

# **The Jewish Blessing over Bread and the Interpretation of the Manna in Judaism and Christianity**

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## **Abstract**

The paper examines the core text of the rabbinic pre-prandial blessing over bread “[... God], who brings forth bread from the land”. The blessing differs from other blessings over food in its formulation and significance. According to Tosefta Brakhot 4.1, its performance releases bread (food) for human use (consumption). The phrasing of the blessing resembles Ps 104:13f. However, its imagined context rather aligns with the cessation of the gift of Manna to Israel. Following the first Pesah in the Promised Land, the people of Israel ate bread (from grain) that “came forth from the land” instead of bread that came “from heaven”. Early Christianity understood the consecration of bread as the function of its celebration of the Eucharist. From late Antiquity on, Christian theologians interpreted the Eucharist as fulfilling the Old Testament’s typology of the Manna. This paper poses and refutes the working hypothesis that the rabbinic blessing sets Jewish, profane, non-Manna bread apart from Christian sacred, Manna-like Eucharistic bread. Two arguments are put forward. First, Early Christian interpreters of the Manna avoid Eucharistic overtones and prefer an allegorical explanation of the Eucharist as God’s word, Jesus’ message, etc. Second, and following this first observation, the hypothesis faces a serious chronological discrepancy. When Christians developed the Manna-Eucharist typology, the rabbinic blessing over bread had already been well-established for at least two centuries. This paper concludes that the formulation and function of the blessing over bread do not stem from Jewish-Christian polemics regarding the religious significance of bread.

## 1 Introduction

The rabbis require the recitation of blessings over various categories of food.<sup>1</sup> Bread is singled out: “Blessed are you Adonai, our God, king of the universe, who brings forth bread from the land (or the earth, *ereṣ*)” (cf. mBer 6.1). Similarly, wine is set apart from the beverages. Before drinking wine, one is supposed to say “... who creates the fruit of the vine”. The blessings over wine and bread differ from each other conceptually. The blessing over “the fruit of the vine” resembles other blessings that mention the creation of a plant, a product of agriculture, or “everything”. In this vein, the Babylonian Talmud (bBer 36a–b) requires for the consumption of flour (of wheat) the blessings “... who creates the fruit of the earth (or soil, *adama*)” (according to R. Yehuda) or “... by means of whose word everything comes into being” (according to R. Naḥman) or over anything that contains one of the five species (of grain<sup>2</sup>): “... who creates kinds of nourishment”. One might expect a blessing “... who creates/brings forth from the soil (kinds of) grain” over bread that mentions grain, not bread, the result of a sophisticated process of food production. Furthermore, bread does not “come forth from the land, (the soil, or the earth)”. The blessing over bread breaks ranks. Its plain meaning is absurd.<sup>3</sup>

The following observations report the attempt to explain the Rabbinic blessing over bread as a reaction to the Christian interpretation of the Manna as typological prefiguration of the Eucharist. According to the bible, God sustained Israel during the journey in the wilderness by means of the provision of Manna, (water from the rock, and quails). After the first Pesah in the promised land, he continues to do so by “bringing forth bread”—not Manna—“from the land”—not from heaven. The emphasis on bread and its special, counter-intuitive blessing demand an explanation. Did the rabbis establish and formulate this blessing as a measure to distance

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1 I am grateful to the members of the seminar “Problems in the Early History of Liturgy” of the North American Academy for Liturgy who discussed a draft of this paper in January 2025.

2 mHal 1.1–2, wheat, barley, spelt, oats, and rye. Modern translations of ancient terms may be botanically inaccurate.

3 Together with bread, wine became a typical beverage and a metonymy for the Judeo-Greco-Roman symposium in a general sense. “... who creates the fruit of the vine” is only said over *mixed* wine (that is consumed during the symposia) according to Rabbi Eliezer (against the Sages); yBer 6.1 10a and other sources.

themselves from Christianity and the Eucharist—a cluster of Christian sympotic customs, rites, and bits of their interpretation that began to take center stage in those decades? As will be shown, the answer is rather no than yes.

