

STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

ESSAYS IN APPRECIATION
OF SHAYE J. D. COHEN

Edited by
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Brown Judaic Studies
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Paul's Scriptures

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Again and again throughout his long and distinguished scholarly career, Shaye has been drawn to the issue of identity. Was Herod a Jew? Was Timothy? Who exactly was a Jew—or should we say “Judean”?—and how would anyone know? How do you become a Jew? Can a woman be a Jew? If you were a Jew, whom could you marry? If you were a Jew, what kind of Jew were you? Would you have followed the teachings of the rabbis? If you were a “rabbi,” would you have followed the teachings of the rabbis? I do not think that it would be an exaggeration to say that in the aggregate the answers that Shaye has offered in these explorations have fundamentally transformed the field, leading to a much more nuanced and fluid sense of religious, ethnic, and gender identity in antiquity.¹ This paper, offered as a token tribute to my teacher, draws on Shaye’s insights as they might apply to the apostle Paul.²

There is now a broad scholarly consensus that Paul was a Jew and should be considered within a Jewish “matrix” or “context.”³ Recog-

1. See the bibliography of Shaye’s works in this volume. Several of these contributions are collected in his books, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties*, HCS 31 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), and *Why Aren’t Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Earlier relevant bibliography can be found in those works as well.

2. Shaye has touched on Paul in several articles but has not dealt directly with Paul’s identity. For a recent essay, see his “From Permission to Prohibition: Paul and the Early Church on Mixed Marriage,” in *Paul’s Jewish Matrix*, ed. Thomas G. Casey and Justin Taylor (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2011), 259–91.

3. This reevaluation of Paul is seen to have begun with E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), although the phrase “the new perspective” was coined by James D. G. Dunn. This approach has generally been focused on explicating Paul’s theology rather than the social-historical concerns focused on here. For an assessment of the new perspective, see Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul*, WUNT 185 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 1–110. See more recently Mark D. Nanos and Magnus Zetterholm, eds., *Paul within Judaism: Restoring the First-Century Context to the Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015); Gabriele Boccaccini and Carlos A. Segovia, eds., *Paul the Jew: Rereading the Apostle as a Figure of Second Temple Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016).

nizing, however, that one cannot speak of a single “Jewish” context in antiquity, scholars have readily understood Paul as a “Hellenistic Jew” and have attempted to situate his writings among those of other Hellenistic Jews, even while recognizing that the line between “hellenized” and “Judean” can be quite blurry, if it exists at all.⁴ Often following the narrative of Acts, Paul is cast as a fundamentally hellenized diaspora Jew whose first language was Greek; who received an education typical of a Jewish middle-class boy; and who then honed some of his scriptural skills as a Pharisee in Jerusalem before his sudden acceptance of Christ. Even the ordinarily skeptical E. P. Sanders almost takes for granted the fact that Paul received a solid childhood education in the Greek Bible, primarily in the diaspora.⁵

In this essay I will develop an alternative hypothesis: that Paul was a Jerusalem Jew, most likely from a relatively affluent family, who in all likelihood spent few if any of his formative years outside of Judea; whose native language was Aramaic but who received a Greek education in Jerusalem, like many affluent Jerusalem Jews; and who developed an increasing understanding of and appreciation for the Septuagint during his travels to diaspora Jewish communities. The narrative in Acts, that is, is fundamentally incorrect. In the latter part of the essay I suggest that this narrative helps us to see Paul’s practice of scriptural citation in a new light.

A Jew from Jerusalem

The argument that Paul was born in the diaspora rests primarily on two pieces of evidence. The first is Acts 22:3, which purportedly cites Paul as saying, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law....”⁶ The second piece of evidence is Paul’s unquestionable command of Greek

See also Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); and Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity*, Contraversions 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

4. For a theoretical reflection on this point, see Anders Klostergaard Petersen, “Paul the Jew was also Paul the Hellenist,” in Boccaccini and Segovia, *Paul the Jew*, 273–99.

5. E. P. Sanders, “Paul’s Jewish Matrix: The Scope and Nature of the Contributions,” in Casey and Taylor, *Paul’s Jewish Matrix*, 51–73. For a more nuanced example of this narrative, see James Albert Harrill, *Paul the Apostle: His Life and Legacy in Their Roman Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 23–45.

6. Translations of all New Testament texts are from the New Revised Standard Version. See also Acts 21:39, in which Paul also states that he is from Tarsus, and 9:11, in which Paul is identified as being from Tarsus. According to Acts 9:30 and 11:25 Paul’s missionizing began in Tarsus.

and, especially, the broad correspondence between his scriptural citations and the extant text of the Septuagint. The problem, though, is that Paul himself never mentions that he was born outside of Judea and there is no reason to think that he could not have learned Greek in Jerusalem.

Previous scholars have noted these issues. W. C. van Unnik, for example, concludes that, "although Paul was born in Tarsus, it was in Jerusalem that he received his upbringing in the parental home just as it was in Jerusalem that he received his later schooling for the rabbinate."⁷ Martin Hengel cautiously subscribes to van Unnik's reconstruction, although Paul's masterly command of Greek suggests that we should not "see him as the purest kind of Palestinian Jew."⁸

In his letters, Paul offers few autobiographical details confined to four short passages:

Romans 11:1: "I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin."

