvation-history, "coming in" between Adam and Christ'.[60] Sin lay dormant from Adam to Moses (5.13; 7.8); but once the law was given, sin revived and killed Israel (7.9-11; cf. Lev 18.5; Deut 30.15-20). For Paul, then, the experience of ἐγώ is not timeless and universal, but restricted to those who live under the Law of Moses.[61]

Thus, with Moo, it seems best 'to restrict the signification of νόμος/ἐντολή in Rom 7.7-12 to that body of divine revelation which had its origin with Moses and found its τέλος in Christ (Rom 10.4)'.[62] In so doing, ἐγώ can hardly stand

---

56 If Paul's reference to the commandment is a 'representative summation of the Mosaic law', as suggested by Moo, then '[i]t is this commandment in its generic significance...to which ἐντολή in vv. 8–11 refers, not to any specific commandment as such' ('Israel and Paul', 123). Contra John A. Ziesler, 'The Role of the Tenth Commandment in Romans 7', *JSNT* 33 (1988) 41–56.

57 Note that elsewhere Paul considers Israelites to be those specifically in receipt of the law (Rom 2.17; 3.2; 9.4), while gentiles do not have the law (Rom 2.14; cf. 2.12; 1 Cor 9.20-21). Indeed, possession of the law is that which distinguishes Jews from gentiles (Eph 2.14-15; cf. Rom 3.27-31); cf. Moo, 'Israel and Paul', 124.

58 Lichtenberger, *Das Ich Adams*, 134.

59 Stephen J. Chester, 'The Retrospective View of Romans 7: Paul's Past in Present Perspective', *Perspectives on Our Struggle with Sin: Three Views of Romans 7* (ed. T. L. Wilder; Nashville: B&H, 2011) 57–103, at 73.

60 Moo, 'Israel and Paul', 124.

61 Moo, 'Israel and Paul', 124: 'That Paul viewed Adam as, in some sense, a "prototype" of man under the law is suggested by Rom 5.14, but the similarity consists in the situation of confrontation with the divine demand; nothing indicates that the analogy must be extended to include possession of the same body of demands'.

62 Moo, 'Israel and Paul', 124-5; 'Paul's clear tendency to view νόμος as a special gift to Israel stands against any "universalistic" interpretation of Rom 7.7-12' (124).

principally for Adam or for all humanity; ἐγώ rather stands first and foremost for Paul prior to his conversion, but the apostle's own sin is narrated as a recapitulation of Israel's sin, which by virtue of the Edenic allusion is a recapitulation of the fall.[63] There are, then, three layers to the discourse: (1) Eve's deception is evoked to illustrate (2) the death of Israel, which itself is evoked to illustrate (3) Paul's own deception and death at the hands of sin and the law.

4.2. Ἐγώ and Israel in Romans 7.14-25

Having argued that in vv. 7-13 ἐγώ stands chiefly for unbelieving Paul (even if as a paradigm for all people who encounter the Mosaic Law), and that Israel's receipt of the law is enlisted there as the primary historical allusion, we now explore how in vv. 14-25 Paul advances his description of life under sin and the law by introducing another historical allusion. This time Paul draws on Israel's experience in Babylonian captivity, which serves to advance the narrative from the earlier allusion to Sinai. Sin and death, as Paul shows in vv. 7-13, were the immediate consequences of his *initial* encounter with the law (note the use of *past* tense verbs). But as Paul's experience under the law *persists*, so does sin's control over him. As he explains in vv. 14-25, moral failure is the inevitable consequence of his *continued* existence in the flesh and under sin and the law (note the use of *present* tense verbs).[64] Much of the captivity imagery employed to describe both the plight and its solution is borrowed from Isa 49.24–50.2, configuring Paul's narrative to the sin–exile–restoration paradigm implicit in the scriptural source.

 The sin and exile themes actually begin in vv. 7-13, where the power of sin exploits the law to produce covetousness, resulting in death.[65] In the Mosaic Law, death, curse, and exile are interrelated concepts—as are life, blessing, and restoration (Lev 18.5; Deut 30.15-20).[66] In Paul's case, however, death (and by extension exile) stands not for expulsion, but condemnation, resulting in

---

63 Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 359–60. Napier, though missing the autobiographical nature of the passage, recognizes the priority of the allusion to Sinai over that to Eden ('Paul's Analysis of Sin', 20). For the typological relationship between Adam and Israel, including their sin and exile, see Seth D. Postell, *Adam as Israel: Genesis 1–3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tanakh* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2011).

