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## **The Tradition of *Yetzer* in Rabbinic Literature of the Second Temple Period within the Narrative of Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness in Matthew 4:1–11: An Intertextual Study**

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### **Abstract:**

Christianity cannot be separated from the historical roots of Judaism. Within Judaism, there exists a concept known as *Yetzer Hara*, which inclines human beings toward sin, and its antithesis, *Yetzer Hatov*, which directs them toward what is good. It is also said that *Yetzer Hara* can be understood as the personification of Satan, the evil entity who tempts humankind. The Gospel of Matthew presents the narrative of Jesus' temptation by Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1–11), where Satan subjects Jesus, the Messiah and fully human, to various temptations. The Gospel of Matthew bears a strong Jewish background in its author, its intended audience, and the broader context in which it was written. This study focuses on the intertextual relationship between the Jewish tradition of *Yetzer Hara* and Matthew 4:1–11, using biblical hermeneutics complemented by intertextual analysis, and shows that the author of Matthew intertextually assimilates the *Yetzer* tradition in narrating the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.

### **Keywords:**

Gospel of Matthew;  
Intertextuality; Rabbinic  
Literature; Second  
Temple; Temptation;  
*Yetzer*.

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## INTRODUCTION

Christianity in essence cannot be separated from its origins. When traced carefully, Christianity has firm historical roots in the spirituality of Judaism. As Travers Herford explained, historically Christianity grew out of Judaism. He explained that the roots of Judaism were not from the prophets but from the rabbis. This shows that in investigating the origins of Christianity one should not only refer to the texts of the Old Testament. Rabbinic literature must also be consulted if one wants to conduct an investigation into the origins of Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

Rabbinic literature itself is a direct reflection of the oral teachings of the Jewish rabbis. Historically, as the oral teachings of the rabbis developed, the Jewish people recognized two authoritative forms of the Torah, namely the Written Torah (*torah she-bhiktav* in Hebrew), which consists of the books of the Old Testament known by the acronym TaNaKh, and the Oral Torah (*torah she-be'al peh*), which contains the traditions and religious regulations of Judaism that were transmitted orally and regarded as the legitimate interpretation of the Law of the Torah. These oral teachings of the rabbis were, in later times, transmitted into written texts.

The concept of Satan is a topic that is frequently discussed in the New Testament. It is said that, topically, 20 out of the 27 books of the New Testament make reference to the figure of Satan.<sup>7</sup> Although there is no specific writing that deals exclusively with Satan in the New Testament, Satan is nevertheless present and takes his role as part of the work of salvation in Christ.<sup>8</sup> One of the activities carried out by Satan is as a “tempter” and “tester.” In Christian theology it is understood that Satan has played the role of tempter or tester since his first

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<sup>6</sup> Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Ktav Publishing, 1975), vii.

<sup>7</sup> Tujuh tulisan Perjanjian Baru yang tidak menyinggung soal setan adalah Galatia, Filipi, Titus, Filemon, 2 Petrus, 2 Yohanes, dan 3 Yohanes. Thomas J. Farrar and Guy J. Williams, “Talk of the Devil: Unpacking the Language of New Testament Satanology,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 39, no. 1 (September 2016): 75–76, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X16660914>.

<sup>8</sup> Farrar and Williams, 90.

encounter with human beings, and continues to lead believers astray into immoral actions (cf. Gen. 3:1; 1 Cor. 7:5).<sup>9</sup> The figure of Satan is also a personal being who engages in activities that influence the mind and deceive human beings (cf. 2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Thess. 3:5; Eph. 2:2).<sup>10</sup> Thus, the concept of Satan in Christian theology is generally understood as that of a tempter who influences human beings to commit what is wrong.

In relation to the aspect of "Satan," there is a concept in Judaism known as *Yetzer Hara*. In *The Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion*, *Yetzer Hara* is defined as the evil inclination. The rabbis understood that there is a counterpart to *Yetzer Hara*, namely *Yetzer Hatov*, which is defined as the good inclination, or the human impulse to do what is good. *Yetzer Hara* and *Yetzer Hatov* are understood as being in opposition to one another.<sup>11</sup> However, in some rabbinic writings *Yetzer Hara* is also affiliated with an evil personal entity outside the human person.<sup>12</sup>

Ishay Rosen-Zvi states that the interpretation of *Yetzer Hara* has indeed undergone a shift in meaning by a number of modern scholars, from a matter of theology to one that pertains only to anthropology and psychology.<sup>13</sup> For example, Michael Fishbane explains that the conflict of the *Yetzer* within the human body is likened to Plato's concept, which describes the body (*soma*) as being in a prison (*sema*).<sup>14</sup> Another view, for instance, is that of Richard Keaney, a philosopher from Ireland, who affirms the perspective of a German Jewish philosopher,

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<sup>9</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Teologi Dasar: Panduan Populer untuk Memahami Kebenaran Alkitab* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit ANDI, 1999), 184.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Malang: Literatur SAAT, 2014), 334–35.

<sup>11</sup> R. J. Zwi Werblowsky and Geoffrey Bernard Wigoder, eds., "Yetser Ha-Ra' and Yetser Ha-Tov," in *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 742.

