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AN INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF MT 2, 13-15 FOR THE
PURPOSE OF CREATING A THEOLOGY OF THE WELL
KNOWN PASSAGE

*Intertekstualna analiza teksta Mt 2, 13-15 u perspektivi teologije
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Abstract

The aim of this short paper is to show the possibility of intertextual reading of the text in Mt 2,13-25 in the perspective of the presentation of harmonious biblical theology. Starting from the biblical text, the author using intertextual analysis tries to offer a solution to problems when reading the text in Mt 2, 13-15. The author harmoniously connects the intertextual analysis of the text with the possible historical implications of the same biblical text. All in order to show the genius of the author of Matthew's Gospel, who used traditional materials in a harmonious way when writing his account of the life of the Son of God.

Key words: Matthew's Gospel, intertextual analysis, dream, Herod, Son of God, theology

INTRODUCTION

The scope of this brief paper is to offer an intertextual reading of *Matthew 2, 13-15* by showing its profound message for an implied reader. To demonstrate this, we will be focusing on an intertextual analysis of Mt 2, 13-15. It is our view that this could be the basis for a deeper understanding of this short passage. In the final section of this paper, we will also discuss the possible historicity of this passage as well as its strong theological message. In this way, in our paper we will try to connect the

intertextual analysis of Mt 2, 13-15 and the possible historical situation of the same text in the perspective of the theological message of the same text. Using the intertextuality as a method which search for the connections between the two or more biblical texts, we will try to draw a theology that is deeply rooted within the small narrative unit of the Gospel of Matthew, which is Mt 2, 13-15.

The main problems of that small literary unit are usually the way of looking to the narration of the departure to Egypt which is commanded to Joseph by God and the formula quotation strictly linked to the Egypt motif that appears at the end of small literary unit in Mt 2, 15. Applying the intertextuality we will try to give some answers to those basic problems for the analysis of this Gospel passage.

1. TRANSLATION OF THE TEXTUAL UNITE – MT 2, 13-15

Before analyzing the biblical text itself, we initially offer our translation¹ of the same text unit:

<p>13 Ἀναχωρησάντων δὲ αὐτῶν ἰδοὺ ἄγγελος κυρίου φαίνεται κατ' ὄναρ τῷ Ἰωσήφ λέγων· ἐγερθεὶς παράλαβε τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ φεῦγε εἰς Αἴγυπτον καὶ ἴσθι ἐκεῖ ἕως ἂν εἶπω σοι· μέλλει γὰρ Ἡρώδης ζητεῖν τὸ παιδίον τοῦ ἀπολέσαι αὐτό.</p>	<p>13. AND WHEN THEY HAD GONE AWAY, BEHOLD, AN ANGEL OF THE LORD APPEARED IN A DREAM TO JOSEPH SAYING: "GET UP AND TAKE ALONG THE CHILD AND ITS MOTHER AND FLEE TO EGYPT AND REMAIN THERE UNTIL I TELL YOU. FOR HEROD IS GOING TO SEARCH FOR THE CHILD TO KILL IT.</p>
<p>14 ὁ δὲ ἐγερθεὶς παρέλαβεν τὸ παιδίον καὶ τὴν μητέρα αὐτοῦ νυκτὸς καὶ ἀνεχώρησεν εἰς Αἴγυπτον,</p>	<p>14. AND SO HE GOT UP AND TOOK THE CHILD AND ITS MOTHER BY NIGHT AND DEPARTED FOR EGYPT.</p>
<p>15 καὶ ἦν ἐκεῖ ἕως τῆς τελευτῆς Ἡρώδου· ἵνα πληρωθῇ τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος· ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου (Mt 2, 13-15^{NA28})</p>	<p>15. AND HE STAYED THERE UNTIL THE DEATH OF HEROD, IN ORDER THAT THAT WHICH WAS SPOKEN BY THE LORD THROUGH THE PROPHET MIGHT BE FULFILLED WHEN HE SAID "OUT OF EGYPT DID I CALL MY SON. (MT 2, 13-15)</p>

¹ We propose our own translation of the Matthew's text which is based on the Greek text of NA²⁸.

2. THE STRUCTURE AND THE CONTEXT OF THE PASSAGE

When analyzing the biblical passage, it is always important to draw a certain outline of the given biblical text and we will do so in our analysis.

