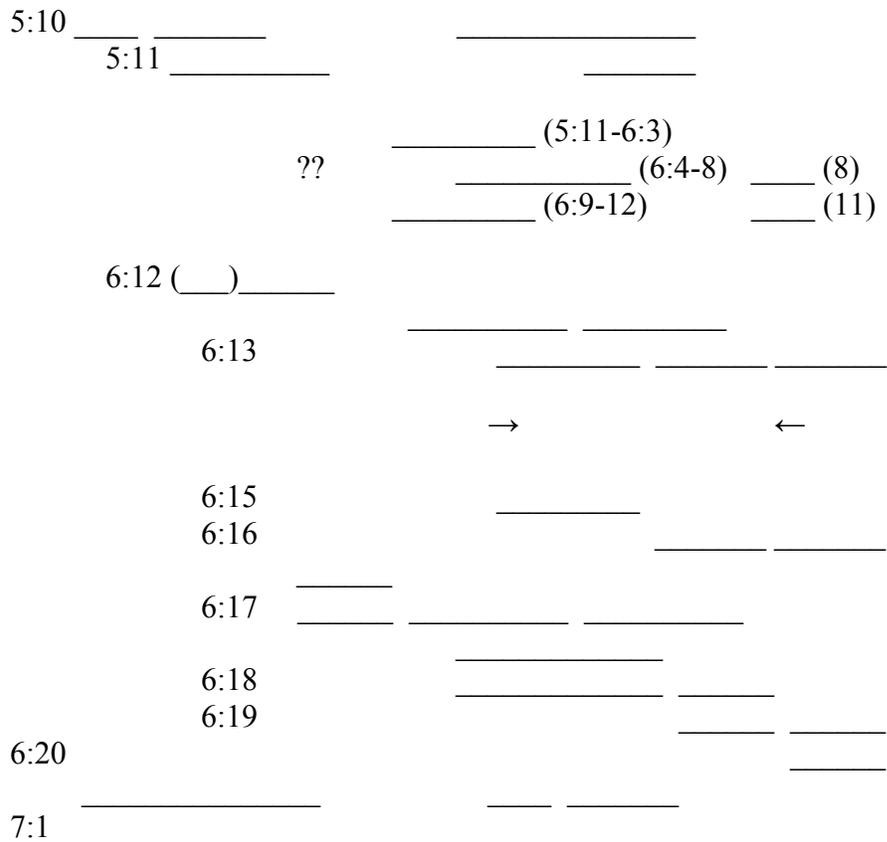


HEBREWS—HANDOUT 14

Hebrews 6:13-20

Structure (Greek Text per New American Standard [NASB] translation)



Suggested Narrative Paradigm

v. 12—“imitators” (Greek, μιμηται/mimētai)

Greek word similar to “mime”—one who play acts, puts on an act, puts on a face

Usual definition of “imitation”:

Is this what the author is suggesting?

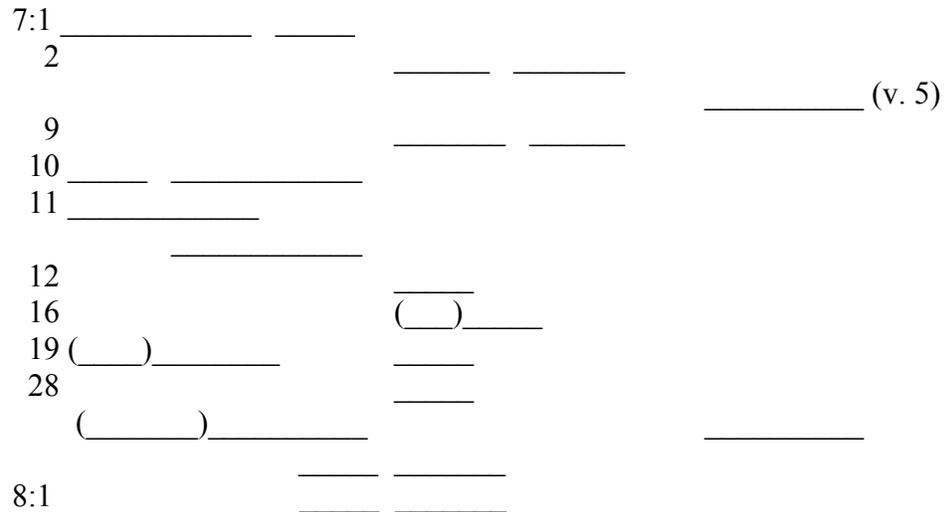
Duplication, Exemplification (Exemplarism), Acting (Aping), External Façade
Not Possession, Identification, Participation (Partaking), Being, Internal Nature

Our author’s paradigmatic era of “imitation” as playing a part, acting out the example of others, showing the external façade is _____

Is that what he urges here?