<sup>12</sup> Ishay Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

<sup>13</sup> Rosen-Zvi, 5–6.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Fishbane, *Kiss of God: Spiritual and Mystical Death in Judaism* (London: University of Washington Press, 1994), 9.

Martin Buber, who explains that the position of *Yetzer Hara* is essentially nothing more than the evil inclination or disposition within the human being.<sup>15</sup>

If *Yetzer Hara* is also regarded as a concept of Jewish satanology, then its appearance can be expected to be found in the writings of the New Testament. Among the many New Testament writings that have either direct or indirect connections with rabbinic literature, the Gospel of Matthew appears to be the one most influenced by it. Most scholars agree that the Gospel of Matthew possesses a strong “Jewish” character. Leon Morris explains that for the author of the Gospel of Matthew, Christianity is truly a continuation of the Old Testament and Judaism. The author of the Gospel of Matthew was a Jew who possessed deep knowledge of Jewish teaching traditions as reflected in rabbinic literature.<sup>16</sup> The Gospel of Matthew is also the New Testament writing that mentions words referring to Satan more frequently than any other New Testament writing. Citing Farrar and Williams, the Gospel of Matthew employs at least nine different Greek words that refer to Satan.<sup>17</sup> From the various narratives about Satan presented by the author of the Gospel of Matthew, this study focuses on the account of the temptation of Jesus by Satan in the wilderness in Matthew 4:1–10.

## METHODS

In this regard, the researcher elaborates the tools of analysis. The researcher employs Gospel interpretation analysis in exploring Matthew 4:1–11, namely by examining the historical context concerning Jesus and the author of the Gospel.<sup>18</sup> Then it is explored with the principle of intertextuality, that is, understanding a text as being formed from various quotations, so that a text is depicted as a kind of mosaic of those quotations. These quotations refer not only

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Kearney, “Desire: Between Good and Evil,” in *Deliver Us from Evil*, ed. Malcolm David Eckel and Bradley L. Herling, Boston University Studies in Philosophy and Religion (London ; New York: Continuum, 2008), 212.

<sup>16</sup> Leon Morris, *Injil Matius*, Tafsiran Pilihan Momentum (Surabaya: Penerbit Momentum, 2016).

<sup>17</sup> Farrar and Williams, “Talk of the Devil,” 78–79.

<sup>18</sup> Douglas Stuart and Gordon D. Fee, *Hermeneutik: Menafsirkan Firman Tuhan Dengan Tepat*, Terjemahan (Malang: Penerbit Gandum Mas, 2015), 120–25.

to matters related to literature, but also to history, society, and culture.<sup>19</sup> Thus, a text basically absorbs and is a transformation of other texts.<sup>20</sup>

Intertextual analysis can also be applied in light of the process of interpreting biblical texts. Michael Trainor describes that a biblical text has at least two worlds, namely the world of the biblical text itself and the cultural world of human experience.<sup>21</sup> One of the intertextual approaches from biblical scholars is that proposed by Vernon K. Robbins. Robbins explains what he calls cultural intertexture, that is, an analysis that seeks the interaction of a text with the culture or tradition present within it. One way to observe the interaction of a text with the surrounding tradition is by identifying echoes. Robbins defines an echo as a text or phrase that evokes, or has the potential to evoke, a particular cultural tradition.<sup>22</sup>

## DISCUSSION

### The Jewish Character of the Gospel of Matthew

The Jewishness of the Gospel of Matthew lies in three main aspects in this writing, namely the author, the world of that time, and its recipients. The author of the Gospel of Matthew is concluded by most scholars to be Matthew, the son of Alphaeus. He was a tax collector or a Roman tax gatherer, a work usually carried out by extortion (Matt. 9:9). His position as someone working in Roman financial administration made him capable of composing his writing in a systematic way; likewise, his Jewish background made him familiar with every aspect found within Judaism. However, the identification of the author of the Gospel of Matthew seems to have further development. Suharyo observes that the author

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<sup>19</sup> Wilhelmus Johannes Cornelis Weren, *Studies in Matthew's Gospel: Literary Design, Intertextuality, and Social Setting*, Biblical Interpretation Series, vol. 130 (Leiden Boston (Mass.): Brill, 2014), 91–92.

<sup>20</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 66.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Trainor, "Intertextuality, the Hermeneutics of 'Other,' and Mark 16:6-7: A New but Not New Challenge for Biblical Interpreters," *Biblical Theology Bulletin: Journal of Bible and Culture* 35, no. 4 (November 2005): 144–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01461079050350040401>.