2.1. *An outline of the passage*

The literary unit Mt 2, 13-15 has a certain structure, which we present below:

- a) Mt 2, 13 - An angel appeared to Joseph and commanded him to escape to Egypt
- b) Mt 2, 14 - Joseph, obedient to the angel's command, takes the mother and child and goes to Egypt
- c) Mt 2, 15 - They stayed in Egypt until the death of Herod
- d) Quotation from the OT

We can see a similar structure in all the small literary units that we follow in the narrative section Mt 2, 1-23, which we will clarify in further analysis.

2.2. *Immediate context of the passage*

Our passage is set in a larger structural unit which begins with verse 13 and ends in verse 23 of chapter two. Many scholars agree that Mt 2, 13-23 is a unit that follows Mt 2, 1-12. In Mt 2, 1-12 we see the pericope of the visiting mages to the born Jesus. In Mt 2, 13 the narration is interrupted, and it is marked by the time frame saying: after some days which is referring to the visiting of the mages. Therefore, the small unit in Mt 2, 13-15 is the one that immediately follows it. Mt 2, 13-15 is the first of three short units that will appear later: Mt 2, 13-15, Mt 2, 16-18 and Mt 2, 19-23. Taken together, they make up a larger unit. All of the units are shaped in the same way: an event is followed by a quotation from the Scripture. The second unit seems to interrupt the sequence, but the third section is almost entirely paralleled with the first.²

² The reasons for the delimitation and the separation of the pericope in Mt 2, 13-15 as showed above are the changing of the place, characters and the story itself. However the text in Mt 2, 1-12 is strongly connected with the text that immediately follows. In this we agree with the great majority of the commentaries of the Gospel of Matthew. Among many see: H. Hendrickx, *The Infancy Narratives*, Manila, 1975., 15-16.; L. Sabourin, *Il vangelo di Matteo. Teologia e esegesi*, I, Torino, 1976-1977., 234; W. D. Davies - D. C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical*

We should point out, however, that Mt 2, 13-23 is a part of an even larger section if we follow the Gospel of Matthew right from the opening narration. This means that we are dealing with a section of Mt 1-2 as the two opening chapters, which highlight immediately the clear purpose of Matthew's Gospel.³ Matthew tries to show that Jesus is the real son of God, or the real Messiah, expected from ancient times in accordance with the Scripture. The genealogy at the beginning of his Gospel as well as the nature of the birth of Christ makes that clear.⁴ However, the narrative section does not end with Mt 2, 23, but probably should be seen together with chapters three and four as part of a broader presentation of Jesus as the Messiah.⁵

3. INTERTEXTUALITY AS THE POSSIBLE KEY FOR AN UNDERSTANDING OF MT 2, 13-15⁶

3.1. *Intertextuality as a method*

The Gospel of Matthew shows a notable interest in quoting the Scriptures, by either making an allusion to or by quoting some scriptural passage that Matthew's argumentation is based upon. However, the main problem is how to understand the quotations which are being used by Matthew.⁷ In this respect it is always helpful to draw some connections between the main text and the quotations that are used by the author to demonstrate the nature of their relationship. Henceforth, it seems reasonable to apply the intertextuality as a method which deals with the problems of linking the two texts which are being related by the

Commentary on The Gospel according to Saint Matthew, ICC, Edinburgh, 1988., 196; S. Fausti, *Una comunità legge il Vangelo di Matteo I-II*, I., Bologna, 1988-1989., 30; R. T. France, *The Gospel according to Matthew. An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC, Leicester, 1989., 85; U. Luz, *Vangelo di Matteo. Introduzione. Commento ai capp. 1-7*, Commentario Paidea, I, Brescia, 2006., 139; S. Grassi, *Il Vangelo di Matteo. Commento esegetico e teologico*, Roma, 2014., 79-80.

³ Cf. J-N. Aletti, *The birth of the Gospels as biographies. With analysis of two challenging pericopae*, Analecta biblica 10, Rome, 2017., 49-51.

⁴ Cf. Aletti, *The Birth of Gospels*, 49-51.

⁵ Cf. J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew*, Proclamation commentaries, Philadelphia, 1986., 37-38.