2 Corinthians 11:22: "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I."

Galatians 1:13–14: "You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. ¹⁴I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors."

Philippians 3:4–6: "If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless."

In these passages, Paul consistently (although not explicitly in Galatians) identifies himself as an Israelite or "from the people [*genos*] Israel." That claim and that of being from the "seed" (*sperma*) of Abraham are relatively clear: his parents identified as Israelites or, as we might say, "Jews,"

7. W. C. van Unnik, *Tarsus or Jerusalem, the City of Paul's Youth* (London: Epworth, 1962), 52. See also his rejoinder to critique in van Unnik, "Once Again: Tarsus or Jerusalem," in *Sparsa Collecta: The Collected Essays of W. C. van Unnik*, 4 vols., NovTSup 29, 30, 31, 156 (Leiden: Brill, 1973–2014), 1:321–27.

8. Martin Hengel, "The Pre-Christian Paul," in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians*, ed. Judith Lieu, John North, and Tessa Rajak (London: Routledge, 1992), 29–52, here 38. See also Jörg Frey, "The Jewishness of Paul," in *Paul: Life, Setting, Work, Letters*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 56–95. Frey (58–60) reviews the evidence and then somewhat arbitrarily decides that Paul was shaped to at least some degree in Tarsus.

although he never explicitly uses that word. Three other claims that he makes in these passages deserve more attention.

First is his claim to be a “Hebrew” (2 Cor 11:22; Phil 3:5). It is possible that this is a mere rhetorical flourish that simply reiterates Paul’s claim to be an Israelite.⁹ The problem, however, is that it seems repetitive: Why emphasize both that he is a Hebrew and an Israelite? It is possible that Paul here means to refer to his linguistic ability. If this is the case, then Paul would be claiming here that he was a native speaker of “Hebrew,” that is, the Aramaic vernacular, and the child of native Aramaic speakers.¹⁰

Second, Paul claims to be, “according to the law, a Pharisee” (Phil 3:5). Much has been made of this claim (e.g., van Unnik’s conclusion that it was “schooling for the rabbinate”), and a full discussion is beyond the scope of this paper. I wish only, then, to make the following observations:

1. There are no Pharisees attested outside of Judea and Galilee.¹¹ Paul must have affiliated with the Pharisees when he was actually there.
2. Paul never claims simply “to be” a Pharisee; only to be one who was a Pharisee “according to the law” (*kata nomon*). The phrase appears in the New Testament only in Hebrews, where it can mean “according to Scripture” (10:8) or “established custom” (7:16; 8:4). Josephus’s use of the term is similarly ambiguous (*Ant.* 1.338; 3.264, 4.139, 19.293). Since in this context Paul cannot mean “according to Scripture” he must mean something like, “according to established customs, I follow the Pharisees.”
3. If this is indeed Paul’s meaning, then his affiliation with the Pharisees might be similar to that of Josephus. Josephus states that in his nineteenth year he ἤρξάμην τε πολιτεύεσθαι τῇ Φαρισαίων αἰρέσει κατακολουθῶν (*Life* 12). Steve Mason renders it, “I began to involve myself in public life, deferring to the philosophical school of the Pharisees.”¹² That is, Josephus is claiming not to have any particularly deep knowledge of the Pharisees but that he acted in public according to their norms. The language is different, but Paul might be claiming something similar.

9. John Reumann, *Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AYB 33B (2008; repr., New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 483.

10. See the discussion in Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 154, who nevertheless arbitrarily asserts that the passages in Paul denote “a proud self-designation” rather than a statement of language. On the use of “Hebrew” to mean “Aramaic,” see Martin Hengel, *Between Jesus and Paul: Studies in the History of Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 9–11. Jerome reports a tradition that Paul’s parents were from Giscala in Judea and had been driven into exile in Tarsus, thus making him a “Hebrew of Hebrews” (*Comm. Phlm* 23 [PL 26:633]).

11. The arguments to the contrary are weak and refuted by Hengel, “The Pre-Christian Paul,” 36–7.

12. Steve Mason, *The Life of Josephus*, FJTC 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 20–21.

4. The “Pharisaic curriculum,” often mentioned by scholars, is far from certain. There is almost no evidence, in fact, that Pharisees were fluent in *written* Scripture; they are most known for their facility with ancestral traditions or laws.¹³ Paul himself suggests this in Gal 1:14: he is devoted to τῶν πατριῶν μου παραδόσεων. The term *paradosis* is often associated with the Pharisees but is not explicitly connected to Scripture.¹⁴

Paul’s evocation of the Pharisees, then, may reveal little; it is certainly no proof of his deep learning in Scripture. Instead, it could well point to his attraction to the religious customs and norms distinctive to the Pharisees of Judea. Whether he studied with the Pharisees (as asserted in Acts) or in some sociological sense was a “member” (whatever that may have meant in this context) of a Pharisaic group is impossible to determine from his words alone.

Third, in Rom 11:1 and Phil 3:5 Paul provides the detail that he is from the tribe of Benjamin. These references have typically been taken in one of two ways. Either they reveal that he has a tradition in his family that he truly descends from the tribe of Benjamin, thus enhancing his prestige, or that the notice is meant to evoke a web of biblical texts that would similarly enhance his prestige. There is, however, a third possibility that scholars have previously overlooked. Paul might be using the term as a toponym, meant to indicate that he was from the area of the tribe of Benjamin, to wit, Jerusalem.

