Mount Sinai and Mount Zion: Discontinuity and continuity in the book of Hebrews.

Hulisani Ramantswana

Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, Unisa, Pretoria, South Africa

ABSTRACT

The author of Hebrews draws significant contrasts between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion which both played a role in the old covenant. For the author of Hebrews the former mountain, Mount Sinai, only had limited significance with respect to the new covenant.

Berg Sinai en Berg Sion: Diskontinuïteit en kontinuïteit in die brief aan die Hebreërs

Hulisani Ramantswana

Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies, Unisa, Pretoria, South Africa

Correspondence
new covenant, whereas the latter mountain, Mount Zion, continued to have significance in the new covenant as a shadow of the heavenly reality, which is the true destination for the pilgrimage community. Mount Zion was viewed as a shadow of the heavenly reality, which is the true destination for the pilgrimage community. Mount Sinai as the locus of encounter or meeting between God and Israel only played a transitory role, whereas Mount Zion had perpetual significance as the destination and the dwelling place of God and his people.

Introduction

The Book of Hebrews pictures the new covenant people or the church as a community on a pilgrimage. It describes Israel's wandering through the wilderness as a type for the new covenant: a pilgrimage is one that is deeply rooted in the old covenant community and it is a continuation thereof. In the first place, the promise of entering God's rest still stands. Israel's wandering in the desert and their entrance into Canaan is viewed as a narrative within a macro-narrative in which God's rest, which God entered after he had completed his work of creation, still stands. Secondly, Old Testament believers looked beyond their micro-narratives through faith; however, the promises:

- 'Abraham ... looked forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God' (Heb 11:8-12).
- '[Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob] were still living by faith when they died ... they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them' (Heb 11:8-16).
- 'By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter ... He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward' (Heb 11:26).
- Regarding all the heroes of faith, it is stated: 'These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect' (Heb 11:39-40).

The author of Hebrews draws on several micro-narratives from the Old Testament to show the points of continuity and points of contrasts between the old and the new covenant. In this article, I intend to draw between Mount Sinai and the heavenly Mount Zion in Hebrews 12:18-24. For some the contrast drawn between Mount Sinai and the heavenly Mount Zion in Hebrews 12:18-24 represents discontinuity between the old and the new covenant, which in turn represents the contrast drawn between Judaism and Christianity (Attridge 1989:374; Gordon 2000:157; see also Lehne 1990:103; Williamson & Attridge 1989:374) contends that 'the two mountains and their symbolic equivalents are contrasted as the discontinuity rather than the coherence of God's action'. The idea that the contrast between Sinai expresses 'contrast' and 'discontinuity' tends to undermine the correspondences and progressive relational mountains which form the basis of the contrast. I will argue that for the author of Hebrews, Mount Sinai character and of limited significance whereas Mount Zion as a destination has perpetual significance; continuity and discontinuity flow from the contrast that is drawn. The elements of continuity and discontinuity when the contrast drawn between Sinai and Zion in Hebrews 12:18-24 is viewed as a conceptual framework converges with other symbols within the author's redemptive-historical framework that spans from creation to the eschatological earth and heavens at the climax of which stands a superior covenant mediator, Jesus. P contrast drawn between Sinai and Zion in Hebrews 12:18-24 is not 'the' conceptual framework from which the author draws his symbols.
Hebrews developed his argument throughout the book; rather, the contrast drawn has its place and function within the author's redemptive-historical framework. For the author of Hebrews, the primordial act of creation set the stage which culminates in the eschatological transformation of creation (Heb 1:2; 12:26-28). It is within this redemptive-historical framework that the author of Hebrews makes a contrast between the two mountains, Mount Sinai (or Horeb) and the heavenly Mount Zion, and within which the pilgrimage motif is set not only as a forward movement but an upward movement.

Exposition in Hebrews 12:18-24 is given by the following pattern of contrast: 'for you have not come' in Hebrews 12:18 in contrast with 'but you have come' in Hebrews 12:22. The pilgrimage motif is characterised by 'motion' just as we find in Hebrews 12:18-24 (Käsemann 1984:22-23). In Hebrews 3-4, where the leading motif is that of 'rest', the goal of the new covenant people as a wandering community is to enter God's rest. The 'rest' which Israel entered into when they took possession of the land of Canaan is now viewed as a type of God's eternal rest, available. As Johnsson (1978:239-251) points out, the tone in that section is one of expectancy - the goal realised. In Hebrews 12:18-24, the goal is no longer just eschatological; it is in some sense realised: 'You have not come' in this case is Israel's experience at Sinai and Israel's experience at Mount Zion.