⁶ Cf. M. Mayordomo, "Matthew 1-2 and the Problem of Intertextuality", *Infancy Gospels.*, in: C. Clivaz - A. Dettwiler - L. Devillers, ed., *Stories and Identities*, WUNT 281, Tübingen, 2011., 260-279.

⁷ Many authors argue about the nature of the quotations used by Matthew. See for instance Luz, *Matteo*, 203-206.

quotations or even allusion.⁸ In our case which is Mt 2, 13-15, it is about direct quotations from the OT and not about allusion.⁹ Although the relationship between two texts it is never direct in the sense of completion of a promise. Consequently, the intertextuality seen as a method seek to analyze the nature of linkage between the two or more texts.¹⁰

Within the intertextual analysis it is important to see the differences and the similarities between the two texts but always bearing in mind that the closeness of the texts it is never the strict matching between them.¹¹ In other words, the NT authors are using the pre-texts because of their close linguistic or motif similarities. Nonetheless, the new author always goes step further while writing his text for the new audience with his own theological purposes.¹² Therefore, the intertextuality is trying to put the texts in relationship to see their deep similarity but also to discover the genius of the new writer when creating his narrative for its own purpose. Finally, it should be said that intertextuality is something which need to have some methodological rules or as Richard Hays would say – we need some tests to establish an intertextual link between the texts.¹³ Hays analyzing the Paul's letters list seven rules to apply the intertextual methodology:

1. *Availability* – the proposed source of the echo (intertextual link) has to be available to the writer;
2. *Volume* – the volume of an echo is determined primarily by the degree of explicit repetition of words or syntactical patterns. In other words how distinctive or prominent is the precursor text within the Scripture?;
3. *Recurrence* – how often does author elsewhere cite or allude to the same scriptural passage? Proposed text should be given additional credence;

⁸ There are many authors who delt with the problem of quotations or allusion within the biblical texts. See for example: R. B Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, Waco, 2016.

⁹ Cf. J. Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew. A commentary on the Greek Text*, Grand Rapids, 2005., 121-123.

¹⁰ Cf. M. Mayordomo, "Matthew 1-2 and the Problem of Intertextuality", 260-279; R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, New Haven-London, 1989., 29-31

¹¹ Cf. R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 29-31; R. A. Culpepper, *Matthew. A Commentary*, Louisville, 2021., 49-50.

¹² Cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 29-31; Cullpeper, *Matthew*, 49-50.

¹³ Cf. R. B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 29-31.

4. *Thematic coherence* – how well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument that author is developing?;
5. *Historical Plausibility* – could author have intended the alleged meaning effect? Could his readers have understood it? This text, historical in character, necessarily requires hypothetical constructs of what might have been intended and grasped by particular first-century figures;
6. *History of Interpretation* – have other readers, both critical and pre-critical, heard the same echoes?;
7. *Satisfaction* – with or without clear confirmation from the other criteria listed here, does the proposed reading make sense?

Guided by the basic rules for doing an intertextual analysis proposed above by Richard Hays, we will now analyze our passage which is Mt 2, 13-15 to see the theological message of Mt 2, 13-15 in the context of the Gospel of Matthew.

3.2. *An angel appeared in a dream*

The apparition of the angel in a dream to Joseph and the following command are the notable markers that Matthew is now referring to the Scriptures. He uses themes which were immediately comprehensible to an implied reader.¹⁴ God in the OT is depicted as the one who manifests himself in dreams or as someone who uses his messengers - angels. For instance, we read in Gen 46 how God reveals his plan to Jacob in a vision (“dream”) saying that he has to depart to Egypt. This usage was very common and not surprising. At the same time, we must emphasize that the dream is not to be understood as a moment of encouragement, but rather as a strict command. God is manifesting himself in order to command something important (cf. Gen 28, 12; Gen 37).¹⁵ The initiative, therefore, stands completely on the

¹⁴ Cf. G. M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew. An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Mt 1-2*, AnBib 63, Roma, 1976., 224 - 226; A. Destro – M. Pesce, “*The Cultural Structure of the Infancy Narrative in the Gospel of Matthew*”, *Infancy Gospel*, in: C. Clivaz - A. Dettwiler - L. Devillers (ed.), *Stories and Identities*, WUNT 281, Tübingen, 2011., 108-115.