The evidence on all sides of this question is sparse, so before reviewing the literary references to tribal identity in contemporaneous Jewish literature it is worth noting the evidence that we do not have and the possible significance of its absence. To my knowledge, there is not a single extant Jewish inscription or documentary papyrus, from any time in antiquity, that notes tribal affiliation.¹⁵ Priestly (and Levitical) status was noted, but no other tribes—including that of Benjamin—can be found in the very places that one might most expect relatively affluent Jews to note their prestigious lineages. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, outside of scriptural and archaizing texts there is no mention of tribal identity aside from priests and Levites.¹⁶ Josephus too never assigns a tribal identity (except

13. For examples, see Josephus, *War* 2.162; *Ant.* 13.297.

14. Albert I. Baumgarten, “The Pharisaic Paradosis,” *HTR* 80 (1987): 63–77.

15. The one possible exception to this is on a single Aramaic ostrakon from Maresha that mentions someone from what appears to read משה דאין. This appears to be a non-Jewish clan identification. See Esther Eshel, “Inscriptions in Hebrew, Aramaic and Phoenician Script,” in *Maresha Excavations Final Report*, ed. Amos Kloner et al., IAA Reports 45 (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2010), 3:35–88, no. 63.

16. Mention of the tribes in biblical contexts can be found in, for example, 4Q365, 4Q377, and 11QTemple.

for priests) to any non-biblical personage. The tribe of Judah would be evoked by later writers to signal Davidic and messianic descent, but this is largely artificial.¹⁷ This lack of evidence suggests that tribal identity had long ceased to be important to Jews in the Second Temple period.

Use of tribal identity as a toponym is uncommon but not unattested in ancient Jewish literature. Jeremiah 8:16 mentions “Dan” as a place rather than a lineage. Among the literary references to tribes in Jewish literature from the Second Temple period, one uses tribal language as a toponym. According to 2 Macc 3:4, Simon, a priest, is identified as “from the tribe of Benjamin” according to the LXX. Simon, however, is, as we know from the narrative of 2 Maccabees, a priest; he cannot be from the lineage of Benjamin.¹⁸ It would make perfect sense, then, that here the reference to the tribe of Benjamin means only that he is from the area of Benjamin. The Latin and Armenian translations, however, state instead that Simon is from the clan of Bilgah. These appear to me to be ancient corrections of the *lectio difficilior* in the LXX, but it is hard to know for certain.

Although the general concept of “the twelve tribes” is mentioned throughout the New Testament and other Jewish texts, identifications of individuals as members of specific tribes are rare.¹⁹ When they do appear, according to Carey Moore, they “represented the general area from which these people descended rather than their actual tribe or bloodlines.”²⁰ The identification of Judith and her family with the tribe of Simon (Jdt 6:15; 8:2; 9:2) may have a geographical resonance, although the evocation of Simon (and his slaughter of his sister Dinah’s rapists) is literarily powerful. In Tobit, for the story to work Tobit must be identified with a northern tribe (Tob 1:4), in this case Naphtali. In the New Testament, aside from Paul only Anna the prophet is associated with a tribe, Asher (Luke 2:36). The reason for this identification is not entirely clear. Anna is described as having lived much of her life as widow in the Jerusalem temple, so it is possible that the tribal identification is meant to convey that she originally came from some distance to take up residence.²¹

Paul’s own brief words, then, are at least consistent with the following reconstruction. Paul was born in or around Jerusalem, or at least

17. Although he exaggerates the role of tribal lineage, still useful is the survey of Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 275–77.

18. On the different witnesses and the argument for this reading (if not interpretation), see Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, CEJL (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008), 95–96, 189–90.

19. The “twelve tribes” are mentioned, for example, in Matt 19:28; Luke 22:30; Eccles 44:23.

20. Carey A. Moore, *Judith: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 40B (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 168.

21. Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke (I–IX): Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, AB 28 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), 431.

lived there from a young enough age that he could consider himself a "Benjaminite." His native language was Aramaic. He did not necessarily receive any formal education in the reading of Scriptures (in any language) while in Jerusalem, although he was attracted to Pharisaic practices and perhaps even studied those practices (not necessarily in written form) with teachers.

We might also make two further inferences. Paul knew Greek, not only the language but also literary and rhetorical techniques. It is thus likely that he learned it as part of his upbringing. If so, then it is also likely that Paul's parents were affluent enough to hire good tutors for him. Despite being a speaker of Aramaic, Paul's formal education would then (at least partially) have been in Greek.

Just because this reconstruction is possible does not, of course, make it correct. It differs from the picture presented in Acts. It also faces the test of plausibility: Can we imagine Jerusalem producing a Jew like Paul? I will here briefly sketch the evidence that suggests that this reconstruction is plausible, and perhaps even likely.