64 Paul's use of past tense verbs, together with the context, indicates that Rom 7.7-13 refers to the past. His then abrupt change to the present tense, together with the context, indicates that the events in vv. 14–25 took place following those in vv. 7–13. These later events occur, from the perspective of ἐγώ the narrator, in the present—even though, from the perspective of Paul the author, they are in the past.

65 N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) 139.

66 Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith*, 318–19; Preston M. Sprinkle, *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul* (WUNT 2/241; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008) 27–34; Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University, 2006) 156–65.

eschatological death (Rom 5.16-17; 7.24–8.2). When the narrative arrives at 7.14-25, therefore, Paul is already in a state of death/exile. There the sin and exile themes resurface as Paul describes himself as 'sold under sin' (v. 14),[67] 'taken captive to sin' (v. 23), and 'serving as a slave to the law of sin' (v. 25).[68] As observed earlier, Babylon functions in Isa 49.24–50.2 as the implied captor who prevents the Israelites from re-inhabiting the land (cf. 49.15-23). But rather than being seized by an external, political agent, as was Israel, Paul's captivity is at the hands of a power residing within. Sin, Paul explains, dwells in him (ἡ οἰκοῦσα ἐν ἐμοὶ ἁμαρτία, Rom 7.17, 20; cf. v. 23), that is, in his flesh (ἐν τῇ σαρκί μου, v. 18), so that he has the desire to keep the law and do what is good (vv. 18, 21, 22), but not the ability to carry it out (vv. 15, 18, 19, 21; cf. 8.3). In fact, sin's dominion over Paul is deceptively debilitating,[69] such that he considers his mind/inner-being to be in God's service (7.22, 23, 25), yet he continually finds that his flesh/members are enslaved to sin (vv. 18, 23, 25).[70] Thus, at the end of the narrative Paul once again characterizes his condition as death (v. 24)—implying at once his body's moral impotency and his condemned status. Paul's situation, then, is like exile insofar as he, as a result of God's judgment, is held captive under the dominion of a foreign power. Unlike exile, however, his plight is not geographical, but corporeal—Paul requires liberation not from a foreign king in a distant land, but from sin's reign in his mortal body (cf. 6.12).

But just as Yahweh (κύριος) promised to reverse Israel's seemingly permanent captivity to Babylon (Isa 49.24–50.2), so God provides restoration to sin's captives

67 Karlberg also notices similarities in Rom 7 to the Babylonian exile ('Israel's History Personified', 69). Frank Thielman observes resonances between Rom 7.13-25 and the disobedience and resultant anguish of Israel apparent in various Jewish texts (Ezra 9.5-15; Neh 9.6-37; Dan 9.4-19; Bar 1.15–3.8), though he concedes that '[t]he similarity between Rom 7:13-25 and these passages does not reach to the level of specific details' ('The Story of Israel and the Theology of Romans 5–8', *Pauline Theology*, vol. 3 [ed. D. M. Hay and E. E. Johnson; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995] 169–95, at 194).

68 The verb δουλεύω (Rom 7.25) does not occur in LXX Isa 49.24–50.2, though see δοῦλος in 49.3, 5, 8. Further, since slavery is conceptually related to exile/captivity, and being 'sold to a creditor' (Isa 50.1) implies debt slavery (Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 334), δουλεύω is an extension of πιπράσκω and αἰχμαλωτίζω in one way or another. Together the three verbs contrast ἐλευθερόω in Rom 8.2. Neither does the verb ἀντιστρατεύω (Rom 7.23) occur elsewhere in the LXX or NT. But it is notable that two of its cognate forms occur in Isa 29.7-8 (στρατεύω, ἐπιστρατεύω [2 ×]) referring to the military opposition Israel faced leading up to the Babylonian exile. For the importance of Isa 28–29 in Romans and elsewhere in Paul, see Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 341–4.

69 Chester argues that in vv. 14–25 Paul describes not a battle to withstand temptation, but his inability to resist committing unrecognized sin (*Conversion at Corinth*, 193). Cf. Gathercole, 'Sin in God's Economy', 167.