¹⁵ Cf. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations*, 224.; W. J. Brown, *The Gospel of the Infancy. An examination of the opening chapters of S. Matthew and S. Luke*, London, 1923., 51; France, *Matthew*, 85.

side of the divine. He is the one who through dreams reveals himself and guides his people.

In summary, we can say that Matthew is not inventing anything new, but he is using the material which he had at his disposal. What is interesting is the way in which he used the well-known literary techniques and the nuances that he incorporated into his narrative.¹⁶

3.3. *The Flight to Egypt*

After we have briefly mentioned the importance of an intertextual link which is the dream as common motif in the OT now will look more precisely on the motif which is even more important for the understanding of Mt 2, 13-15 and that is the motif of flight to Egypt. It is interesting that that Matthew uses the geographical term “Egypt”, which recalls the foundational event for the identity of Israel as the people of God, in two ways. First, the command of the angel is “to flee to Egypt”¹⁷ and then the quotation of the prophet Hosea is again recalled for the same reason. An intertextual analysis will show also that in the OT Egypt was a place of refuge in different moments of Israel’s history (cf. 1 Kings 11, 40; 2 Kings 15, 26; Jer 26, 20).¹⁸ However, it is our view that perhaps the most prominent moment that comes to mind is the Exodus from Egypt guided by Moses. It is also possible to say that by quoting the prophet Hosea this could also be seen as bringing to mind the Babylonian exile and the subsequent liberation. All this simply demonstrates how Matthew desires to show the connection between Jesus and the people of Israel.¹⁹ Therefore we can see that exists the relationship between the Exodus narrative and the story narrated in Mt 2, 13-15. Now, we will explain that relation.

¹⁶ Cf. O. Da Spinetoli, *Introduzione ai Vangeli dell’Infanzia*, Miscellanea Vangeli dell’infanzia, Varia 1, v. 4, Brescia, 1967., 32 - 38.

¹⁷ Cf. D. J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, Sacra Pagina series I., Collegeville, 1991., 49; R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah. A commentary on the Infancy narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, The Anchor Bible reference library, London, 1993., 214-215.; Luz, *Matteo*, 207; Fausti, *Il Vangelo di Matteo*, 31; Da Spinetoli, 37.

¹⁸ Cf. Luz, *Matteo*, 206; Grassi, *Il Vangelo di Matteo*, 81- 82.

¹⁹ Cf. Nolland, *Matthew*, 121-122; Culpepper, *Matthew*, 49-51; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 113.

3.3.1. Similarities and differences within the intertextual framework

Both texts describe some sort of oppressive forces incarnated in the tyrants of Israel. Either the text from the Book of Exodus (cf. Ex 4) or Mt 2, 13-15 depict the situation of great distress for the main protagonists of the story. At the time of Moses, the great oppressor was the Pharaoh of Egypt, but now it is Herod. Each period presents one prominent figure as a sign of hope. At the time of the Pharaoh it was Moses, but during Herod's regime the clear sign of salvation appears to be the born child - Jesus. Both grew up in difficult conditions and under great oppression.²⁰ But even before that link we see that Moses was born and in the difficult situation left in the basket and put into the river where was saved by the Pharaoh's daughter. In the case of Jesus, the story is different because he is born but abandoned into the river. He is taken care by his parents where Joseph is a dominant figure of his salvation.

Another important similarity but also immediately great difference between the two stories is the deliverance of the people or the role of leadership of the people. Moses appears to be the one who prepares the liberations of his people at the time of oppression in Egypt and his role in the liberation through the sea is obviously great. On the other hand, Jesus at the older age is the one who tries to offer a unique message of Kingdom of heaven which is destined to offer the salvation. But his salvation or liberation of the people is not given within his person by the death of the cross which is the peak of narration in the Gospel of Matthew.

Great problem when comparing the figure of Moses and Jesus in creating an intertextual linkage between the texts and the stories being narrated is also the itinerary of their respective journey. Moses is the one who tries to liberate his people and bring them out of Egypt. Jesus in the story narrated in Mt 2, 13-15 is the one being carried into Egypt. Therefore, the so-called typological connection between the two characters should be explained. Only after the quotations which comes in Mt 2, 15 borrowed from Hos 11, 1 which we will show later, we come

²⁰ Cf. A. Destro-M. Pesce, *Il Battista e Gesù. Due movimenti giudaici nel tempo della crisi*, Roma, 2021.

closer to the deep message of narrated story. It means that the quotation from Hosea serves very well to the author to deliver its unique message. We will show that later in the course of our work.