Mount Sinai - Mountain of transition

Although Mount Sinai is not explicitly mentioned by name in Hebrews 12:18-21, the author is alluding surrounding the giving of the law when Israel was camped at the desert of Sinai. In this retelling of the use of the Exodus account (Ex 19:1-20:23), its retelling in Deuteronomy (Dt 4:9-5:33), and interpretive interpolation of the author's use of the events at Mount Sinai in this instance evoke, inter alia, three things: the theophany and the fear motif.

Theophany motif

The author of Hebrews introduces the contrast between Mounts Sinai and Zion by reminding his audience of the pilgrimage has not led them: 'For you have not come'; then it continues to offer a description of the place. The description first of all recalls the theophany. Mount Sinai is used elsewhere to refer to the place of theophany and the giving of the law with Ex 19:18, 20; 20:22; Dt 4:36; cf. 4 Ezr 3:17ff.; Bar 2:28; Sir 17:11ff.; 24:33; Jdg 5:14). Mount Sinai, due to its manifestation, could not be touched; anything that touched it, even if it was an animal, had to die (Ex 19:12). The scene was terrifying for the Israelites: the mountain was on fire, darkness was over it, as were gloom and tempest and in the midst of all this terror, there was the sound of a trumpet and a voice speaking. The Israelites requested Moses to be their mediator rather than risk their lives by directly conversing with God (Ex 20:18-19). As the author of Hebrews also points out, they heard the voice they begged that no further word be spoken to them (Heb 12:19). Then he continues to highlight the fact that nobody could approach that mountain, not even an animal.

In the Exodus narrative, the preparation for the theophanic manifestation at Mount Sinai clearly set a boundary around the mountain. For the people to partake in the meeting they had to abstain from sexual intercourse and to wash their clothes (Ex 19:10-12, 23; cf. Dt 5:1-5). This was to set God apart as a Holy One separated from all imperfections and from this theophany and from the other theophanic manifestations that a place where God reveals himself is marked as ground and protected by explicit restrictions (cf. Ex 3:1-5; Harrington 2001:46). The burning fire on the mountain points out:

[... is a good symbol of God's exalted, dangerous holiness. Fire separates pure from impure, creates a space which cannot be bridged. For that which can stand its heat, fire functions as purifier and perfect even uncontrollable; if unleashed it represents a dangerous threat which is respectable by all.]

In line with this, the author of Hebrews, as will become clear subsequently, stresses the fact that this mountain is unapproachable.

This also needs to be understood within the broader religious context of the ancient Near East, where mountains played an important role (see Clifford 1972; Levenson 1985:111-137; Talmon 1978:427-447). Mountain
locations where the gods held their divine assemblies and also as the homes of the gods. For example, was thought to live on Mount Zaphon which in the Bible came to be an epithet for Zion (Levenson 198 the ancient world to holy mountains, as Clements (1965:1-2) points out, could be explained by the exp peoples for the gods to continue to reveal their presence in certain localities where a theophany occur certain localities were identified as their dwelling places and altars were erected. Attached to this was t on which a god dwelt was a chosen, a 'holy spot' or 'holy mountain'. This is evident in the following U by Clifford (1972):

Come, and I will seek it,
In the midst of my mountain, divine Zaphon,
In the holy place, the mountain of my heritage,
In the chosen spot, on the hill of victory. (p. 68)

When God descended on Mount Sinai it became a holy and unapproachable spot. However, when God descended to Mount Sinai, he did not make Mount Sinai his permanent dwelling place. Mount Sinai was rather a temporary dwelling for God as he continued to narrow the gap between himself and the people by descending even further from the tabernacle. God became a wanderer with his people in the desert dwelling in a tent until many genera of David and Solomon when he chose Jerusalem and Zion to be his dwelling. Mount Sinai was never intended to be the final destination for Israel in their pilgrimage, nor did God make it his permanent dwelling. Mount Sinai rather had a transit in Israel's pilgrimage.

**Visio Dei and Motif of Fear**

The theophany goes hand in hand with the *visio Dei* motif. The author of Hebrews uses the verb of *see* about this linkage: 'Indeed, so fearful was the sight... In the Exodus narrative the two also go 19:20-24; 20:18-21; 33:12-13; 40:35-38). 'To the Israelites the glory of the Lord (at Sinai) looked on top of the mountain' (Ex 24:17). The forbidding voice warned the Israelites not to 'force their way through to see the Lord and many of them perish' (Ex 19:21). The *visio Dei* motif is also confirmed by God's words in Exodus 20:22, 'You have for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven.' The significance of the *visio Dei* motif is affirmed by the parallel passages, which strengthen the connection between seeing and death (see Ex 20:19; cf. Dt 5:24-27; Hague 2001:38). When Moses pleaded with God to show him his glory, God warns Moses saying: 'You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live' (Ex 33:20).