## 2 Bread from the Land and Bread from Heaven

Judaism and Christianity share a conspicuous interest in ritual activities involving bread. It distinguishes them from their Greek and Roman contemporaries. Teresa Berger aptly discerns a practical as well as conceptual “bread thread” in the two religions.<sup>4</sup> For the performance as well as the scholarly interpretation of Greek and Roman symposia, wine took center stage. Rabbinic rules about blessings before the consumption of solid food as well as liquids provide a reason for the custom to bless not only bread, but also wine at the beginning of a meal.<sup>5</sup> Even though Birkat ha-Mazon is the more solemn occasion for ritualized acts during formal meals in rabbinic as well as Greek and Roman terms, the rabbis make its performance dependent upon the blessing and consumption of bread at the beginning of the respective meal.

Other blessings that emphasize growth from the earth speak about *adama* (“soil” or “earth”), not *ereṣ* (“land” or “earth”). At first sight, the difference seems insignificant. The Sages of the Bavli discuss two variants of the wording of the blessing over bread. They legitimize all variants by means of references to the Exodus associating “who brings forth”, (*ha*)*moṣi*’, with Num 23:22, Deut 8:15 (which refers indirectly to the wandering in the wilderness and the Hallel Ps 114:8), and Exod 6:7. Bread is associated with the Exodus from Egypt to *ha’aretz*, “the Land” (of Israel). The explanation of the Sages is demonstrative regarding the etymology of *moṣi*’, but avoids the conceptual problems of the text of the blessing.

The *Mekhilta* adds another aspect. It remarks on the lemma “(bread) from heaven” that “[i]n the past the bread came up [‘*oleh*] from the earth [*ereṣ*—rather

4 Communication at the meeting of the North American Academy for Liturgy in 2025.

5 LEONHARD: Blessings. Wine was not only blessed at the occasion of Birkat ha-Mazon after the meal. The question why wine is blessed *before* eating in Jewish and Christian sources requires its own discussion. See COSGROVE: Ceremonies.

‘land’ than ‘soil’] and the dew would come down from heaven [...] But now things have changed. Bread began to come down from heaven and the dew came up from the earth”<sup>6</sup>. After crossing the Jordan, the situation is again reversed. In all respects, bread is complementary to Manna. They are mutually exclusive. Manna comes from heaven when bread is lacking and withdrawn when bread is again available from tilling the land.

Thus, the context of the Pesah at Gilgal (Josh 5) provides the conceptual background of the blessing. Josh 5:11–12 repeats thrice that Israel ate “bread” which God supplied from above, from heaven. After the Pesah at Gilgal, they ate “from the produce of the land (*ereṣ*)”, i.e. from below. Before this background, the blessing celebrates God’s gift of bread to Israel after their entry into the land and as a replacement for the Manna (which had earlier replaced bread). The bible calls Manna “(heavenly) *bread*”<sup>7</sup>. It is thus even more significant that the blessing mentions “bread” instead of “grain”. The “bread” of normal meals of the present time is conspicuously—not accidentally—different from the Manna.

The gift of the Manna is limited in time and in place. It is received and almost always consumed outside of the borders of the Land (of Israel). Thus, rabbinic texts remark that the gift of the Manna ended with Moses’ death, i.e. outside of the land. Upon Moses’ death, the Israelites collected a supply of Manna and lived on it for another 39 (40<sup>8</sup>) days.<sup>9</sup> Until the offering of the ‘*omer* on the 16<sup>th</sup> of Nisan (Deut 16:9; in the land), the Israelites exhausted a special store of Manna,<sup>10</sup> or “from the unleavened cake(s) that they had brought with them from Egypt

6 MekhY *vayassa* ‘3 Lauterbach 234.

7 Ps 105:40, 78:23–25: Manna and “heavenly grain” being rained down; apart from Exodus 16:4, 8, 12, 15, 22, 29, 32. ZUCKER: Manna, 781–782 refer to a *Jerusalem Post* paper (August 8, 2007; <https://www.jpost.com>, Levi Cooper, “World of the Sages: Is There a Blessing Over Manna?”) that discusses the proper blessing over Manna—a reasonable question, as the righteous will eat Manna in the World to Come. The suggestion of a blessing “... who brings forth bread from the heavens” is rejected there based on the idea of divine sparks that are normally set free by the performance of the blessing. This will not be required for something that is anyhow heavenly food. Thus, the reception of concepts of Gnosticism has led to new reasons for saying a blessing independent from the biblical system of Levitical and priestly dues.