Hebrews 7:1-28

Structure



1st Narrative unit:

Redemptive-historical paradigm (linear/horizontal):

Eschatological-transcendental paradigm (vertical):

Genesis 14

1. Invasion (vv. 1-3)
2. Insurrection (vv. 4-5)
3. Retaliation (vv. 5-7)
4. Humiliation (vv. 13-17)
5. Benediction (vv. 18-20)

v. 2—Melchi from Hebrew *melek* (“king”); zedek from Hebrew *zedek* (“righteousness”)
 Salem from Hebrew *shalom* (“peace”) = Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 76:2)
Uru-salim (Akkadian) “city of peace” (attested 14th c. B.C. in the Amarna Letters)
 “tenth part” = _____

v. 3—What do you make of this?
 Reading “perpetually” (NASB) instead of “forever” (Greek word is not *aiona*).

Protological Melchizedek → Eschatological Melchizedek

Eschatological Melchizedek → Protological Melchizedek

Ontological Melchizedek → Historical Melchizedek

v. 4—Abraham gave tithes _____

v. 5—The Levites received tithes _____

v. 6—Whose genealogy?

v. 7—The lesser is _____

v. 8—“mortal men” is _____

“lives on” is _____

V. 9—Levi tithes to Melchizedek in _____

“seed” of Abraham tithes to Melchizedek _____

Abraham tithes to _____ and to _____

“children of Abraham” () tithes to _____

“To the Hebrews”: A Narrative Paradigm

James T. Dennison, Jr.

The title “To the Hebrews” sits atop the oldest extant manuscript of this epistle as it occurs in the Chester Beatty collection jointly housed at the University of Michigan and the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, Ireland. Discovered in 1931 in Egypt, the manuscript is labeled P46 (P stands for papyrus). In Greek, the title reads ΠΙΡΟϞ ΕΒΡΑΙΟΥϞ (or, in lower case characters, προς εβραιουϞ) “To the Hebrews”. How old is this oldest extant Greek copy of the epistle? Most scholars date it to about 200 A.D. But Philip Comfort makes a credible case for dating it about 150 A.D.¹ Either way, the 2nd century provenance of the papyrus text is assured. The manuscript is virtually complete—only 9:17, 10:21 and 31 are missing from the 13 chapters of the letter. Thus, we have, in the providence of God, a near perfect copy of the Greek text of the epistle to the Hebrews dating about a century or a century and a half from its author putting pen to papyrus. And that copy has the title “To the Hebrews” superscribed over it.

Did the original author place the title over the text of his epistle? Most scholars tell us, “No.” They are certain that a later copyist added the title to the text of the epistle. How do they know this? For instance, is the hand in P46 which wrote the title and the hand which wrote the text different? In other words, do scholars detect a difference in the orthography of the Greek P46 in the title from the Greek in the body of the text of the letter? No, they do not. Well, then, how do they know that a copyist added the title to P46? They don’t know it for certain; they merely assert it. Because they regard P46 as a copy of the epistle (which we concede), they regard the title as a scribal or copyist’s addition to the text on the assumption that the author of the letter would not have placed a title upon it (which we contend is a gratuitous assumption, since P46 is likely a copy of the original author’s work—superscription and body-text). Now, let us prick this vulnerable part of academic arrogance. Since they did not see the copyist add the title, their argument is an argument from silence. And we may answer an argument from silence with an equally plausible argument from silence. We assert that the original author placed this title over his epistle as a description of the contents of the letter he composed under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. In fact, we maintain that our assertion is as weighty as the assertion of the scholars who contend that “the copyist did it”. We did not see the author do this (which we admit); they did not see the copyist add it (as they admit, if they are forced to). And thus, our suggestion has as much credibility as their suggestion. Hence, it is just as likely that the original author of Hebrews placed the title atop his manuscript as to suggest that a later copyist supplied it. Two equally plausible explanations for the origin of the title leave us with no absolutely certain answer