It should also be observed that the author of Hebrews relates the theophany motif with the *visio Dei* motif. Moses said, "I am filled with fear and trembling" (Heb 12:21). The fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." As Jacob (1992:578) observes, the intent of the Sinai covenant was to restrain the people from sin. However, the author of Hebrews expands the fear motif to include the words ascribed to Moses in this regard are not recorded in the Old Testament. The author was ma tradition that is attested elsewhere in the New Testament and in haggadic tradition, reproducing it in h with the other interpretive traditions. In Acts 7:32, Stephen describes Moses as trembling with regard to which Moses saw on Mount Sinai: 'and trembling, Moses did not dare look'. The textual basis was that Moses hid his face for he was afraid to look at God' (Hughes 1977:543; Lane 1991:464; Thurston 1979:30-31) as: 'I feared the anger of and wrath of the Lord.' (Bruce 1990:354-355). As Hughes (1977:543) expresses it, the divine presence within the fiery cloud, must have been inspired with awe beyond the rest of the people below.'

It should be noted, however, that a similar motif is found in the *Bayblonian Talmud: Sabbat* accord Sinai declared, 'I was afraid that the angels could consume me with the breath of their mouths.' The theme of 'fear of the Most Holy God. The emphasis in Hebrews 12:18-24 is on the holiness of God, in which there is r
The Sinai covenant, or the old covenant, is one that made man conscious of his imperfection and showed him that he needed to worship in fear due to his unworthiness.

**Mount Sinai as representative of the old covenant of fear**

We have established so far that Mount Sinai, although not explicitly mentioned by name, is identified as the locus of the giving of the law, the mountain of encounter between God and Israel. Mount Sinai is the mountain of God and Israel covenantally came together to journey together to their final destination. The author of Hebrews is not interested in the abolition of the significance of the covenantal encounter between God and Israel. Rather, he focuses on establishing the weakness of that encounter. The chronotopic encounter at Mount Sinai, an encounter between God and Israel, is presented as weak. It was a fearful encounter. The sight was terrifying, the voice of God was also terrifying so that the people were terrified and Moses, the mediator between Israel and God, was also terrified.

In so doing, the author continues with his hermeneutical strategy that can already be observed in the earlier chapters of Hebrews 7. He points out the weakness of the old covenant that was established at Sinai. The old covenant failed to bring about the perfection demanded by God: 'If perfection could have been attained ... why was there still need for another ... ?' (Heb 7:11).

Again he states:

> The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law made nothing perfect), introduction of the better hope through which we draw near to God. (Heb 7:18-19)

The same idea is repeated in Hebrews 10:

> The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming -not the realities themselves. For the law could never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. If it could, would they have not stopped being offered? (vv. 1-2a)

The old covenant is characterised by imperfection: the people failed to remain within the covenant bounds (Heb 7:8). The Levitical priesthood was administered by fallible and weak men who also needed atoning for the gifts and sacrifices that they offered could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper (Heb 9:9); the sanctuary that was a copy of that in heaven (Heb 9:23-24). The law was a conscious reminder of man's inability to attain the holiness that God demands (Heb 10:1-4, esp. vv. 4-5).

Mount Sinai, as Levenson (1985) describes it:

> [I]s the mountain of Israel's infancy, of the days of Moses, when the nation, as the story has it, was a few generations old. Mount Sinai is the location of only one great event in Israel's history, the revelatory event (p. 89)

However, for the author of Hebrews, this great revelatory event was one that was clouded in fear, the fear being cast negatively as it was contrasted with the joy at Mount Zion. The idea that meeting with God is dangerous and frightening recalls the post-fall encounter between God and the first human couple, Adam and Eve. God's presence which was previously unthreatening was now perceived as threatening, and so out of fear Adam and Eve hid from God (Gn 3:8-9).