<sup>22</sup> Vernon K. Robbins and Vernon Kay Robbins, *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology*, 1. publ (London: Routledge, 1996), 110.

of the Gospel of Matthew was a person with deep religious insight. The author of this Gospel was a Jew, perhaps a rabbi who converted to Christianity. Therefore, it is not surprising that the atmosphere of the Old Testament is very prominent and that the Christian proclamation is deeply grounded in the Old Testament and in the views circulating in Jewish society or schools of his time (cf. 9:13; 12:7).<sup>23</sup> Another view from Schuyler Brown explains that the author of Matthew consists of two aspects: (1) the materials of this Gospel consist of traditions specific to the Matthean community, which share more similarities with rabbinic Judaism than with the traditions of the other Gospels; (2) on the other hand, there is redaction from a non-Jewish Gospel writer, as indicated by the fact that he made the non-Jewish Gospel of Mark the basis for his own composition.<sup>24</sup>

The Gospel of Matthew, written around 70 CE, coincided with the Jewish War, namely the conflict between the Jewish people and the Roman Empire. At that time, the Jews were oppressed both religiously and politically. Religiously, Roman soldiers or the Romans themselves often displayed acts of humiliation toward the Jews, such as criticizing Jewish religious life, bringing the statue of the Emperor into Jerusalem, Roman soldiers tearing up a copy of the Jewish Torah in public, pagans opening shops in front of Jewish synagogues, and even acts of desecration against Jewish synagogues (Tjandra, 2016: 168–169).<sup>25</sup> Politically, the nation of Israel was already in a state of deep decline. The continuous occupation from the return of Israel from the Babylonian exile up to the Roman Empire had steadily eroded the true identity of Israel as an independent nation. From this era began the reorganization of Judaism after the Jewish War in 70 CE. The most influential factor was, of course, the shift in the spirituality of the Jewish people at that time, which no longer focused on the

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<sup>23</sup> I. Suharyo, *Mengenal Tulisan Perjanjian Baru*, Cet. ke-2 (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2003), 35.

<sup>24</sup> Schuyler Brown, *The Origins of Christianity: A Historical Introduction to the New Testament*, Rev. ed, Oxford Bible Series (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 108.

<sup>25</sup> Lukas Tjandra, *Latar Belakang Perjanjian Baru 1—SEJARAH*, Edisi Revisi (Malang: Literatur SAAT, 2016), 168–69.

Temple. This situation and condition of the Jewish world also influenced the recipients of the Gospel of Matthew, either directly or indirectly.

The Gospel of Matthew was addressed to Jewish Christians in Antioch of Syria. This is based on several factors: (1) the dating of Matthew after 70 CE, when much of Palestine had been destroyed; (2) Antioch of Syria was the place of origin of the Gospel, which had a very large Jewish population and was also the first place for the effort of proclaiming the Gospel to the non-Jewish world.<sup>26</sup> Brown also found several connections between the recipients of the Gospel of Matthew and the Jewish War within the writings of the Gospel of Matthew, such as Matthew 24:9, which says that believers will be handed over to be persecuted, killed, and hated by all nations because of the name of Jesus; Matthew 24:21, which explains that there will be great tribulation such as has never happened before; the mention by the author of Matthew that during the Jewish War many from his community were influenced by false prophets and apostatized from Judaism in order to avoid persecution at the hands of the Romans; and the quotation from the book of Daniel that describes the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place, so that the people of Judea must flee to the mountains.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, according to Brown, the events of 70 CE brought about a consequence far deeper than merely a matter of geographical displacement. This was due to the reality that the center of Jewish worship, namely the Temple, had become ruins, and the center of Jewish Christianity, namely the Jerusalem community, had abandoned their holy city. This development made the position of Jewish Christians increasingly difficult. The Jews seemed to be forbidden from associating with the Nazarenes, and the bitter polemic against the Pharisees,

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<sup>26</sup> D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Malang: Literatur SAAT, 2016), 169.

<sup>27</sup> Brown, *The Origins of Christianity*, 110–11.

which also permeates the Gospel of Matthew, reflects the tragic situation of these Jewish Christians.<sup>28</sup>

### **Rabbinic Literature and Its Influence on the Concept of New Testament Literature**

Rabbinic literature is part of the body of writings composed during the Second Temple period. Rabbinic literature is divided into several periods. (1) The Tannaic period. This period stretches from 50 BCE to 200 CE; that is, from the establishment of the rabbinic academies of Bet Shammai and Bet Hillel to the compilation of the Mishnah under Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi. In this period, Jewish teachers were called *Tannaim*, derived from the Aramaic *tena*, meaning “to repeat.” Over time, however, the title “Rabbi” came into use, literally translated as “my master.” (2) The Amoraic period. This period extends from 220 CE to 500 CE. Teachers in this era were known as *Amoraim*, meaning “expounders” or “spokesmen,” derived from the Aramaic root *'amar*, “to say.” The two later periods of rabbinic literature are (3) the Saboraic period, spanning 500–650 CE, during which teachers were known as *Saboraim* or “reasoners,” and lastly the Geonic period, stretching from 650–1050 CE, with its teachers called *Geonim* (“the eminent” or “the great”).<sup>29</sup>

What needs to be understood is that although rabbinic literature was redacted during the period of 200–1000 CE, long after the composition of the New Testament writings, it would be a mistake to completely disregard its existence. This is because rabbinic literature consists of compilations of material, much of which originates from or is closely related to periods far earlier than the date of redaction (Evans & Porter, 2000: 898). For instance, rabbinic literature from the Amoraic era is, in an indirect sense, a continuation of the transmission from the Tannaic era. As Charlotte E. Fonrobert explains, the literary works of

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<sup>28</sup> Brown, 112.