8 SifBam 89 Kahana I.1, 227; unless the year was a leap year, MekhY *vayassa* ‘6 Lauterbach 249.

9 tSot 11.2–5 (ms. Erfurt 6) Lieberman 217–219 and cf. MekhY *vayassa* ‘5 Lauterbach 249–250. *Seder Olam Raba* 10 Milikowsky 1.251–252.

10 tSot 11.2 Lieberman 218 remarks that if the Manna had not stopped, Israel would not have been willing to eat bread made of grain grown in the land.

(and) which was beautiful for them like Manna”<sup>11</sup>, according to other sources. The blessing over bread acknowledges the continuation of God’s beneficent agency although the boon of the Manna ended.<sup>12</sup>

The blessing “... who brings forth bread from the land” is not attested before the era of the early rabbis. As argued elsewhere,<sup>13</sup> it is designed to replace, and thus to reconstitute the biblical system of Levitical and priestly dues in the absence of a functioning temple in Jerusalem. The liturgical and legal functions of the blessing are rabbinic innovations. Neither its wording nor its function requires any bit of external—more precisely, Christian—influence. Its wording traces back to Ps 104:(13–)14: “He makes grass grow for the cattle, and plants for people to cultivate—to *bring forth* bread from the land”.<sup>14</sup> However, the blessing interprets the verse in a very specific way.

Ancient Hebrew grammatical infinitives (in this case: “to bring forth”) do not imply the respective grammatical subject of the sentence as their logical subject. In Ps 104:14, God, “the work of humankind”, or “humankind” may “bring forth bread from the land (or earth)”. Rashi (R. Shlomo Yiṣḥaḳi) and (R. Abraham ben Meir) Ibn Ezra understand God as logical subject of “to bring forth”. The Radaq (R. David ben Joseph Qimḥi), (as well as the Septuagint and the Vulgate) interpret *adam*, “man, humankind” or “the work of humankind” as the logical subject.<sup>15</sup> Qimḥi associates Ps 104:14 with Gen 3:19 (the curse over the land and implicitly over Adam, who will eat bread [*leḥem*] from the ground [*adamah*] through painful toil). In contradistinction to the sustenance of the cattle, the food for humankind requires human labor, *‘avodat adam*. In a straightforward reading of Ps 104:14, God causes the growth of the grass (*maṣmiah ... ḥaṣir*) for the livestock and the *‘eseb* (“herbs”, “grass” as raw material) for the “the work of humankind, (i.e. that human beings should work) in order to bring forth bread from the land (or earth)”.

11 tSot 11.5 Lieberman 219; par. Ms. Erfurt and SOR 10 Milikowsky 1, 252 do not mention that the cakes were unleavened.

12 WILFAND: Manna, 777 refers to bBer48b where R. Naḥman attributes the introduction of the first blessing, *ha-zan et ha-kol*, “... who nourishes everything”, to Moses (referring to the Manna) and *‘al ha-areṣ we-‘al ha-mazon*, “upon the land and the food” to Joshua.

13 LEONHARD: Blessings.

14 Communication of Ruth Langer at the meeting of the North American Academy for Liturgy in 2025. I am grateful to Johannes Schnocks for his suggestions to Ps 104:14.

15 GRUBER: Commentary, 620 n. 11–12. Qimḥi interprets “bread” as a metonymy for “all food”.

Ps 104:(13–)14 does not say that God “brings forth bread from the earth”. This may be one of the reasons why the interpretation of the blessing in bBer avoids mentioning Ps 104:14,<sup>16</sup> although it provides the text of the blessing with biblical terminology.

The emphasis of the Tosefta on the requirement to recite the blessing “to avoid misuse of God’s property” (tBer 4.1), verges on a ritualized act that establishes the profaneness of food, especially bread, and especially in the context of formal meals.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, when the system of these blessings emerges in Judaism, Christian authors like Paul write institution narratives of the Eucharist, that identify bread as Christ’s body.<sup>18</sup> A century after Paul, Irenaeus of Lyon muses about causes and effects of this identification for the celebration of Eucharists.<sup>19</sup> He distances Christianity from Judaism (and heretical groups) and claims the universal “pure sacrifice” according to Mal 1:11 for Christianity. He associates the Eucharist with the first fruits of God’s creation. He alludes to Mark 4:28 (that mentions that “the *earth* gives first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear”) and identifies the sanctifying effect of unspecified acts.<sup>20</sup> In a catena fragment, Irenaeus clusters the notions set up above as a background for the Jewish blessing over bread: the Exodus from Egypt and the replacement of the provision of the Manna with grain from the “earth”, “land”, “ground” (*gē*) under Joshua’s leadership. He adds that the Manna should be a *typos* of the (Eucharistic) body of

16 Quoting Ps 104:14, rabbinic sources do not associate the blessing over bread; cf. SifDev 43 (11:15) Finkelstein 92. The following verse 15 is referred to in the interpretation of the blessing over wine, bBer 35b.