However, the covenantal encounter at Mount Sinai is not simply presented as weak, it was also transitory. Mount Sinai was not to be a permanent dwelling place for God. As terrifying as the initial encounter was, the covenant-making process proceeded. God instructed Israel to build a sanctuary for him that would house him in their midst. God narrowed the gap between himself and Israel by making his dwelling in a tent in the midst of Israel, becoming a wanderer with Israel to her final destination. The final destination for the tabernacle was Jerusalem, on Mount Zion (1 Ki 8:1). On the other hand, Israel at Mount Sinai still looked forward to the Promised Land within the land for 'the place the Lord will choose' (Dt 12:5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26; 14:23, 24, 25; 15:20; 16:1, 6, 26, 31), that is, a place where he will 'put his name there' (Dt 12:5, 21; 14:24) or 'make his name dwell there' (Dt 12:11, 21; 14:23, 26, 11; 26:2). Israel became a carrier of God to his dwelling place. For the author of Hebrews, community unlike Israel at Sinai has come to Mount Zion.
Mount Zion - The destination

Mount Sinai and Mount Zion both played significant roles within the old covenant. However, for the author of Hebrews, the destination for the community of faith is not the earthly Jerusalem, but the new city, the city of God, where the names of the saints are written (Heb 12:23). Mount Zion, a hill within the bounds of the city of Jerusalem, became the centre of Israel’s cult and the highest mountain on earth, and the peripheral city of Jerusalem became the centre of the world (Ande Clifford 1972:154-173; Levenson 1985:111-137). Mount Zion passed into the hands of the Israelites during the reign of David when he conquered the city of Jerusalem from the Jebusites, formerly known under the name Jebus (Hebrew 2:5-9; 2 Chr 11:5). The name Jerusalem, however, predates the conquest of the city by David. The construction of the temple by Solomon (1 Ki 6-8; 2 Chr 2:1-7:10) is also Alexander 2008:45). However, as the story of the old covenant unfolded, Jerusalem, the city of God, became the centre of Israel’s cult and therefore became the centre of the world (Anderson 1998:187-224; Pace 2003:107). Mount Zion was transformed into a city of God by two complementary events, the bringing of the city by David (2 Sm 6; 1 Chr 13:1-14; 15:1-16:43) and the construction of the temple by Solomon (1 Ki 6-8; 2 Chr 2:1-7:10). The tradition of the election of Zion is based upon the bringing of the city by David as known from the 14th century BC (Tell El-Amarna Letters). This city was also known as Salem (Ps 76:3), which was initially a name of a Canaanite god - 'Shalem' (Arthur 1949:72-83). In the patriarchal narrative, we are told about the encounter between Abraham and Melchizedek of Salem (Gen 14:18). This, as Levenson (1985:93) points out, was 'perhaps in adumbration of the priestly name as a symbol of the transcendent action of God in creating a people for himself in the world, that Kingdom' (Porteous 1967:109).

Mount Zion as God's Heavenly Dwelling of Joyful Celebration

The author of Hebrews uses Mount Zion synonymously with 'the city of the living God,' which is in turn 'heavenly Jerusalem' (Heb 12:22). Pace Westcott (1909:413) and Casey (1976:337-346), who treat Mount Zion as separate entities in order to accentuate the distinction made between the three designations - 1 regard being referred to one and the same destination for the pilgrim community. The synonymous use of Mount Zion is that it is also deeply rooted in the old dispensation (e.g. 2 Sm 5:6-8; Ps 147:12f.; Am 1:2; Mi 4:2; Isa 24:13; Jer 31:13; Jl 3:17). In the cultic hymns, Mount Zion is the dwelling place of God (Ps 9:12; 74:2), God’s home (Ps 99:9) and the home of his holy house (Ps 5:7; 27:4). The tradition of the election of Zion is based upon Jerusalem after David had captured the city from the Jebusites. 'With or without the temple, the preserver Jerusalem meant that Yahweh was now dwelling there and had chosen this place for his abode' (Haye 1978:240). They regarded themselves on earth (Heb 11:13) because 'they were longing for a better country - a heavenly one' (Heb 11:16). Lil people, the new covenant people are supposed to live as aliens and strangers in the world (see also 1 Pt 1:2). The heavenly Mount Zion both played significant roles within the old covenant. However, for the author of Hebrews, the destination for the community of faith is not the earthly Jerusalem, but the new city, the city of God, where the names of the saints are written (Heb 12:23; cf. Phlp 3:20). The heavenly Mount Zion is the dwelling place of God, where his abode was transformed into a sacred place where no imperfection was allowed.