70 For Paul's anthropological language here, see Hans Dieter Betz, 'The Concept of the "Inner Human Being" (ὁ ἔσω ἄνθρωπος) in the Anthropology of Paul', *NTS* 46 (2000) 315–41, at 335–9.

through the Lord (κύριος) Jesus Christ (Rom 7.24; 8.3). To be sure, Paul's plight is not fully resolved at conversion. He begins to undergo the process of redemption in the present, as (1) God, in Christ, condemns sin in the flesh (8.3), and (2) the Spirit of God grants new life to believers. The Spirit—anticipated in the OT as the sign of Israel's restoration (e.g. Isa 44.1-5; Ezek 36.16–37.14; Joel 2.28-3.3)—is, according to Paul, the agent who liberates the captives of sin and death and provides moral enablement (8.2, 4-11).[71] But the believer's 'rescue' culminates at the parousia (cf. ῥύομαι, Rom 11.26; 2 Cor 1.10; 1 Thess 1.10). Only at that time will the somatic effects of sin and death be reversed through bodily resurrection (Rom 8.11, 13, 23).

These proposed allusions to the sin–exile–restoration paradigm have significant implications for Paul's rhetorical strategy in Rom 7.14-25. Paul employs these allusions to legitimate his law-free gospel and thus to deter believers from submitting to the law. Having established in Romans 6 that believers are freed from sin and enslaved to righteousness, Paul is careful in Romans 7–8 to demonstrate that the means of moral transformation is the πνεῦμα, not the γράμμα (7.6; 8.3-4). Because believers have died to sin through Christ (6.11), they also through Christ have died to the law, which, counter-intuitively, generates sin and imprisons people under sin's power (7.4-6; cf. 5.20; Gal 3.22). Placing a retrospective and representative version of himself (ἐγώ) at the center of the narrative, Paul then in Rom 7.7-25 recounts his inability as an unbeliever to keep the law in order to show that the law, though 'holy and righteous and good' (7.12; cf. vv. 14, 16), cannot aid in the believer's sanctification, because it has been exploited by sin in the flesh to produce unrighteousness and death (7.7-13; cf. 4.15; 2 Cor 3.6-9). The law, to be sure, has a revelatory (albeit provisional) purpose. If it were not for the law, Paul would not have known sin (Rom 7.7; cf. 3.19-20); indeed, the law was given to increase and expose sin as utterly horrific (7.13; cf. 5.20).[72] But having served its purpose, the law's tenure has now been terminated, having expired following the Christ-event (10.4; cf. 2 Cor 3.11).

Accordingly, pursuing sanctification through law observance would not only re-confine (κατέχω) and re-enslave (δουλεύω) believers to a power (the law) from which they have already been released (καταργέω, 7.6; cf. Gal 3.23-4.5);[73] it would also re-invigorate sin in the flesh, such that believers would become enslaved to sin's power all over again (Rom 7.14, 23, 25). Put in different,

---

71 The meaning of νόμος in 8.2 is that of 'power', as it is in 7.23 and 25; cf. Moo, *Romans*, 473–7. So, while union with Christ releases believers from the Mosaic Law in 7.4-6, the powers of sin and death are those from which believers are liberated in 8.2.

72 Gathercole, 'Sin in God's Economy', 171: 'God gives the Law so that as Sin surges with all its energy, it is shown up in all its horror'.

73 Paul did not reject all forms of law observance (Rom 3.31; 14.1–15.6; 1 Cor 9.20); cf. John M. G. Barclay, '"Do We Undermine the Law?" A Study of Romans 14.1–15.6', *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (ed. J. D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 287–308.

historical-scriptural terms, adhering to the law would usher believers into the sequence of deception, death, and exile that Israel experienced at Sinai and Babylon (7.7-25), a state from which they, through the Christ-event, have already been redeemed (7.4; 8.1-2). Submitting to the law for the purpose of moral transformation, therefore, is tantamount to a rejection of the Christ-gift and a rescission of God's redemptive work (Gal 4.9-11; 5.1-4).