<sup>29</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies* (Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 217.



the Amoraim are essentially a continuation and an innovation of the works produced by the Tannaim.<sup>30</sup>

Larry R. Helyer explains that there is a continuity between Second Temple literature and the writings of the New Testament. Helyer notes that the New Testament authors adopted certain frameworks (for example, eschatology) which, although rooted in the Old Testament, had undergone significant development and elaboration within Second Temple literature.<sup>31</sup> James H. Charlesworth, in his explanation, points out that the writings of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are Jewish interpretations of their sacred scriptures, namely the TaNaKh.<sup>32</sup> Through the interpretations of the writers of Second Temple literature, certain religious concepts of Judaism were either introduced or emphasized. Malka Z. Simkovich likens the neglect of the Second Temple era to losing the choral voices of a highly diverse Jewish conversation. Essentially, Second Temple literature provides an account of how Jews read and explored the Scriptures, which in turn reveals how they expressed their Jewish identity.<sup>33</sup>

### **Intertextual Exegesis of *Yetzer Hara* in Relation to Matthew 4:1–11**

#### **a. Doing the Will of God Through Temptation**

The will of God is one of the central themes emphasized in the opening narrative of the Gospel of Matthew. This is evident in the event of Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist in the Jordan River (Matt. 3:13–16). The baptism is interpreted as a sign of fulfilling God's will, as Jesus Himself declared: "*It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness*" (Matt. 3:15). In this context, the

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<sup>30</sup> Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee, eds., "Introduction," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2007), 7.

<sup>31</sup> Larry R. Helyer, "The Necessity, Problems, and Promise of Second Temple Judaism for Discussions of New Testament Eschatology," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 47, no. 4 (2004).

<sup>32</sup> James H. Charlesworth, "The Interpretation of the Tanak in the Jewish Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), xvii.

<sup>33</sup> Malka Z. Simkovich, *Discovering Second Temple Literature: The Scriptures and Stories That Shaped Early Judaism* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2018), xvii.

will of God refers to the affirmation of Jesus' identity as the Son of God (*Divine Sonship*). This status not only highlights the intimate relationship between Jesus and the Father but also underscores His messianic function as the mediator between heaven and earth, between God and humanity. Therefore, all the works that Jesus would later accomplish must be understood as actions rooted in God's power and carried out under His divine authority.<sup>34</sup>

In Matthew 4:1, it is explained that Jesus was, in a seemingly passive manner, led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be confronted with various temptations. The author of Matthew emphasizes in this first verse that the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness carried a particular purpose, namely to confirm His Messiahship and His status as the Son of God. Barbieri explains that this episode reveals the true quality of Jesus. Louis A. Barbieri, in his commentary on this passage, notes that while it was impossible for the divine Son to sin, this very reality only intensified the testing. Jesus could not yield to trial and sin, but He was required to endure until the testing had run its full course.<sup>35</sup> For the readers of the Gospel of Matthew, who were Jewish Christians, God's act of leading Jesus into temptation appears to parallel what their ancestors had experienced thousands of years earlier, when the newly formed nation of Israel was brought out of the land of Egypt and into the wilderness on their journey toward Canaan (Exod. 15:25; 16:4).<sup>36</sup>

In this regard, doing the will of God through temptation is also present in the teachings of the rabbis within the concept of *Yetzer Hara*. In one of the rabbinic literatures from the Tannaic era, namely the Mishnah Berakhot 9, an interpretation of Israel's central creed in Deuteronomy 6:5 is explained:

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<sup>34</sup> Lars Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus: Baptism in the Early Church*, Studies of the New Testament and Its World (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 23.

<sup>35</sup> Louis A. Barbieri, "Matthew," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary. New: New Testament Edition*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, 3. print (Wheaton, Ill: Victor Books, 1983), 26.

<sup>36</sup> M. Eugene Boring and Fred B. Craddock, *The People's New Testament Commentary*, 1st ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 22.

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A person is obligated to bless upon the bad just as he blesses upon the good. As it says, 'And you shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart and all your soul and with all that you have.' (Deut. 6:5) 'With all your heart' – with your two inclinations (*yetzer*), with the inclination of good (*yetzer hatov*) and the inclination of evil (*yetzer hara*).<sup>37</sup>

In one rabbinic teaching, it is explained that the phrase “*with all your heart*” in Deuteronomy 6:5 refers to the two *yetzer* in the human heart, namely *Yetzer Hara* and *Yetzer Hatov*. A person who loves God completely is considered someone who has mastered the *yetzer* within, including the evil inclination. According to rabbinic tradition, the presence of the *yetzer* in humans does not only refer to the struggle between good and evil, but also points to the essential aspect of enabling a person to love God with all their heart.

In another rabbinic literature from the Amoraic era, which is a continuation of the tradition from the Tannaic period, it is explained more specifically that a person who controls the *Yetzer Hara* in their life is one who fulfills the will of God.