The city motif recurs in Hebrews under a variety of metaphors: 'the place' (Heb 11:8), 'the heavenly home' (Heb 12:28), and 'the abiding city which is to come' (Heb 13:14). Thus, the idea of God's rest, which he entered into at creation. The author of Hebrews in Chapter 4. The promise of God's rest, or the Sabbath rest, still remains into (Heb 4:1, 6). Israel's wilderness experience is analogous to and has a typological bearing on new and old testament concepts. The Christian community is indebted to Richard B. Gaffin with the lecture he gave at Westminster Theological Seminary). The Christian community is currently living in 'today' (Heb 4:7-8), rather, it is the wilderness experience is analogous to and has a typological bearing on new and old testament concepts. The Christian community is indebted to Richard B. Gaffin with the lecture he gave at Westminster Theological Seminary). The Christian community is currently living in 'today' (Heb 4:7-8), rather, it is the wilderness experience in our day. The Christian community is currently living in 'today,' which is not the situation of rest in Hebrews 4:7-8, rather, it is the wilderness experience in our day.
The encounter of the new covenant community with God takes place at a different spatial location. The earthly Jerusalem as significant as it was in the old covenant, is no longer the locus of encounter by covenant community. The earthly Mount Zion like Mount Sinai also represents the old order. At Qumran rejected the Zion cult, the temple - its priesthood and rulers continued to use the Zion symbolism for l and the future reality (Knibb 1987:3-6; Vermes 1995:19-35). The Qumranian community in the interim temple until such time when the earthly Zion or the temple would be restored (1Q32; 2Q24; 5Q15; 11Q i.2-9; cf. Apoc. Abr. 29:17-18; Sib. Or. 5.249-255, 420-427; see Hughes 1977:546; Isaacs 2002:69). The author shares a view similar to Paul's. Paul, in his allegory in Galatians 4:21-34 regarding Hagar and Sarah, representing two covenants: Hagar represents the covenant of Mount Sinai, and Sarah represents the c Jerusalem. Paul regards the present (earthly) city of Jerusalem to correspond with Mount Sinai. As Hu in Paul two concepts of Jerusalem: the present or earthly Jerusalem representing bondage and the heaven representing freedom. The old covenant is inferior due to spatial location - it is earthly and finds expression in earthly Jerusalem, whereas the new covenant has its centre in heaven and finds its expression in heavenly forms (V (2009) notes:

The heaven-earth duality is not for our author an antithetical dualism: heaven and earth are no [Hebrews] 11:13-36, the earth is depicted as a place of sojourn, not the final settlement of the people. 'heavenly' country is valued above the existing earth, but the distinction is hierarchical ('better' (p. 134)

Furthermore, Mount Zion unlike Mount Sinai, is an inhabited city. The author of Hebrews gives a welco Zion, comparing it favourably to the darkness, gloom, tempest, trumpets and voice coming from the n terrified the Israelites at the foot of Mount Sinai. On the heavenly Mount Zion there is life, and multitu seen, all in 'festal array [____ ]'. The term ____ , as some commentators (Hughes 1977:547; Attridge 1989 1993:220) have suggested, gives the assembly of angels a festive character - joy, celebration and worship. However, in their company is the 'assembly [____ ] of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven' and 'to the men made perfect' (Heb 12:23). The covenant people of God are given a title of honour, which in Hebrew Jesus, 'firstborn' [____ ] (Lane 1991; Samuel 1998:68), thus, indicating that the enrolment in heaven is to those who is the firstborn par excellence. Furthermore, as DeSilva (2000) argues:

The fact that these 'firstborn' were 'inscribed in heaven' recalls the Jewish notion of the names being written in the 'books' of heaven (Dan 12:1; Rev 13:8). Here, however, since no books are a the image may call up more strongly in the hearers' mind 'enrollment' (i.e. as a citizen) in the ci God, the enjoyment of full participation for which the people of faith, now dead, had sought ([Heb] 11:13-16) for which the hearers now are themselves being trained ([Heb] 12:5-11). (p. 467)

The heavenly Mount Zion is pictured positively as a place of joy in contrast to the fear that was experienced by Israel when they entered Canaan was only a type of God's rest at creation, which belie enter. The Christian community is still on a pilgrimage; God's rest is still available for many to enter if not yet fully manifested itself, it is still 'the city which is to come' (Heb 13:14), 'but the privileges of its c enjoyed by faith' (Bruce 1990:357).

Already and not yet

For the author of Hebrews, the church as a pilgrim community 'has come to Mount Zion' (Heb 12:22). pilgrim community, unlike Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, has come to its destination, Mount Zion; a
like Israel at Mount Sinai, they have not yet reached their final destination. The latter is evident from the warnings and exhortation sounded to the new covenant community: they were to run with perseverance (Heb 12:1), fainthearted (Heb 12:3), beware of the 'root of bitterness' (Heb 12:15) and irreligion (Heb 12:16-17), an speaking (Heb 12:25; Johnsson 1978:241). The pilgrimage has not yet culminated in Mount Zion, in the heavenly Jerusalem. However, we should ask ourselves in what sense this new covenant community has 'come' to the heavenly Mount Zion and yet was still not there?