¹ Philip W. Comfort and David P. Barrett (eds.), *The Text of the Earliest New Testament Greek Manuscripts* (2001) 206. The entire Greek text of Hebrews in P46 is given by Comfort on pp. 224-50 (with the title on p. 224). A photo of the page with the title may be viewed at: http://quod.lib.umich.edu/a/apis/x-3570/6238_41.tif (Click the “Full Image” button at the top of the page for a blow up of the title).

to the question. And all honest scholarship must admit that. We cannot infallibly prove our case; they cannot infallibly prove their case.

However, we would like to add some further considerations below to our case which, in our opinion, makes our argument even a bit more plausible. We confess at the outset of our exposition that these further considerations do not cinch the infallibility of our position (i.e., that the author himself superinscribed the title to his letter). But we do believe that they add further weighty arguments in support of our thesis that “To the Hebrews” came from the author’s pen.

Hebrews as Narrative

The epistle to the Hebrews is a narrative epistle. The narrative it reveals is the story of a journey—a journey or pilgrimage of the eschatological Hebrew for (or on behalf of) the semi-eschatological Hebrews. Or to rephrase my paradigm: the epistle to the Hebrews is the narrative of the eschatological pilgrim for (on behalf of) the semi-eschatological pilgrims. These Hebrews of the end of the age—these pilgrims of the age to come—these pilgrims of the coming age whose sojourn marks the age of the end are mirrored in the Hebrew of the Hebrews—the Pilgrim of the pilgrims—the Sojourner of the sojourners. It is this Sojourner, this Pilgrim, this eschatological Hebrew who mirrors himself in the sojourning pilgrims of the former age—that former age of longing, yearning, believing, possessing the end of the sojourn—the end of the pilgrimage—the end, even in its beginnings. It is these former pilgrims of the former age—from Abel to Abraham, from Enoch to Samuel, from Moses to David, from Jacob to the prophets, from Joseph to the incarnation—whose mirror image is perfectly reflected in the Eschatological Pilgrim (and he in them, as their marvelous mutual union and communion attests). Listen to their confession—the confession of these pilgrims of the former age: “I am a stranger on the earth” (Ps. 119:19); “I am a stranger with Thee [O Lord], a sojourner like all my fathers” (Ps. 39:12—which echoes Abraham’s confession in Gen. 23:4, “I am a stranger and a sojourner”); “We are sojourners before Thee [O Lord] . . . as all our fathers were” (1 Chron. 29:15; cf. also Ps. 119:54; Lev. 25:23). These are the pilgrims of the former era who “by faith” (cf. Heb. 11 passim) possessed and obtained the end of their pilgrimage in a heavenly city (Heb. 11:16; 12:22; 13:14).

The narrative of their pilgrimage is a sojourn of faith in God their Lord, whether east of Eden, sacrificing in hope of a final Sojourner, Serpent-Crusher, Dragon-Slayer. The narrative of their pilgrimage is a sojourn of faith in God their Lord, whether atop Mt. Moriah, knife raised over the pilgrim son, the sojourning child, the lad upon whom the promises of death for the pilgrims of that age are life—resurrection-life. The narrative of their pilgrimage is a sojourn of faith in God their Lord, whether huddled in hope beneath the canopy of the angel of death, laying hold of the sprinkling of blood and embarking on a sojourn of freedom for pilgrims under the life-blood of the lamb—exodus pilgrims, sojourners from bondage to liberty under a canopy of cloud and fire. The narrative of their pilgrimage is a sojourn of faith in God their Lord, whether entering in, drawing nigh to the tent of sojourn, the pilgrim tabernacle, the tent of meeting where pilgrim priest and pilgrim non-priest offer up bulls and goats with sighs and tears and deep groanings,

yearning for the end of sojourning, looking for life in the sabbath rest at the end of their pilgrimage, longing for the day when pilgrims could enter beyond the veil and behold the Lord of glory with unveiled faces—no more pilgrim steps, no more plodding sojourn, but rest, perfect rest, seated *visio Dei* before the Holy One himself—journey’s end!