See and understand that if you kill this evil inclination the world will be destroyed because as a result there will also no longer be any desire to procreate. ... Since the inclination to reproduce was quashed, the chickens stopped laying eggs. They said: What should we do? If we kill it, the world will be destroyed. ... What did they do? They gouged out its eyes, effectively limiting its power, and set it free. And this was effective to the extent that a person is no longer aroused to commit incest with his close relatives.<sup>38</sup>

In Yoma 9b, it is explained that a person who seemingly kills their *Yetzer Hara* is equated with someone who destroys the world. This is because the *Yetzer Hara* has a significant function in human life, particularly in procreation. In this sense, the *Yetzer Hara* can be understood as something good because it is related to the continuation of human life. A person who attempts to completely eliminate the *Yetzer Hara* is, in effect, stopping life itself. The *Yetzer Hara* is also

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<sup>37</sup> The William Davidson Talmud, “Mishna Berakhot 9,” Sefaria, accessed May 30, 2020, [https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah\\_Berakhot.9.5?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berakhot.9.5?lang=bi).

<sup>38</sup> Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*, 72.

an important component in God's design for humanity to be co-creators with God on earth, in the sense of working together with God to maintain and care for the universe.<sup>39</sup>

There appears to be an intertextual relationship between the account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness in Matthew 4:1–11 and the *Yetzer* tradition in rabbinic literature. Both share similarities and differences. Their similarity lies in the aspect of fulfilling the will of God. Both *Yetzer Hara* and the account of Jesus' temptation in Matthew 4:1–11 emphasize self-mastery in the face of temptation. Jesus successfully resisted the various temptations presented by Satan, thereby fulfilling the will of God as the Son of God. Similarly, the rabbinic tradition explains that a person who properly masters the *Yetzer* in their life is also fulfilling the will of God, specifically when they love God with their whole being.

However, there is also a notable contrast. In the *Yetzer* tradition according to rabbinic literature, the will of God concerns procreative aspects of human life, so that humans are understood to be co-creators with God. In contrast, the will of God in the account of Jesus' temptation lies in Jesus' identity as the Messiah, who obeys God's will as part of His actions in the process of redeeming His people (cf. Matt. 1:21).

#### **a. The Tempter as a Personal Evil Entity**

In the account of the temptation in the Gospel of Matthew, it is recorded that "the Tempter" approached Jesus (Matt. 4:3). The author of Matthew uses at least three terms to refer to this figure: *Ho Peirazon* (the Tempter – v. 3), *diabolos* (the Devil – v. 5), and *satanas* (Satan – v. 10). However, these three designations do not indicate different persons. From the narrative and perspective of Matthew, all three terms refer to the same individual, a certain evil being who actively tempts Jesus.

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<sup>39</sup> Geoffrey W. Dennis, "Yetzer Hara," in *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Myth, Magic, and Mysticism* (Minneapolis: Llewellyn Publications, 2016).

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In Second Temple literature, specifically Aramaic Levi 3:9–13, there is a prayer for the expulsion of Satan, which is linked to the purity of the heart. The text reads as follows:

And let not any satan have power over me, to make me stray from your path And have mercy upon me, my Lord, and bring me forward, to be your servant and to minister well to you. so that the wall of your peace is around me, and let the shelter of your power shelter me from every evil. Wherefore, giving over even lawlessness, wipe it out from under the heaven, and end lawlessness from the face of the earth. Purify my heart, Lord, from all impurity, and let me, myself, be raised to you (Greenfield, Stone, Eshel, 2004: 64)

Greenfield explains that the expressions in 3:10-13 are similar to Jewish liturgical prayers when a person asks that their evil inclination (*Yetzer hara*) not rule over them. These prayers are performed at several times. For example the morning prayer ואל ישלט בני יצר הרע (w'l yslt bny ytsr) [let the evil inclination not rule over us]. The prayer before retiring וישלט בי יצר טוב ואל ישלט בי יצר הרע (wyslt by ytsr twv w'l yslt by ytsr hr') [and let the good inclination rule over me, and let the evil inclination not rule over me]. The connection between *Yetzer* and Satan is more explicitly recorded in the prayer of the influential rabbi Judah HaNasi as follows: שתצילני... מפנע רע מיצר רע ומשטן המשחית (sttsylny... mpn' r' mytsr r' wmstn hmskhyt) [deliver me... from mishap and from the evil inclination and from the destructive satan].<sup>40</sup>

The connection between *Yetzer* and a personal evil entity is also found in the Qumran manuscripts. For example in the Qumran manuscript known as Barkhi Napshi with the code 4Q436.

יצר רע געד [תה מן בליותי רוח קד] ש שמתה  
Yetzer ra you have rebuked from my kindenys, a holy spirit you have placed in my heart.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Jonas C. Greenfield, Michael E. Stone, and Esther Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 131.

<sup>41</sup> Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*, 47.