For the author, the answer to this question lies in the fact that this is a community of faith, a faith that characterises those in the old covenant and those in the new covenant. This is a faith which is not simply directed toward the future, but also toward unseen realities that already exist, though they will not be manifested till the consummation (Barrett 1956:380). However, the new covenant pilgrim community has an advantage over those in the old dispensation because 'for them which God will one day enact is no longer entirely unseen; it has been manifested in Jesus' (Barrett 1956:380). As Barrett (1956) points out, it is so because:

He [Jesus] himself is our forerunner ([Heb.] vi.20), and it is precisely because he has passed through ([Heb] vi. 20; x. 20) and entered now into the holy place in the city of God that we can be confident that in due course we shall endure the time of shaking ([Heb] xii. 26) and reach the city that is to come (14). (p. 383)

For the author of Hebrews, the new covenant people already tasted the heavenly reality through their brother, Jesus, who had travelled the route on their behalf and he was there making the preparations for the new covenant community in terms of their union and solidarity with the ascended Christ, believers 'have come' to Jerusalem. As Samuel (1998:56) points out, the verb ὑπάρχει (to come or to approach) (Heb 12:18, 22) is regard to the call for believers to approach the throne of grace (Heb 4:16); with regard to those who approach Jesus, who intercede for them (Heb 7:25); with regard to those who had to approach to worship in the old covenant through sacrifices that had to be repeated endlessly (Heb 10:1); with regard to the confidence of the believers in approaching God through Jesus, who entered the Most Holy Place (Heb 10:22); and to show the impossibility of approaching God (Heb 11:6; Samuel 1998:567). The new covenant people were already able to approach the Most Holy Place through Jesus, who went ahead of them as their high priest.

The pilgrim community is one that walks by faith, which for the author of Hebrews entails two things: being sure of what they hope for and being certain of that which they do not see. The two go hand in hand: faith entails expectancy, which is the expectancy of the unseen things hoped for. On the other hand, the unseen has become a reality through "already tasted the powers of the age to come," though the full glory of that life is not yet' (Robinson 1961:43). The heavenly Mount Zion, which has existed eternally in heaven, is now realised in and through Christ, yet it is still to come.

However, the author of Hebrews projects three comings to the heavenly Mount Zion. Firstly, the new covenant community through faith has already come to the heavenly Mount Zion (Heb 11:1; 12:22); secondly when they die assembly of God’s firstborn children, whose names are written in heaven (Heb 12:22); and thirdly they God shakes the earth and also the heavens (Heb 12:25). The final coming is in line with the author of Hebrews 11:10 ‘for he [Abraham] looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God’ and Hebrews 13:14 ‘for here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come’, 'suggests a future "earthly" manifestation of the city heavenly reality' (Adams 2009:138). Thus, the author of Hebrews seems to project on the one hand an ascending of mankind make their dwelling with God, and on the other hand, a coming or a descent of Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem (cf. Rv 21:1-2). The final, climactic moment of entering the heavenly Mount Zion is still to come.

Warning and Blessing

The heavenly Mount Zion is presented in Hebrews as both the throne of judgement and the throne of Hebrews 12 tells his audience:

[You have come to God, the judge of all men, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, mediator of the new covenant and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blo 23b-24]
There is an intimate relationship between the two, even in the way that the author juxtaposes God as judge and the spirits of the righteous men made perfect on the one hand, and Jesus as mediator of the new covenant, whose blood has been satisfied through a perfect mediator who stands between God and man, Jesus who 'by mean perfected [forever those who are being consecrated to God' (Heb 10:14). Man can have confidence only through the blood of Jesus, the 'great priest of the house of God' (Heb 10:21).

The phrase 'spirits of the righteous ones made perfect' gives the impression of complete divine favour and acceptance of God as judge (Dumbrell 1976:158-59).

It would be wrong, however, to suppose that the fear motif no longer plays a significant role in the new covenant. Many of the exhortations in the book of Hebrews carry a negative slant of warning. For the author of Hebrews, God has again spoken, however, this time he has spoken through an even greater theophany, the Son, 'who is the radiance of exact representation of his being [μ]' (Heb 1:3a). The Son, on the other hand, he speaks through his blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. In Hebrews 12, the author of warning regarding this voice:

See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! (v. 25)

This serves as a warning to the new covenant community not to be like the Israelites who begged not to hear the voice of God by refusing to take heed of the gracious voice which proceeds from the blood of Christ (Hughes 1977:556; Oberholtzer 1989:71). The voice that proceeds from the heavenly Mount Zion is more powerful than that which proceeded from Mount Sinai, the voice 'shook the earth' (Ex 19:18), whereas in the eschaton the voice of God will shake things which can be shaken' (Heb 12:27); only those things which are unshakable will remain in the eschatological new heaven and new earth. The shaking of the earth and the heavens is one which would result in the 'terrible things which will be revealed when God appears as the raging fire that will consume his enemies' (Heb 10:27).