17 tBer 4.1 Lieberman 18. The Bavli adds this topic close to the beginning of its discussion of mBer 6.1; bBer 35a–b.

18 1 Cor 11:24. The oldest sources only identify bread with Christ’s body. Only later, this notion is adapted to the wine as Christ’s blood; KLINGHARDT: Becher.

19 *Adversus Haereses* 4.18.4–6 SC 100.2, 606–610.

20 *Adversus Haereses* 4.18.5–6 SC 100.2, 610–612 ANF 1, 486: “For as the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist, consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly; so also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity. [Chapter 6:] Now we make offering to Him, not as though He stood in need of it, but rendering thanks for His gift, and thus sanctifying what has been created.” For an analogous idea of an incorporation of Christ’s body, see MekhY *vayassa* ‘4 Lauterbach 241–242: The Manna is “absorbed into your limbs” and see n. 24.

Christ.<sup>21</sup> The idea that a presider's recitation of Jesus' words over bread and wine should bring about this change (from bread to the body Christ) was elaborated much later.<sup>22</sup> However, Christians very early regarded the Eucharistic meal and the Eucharistic bread as sacred.

Ancient observers of rabbinic and Christian customs could see one group that requires a micro ritual before any profane use of food, especially bread (and wine). Another group performs short, ritualized acts before their meals. They regard the ensuing meals as sacred, transport or distribute food to absentees, and exclude (unbaptized) outsiders from the consumption of this bread. As remarked above, both the rabbis and the Christians single out bread from all foodstuffs. Bread-only Eucharists are well attested in ancient sources.<sup>23</sup> The rabbinic blessing is evocative of the dichotomy of bread and Manna. Did the Sages emphasize the worldliness of bread as non- or post-Manna (after the recitation of the blessing) when Christians regarded the Eucharist as sacred and as a new Manna (in the context of their communal meals)? If yes, were the two groups aware of each other's rites and the respective explanations?

21 "Take unto thee Joshua [...] the son of Nun (Num 27:18). For it was proper that Moses should lead the people out of Egypt, but that [...] Joshua should lead them into the inheritance. Also that Moses, as was the case with the law, should cease to be, but that Joshua [...], as the word, and no untrue type of the Word made flesh [...], should be a preacher to the people. Then again, (it was fit) that Moses should give Manna as food to the fathers, but Joshua wheat; as the first-fruits of life, a type of the body of Christ, as also the Scripture declares that the Manna of the Lord ceased when the people had eaten wheat from the land"; Fragment 19 Harvey 2, 488–489 translation ANF 1, 571–572. As discussed below, the "body of Christ" could theoretically be interpreted in terms of John 6, i.e. as an allegory on Jesus' teaching. The text does not hint at this interpretation. It is, however, plausible, because Irenaeus discusses the quality of Eucharistic bread elsewhere, see above.

22 Even Ambrose of Milan, *De Mysteriis* 9.54 CSEL 73, 112–113; *De Sacramentis* 4.4.13–16 CSEL 73, 51–53 does not yet envisage a formula (pronounced by the presider of the Eucharist) which turns bread into the body of Christ, see TAFT: Mass 503–504, esp. 504. ZHELTOV: Moment reviews notion of a moment of consecration and the function of the epiclesis during the celebration of the Eucharist. For late antique Platonists like Theodore of Mopsuestia, the idea of an earthly change of bread was utterly disturbing. All worldly things are said to be images, *typoi*, etc. of heavenly ideas. The utterance of a formula cannot change this relationship. Human observers of liturgies should see through or comprehend the bread as the body of Christ.

23 MCGOWAN: *Ascetic*, 93–95 ore.g. 191–192, 201. After the dissemination of infant baptism, Medieval rites of baptism may look like wine-only Eucharists. However, infants were communed with wine only because they could not yet eat bread and because the reception of communion was regarded as a necessary conclusion of baptism; GY: Taufkommunion, BROWE: Kinderkommunion.