Despite attempts to argue for the extensive use of Hebrew, even multilingualism, in Jerusalem in the first century CE, the linguistic environment of Jerusalem was dominated by Aramaic.²² Those in the upper classes would also receive tutoring in Greek. Knowledge of Hebrew, though, appears to have been scarce and was perhaps largely confined to scribes.²³ This is why, outside of the products of the nationalistic uprising of 66–73 CE, there is very little evidence for the everyday use of Hebrew in the first century CE; almost all extant inscriptions are in Aramaic and Greek. Nor would we expect any deep knowledge of Scripture, even among the (non-

22. The issue of the "language environment" of first-century Jerusalem has been extensively discussed and is still unsettled. A recent volume pushes toward seeing Hebrew as far more commonly known than has often been thought; see Randall Buth and R. Steven Notley, eds., *The Language Environment of First Century Judaea: Jerusalem Studies in the Synoptic Gospels*, JCP 26 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).

23. A fuller defense of this position is beyond the scope of this paper, but see the inscriptions collected in *CIIP*, vol. 1. Nearly all of the nonfunerary inscriptions are in Greek and Aramaic. The funerary inscriptions tend to be very short (often just a name), and it is sometimes unclear if those that use Semitic scripts are more "Hebrew" or "Aramaic." See also Jonathan J. Price and Haggai Misgav, "Jewish Inscriptions and Their Use," in *The Literature of the Sages*, ed. Shmuel Safrai, 2 vols., CRINT 2.3 (Assen: Van Gorcum; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 2:461–83. A linguistic analysis of these inscriptions can be found in Guido Baltes, "The Use of Hebrew and Aramaic in Epigraphic Sources of the New Testament Era," in Buth and Notley, *Language Environment*, 35–65. While Baltes arrives at the conclusion that Hebrew was widely used, his own data suggest the opposite: by his counting, only 67 of the 726 inscriptions contained in *CIIP* and that date between 100 BCE and 70 CE contain "primary" or "secondary" language markers in Hebrew (51). See the analysis in Hanan Eshel, "The Hebrew Language in Economic Documents," in *Jesus' Last Week*, ed. R. Steven Notley, Marc Turnage, and Brian Becker, JCP 11, Jerusalem Studies in the Synoptic Gospels 1 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 245–58, who sees very little Hebrew in these documents.

scribal) upper classes. There were synagogues in first-century Jerusalem (although we cannot gauge how popular they were) that might have read Scripture in an ad hoc fashion, perhaps accompanied by oral (probably on the fly) Aramaic translations.²⁴

To test this reconstruction of Paul as a plausible product of first-century Jerusalem one can compare him to Josephus. Josephus was just a little younger than Paul. His first language was Aramaic. He learned enough Greek to compose literary works in it, even if he had assistants and was embarrassed by his pronunciation (*C. Ap.* 1.50; *A.J.* 20.262–265). His knowledge of Hebrew appears to have been shaky.²⁵ He claims to have followed the customs of the Pharisees and to have been expert at ancestral practices, but if his earliest extant work, the *Bellum judaicum*, is representative, then he had little familiarity with written Scripture while in Jerusalem.²⁶ His first intensive engagement with written Scripture was in its Greek translation when he arrived in Rome.²⁷

Paul's trajectory was similar to Josephus's. Paul demonstrates a deep command of Scripture. It was a command, though, picked up outside of Judea and in Greek translation. This reconstruction of Paul's education helps to solve some puzzles about his use of Scripture that have long troubled scholars.

The Evidence of Acts

The reconstruction that I have offered above is in conflict with Acts. Yet a careful, if brief, examination of Acts can explain how and why the author of Acts made the mistakes he (?) did.

Paul claims in Acts 22:3 to have been educated "at the feet of Gamaliel." There is, of course, no way to know if this was actually true. However, it suspiciously embellishes Paul's own claim in his letters to have

24. Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 42–73. In the rabbinic period, there are already relatively well-established Aramaic translations of Scripture, Targum Onkelos and Targum Jonathan. The rabbis knew of or developed the ritual of translating regular scriptural readings into Aramaic. According to Levine, "Targumim were in use in the first century, first and foremost (although by no means exclusively) in a synagogue setting" (150). Much more than this is hard to know for certain.

25. Tessa Rajak neatly summarizes the issue but presses the evidence too hard when she concludes that Josephus was "totally at home in both" Aramaic and Hebrew (*Josephus, the Historian and His Society*, 2nd ed., Classical Life and Letters (London: Duckworth, 2002), 230–32, here 232). Josephus's demonstrated knowledge of Hebrew is far more limited.

26. Seth Schwartz, *Josephus and Judean Politics*, Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 18 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 25: "there is little evidence he knew the biblical texts at all."

27. Michael Tuval, *From Jerusalem Priest to Roman Jew: On Josephus and the Paradigms of Ancient Judaism*, WUNT 357 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 260–74.

followed the Pharisees; Acts turns him into a disciple of the very paragon of what was imagined to be a Pharisee, Gamaliel himself.²⁸ One would expect no less from Paul's most admiring biographer.