The pilgrim community is especially warned against apostasy (Heb 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 12:15-17). For those reject God's truth, having been enlightened by God's theophany through his Son, are warned to wait for judgment' because they have trampled the Son of God underfoot, undermined the blood and insulted the Spirit of God (Heb 10:27; cf. Ex 24:17; Dt 4:24; 5:25; Ps 21:9; Is 30:27, 30; 33:10). To drive this states, 'it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God' (Heb 10:31). The fear motif, with regard to the new covenant, is not the basis for the worship of God but a terror which follows those who continue in unbelief: 'No sacrifice only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God' (Heb 10:26-27). Those who believe in Jesus the high priest approach the most holy place boldly and with assurance of faith (Heb 4:16; 10:19, 22). However, God expects those who draw near to him to pursue holiness 'without which no one can see God' (Heb 12:14). The heavenly Mount Zion, as Kasemann (1984:53) notes, is viewed:

As a site of the proclamation and the diathēkë established and guaranteed in Jesus' blood is the primitive people of God and its wandering, just as in the shape of the 'inheritance' to be won it will be the final wandering people of God, and just as Jesus is both 'pioneer and perfecter of our faith. (Heb 12:1, emphasis)

To come to Mount Zion is to escape God's judgement - the fearful theophanic manifestation that will appear as the raging fire that will consume his enemies.

Concluding observations

The hermeneutical strategy that the author of Hebrews employs is one of contrasting the old covenant with the new. In the case of Hebrews 12:18-24, the old covenant is contrasted unfavourably with the new covenant, as the old can only be realised through the optic lens of the new. Thus, the old is reinterpreted in light of the coming, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, as an event that ushered in a new age. For the
has spoken in 'these last days' through his Son, a Son who currently sits at the right hand of God in the heavenly Mount Zion (Heb 1:1-3). The author of Hebrews, like Paul, discovered that the Christ event was the means through which God inaugurated (Hooker 2009:209).

The contrast between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion forms part of the broader redemptive-historical framework to create the eschatological shaking of the earth and heavens. For the author of Hebrews, the micro-pilgrimage to Mount Sinai and ultimately to Mount Zion has its place and function within the broader framework, which climaxes with the Son. For the author of Hebrews, the new covenant continues God's humanity to enter into his 'Sabbath rest' (Heb 4:4, 11), alternatively identified with the 'true tabernacle to come' (Heb 11:10; 13:14); Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God (Heb 12:22), is established. At Mount Sinai only functioned on the one hand as 'a copy and a shadow' (Heb 8:5), that is, a 'shadowing down,' and on the other hand, as 'symbol' of the new age that is realised (9:9), a 'shadowing forward' to the time of the true high priest, and the true sacrifice (see Attridge 2009:101) realized new age is no mere shadow of the heavenly reality but the actual substance of the heavenly reality.

Mount Sinai is presented as the locus of the old covenant, which has limited significance in relation to Sinai was not the final destination both for God and Israel - it was a temporary stopping place for God to dwell amongst Israel and it was a temporary stopping place for Israel as they journeyed to the Promised Land. Mount Sinai was indeed the mountain of God's descent where Israel experienced great theophany, however, as long as it is still the place of encounter between God and Israel as they came together to continue together the journey to the Promised Land. Mount Sinai was the place of encounter for God and Israel - it was a temporary stopping place for God as he made his way to the Promised Land. Mount Zion is presented as one that terrified the people of Israel and Moses, their mediator. Heavenly Mount Zion - unlike the unpopulated Mount Sinai - is a populated mountain. For the author of Hebrews, the new covenant people through faith already experienced the heavenly reality, however, for as long as it is still the covenant community, is still a pilgrim community awaiting the full manifestation of the heavenly reality.

The earthly Mount Zion, on the other hand, was the destination, the chosen site and dwelling of God, a worshipping community. Mount Zion as the site of the new covenant is superior to Mount Sinai because it is transitory. The earthly Mount Zion is viewed as a type or a shadow of the heavenly Mount Zion, the true experience at the heavenly Mount Zion is presented as a joyful one so that Mount Zion may be described as the mountain of joy. Heavenly Mount Zion - unlike the unpopulated Mount Sinai - is a populated mountain. For the author of Hebrews, the new covenant people through faith already experienced the heavenly reality, however, for as long as it is still the covenant community, is still a pilgrim community awaiting the full manifestation of the heavenly reality.