Menahem Kister analyzes the interpretation of the Manna in ancient Jewish and Christian texts.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Philo interprets the Manna allegorically as a reference to the divine word. This interpretation is shared by John 6 and Origen.<sup>25</sup> The character of the Manna giving every eater his or her own desired flavor corresponds to God's word that is received by every believer according to his or her capacity. In John 6:30–50, Jesus identifies himself—i.e. his message—with the new Manna that is given as a sign to his generation. Giving himself is giving his teaching. Consuming him is accepting his teaching. The effect of the reception of Jesus, eternal life, etc. stands in sharp contrast to the generation of the wilderness, who ate the Manna and died (John 6:31–33, 49; 1 Cor 10:5). Jesus' Jewish interlocutors in John's Gospel reject this approach. Kister observes that Jewish and Christian scholars share the allegorical interpretation of the Manna as teaching, as Torah, as wisdom, etc. Later, the rabbis conspicuously prefer the literal, material explanations and avoid the allegorical ones. Apparently, they know and reject an older bit of genuinely Jewish exegesis—perhaps because the Christians had appropriated it in the meantime.

Thus, one may expect Christian interpreters not only to appropriate aspects of the Manna narrative as allegories for Jesus' teaching, but also as a typology for the Eucharist. This could imply that Christians established the Eucharist as a ritual, where bread was sanctified as the new Manna. Conversely, Jewish scholars created the blessing over bread as a ritual where bread was (implicitly) declared profane just by emphasizing the contrast to the Manna. This straightforward ana-

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24 KISTER: Allegorical interpretations. Menahem Kister (164–165) points out that the comparison of the Manna with hoarfrost, *kfor*, evokes atonement, *kippur* (both containing *kpr*) for ancient speakers of Hebrew. Therefore (!), Manna is white like Coriander, “because it whitened [cleansed] the sins of Israel” (167), bYom 75a. Early Christian explanations of the Eucharist still oscillate between the Eucharist as removing (lighter) sins from the sinner and the Eucharist as requiring sinlessness from Christians who approach communion. Similarly, one may square the rabbinic discussion of the digestion of Manna with Israel Yuval's (SCHÄFER: Jesus, 174 n. 32) and Peter Schäfer's interpretation of the rabbinic vilification of Jesus; bGit 56b–57a; SCHÄFER: Jesus, chapter 8. The more Christian interpreters emphasize a kind of materiality of Jesus' body as Eucharistic bread, the more they are challenged to explain what should happen to this bread in human metabolism. The idea that the Manna was not subject to defecation resembles Christian considerations regarding Eucharistic bread. These two parallels require further substantiation to qualify as traces of an ancient interreligious dialogue about the Eucharist.

25 See METZDORF: Manna. HEILMANN: Wein collects arguments against a Eucharistic understanding of John 6. See below n. 37 for Irenaeus' adoption of the concept.



lysis may be aesthetically compelling. However, the historical situation is more complicated.

### 3 The Christians' Manna

Paul's allusion to Israel's journey in the wilderness falls short of a typological interpretation of the Manna. Typology implies Christian superiority over Israel. For Paul, the story of the Manna is but an example in support of the idea that being a Christian is of no avail for those who harbor evil or similarly bad desires. Paul offers an exhortation to virtue, not an explanation of the Eucharist.<sup>26</sup>

Justina C. Metzdorf summarizes passages from Origen and their history of reception. She labels the typology of Manna-Eucharist as "classic" (without quotation of ancient sources).<sup>27</sup> She emphasizes Origen's allegorical interpretation of the Manna on the word of God, Christ, etc. Conversely, Harald Buchinger points to passages where Origen associates Manna with the Eucharist.<sup>28</sup> However, he remarks that the evidence for this association is slim. The typology is mentioned "only implicitly", "not said expressly", "Origen does not elaborate it [...]".<sup>29</sup> By contrast, the allegorical interpretation on the word of God is patent.