The second suspicious claim in Acts 22:3 is that Paul was born in Tarsus (found also in 21:39). Van Unnik reads the entire verse as factually correct but conventional, indicating that Paul may have been born in Tarsus but for all intents and purposes he was really from Jerusalem. While this may be correct (and would comport with my reconstruction), it may well be possible to go further. This claim might instead be invented by the author, a literary flourish that advances the plot. "Purely redactional," in the words of Hans Conzelmann.²⁹

Why would the author of Acts make up a birthplace for Paul? It is clear from other places in Acts that the author does not hesitate to create details when it suits his purpose.³⁰ In the context of the narrative of Paul's capture in Acts 21–22, his assertion of birth outside of Egypt, and as a Greek speaker, is crucial. But I think that it is also possible that the author of Acts, or his source, genuinely and sincerely inferred that Paul was from the Greek world. If the author was familiar with Paul's letters, he would know that Paul had a good knowledge of Greek and Greek Scripture and traveled throughout the eastern Mediterranean basin. Many decades removed from a Jerusalem long since destroyed, the author of Acts would not have known about what was typical in first-century Jerusalem. So the author made a speculation that was reasonable enough to have shaped scholarly discourse to this day.

A couple of other details in Acts can be similarly explained. Acts gives Paul the name Saul (7:58; 13:9). Whether or not the author was working from a source (perhaps even an urban legend), it fits nicely with 13:21, where Paul evokes "Saul, son of Kish, from the tribe of Benjamin." Paul/Saul share a lineage, perhaps in parallel to Christ/David (13:22). The author of Acts might have extrapolated from Paul's own assertion that he is a Benjaminite, understanding the claim to be one of lineage rather than geography.

Also from Acts comes the idea that Paul was middle or lower class. In Acts 18:3 and 20:34, he claims to work with his own hands as a tent-maker.

28. See also Acts 23:6 and 26:5, in which Paul emphasizes his actual identity as a Pharisee.

29. Hans Conzelmann, *Acts of the Apostles: A Commentary on Acts of the Apostles*, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 183.

30. The highly improbably temple-visiting, Scripture-reading Ethiopian eunuch met by a disappearing apostle (Acts 8:26–40) comes to mind as an example. This raises the interconnected questions of the genre and accuracy of Acts. Pervo reviews these positions, particularly whether Acts is to be considered historiography or fiction (*Acts*, 14–18). Below I develop a limited argument that Acts can be understood as (flawed) historiography, but my larger argument would work just as well if it was a fiction.

This claim might have been derived from 1 Cor 9:6–7, 15, in which he claims to earn a living with his own hands. Such an upbringing, however, pointedly raises the question of how he would have acquired command of literary Greek.

Acts says nothing that directly contradicts Paul's own words in the letters about his upbringing, but instead, as we might expect in such a literary treatment, expands and embellishes them.³¹ If this is right, then Acts offers us a lively and smart reconstruction based on evidence similar to our own but does not possess independent facts that throw any light on Paul's upbringing.

Paul and Scripture

Understanding Paul not as a native Greek-speaking "Hellenistic Jew" but as a native Aramaic-speaking Jerusalem Jew with a Greek education that would have been typical of upper classes has several potential consequences. Here I will look at just one example of how it might help us to better understand Paul, namely, his use of Scripture.

Paul cites Scripture frequently, if unevenly, in his extant letters. In what follows, I discuss three dimensions of Paul's use of Scripture: (1) the language and version that he uses; (2) the parts of Jewish Scripture that he favored; and (3) the purpose to which he puts these citations. It is important to note that my discussion is limited to Paul's direct citations, almost always introduced with a citation formula. "Echoes" and "resonances" of Scripture in Paul's writings might be useful for gauging Paul's general familiarity with the contents of Scripture, but they are not as useful in answering the specific questions that interest us here.³²

Language. Modern scholars have reached a near-consensus that Paul predominantly referenced the Septuagint in his letters.³³ Yet this conclusion is not without the major problem that, while many of Paul's citations of earlier Scripture seem to come directly from the Septuagint, most of his citations do not.

31. This, however, is not an argument that Acts is correct. The conflation of historiography and accuracy is present in Stanley E. Porter, "The Portrait of Paul in Acts," in *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*, ed. Stephen Westerholm (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 124–38.

32. See Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989). For a trenchant critique of this approach, see Paul Foster, "Echoes without Resonance: Critiquing Certain Aspects of Recent Scholarly Trends in the Study of the Jewish Scriptures in the New Testament," *JSNT* 38 (2015): 96–111.

33. The classic study, still relied on by modern scholars, is E. Kautzsch, *De Veteris Testamenti locis a Paulo Apostolo allegatis* (Leipzig: Metzger & Wittig, 1869).

Table 1 is a tabulation of the data provided by E. Earle Ellis. Ellis categorized each of Paul's citations according to one of five categories:

1. In agreement with the LXX and the Hebrew
2. In agreement with the LXX against the Hebrew
3. In agreement with the Hebrew against the LXX
4. At variance with the LXX and the Hebrew where they agree
5. At variance with the LXX and the Hebrew where they vary³⁴

Some of the verses fall betwixt and between his schema, so he additionally notes that some verses within each of these categories show only a "slight variation" or a "difference in word order." For the purpose of these statistics I have amalgamated these into their respective categories. Note that 1 Thessalonians, Philemon, and Philippians do not contain any direct citations.³⁵

Table 1
Number (Percent of Total Number in Epistle) of
Scriptural Citations in Each of Ellis's Categories³⁶

	1	2	3	4	5
Romans	12 (22%)	9 (15%)	1(2%)	11 (21%)	21 (39%)
1 Corinthians	2 (13%)	2 (13%)	1 (6%)	4 (25%)	7 (33%)
2 Corinthians	3 (38%)	0	1 (13%)	3 (38%)	1 (13%)
Galatians	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	0	3 (30%)	3 (30%)

As this table illustrates, on a simple quantitative level it is hard to make a compelling case that Paul was primarily reliant on the Septuagint. In no single letter does Paul use the Septuagint version for more than 40% (categories 1 and 2 combined) of his citations. Instead, the bulk of his citations fall into categories 4 and 5, unattested text forms.