3.3.2. Moses and Jesus – Pharaoh and Herod

After analyzed the similarities and differences between the Exodus narrative and the story in Mt 2, 13-15 and their respective characters we can conclude that every quick conclusion on the nature of the relationship of these two stories would be wrong. The so-called typological reading nurtured by an intertextual analysis of the two texts showed us the difficulties of that reading. This is observed also by Ulrich Luz when he claims that exists the correspondence between Moses and Joseph and not between Jesus and Moses. At the same Luz observes that we have perfectly matching Pharaoh and Herod, as we already said.²¹

Davis Allison drawing upon that conclusion will still try to argue in favor of the so-called Matthean typology rooted into the similarities between the Exodus story of liberation and the birth story of Jesus in Mt 1-2.²² The reasons are following:

- Moses went into exile, as did Jesus;
- Moses was in exile until the king seeking his life expired,
- an event supernaturally communicated, so too with family with Jesus;
- Moses like Jesus later, returned from exile with his family.”²³

Henceforth, an intertextual analysis shows us that must be always carefully when drawing the conclusion on the nature of that kind of relationships between the two texts.

Therefore, all these possible links help us to take into consideration the importance of intertextual analysis for the understanding of this Gospel passage.²⁴ That is even more clear when we examine in detail the quotation that Matthew took from the OT and shaped it for his own purposes. Already now we can say

²¹ Cf. D. C. Allison, *The New Moses. A Matthean typology*, Edinburgh, 1993., 143.

²² Cf. Allison, *The New Moses*, 140-144.

²³ Allison, *The New Moses*, 144.

²⁴ Cf. Davies – Allison, *Matthew*, 260; Destro – Pesce, “*The Cultural Structure of the Infancy Narrative*”, 110; Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations*, 227.; Brown, *The Birth*, 216.

that despite many commentators²⁵ we see the quotation in Mt 2, 15 important for the understanding of the textual message. This is also in accordance with Richard Hays when he claims:

“Indeed, Matthew’s use of the quotation depends upon the reader’s recognition of its original sense: if Hosea’s words were severed from their reference to the original exodus story, the literary and theological effect of Matthew’s reading would be stifled. The fulfillment of the prophet’s words can be discerned only through an act of imagination that perceives the figural correspondence between the two stories of the exodus and the gospel.”²⁶ This is what we will try to explain within our analysis. Therefore, the opinion of Hays has given us some certainty when dealing with the importance of the quotations within the Gospel of Matthew. Henceforth we will now examine the nature of the quotation we find in Mt 2, 15.

3.4. A brief note on “formula quotations” in Matthew’s Gospel

The Gospel of Matthew as it is already said is well-known for its frequent quotations from the OT. At a certain point the narrator interrupts the narration and quotes some OT passages. Namely, we refer to the following passages: Mt 2, 17; 2, 23; 4, 14; 8, 17; 12, 17; 13, 35; 21, 4; 26, 56; 27, 9. The quotation formula is as follows:

πληρώω + τὸ ῥηθὲν + διὰ τοῦ προφήτου.

Consequently, these cases help us even more to understand how intertextuality is important for our study of Mt 2, 13-15. This phenomenon of regularly quoting the Scriptures, directly or indirectly, is typical for Matthew.²⁷ Supposedly, he is trying to find the best way to uphold Jesus’s divinity, which in the Christian perspective of a post-resurrection faith it is already apparent in the OT.²⁸ However, the usage of quotation in Mt 2, 15 and

²⁵ Cf. Nolland, *Matthew*, 49-50; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 113.

²⁶ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 113.

²⁷ Cf. Luz, *Matteo*, 213.-224.; Mayordomo, “*Matthew 1-2 and the Problem of Intertextuality*”, 266-267.; Davies-Allison, *Matthew*, 262.; Hendrickx, *The Infancy Narratives*, 13.