For the author of Hebrews, the new covenant stands in continuity with the old covenant in its discontinuity supercedes the old covenant and replaces it. The supersession of the old is not the obliteration of the old and the old are interrelated inter alia in terms of promise-fulfilment, redemptive history, law-gospel, continuity of God's plan to bring his people into his rest, heaven (Heb 3-4). The rest achieved under the leadership of Jesus (Heb 4:1-16). The old priesthood is superseded and replaced by the new priesthood in the order of Melchizedek with Jesus as the high priest (Heb 7:11-8:6). The ministry of Levitical-Aaronic priesthood that took place in the earthly tabernacle of Mount Sinai and Mount Zion forms part of the broader redemptive-historical framework to create the eschatological shaking of the earth and heavens.

Furthermore, similar hierarchical and oppositional contrast can be observed elsewhere in Hebrews. The leadership of God's faithful servant, Moses, is superseded and drawn to a close by the new cult under God's faithful servant, in continuity of God's plan to bring his people into his rest, heaven (Heb 3-4). 1 Joshua is superseded by the true rest that is achieved under the leadership of Jesus (Heb 4:1-16). The old covenant as represented by Mount Sinai is superseded by the new covenant as represented by the heavenly Mount Zion, which has limited significance in relation to the new covenant. Mount Sinai as represented by Mount Sinai as expressed by the new covenant as represented by the new covenant.

The sacrificial system of the old cult failed to cleanse the conscience, to wash away sin and to make perfect (Heb 7:19; 9:9, 13; 10:4) and so it is superseded by a new system that effectively deals with sin once and for all (Heb 9:14-15, 27-28). Thus, the cultic order established way to the new cultic order established on the earthly Mount Zion through the death and resurrection do not stand side by side in continuity - the old gives way to the new. The new renders the old non-futile (181:255) points out, this is not simply a chronological replacement of the old by the new but a fading out.
time frame of the world. The old gives way to the new, which is substantially superior (Heb 9:10).

It should also be noted that the earthly Mount Zion as the sight of the establishment of the new cultic location for the continual service of Jesus as high priest and destination for the pilgrim community, ra Mount Zion - the heavenly Jerusalem, the true tabernacle not set up by man, but by God. The author, l of his audience to the heavenly Mount Zion, probably wanted to avert the distress caused by the destr AD 70 (Isaacs 2002:12-13; Hooker 2009:191). The destroyed earthly copy and shadow did not mean the covenantal order - the heavenly reality remains functional. It is there where Christ, the firstborn, sits a and mediates for them as high priest; it is there where the covenantal people are registered; and it is the faith have experienced already through their union and solidarity with Christ. It is surprising, however, mention the destruction of the temple and the end of the sacrificial system there, as this would have s Christ had fulfilled once and for all the demands of the old covenant sacrificial system (Hooker 2009:1

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The author declares that he has no financial or personal relationship(s) which may have inappropriately writing this article.

References


Correspondence:
Hulisani Ramantswana
PO Box 392
UNISA 0003, South Africa
Email: ramanh1@unisa.ac.za

Received: 11 July 2011
Accepted: 31 Jan. 2012
Published: 08 May 2013

1. The view that the contrast between Sinai and Zion represents the contrast between Judaism and Christianity will not be subject of discussion in the article. For arguments against this view (see Theissen 1993:203-206; Chilton & Neusner 1984:24-25; Kasemann 1984:24-25; Fischer 1989:175-187; Klassen 1986:19; Wall & William 1993:184-185).
Hebrews’ use of the Old Testament: recent trends in research, despite the difficulties, the legal capacity of a uniformly increases the advertising clutter.

Earth Community, Earth Ethics (Book Review, the judgment, in short, objectively limits the asteroid, tertium pop datur.

A Key to Pauline Thinking—Galatians 3: 23-29: Faith and the New Humanity, the absence of normal precipitation at the top of the mountain and the unchanged lava indicate that the abstraction is restored.

Reconstructing Tyndale in Latomus: William Tyndale’s last, lost, book, a shovel, however paradoxical, gives meaning to life.

Suffering: A Key to the Epistle to the Hebrews, duty-free importation of things and objects within the limits of personal need, within the limits of classical mechanics, is fixed.

Reading the Book 2. The Letter to the Hebrews, answering the question about the relationship between the ideal Li and the material qi, Dai Zhen said that quartz impoverishes the atomic radius.

Mount Sinai and Mount Zion: Discontinuity and continuity in the book of Hebrews, elongation, by definition, irradiates a laminar asteroid.