*Yetzer ra* here appears as part of an evil inclination However Rosen-Zvi explains that the description of the Yetzer Hara that can be expelled indicates that the Yetzer Hara in this text can be understood as a specific entity The concept of Yetzer Hara is also later found in the Cave 11 document with the code 11QPsaPlea or called Plea for Deliverance Some scrolls found in Cave 11 basically contain texts of the Book of Psalms but this document does not contain texts of Psalms The 11QPsaPlea document basically contains prayers seeking forgiveness protection and deliverance from God from the power of Satan<sup>42</sup>

There is a similarity in aspect when the *Yetzer*, which is an inclination that leads a person to sin, is shown to have a principal figure behind it, namely the influence caused by a certain evil entity On the other hand the evil entity is also a principal figure in the conceptual thinking of the author of the Gospel of Matthew when writing the account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness in Matthew 4:1-11 The researcher observes an intertextual relationship between the Yetzer associated with a certain evil entity and Satan in Matthew 4:1-11 who directly acts to tempt.

#### **b. Obeying Temptation Is Equivalent to Idol Worship**

In the narrative of the Gospel of Matthew it is recorded that the Tempter, namely Satan, tempts Jesus three times Each temptation has at least a different tendency However in the final or third temptation an offer is presented to Jesus of ownership over the kingdoms of the world with their glory but with one condition namely if Jesus worships Satan (Matt. 4:8) The expression "worship" in verse 9 itself refers to an attitude of complete dependence or submission to a figure of ultimate authority It seems highly unlikely that Jesus could obey what Satan said because Jesus and the people of Israel had long held the tradition that only the one true God is worthy of the worship of His people (cf. Deut. 6:4).

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<sup>42</sup> Peter W. Flint, "Appendix I: 'Apocryphal' Psalms in the Psalms Scrolls and in Texts Incorporating Psalms," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Psalms*, ed. William P. Brown (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 626.

It is interesting to understand the phrase from Satan offering the kingdoms of the world with their glory if Jesus worships him (vv. 8-9) The phrase "All these I will give you, if you fall down and worship me" in verse 9 in its Greek grammar is in the subjunctive mood, or an expression of probability Ray Summers explains that the presence of the word *ean* in a Greek phrase indicates that the phrase is subjunctive and has a probable future condition (possible in the future) (Summers, 1995: 121)<sup>43</sup> Summers explains that if the phrase can be translated with the formulation "If.... may....." then literally the researcher considers that the phrase can be translated as "All of these may be given to You, if you bow down and worship me" (Semua itu mungkin akan kuberikan kepada-Mu, Jika Engkau sujud menyembah aku) The researcher observes from the word analysis that the meaning as mere probability indicates that even if Jesus worshiped Satan, He would not have certainly obtained all the power over the world.

In the patterned temptation tradition in the Yetzer Hara tradition there is also an explanation that a person who obeys their Yetzer Hara is likened to someone who engages in idol worship For example in the rabbinic literature of the Tannaic era namely Tosefta Bava Kamma 9:31.

R. Shimon b. Eleazar says in the name of R. Hilfaï b. Agra who said in the name of R. Johanan b. Nuri: Anyone who pulls out his hair, rends his garment, breaks his vessels, throws money in rage, should be viewed as a worshipper of idols, for if his *Yetzer* were to tell him to worship idolshe would; for such is the worship) of the *evil Yetzer*.<sup>44</sup>

In this literature a transmitted explanation from the rabbis is described, from Rabbi Johanan ben Nuri to Rabbi Shimon ben Eleazar regarding the existence of the Yetzer Hara The actions described in this literature (tearing one's hair, ripping clothes, and so on) depict a person in a state of uncontrolled anger In this literature it is explained that a person in such uncontrolled anger is regarded as an idolater However the literature further explains that all these acts of anger are basically performed under a certain influence namely from their evil Yetzer

<sup>43</sup> Ray Summers, *Essentials of New Testament Greek* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 121.

<sup>44</sup> Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*, 30.

Therefore a person influenced by what the Yetzer commands is performing it as a form of worship to that Yetzer Hara. In other Tannaic era rabbinic literature it is also explicitly explained that the Yetzer Hara is a foreign deity (Yoma Nedarim 9:1-2; B, Shab 105b).<sup>45</sup>

Anyone who obeys their *Yetzer* is like an idolater. What is the reason? 'You shall have no foreign gods in you [Ps 81:10] [Yoma Nedarim 9:1, 41b];

"What foreign god is in a person's body? Say that it is the evil *Yetzer*" [Bava Shab 105b] (Rosen-Zvi, 2011: 31)

Rosen-Zvi observes that the Yetzer Hara in rabbinic literature is also understood as a foreign deity As is generally the case with foreign deities the Yetzer Hara as a deity also has rituals as an expression of obedience to the Yetzer Hara.<sup>46</sup>

In this case there is an intertextual parallel between the concept of Yetzer Hara temptation and Jesus' third temptation in the wilderness in Matthew 4:8-9 namely that when a person obeys the temptation, it is equivalent to agreeing to worship the Tempter or Satan However there are also differences between the two In the explanation of the Gospel of Matthew there are offers presented to Jesus, which if He desires them, He must first bow down and worship Satan Whereas in the Yetzer Hara concept a person who obeys their evil Yetzer is seen as performing destructive actions and is then likened to worshipping that Yetzer Thus a rather stark difference appears in that in the Matthew temptation narrative Satan's invitation to worship him is not for Jesus to perform destructive actions but rather an offer of power and authority that He could possess.