Later interpreters of Manna as a biblical topic of Exod 16, John 6, and 1 Cor 10 regard it as a typological prefiguration of the Eucharist.<sup>30</sup> Thus, John Chrysostom and Ambrose of Milan interpret the Manna with reference to the Eucharist, although they also pass on the well-known allegorical explanations. In passing,

26 1 Cor 10:1–13. John Chrysostom, *In Epistulam Primam ad Corinthios Homiliae* 40.4 PG 61 col. 353 finds ethical principles in Paul's reference to the Manna. He does not refer to the Eucharist.

27 METZDORF: Manna, 334.

28 BUCHINGER: Praxis, 14 n. 40 = 16 n. 47: Buchinger observes that Origen first associated the Manna with the Sunday Eucharist and reinterpreted it later as referring to the daily liturgy of the word. Ch. 2.5 c is devoted to the typology of the Manna, 69–71.

29 BUCHINGER: Praxis, 70.

30 The (text of the) hymn "O Esca Viatorum" of the 17<sup>th</sup> cent. begins with the typology of the Manna. Continuing the topic of the first stanza, the hymn refers to Jesus' blood. Although it mentions "water", *lympa*, it does not expand the typology of the rock as Israel's source of water in the wilderness. It refers the "the Savior's pure heart" instead; BECKER: Seelenspeise, 241. Pope Francis chose the Manna-Eucharist typology as a topic for a sermon in the context of the Corpus Christi festival in 2014; ANON.: Summus Pontifex, 530.

John Chrysostom shows Christian superiority pairing Israel's way through the Sea of Reeds with baptism, the Manna with the "Lord's body", and the water from the rock with blood from the wound of Jesus' side.<sup>31</sup> In other passages, he mentions the Manna without any interest in a Eucharistic typology.<sup>32</sup> Ambrose of Milan devotes a chapter of *De Mysteriis* to a discussion of the Manna and the water from the rock, blending Exod 18, Ps 78, John 6, 1 Cor 10, and other biblical texts.<sup>33</sup> The Manna is conceptualized as a "shadow" of the Eucharistic bread in typological terms. In other contexts, Ambrose may prefer allegorical bits of interpretation. In one of his letters, he gives a vague hint at the Eucharistic typology and continues: "But there is also a spiritual Manna, the dew of spiritual wisdom, which is shed from heaven upon those who are resourceful and in search of it."<sup>34</sup>

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31 The typology is obvious in John Chrysostom's interpretation of 1 Cor 10:1–13 in *In Epistulam Primam ad Corinthios Homiliae* 1–44 23.2–3 PG 61 col. 191–192; similarly, *Expositio in Psalmos* 46/47.2 PG 55 col. 210; *In Dictum Pauli: Nole Vos Ignorare* PG 51 col. 248–249; (implicitly in) *In Epistulam ad Ephesios Homiliae* 1–24 23.2 PG 62 col. 166; *Catecheses ad Illuminandos* 1–8 3.26 SC 50bis 166. In an interpretation of John 6:53–63, he emphasizes spiritual eating. His explanations do not exclude a Eucharistic interpretation of the passage in the Gospel in *In Iohannem Homiliae* 1–88 47.1–2 PG 59 col. 261–266.

32 In his *Contra Iudaeos et Gentiles Quod Christus Sit Deus* PG 48 col. 827; *Quod Nemo Laeditur* 13 SC 103, 120–126; *In Epistulam Primam Ad Corinthios Homiliae* 1–44 5 PG 61 col. 46; *De Paenitentia* 8.1 PG 49 col. 338, 8.3 (Num 11:5) col. 341; *In Epistulam Ad Colossenses Homiliae* 1–12 4 PG 62 col. 329. John Chrysostom mentions the Manna without typological interpretation, esp. in summaries of the history of the Exodus. In *Ad Stagirium* 3 PG 47 col. 475, he infers ethical teachings from the story of the Manna. Similar mentions are to be expected in many sources, cf. the Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* 23 CSCO 407 = CSCO.S 179, 221–222.

33 *De Mysteriis* 8.43–49 CSEL 73, 107–110. The Eucharistic interpretation is evident in *De Sacramentis* 4.4.13 CSEL 73, 51 or 4.5.24–25 CSEL 73, 56–57.