Protological Pilgrims in the Eschatological Pilgrim

How could it be that these sojourners of faith, these pilgrims of the former age could see the end of their journey so confidently, and so steadfastly possess that final end—that rest afar off? How could it be? Could it be that they were reflections of the Pilgrim of pilgrims, the Sojourner of sojourners, the Hebrew of the Hebrews, the One appointed from the foundation of the world to be a pilgrim as they were, to be a sojourner as they were—the One who would incarnate a Hebrew’s life; the One who would sojourn in flesh and blood though he was from all eternity not flesh and blood, but eternally very God of very eternal God. The One who would display his blood in Abel’s lamb; the One who would reveal that he is son of the Hebrew Abraham, bound over to death by his Father, yet raised from death because he is the Hebrew with eternal life—with the power of an endless life. The One who would be revealed in the blood of a lamb upon the doorposts of his mirror-reflection pilgrims, aliens in a strange land—bond-servant sojourners of a land of death; this One bearing in his pilgrimage, his descent into Egypt the reproach of their bondage, laying his life-blood upon their pilgrim hovels so they could travel with this Lamb—this Passover Lamb—travel with this Lamb to the land of milk and honey—travel with this One tabernacling amongst them, accommodating himself to their pilgrim mode, drawing them unto his everlasting self by pilgrim sacrifices, pilgrim priests, a pilgrim tent of meeting—mirroring himself in priesthood and sacrifice, in tabernacle and veil.

My thesis is that every element of this New Testament epistle is built upon the ‘Hebrews’ motif—the pilgrim motif—the sojourn motif. Whether it is the cast of sojourners in faith (chap. 11) or the doxology of the heavenly Jerusalem (chap. 12) or the proto-benedictory “no lasting city here” (chap. 13)—all of which are explicit pilgrimage motifs underscored by our narrator-author in express pilgrimage vocabulary; or whether it is the narrative of the former Hebrews’ sojourn in the wilderness after Exodus from Egypt—a sojourn which dominates chapters 3 and 4 and much of chapter 6; or whether it is the cult ritual and personnel coincident with the era of the wilderness sojourn between exodus and conquest of Jericho—that is, the tabernacle ritual of sacrifices and offerings of blood by the tabernacle personnel from the tribe of Levi, especially the high priest, a co-pilgrim priest on behalf of a pilgrim people ministering at a pilgrim sanctuary-tabernacle—a theme which dominates chapters 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10.

In other words, the epistle to the Hebrews is steeped, is loaded, is freighted with the narrative of the Old Testament Hebrews. And since that narrative imagery from the Old Testament era dominates the stories our inspired author relates—since the dominant image, the dominant plot-line from the Old Testament narratives he recounts is sojourn, is pilgrimage, then I conclude that an accurate reading of our author’s focus *is* pilgrims: Hebrews Old and New, sojourners of the former times, sojourners of these last

(“*eschatou*”logical, cf. 1:2) times. Protological Pilgrims/Eschatological Pilgrims. And the glue that binds these old and new pilgrims together in a common sojourn of faith from this world to the heavenly city of God—the glue is the Hebrew of the Hebrews, the Pilgrim of the pilgrims—the eschatological Pilgrim himself, who is the Son of God. The Son of the Father as Pilgrim and Sojourner is placed at the forefront of this epistle because our author makes him the Pioneer and Perfecter (12:2) of every faithful pilgrim’s sojourn. He is more than Moses; he is more than Levi; he is more than Melchizedek; he is more than Abraham or David or any other pilgrim. He is even more than the angels. He is God (“the exact representation of his nature,” 1:3)!! And God pilgrims among us—in the flesh. If he is to bring many pilgrims to glory, he must become flesh and blood as they are. He must incarnate pilgrimage who is the pilgrim’s end and goal—whether by faith, in the former times, or by faith, in these last times. Christ Jesus is *the* pilgrim—the eschatological prototype of all believing pilgrims in the history of redemption—the eschatological pilgrim completer and perfecter of the history of redemption—the eschatological pilgrim in whom the pilgrimage of the history of redemption is complete—complete once and for all.

“To the Hebrews”—to the pilgrims of the former age and the pilgrims of the end of the age in narrative style. A letter from the Eschatological Pilgrim who made your pilgrim story his own and completed his own pilgrim story by recapitulating your own.