Previous scholars have proposed, very roughly, three kinds of accounts that reconcile these data with the thesis that Paul relied pri-

34. E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), 150.

35. The lack of citations from these three letters might be due to their short length. I suspect, though, that the absence is better explained by their intended audiences. These three letters are all addressed to gentile congregations (rather than what I believe to be the "mixed" congregations in Rome, Corinth, and Galatia) who Paul (probably rightly) assumed would not understand scriptural citations. I do not deal with Paul's audience here, but it must be taken seriously. See Christopher D. Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 38–61; Stanley, "Paul's Use of Scripture: Why Audience Matters," in *As It Is Written: Studying Paul's Use of Scripture*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Stanley, SBLSymS 50 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 125–55.

36. Due to amalgamations and some other anomalies in determining proper categories, the rows do not always add up to 100%.

marily on the Septuagint.³⁷ The first kind of account ascribes divergences from the Septuagint (or some related Greek translation) to Paul's "faulty" memory. This account assumes that Paul learned written Scripture carefully, in both Greek and Hebrew, but when he was writing he tended to quote from memory rather than look each citation up in multiple, bulky scrolls.³⁸ The second kind of account, focusing on the fact that some of Paul's citations are in verbatim agreement with extant written versions of Scripture (and more specifically the Septuagint), claims that Paul must have been using a written source. In this account, the written base text might be a version (or versions) of Scripture that is no longer extant, or a collection of relevant verses that perhaps were modified during the course of composition or transmission.³⁹ The third kind of account posits that Paul knew the "correct" version of Scripture but changed it when it suited his needs.

These explanations have many variations. For the purposes of this paper it is worth noting a few insights on which previous research largely agrees:

1. Paul had access to and consulted the Septuagint. We do not know whether, when writing his letters, he consulted a full version (which, given the difficulty of finding specific references in bulky scrolls seems unlikely) or a smaller, previously compiled collection of quotations (which he himself may have created), but at least at times he probably consulted written versions for his quotations.⁴⁰
2. Paul did not know Hebrew, or at least did not know Hebrew Scripture well. There is no real evidence that Paul consulted or knew a

37. The problem and different proposed solutions are nicely summarized by Christopher D. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature*, SNTSMS 74 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 3–30.

38. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 14–15; see Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 16–17, for a quick summary and rejection of the argument. In his argument against Paul's citation of Scripture by memory, Stanley raises the legitimate point that in some cases Paul almost surely does cite from a written text (17 n. 49). Below I propose a model that addresses this objection.

39. For a summary of this argument (even if he largely rejects it), see R. Timothy McLay, *The Use of the Septuagint in New Testament Research* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 25–30. See also Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 67–79; Stanley E. Porter, "Paul and His Bible: His Education and Access to the Scriptures of Israel," in Porter and Stanley, *As It Is Written*, 97–124, here 122.

40. For a review of the arguments for Paul's primary use of the Septuagint, see Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 11–13, and the literature cited there. For the idea that Paul compiled his own notebook of scriptural citations from which he later drew for his letters, see Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums: Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, BHT 69 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1986), 92–101; Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 69–74.

written version of Hebrew Scripture (as strikingly seen in the verses that fall into category 3 in table 1). This reinforces the hypothesis offered above that Paul did not know Hebrew, or at least was unacquainted with or unable to access Jewish Scriptures in Hebrew.

3. Paul might have known some Scripture in Aramaic translation. Crawford H. Toy proposed that Paul knew Scripture through its oral Aramaic recitation, perhaps in the synagogue.⁴¹ This proposal has not gained wide acceptance, but it also has not been refuted.⁴²
4. Paul cited versions of Scripture that were favorable for the points that he was trying to make with them.⁴³ This does not necessarily mean that Paul knew all of the different versions of a citation and deliberately chose the one that he could best use, even altering it when necessary. At the same time, Paul has a pattern of departing from the Septuagint's version when another version better serves his purposes.

Before showing how the reconstruction above helps to synthesize these data, we should consider the scriptural books with which Paul is acquainted.

Paul's Scriptural Books. Paul cites from fifteen of the books that comprise our Hebrew Bible. His citation sources, by letter, are found in table 2.

Table 2
Sources of Paul's Direct Citations⁴⁴

	Gn	Ex	Lv	Dt	1 Kgs	2 Kgs	Isa	Jer	Hos	Joel	Hab	Mal	Ps	Prov	Job
Rom	5	3	2	6	2		16		2	1	1	1	13	1	
1 Cor	2	1		1			5	1	1				3		1
2 Cor		1	1	1		1	2	1					1		
Gal	4		2	2			1				1				
Totals	11	5	5	10	2	1	24	2	3	1	2	1	17	1	1

Paul cites most from Isaiah, Psalms, Genesis, Deuteronomy, Exodus, Leviticus, and Hosea, with only one or two citations from the remaining books.⁴⁵ To a large degree this mirrors the pattern found in the Dead Sea

41. Crawford Howell Toy, *Quotations in the New Testament* (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1884), xiv–xviii.

42. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture*, 13, 22–24.

43. *Ibid.*, 348–50.

44. Data follow Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 150–52.

45. This largely mirrors quotation patterns elsewhere in the New Testament (with the exception of Leviticus). See David McCalman Turpie, *New Testament View of the Old: A Contribution to Biblical Introduction and Exegesis* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1872), 7.

Scrolls. The most frequently found manuscripts of “biblical” texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls were, in order, Psalms, Deuteronomy, Genesis, Isaiah, Exodus, and Leviticus.⁴⁶ Paul’s choice of books thus appears to align with those most popular in Palestine.

One explanation for this correspondence between the most popular biblical books at Qumran and the books that Paul most frequently cites is that these books were the most well-known books in Judea, where Paul was first exposed to Scripture. Paul gravitated to citing the texts that he did not only because they served his purpose but also because he knew them better than other biblical texts. It is worth noting that in more or less contemporaneous texts produced by diaspora Jews, far less use is made of books such as Isaiah and Psalms. Paul’s older contemporary Philo, for example, was hardly interested in non-pentateuchal biblical texts.⁴⁷

Before continuing this line of inquiry, it is worth considering the evidence in a more fine-grained way. There is very little evidence that Paul knew the Bible in Hebrew at all; the citations that Ellis assigns to category 3 (following the Hebrew against the Septuagint) come from Job (two) and Exodus (one), and don’t tell us very much. There may not yet have been a Greek translation of Job, and the difference of wording of the citation of Exodus between the MT and the Septuagint makes no difference to Paul’s argument (2 Cor 8:15, citing Exod 16:18). There is substantially more evidence, as noted above, that Paul knew Scripture in Greek. Below is the list of books, by letter, that Paul cites that Ellis assigns to category 2 (following the Septuagint against the Hebrew).

Table 3
Books Cited That Fall into Ellis’s Category 2

Romans	Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah, Proverbs, Deuteronomy
1 Corinthians	Genesis, Isaiah
2 Corinthians	0
Galatians	Genesis, Isaiah

This could be seen as a challenge to the hypothesis that Paul’s knowledge of biblical books popular in Judea derived from his upbringing there. That is, if this were the case, we would expect that citations from these books in particular would follow the Hebrew—why, instead, do they fol-

46. James VanderKam and Peter Flint, eds., *The Meaning of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Their Significance for Understanding the Bible, Judaism, Jesus, and Christianity* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2002), 150.

47. Gregory E. Sterling, “The Interpreter of Moses: Philo of Alexandria and the Biblical Text,” in *A Companion to Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism*, ed. Matthias Henze (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 415–35, here 424–27.

low the Septuagint? Here, though, the picture is actually more muddled. Paul never consistently and clearly follows one textual version for his citations of a given biblical book, even within the same letter. In Romans, for example, Paul's citations of Isaiah fall into Ellis's categories 4 and 5 (both unattested textual forms), with the bulk actually falling into category 5. In 1 Corinthians, Paul uses different textual versions in his two citations of *the very same chapter* of Genesis. In 6:16 he cites a version of Gen 2:24 that falls into category 2, but in 15:45 he cites a version of Gen 2:7 that falls into category 4. For the citation of Gen 2:24, it would not have made a difference to Paul's argument had he used the Septuagint or the Hebrew version. His citation of Gen 2:7, however, contains a divergence from all known versions that is critical for Paul's argument.⁴⁸ Did Paul here have two different versions of Genesis, on two different scrolls, open in front of him as he composed the letter? Did he have one scroll that diverged from the textual versions that are now extant? Did he simply insert a critical word into his citation in 1 Cor 15:45 in order to make a better argument, hoping that no one would notice?

The reconstruction offered above provides a way to answer these questions. Paul almost never cites the Hebrew version of Scripture because he did not know Hebrew. He does at times appear to be consulting written versions of the Septuagint, but primarily he worked from memory of verses that he knew in Aramaic. This is why in the overwhelming majority of cases Paul's citations match neither the extant Greek nor Hebrew versions; they were filtered through both a translation and the vagaries (and desires) of memory. When Paul "miscites" Gen 2:7, he did not deliberately change what he knew to be the correct text. Rather, he cited it as he remembered it, with perhaps his memory adjusting the wording to better fit what he understood to be the true meaning of the verse. This was not a "memory lapse" because Paul had less interest in citing the precise wording of Scripture than he did in conveying its true (in his mind) meaning.⁴⁹

Usage. Finally, an analysis of the way in which Paul uses Scripture also can largely be explained by the model offered in this essay.

48. Paul's citation calls Adam "the *first* man." The word "first" is not found in any other version but is necessary for Paul in order to make the contrast with "the last man," Christ.