The plausibility of this reading finds strong support in Gal 3.10-14, where Paul challenges the inclination of certain gentile believers to submit to the law by making a similar allusion to exile imagery by way of a scriptural reference. Paul writes, 'For all who are by works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not abide by and do all things written in the book of the law"' (Gal 3.10; citing Deut 27.26). In Deut 27.26, the curse of the law is death/exile (cf. Deut 28.15-68; 30.15-20).[74] But as in Romans 7, Paul interprets the curse of death/exile not as deportation, but as condemnation (cf. δικαιόω, δίκαιος, ζάω, Gal 3.11-12).[75] And just as in Romans 7–8, the plight of death/exile is resolved by Christ and the Spirit: 'Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith' (Gal 3.13-14). Thus, Paul here alludes to the plight of death/exile, just as he does in Romans 7, in order to demonstrate the impotency of the law, and thereby to deter gentile believers from submitting to it. Given these striking rhetorical and theological similarities in Gal 3.10-14, our reading of Rom 7.14-25 finds strong support.[76]

5. Conclusion

This essay has attempted to expose echoes of Isaiah 49–50 in Rom 7.14-25 and to explain how Paul used those echoes together with other scriptural allusions in 7.7-13 to create a coherent and continuous narrative that describes the speaker's moral inability while remaining under the powers of sin and the law. We began with a brief survey of existing views on the scriptural derivation of the phrase 'sold under sin' (Rom 7.14). There it was shown that while several texts

74 N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 137–56; James M. Scott, '"For as Many as Are of Works of the Law are Under a Curse" (Galatians 3.10)', *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (ed. C. A. Evans and J. A. Sanders; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993) 187–221.

75 Rodrigo J. Morales, *The Spirit and the Restoration of Israel: New Exodus and New Creation Motifs in Galatians* (WUNT 2/282; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010) 107: 'By speaking of death rather than exile as the curse, Paul has in a sense taken a metaphor that once referred to exile and made it the true referent of the curse'.

76 See also David I. Starling's thematically related study, *Not My People: Gentiles as Exiles in Pauline Hermeneutics* (BZNW 184; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011).

have been advanced as possible influences on the Pauline phrase, the most plausible suggestion has come from Philonenko, who proposes that πεπραμένος ὑπὸ τὴν ἁμαρτίαν is a 'complex allusion' to Isa 50.1. Even so, it was our thesis that additional echoes from LXX Isa 49.24–50.2 are also present in Rom 7.14-25. Therefore, utilizing several of Richard Hays's criteria for detecting scriptural echoes, we attempted to demonstrate the plausibility of these echoes by showing that: (a) Paul quotes and alludes to Deutero-Isaiah frequently in Romans and elsewhere (*recurrence*); (b) numerous key terms from LXX Isa 49.24–50.2 bookend Rom 7.14-25 (*volume*); (c) several themes in Isa 49.24–50.2 (including the sin–exile–restoration paradigm) are also present in Paul's discourse (*thematic coherence*); (d) the same hermeneutic Paul employs to re-cast ἁμαρτία from the grounds of captivity in Isa 50.1 to the captor in Rom 7.14 and 23 is also apparent elsewhere in Paul and contemporary Jews (*historical plausibility*).

We then turned to investigate what implications these echoes have for discerning the identity and storyline of ἐγώ in Romans 7. Largely assuming, based on other studies, that ἐγώ stands for unbelieving Paul as a representative of Israel, we showed how in Rom 7.7-13 Paul portrays his initial encounter with Torah by alluding to Israel's receipt of the law at Sinai. Similarly, in Rom 7.14-25 Paul uses words and themes from LXX Isa 49.24–50.2 to portray his continued struggle to keep the law as one surviving under the power of sin. Collectively, these Isaianic echoes evoke notions of Israel's Babylonian captivity and thereby provide narratological continuity to the historical-scriptural allusions commonly identified in Rom 7.7-13. In short, just as Israel's early (Sinaic) and later (Babylonian) history is marked by deception, death, and exile, so Paul's own experience under the law, due to sin's disabling power, produced the very same disastrous results, amounting to a condemned state (8.1). God, however, through Christ and the Spirit, has rescued Paul and all believers from captivity to sin and death and released them from the law's demands. Thus, while those who are united with Christ are indeed slaves of righteousness (6.16-23), they must avoid retracing Paul's steps on sin's course of deception, death, and exile, by pursuing moral transformation through the Spirit and apart from the law.