34 Book 8 *Epistle* 54.2 CSEL 82.2, 72 translation FaCh 26, 432. In book 7 *Epistle* 39.5 CSEL 82.2, 29, he expounds the motif of the Manna—sufficient for everybody but defying stockpiling (Ex 16:17–24)—as an image for Christ's incarnation that did not reduce his divinity. Book 1 *Epistle* 1.5 CSEL 82.1, 5 mentions the heavenly food adding in an aside: "for heavenly wisdom is food and delightful nourishment, which those in paradise feed upon, the unfailing food of the soul, called by the mouth of God, Manna"; FaCh 26, 107. Likewise, the Ark of the Covenant is said to contain a golden jar containing the Manna, "spiritual nourishment and a repository of divine knowledge", Book 1 *Epistle* 5.4 CSEL 82.1, 36. In Book 8 *Epistle* 55.6–7 CSEL 82.2, 79, he uses the Old Testament concept of the Manna as one of his examples for the application of the method and terminology of antique rhetoric. While the Israelites tasted the *hyle*, the *aition* of the Manna is God's act, "who waters the intellects with the dew of wisdom", 55.7.

Christian authors of the age of the Mishna hardly refer to the Eucharistic typology when they interpret the Manna episode of the book of Exodus.<sup>35</sup> Thus, Justin's allusions to verses and notions of Exodus 16 in the *Dialogue* are not Eucharistic.<sup>36</sup> Irenaeus implicitly connects 1 Cor 10:3 (about the "spiritual food") with the story of the Manna quoting Deut 8:3: that "you" should not "live by bread alone; but by every word of God proceeding out of His mouth". Supposedly, the Manna was a *rationalis esca* already during Israel's journey in the wilderness. It taught the love of God and the practice of justice towards one's neighbor.<sup>37</sup> The Eucharistic interpretation is absent from Clement of Alexandria's *Stromata*<sup>38</sup> and *Pedagogue*.<sup>39</sup> Clement hints at a Eucharistic and "better still" (*mallon*) ecclesiastic interpretation of the "heavenly bread" and "spiritual food" in *Extracts of Theodotos*.<sup>40</sup> Tertullian hardly mentions a Eucharistic interpretation of the Manna.<sup>41</sup> He quotes John 6 and the Institution Narrative (e. g. Matt 26:26) for the notion that Jesus's body is in the bread. The Eucharistic interpretation even supports the allegorical, spiritual

35 The collection of data is based upon searches on in [www.bibindex.org](http://www.bibindex.org).

36 *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 57.2 PTS 47, 168 (about whether the heavenly creatures ate Abraham's food at Mamre); 73.6 PTS 47, 197; 131.3 PTS 47, 297; 131.6 PTS 47, 298.

37 *Adversus Haereses* 4.16.3 SC 100.2, 566 (in Latin only).

38 *Stromata* 1 (21).113.4 SC 633, 326–329; 1 (21).136.3 SC 633, 368–369 (like Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolycum Libri Tres* 3.24 SC 20, 254–255) only mentions the Exodus in chronological summaries without reference to the Manna. In *Stromata* 2 (11).50.1–2 SC 38, 74, Clement gives a farfetched allegorical interpretation of the Manna on three faculties of human beings (perception, speech, and thought).

39 Via John 6, *Pedagogue* 3 (7).40.1 SC 158, 86–87. The "veritable bread" (*artos alēthinous*) is the "heavenly bread" (*artos ouranōn*), i.e. the Lord's word (*hrēma kyriou* in the quotation from Deut 8:3).

40 *Extracts of Theodotos* 13.2–5 SC 23, 84–85; translation StD 1, 50–52.

41 *De Ieiunio Adversus Psychicos* 5.2 CCSL 2, 1261 (Israel's sustenance during their wandering in the wilderness); *De Patientia* 5.24 CCSL 1, 305 (about Israel's impatience in the wilderness), *Adversus Iudaeos* 3.13 CCSL 2, 1347 (as a matter of fact in a summary of the Exodus), *De Baptismo* 20.4 (hinting at the allegorical interpretation via Deut 8:3), *Adversus Marcionem* 2.18.2 CCSL 1, 495–496; 4.12.6 CCSL 1, 570; 4.21.3 CCSL 1, 598; 4.26.4 CCSL 1, 615 (among allusions to the Lord's Prayer). In *Adversus Praxean* 21.17 CCSL 2, 1188, Tertullian summarizes Christological notions from John's Gospel. From ch. 6., Jesus called himself "bread from heaven", because he descended from heaven. Human beings are invited to believe in God's son—i.e. by implication, not to consume Eucharistic bread. In *De Resurrectione Mortuorum* 37.1–5 CCSL 2, 969–970, he emphasizes the allegorical interpretation of "bread" in John 6 and fails to hint at a Eucharistic interpretation. He interprets the petition for bread in the Lord's Prayer first as spiritual based on John 6 and second as Eucharistic. He does not refer to the Manna in this context; *De Oratione* 6.1–2 CCSL 1, 260–261.