49. The theory that Paul cited from memory, as noted above, has a long and distinguished scholarly history. The claim that Paul "miscites" Scripture, though, which arises from a priori assumptions and value judgments about Paul's education and the primacy of written Scripture, has made scholars uneasy. I am suggesting a model meant to be value neutral that, in large measure, comports with Leonard Greenspoon, "By the Letter? Word for Word? Scriptural Citation in Paul," in *Paul and Scripture: Extending the Conversation*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley, ECL 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 9–24 (although I disagree with him on several specific points).

Paul's introductions to direct scriptural citations—his so-called “introductory formulae”—and the purpose to which he uses these citations tend to resemble Palestinian Jewish literature to a far greater extent than they resemble Jewish literature written in Greek, presumably outside of Palestine. Due to the scant and selective nature of the evidence, this is not a particularly strong argument, but nevertheless it helps to buttress the conclusions reached above.

Paul's preferred introductory formulae are “as it is written” and “Scripture says.”⁵⁰ Only a handful of times does he cite Scripture with a formula that begins with a character (David, Isaiah, Moses, and, in just a few cases, God) who “says” the scriptural verse.⁵¹ As scholars have, again, long noted, the phrase “as it is written” is more common in Palestinian Jewish literature such as the Dead Sea Scrolls and later rabbinic literature than in Greek Jewish literature.⁵² The authors of the latter texts prefer to quote Scripture in the name of a character, especially Moses. Moreover, the Greek phrase “as it is written” is rarely used in contemporaneous non-Jewish Greek or Latin literature to introduce a citation. Paul appears to be following a distinctly Palestinian pattern of introducing Scripture.

A comparative analysis of the reasons that Paul cites Scripture yields murkier results. Scholars have developed competing schema for classifying Paul's use of scriptural citations.⁵³ Nearly all of Paul's citations, however, really fall into one of two types. Most of his citations are deployed in order to make christological claims about how we are to understand the world and our relationship to it in light of Christ. Most of the remainder of his citations attempt to prescribe proper behavior. Both Palestinian and non-Palestinian Jewish literature cite Scripture for proof of proper or normative behavior. While neither branch of literature obviously uses Scripture to make christological arguments, they both use it to make larger claims about the nature of the world. This is especially clear in Philo, who often reads Scripture as encoding some deeper truth about the nature of the world.⁵⁴ Such a use of Scripture in Palestinian literature is far less common but not completely unattested; some of the Dead Sea Scrolls, for example, use Scripture to reveal the state of affairs under the “new covenant.”⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Ellis concludes that “where distinguishable, with

50. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 22–25, 48–49; Turpie, *New Testament View of the Old*, 340–41.

51. The vast bulk of these exceptions are found in Romans: 4:7, 8; 7:7; 9:15; 10:16, 19, 20; 11:4, 9, 10; 15:12.

52. For a careful and nuanced statement on the introductory formulas in the New Testament and the Mishnah, see Bruce Manning Metzger, “The Formulas Introducing Quotations of Scripture in the NT and the Mishnah,” *JBL* 70 (1951): 297–307.

53. See Steve Moyise, “Quotations,” in Porter and Stanley, *As It Is Written*, 15–28.

54. Hindy Najman, “A Written Copy of the Law of Nature,” *SPhiloA* 15 (2003): 54–63.

55. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Lit-

few exceptions [Paul's literary methods] point to a Palestinian rather than a Hellenistic Judaism."⁵⁶

Conclusions

Over the past few decades there has been an increasing awareness of Paul's "Jewishness" and its importance for understanding his activities. Much of this research, however, has remained grounded in assumptions about Paul's "Hellenistic" upbringing followed by his "rabbinical" training. In this essay I have argued for another, more nuanced understanding of Paul's upbringing. Paul was a "Hellenistic Jew" from Jerusalem, whose childhood and education would not have been very different from many of his affluent neighbors like Josephus. His native tongue was Aramaic, the language in which he would have orally learned Scripture in an ad hoc fashion. During his sojourn outside of Judea and through his trips to synagogues there he became familiar with written Jewish Scripture, in Greek.

There are two primary ramifications of this argument. The first involves audience. It is by no means obvious that Paul's invocation of Scripture and its authority "worked" for his audience. After all, why would gentile readers of his letters have given authority to the cryptic citations of Jewish Scripture? How might they have regarded it? The argument here sensitizes us to the possibility that Paul and his audience had different assumptions about scriptural authority based at least in part on their social locations.

The second ramification is for the cluster of questions generally tied to the "new perspective." These questions generally place Paul in a "Jewish" context but sometimes do not adequately address the question of what that actually means. Just as Shaye's work has forced us to reconsider what it meant to be a "Jew" in antiquity, it is my hope that this study will help us to recognize how our preconceptions about the artificial boundaries of "Hellenistic Judaism" might be reconfigured in a productive manner.

erature and the New Testament," *NTS* 7 (1961): 297–333: "The conclusion drawn from these details is that the exegetical practices of the New Testament writers is quite similar to that of their Jewish contemporaries, which is best illustrated by the Qumran literature" (330). See also Sarianna Metso, "Biblical Quotations in the Community Rule," in *The Bible as Book: The Hebrew Bible and the Judaean Desert Discoveries*, ed. Edward D. Herbert and Emanuel Tov (London: British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2002), 81–92.

56. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament*, 83.