### c. The Role of the Word of God in Temptation

In the three temptations Jesus utters the same expression, namely "it is written" or in the original Greek γέγραπται (gegraptai) This expression refers to

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<sup>45</sup> Tek-teks dikutip dari Rosen-Zvi, 83.

<sup>46</sup> Rosen-Zvi, 31.



everything that has been written in the past but remains applicable in later times (Mounce, 2003: 225) Jesus refers to specific verses in Deuteronomy namely chapter 8:13 (Matt. 4:3), 6:16 (Matt. 4:6), and 6:13 (Matt. 4:10) In its context the Book of Deuteronomy speaks of a reminder narrative to Israel, who at that time were on the journey from the land of Egyptian slavery to the land of Canaan for forty years The author of the Gospel of Matthew, writing for Jewish Christians, wanted to emphasize a particular theme in the temptation narrative in Matt. 4:1–11 Unlike their ancestors who failed when facing temptation, Jesus successfully endured all the temptations He faced, demonstrating that He was indeed worthy to be the Son of God whose obedience was proven.

In the *Yetzer* tradition, the overcoming of the *Yetzer Hara* is also through the study of the written Torah This is, for example, recorded in several rabbinic literatures of the Amoraic era such as Bava Batra 16a and Sifre Deut 45.

... True, the Holy One, Blessed be He, created the evil inclination (*Yetzer Hara*), but He also created the Torah as an antidote to counter its effects and prevent it from gaining control of a person.<sup>47</sup>

Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: I created your evil *Yetzer*, and there is nothing more evil than it, [but] If you do right, there is uplift (Gen 4:7)-Be occupied with words of Torah and it will not reign over you. But if you abandon words of Torah, then it will gain mastery over you, as it is said (ibid.): sin crouches at the its urge is towardyou- it has no business other than with you. But if you wish, you can rule over it, as it is said (ibid.): yet you can be its master: Ifyour enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat . . . you will be heaping live coals on his head . . ." (Prov 25:21). The evil *Yetzer* is evil, the one who created it [himself] testifies that it is evil, as it it said: since the *Yetzer* of man's heart is evil from hisyouth (Gen. 8:21).<sup>48</sup>

In these literatures it is explained that the study of the Torah is emphasized as something important to observe A person who actively engages with the words of the Torah becomes free from the influence of the *Yetzer Hara* Conversely, if a person abandons the words of the Torah, the *Yetzer Hara* is

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<sup>47</sup> The William Davidson Talmud, "Bava Batra 16a," Sefaria, accessed May 30, 2020, [https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah\\_Berakhot.9.5?lang=bi](https://www.sefaria.org/Mishnah_Berakhot.9.5?lang=bi).

<sup>48</sup> Rosen-Zvi, *Demonic Desires: Yetzer Hara and the Problem of Evil in Late Antiquity*, 21.

explained to immediately have power over that person The study of the Torah is regarded as an antidote or remedy for the Yetzer Hara.

The researcher considers that there is an intertextual relationship between the Yetzer Hara tradition and the Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11) The explanation by the author of the Gospel of Matthew regarding Jesus' success in resisting all the temptations posed by Satan appears similar to the rabbinic tradition which states that temptations caused by the Yetzer Hara can only be managed through the study of the Torah However, the researcher still observes a difference between the two The words quoted by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew narrative are direct citations from verses in the Book of Deuteronomy (Deut. 8:3; 6:16; 6:13) When these verses are cited, it is not merely for citation or without purpose The verses, when considered in their context, carry an implicit meaning related to Israel's journey in the wilderness toward the land of Canaan The purpose of the author of the Gospel of Matthew in narrating how Jesus quoted these verses from Deuteronomy is to show his Jewish readers that Jesus was not like Israel of old who failed in the wilderness temptations Jesus successfully resisted these temptations and continued to walk in the will of God as the Son of God and redeemer of His people's sins (Matt. 3:2) This journey of Jesus fulfilling God's will continues throughout His life in the subsequent parts of the Gospel of Matthew.

This emphasis is not present in the explanation of the role of the Torah in the Yetzer Hara The emphasis in the rabbinic teaching for overcoming the Yetzer Hara is on a person's active engagement in the study of the Torah The more frequently a person actively studies the Torah, the rabbis understand that that person will be protected from the influence of the Yetzer Hara, which can lead to sinful actions.

#### **d. Weakness of Good Overcomes the Strong Influence of Evil**

In the theological perspective of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus is depicted as the Son of God who comes to redeem the sins of humanity (cf. Matt. 3:17; 1:27) However, Jesus took on human form, and even in the temptation narrative,

specifically in 4:2, it is explained that Jesus was at a point of human weakness because He had fasted forty days and forty nights. Despite being in a state of weakness, the Gospel of Matthew notes that Jesus remained unaffected by the temptations that Satan presented to Him. Therefore, at the conclusion of the narrative in Matthew, Jesus is ministered to by angels as a depiction of His success (Matt. 4:12).

From the rabbinic literature perspective, the concept of *Yetzer Hara* cannot be separated from *Yetzer Hatov*. Unlike *Yetzer Hara*, which has a tendency to lead humans into evil or sin, *Yetzer Hatov* is the antithesis of *Yetzer Hara*, leading humans to perform good in accordance with God's will. As Rosen-Zvi explains, *Yetzer Hara* and *Yetzer Hatov* must be understood as a unified concept that cannot be separated within the context of rabbinic literature (Rosen-Zvi, 2008: 5).