one of the Manna. Cyprian uses the story of the Manna in support of the concept that the Holy Spirit is distributed in equal measure upon all believers.<sup>42</sup> He quotes John 6:35, 53 in an anti-Jewish paragraph of the collection of (Biblical) *Testimonia*.<sup>43</sup> The Manna is not mentioned there, although Jesus as the “bread of life” may be interpreted in a Eucharistic way in this combination of verses. Methodius of Olympus is only interested in the allegory of the Manna as pedagogical measure during Israel’s wandering in the wilderness.<sup>44</sup> (Pseudo-Clement’s) *Recognitions* do not refer to the Eucharistic concept of the Manna.<sup>45</sup>

Christian interpreters of the Manna of the era of the Tannaim and Amoraim could know the concept of the Eucharist as superseding the Manna. However, it was by no means the prevalent let alone the only interpretation. Therefore, it is by no means necessary that the allusions of the rabbinic blessing “... who brings forth bread from the land” to the Manna and to Josh 5 emerged as an antagonism against a powerful, Christian, typological conceptualization of the Manna as prefiguration of the Eucharist.

## 4 Conclusions

The above attempted reading of the evidence in an exaggerated and stereotyped way throws intergroup connections into sharp relief: Judaism and Christianity display the *bread-thread* that distinguishes them from their neighbors. Jewish bread is blessed and thus mundane. Christian Eucharistic bread is blessed and thus sacred. Jewish bread is non-Christian bread par excellence. It is the symbolic

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42 *Epistulae* 69.14.1 CCL 3B, 491–492. “Heavenly food” in *De Bono Patientiae* 7 CCL 3A, 122 may refer to Manna, to the Eucharist or to any allegorical interpretation thereof. It is contrasted with the bile that was given to Jesus on the cross.

43 *Ad Quirinum (Testimiorum Libri Tres)* 1.22 CCL 3, 24–25.

44 *De Cibis* 7.4 GCS 27, 436 may be a remote allusion to the Manna: God guiding Israel away from the Egyptian food as a path of/to piety (in the German translation of the Old Slavonic): “Denn [wie] nichts Unnützes befahl Gott, sondern damit er den vielen den Weg zur Frömmigkeit zeige, aussondernd die ägyptischen Speisen, und vielmehr sie zur Besonnenheit führend; wie auch oft die Ärzte die Kranken durch andere Speisen heilen”.

45 *Recognitions* 1.35.3 GCS 51, 28–29 ANF 8, 87 mentions the Manna as “given to them from heaven for bread, and drink supplied to them out of the rock that followed them, which kind of food was turned into whatever taste any one desired” without further interpretation.

Other of the Christian Eucharist. This becomes evident in the concept of Jewish bread being anything but Manna. The Jewish people ritually acknowledges God's generosity, which continues beyond the epoch of the Manna by providing them with bread from the land. Furthermore, the allegorical interpretation of the Manna as God's teaching (etc.) becomes more prominent in Christianity than in rabbinic Judaism, even though Philo used the concept earlier. In Christian terms—certainly of late Antiquity, but hardly regarding the writers of the second and third centuries—the Manna provides interpreters with a bridge between an exegetical allegory and an interpretation of the liturgy. The Manna is Christ given by God both as Jesus' teaching and as Christ's body in the Eucharist.

In an imaginary discussion, early Christian writers and Tannaim would not agree with the observations and conclusions of the preceding paragraph, as this reconstruction faces a serious chronological problem. By the time the Eucharistic typology of the Manna began to gain prevalence in Christian thought, the Rabbinic blessing had already been well-established. Although they do not say so, the rabbis probably devised the *wording* of the blessing as an allusion to Ps 104:14 read in(to) the narrative framework of Josh 5 (especially verse 11). They understood its *function* as an adaptation of parts of the biblical system of priestly and Levitical dues. This does not imply that the Tannaim were unaware of Christianity. It just suggests that the blessing over bread did not emerge from polemics against Christianity.

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