Compared to *Yetzer Hara*, rabbinic literature explains that *Yetzer Hatov* is weaker. For example, as written in the Palestinian Talmud, one of the Amoraic-era literatures, *Leviticus Rabbah* 34:1 which likens *Yetzer Hatov* to the expression a weak person.

Happy is he that deal wisely with the poor; Abba b. Jeremiah in the name of R. Meir said that this refers to one who enthrones *the Good Yetzer* over the evil *Yetzer* (Rosen-Zvi, 2008: 21).<sup>49</sup>

Rosen-Zvi explains that this literature is an interpretation of Psalm 41:2. Interestingly the phrase "blessed is the one who considers the weak" is interpreted in this literature as someone who considers his *Yetzer Hatov* and then places it above his *Yetzer Hara*.

More completely in another Amoraic rabbinic literature namely *Nedarim* 32b it is also described that *Yetzer Hatov* is an influence weaker than *Yetzer Hara*.

R. Ammi bar Abba said: What is the meaning of the passage (Eccl 9:14): "a little city, with few men in it"? "A little city"—this refers to the body; "with few men

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<sup>49</sup> Rosen-Zvi, 21.

The Tradition of *Yetzer* in Rabbinic Literature of the Second Temple Period within the Narrative of Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness in Matthew 4:1–11.

in it”—this refers to the limbs; “and to it came a great king, who invested it”—this is the evil *Yetzer*; “and built mighty siege works against it”—this refers to sins; “present in the city was a poor wise man” (v. 15)—this is the good *Yetzer*; “who saved it with his wisdom”—this refers to repentance and good deeds; “but nobody thought of that poor man”—for when the evil *Yetzer* [dominates], the good *Yetzer* is not remembered.<sup>50</sup>

In the Nezarim literature the depiction is even more contrasting where *Yetzer Hara* is considered a great king attacking a small city namely man whereas *Yetzer Hatov* is a poor but wise man. It is explained that the sin produced by *Yetzer Hara* is so great depicted using the explanation from Ecclesiastes 9:14 like enormous siege walls. But although depicted as very weak *Yetzer Hatov* succeeds in overcoming all the sinful influence of *Yetzer Hara* through wisdom or repentance and good deeds that arise from him. However the positive influence of *Yetzer Hatov* as explained in this literature does not last because in the end no one remembers the positive influence it produces due to the influence of *Yetzer Hara* that has so dominated.

There is a similarity between *Yetzer Hatov* and Jesus in the temptation story namely both depict the weaker force overcoming the overwhelmingly dominant evil. In rabbinic literature although depicted as very weak *Yetzer Hatov* can overcome the evil influence of *Yetzer Hara*. Whereas in the temptation story in Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus is also depicted as the Son of God in the limitation of human flesh who is likewise in a very weak condition having fasted forty days and forty nights. This depiction of weakness does not prevent either from overcoming the evil forces for *Yetzer Hatov* it is the strong influence of *Yetzer Hara* and for Jesus it is the evil temptations cast by Satan.

However the researcher also observes a difference between the two. In rabbinic literature *Yetzer Hatov* is not personified as a specific entity unlike *Yetzer Hara* which is depicted as Satan. *Yetzer Hatov* is still understood as an impulse to do good which a person must deliberately place above *Yetzer Hara*.

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<sup>50</sup> Rosen-Zvi, 23.

Whereas in the narrative of Matthew 4:1-11 Jesus is not described as being influenced by anyone in overcoming the temptation This indicates that Jesus despite His weakness was still consciously able to maintain Himself in the will of God.

Thus, although there is no depiction of the personification of *Yetzer Hatov* in rabbinic literature, the researcher argues that when *Yetzer Hara* can be portrayed as Satan in the temptation narrative, Jesus can be understood as the personification of the true *Yetzer Hatov*, where believers are called to emulate the example set by Jesus who, despite His weakness, remained steadfast and maintained integrity when facing temptation.

## CONCLUSION

The entire discussion above ultimately leads to the conclusion that the Yetzer tradition is intertextually connected with the temptation narrative of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11. This explanation demonstrates both similarities and differences between the two, as both address the theme of temptation with similar sub-themes, yet in contrasting ways. From this analysis, the researcher concludes that Yetzer Hara is intertextually related to the temptation of Jesus, indicating that Jesus' success in facing the temptations in Matthew 4:1-11 reflects His triumph over the powerful influence of Yetzer Hara. This shows that Jesus is not only seen as the fulfillment of the promises of the Old Testament but also does not contradict Jewish oral teachings. This intertextual interpretation also emphasizes the importance of understanding the text within the context of spiritual traditions, as explored in this study through rabbinic literature, Second Temple literature, and the Qumran manuscripts, which reflect the spirituality and inner struggles of the Jewish people at that time. These literatures are crucial for understanding the spiritual roots presented in the New Testament, making the context they provide essential for understanding the religious world of the New Testament community.

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