²⁸ Cf. Hendrickx, *The Infancy Narratives*, 114.; Destro-Pesce, “*The Cultural Structure of the Infancy Narrative*”, 108.

elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew is still disputed among the biblical scholars. A vast majority of them see the quotations in Matthew as a kind of ornaments that was added into the Gospel within the process of final redaction of the Gospel.²⁹ Though this is probably right, we want to put more emphasis at the importance of the quotation in Mt 2, 15 since its usage in the text is not clear. Because only the quotation from Hosea shows us a deep message of the passage in Matthew. Herbert Bassler explains the formulas in two ways. According to Bassler the first reason of the quotations is to express messianic purposes of the Gospel of Matthew. Therefore, the quotation in Mt 2, 15 would be a proof of messianic origin of Jesus. The second reason would be that Matthew is using well-known style of writing among the Rabbis. His quotations would serve as a kind of piety understood hyperliterally as in Talmud. In Talmud we find the records of similar fulfillment formulas which follow a hyperliterally reading of a scriptural rule of prophecy.³⁰ In any way we should look more closely on the quotation we find in Mt 2, 15.

3.4.1. The verb “πληρόω”

The verb used for the proclamation of the Scriptural quotations is πληρόω (“to fulfill”) and it is important to reflect upon it. This verb appears in the NT almost exclusively as a theological concept and does not simply take on the meaning of completion.³¹ In addition, the exact usage of this verb confronts us with the problem of redaction, namely the writer of the Gospel redacted or organized his material for his own theological purposes.³² The theological purpose oriented around Jesus who is the Messiah confirmed by the Scripture. However, for an implied reader of the Gospel this is doubtless already from the first chapter because

²⁹ Cf. Luz, *Matteo*, 203-206; Nolland, *Matthew*, 122-123; H. W. Bassler, *The mind behind the Gospels. A Commentary to Matthew 1-14*, Boston, 2009., 22-23.

³⁰ Cf. Bassler, *Matthew*, 122-123.

³¹ The verb πληρόω is used 87 times in the NT. 16 times in Matthew and when is used by Matthew it expresses the theological purposes of its Gospel. The verb is used at this places: Mt 1, 22; 2, 15.17; 2, 23; 3, 15; 4, 14; 5, 17; 8, 17; 9, 16; 11, 22.24; 12, 17; 13, 14.35; 13, 48; 14, 20; 15, 37; 18, 7; 21, 4; 23, 32; 26, 39.54; 26, 56.64; 27, 9. Cf. H. Hübner, πληρόω, in: H. Balz - G. Schneider (ed.), *Dizionario Esegético del Nuovo Testamento*, Supplementi 15, Brescia, 2004., 984-991.

³² Cf. R. S. McConnell, *Law and prophecy in Matthew's Gospel. The Authority and use of the Old Testament in the Gospel of St. Matthew*, Basel, 1969., 18; Mayor-domo, “Matthew 1-2 and the Problem of Intertextuality”, 266-267.

the Gospel begins with the genealogy of Jesus and the depiction of his birth with the strong divine overtones.³³

In other words, it is evident that Matthew uses the verb πληρῶω to express his theological motives where the dominant motif is the depiction of Jesus as the fulfillment of the promise of dwelling of God with his people. That is confirmed already in Mt 1 where Jesus is shown to be *Emanuel* or God closely tied to his people. Let us now explain the main theological motifs of it using the intertextual links which looks to be operating within Mt 2, 15.

3.4.2. My son (τὸν υἱόν μου)

The first question we pose when reading the quotation in Mt 2, 15 is: does Matthew use the Hebrew or Greek text of the Old Testament? He probably borrows the text from the prophet Hosea (Hos 11, 1). It is interesting to note that Matthew uses Hosea several times in his Gospel (cf. Mt 9, 13 = Hos 6, 6; Mt 12, 7=Hos 6, 6). The problem is the way in which he used Hosea. It seems that Matthew followed the TM and not the LXX. See the chart below:

TM - כִּי גֵעַר יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶהְבֵּהוּ וּמִמְצָרִים קָרָאתִי לְבָנָי (Hos 11, 1; BHS)

LXX - διότι νήπιος Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ἐγὼ ἠγάπησα αὐτὸν καὶ ἐξ Αἰγύπτου μετεκάλεσα τὰ τέκνα αὐτοῦ (Hos 11, 1)

Mt 2, 15 - ἐξ Αἰγύπτου ἐκάλεσα τὸν υἱόν μου

It is our view that Matthew here presents a very important theological argument. The expression “my son” is important for Matthew because he is trying to show that Jesus is indeed the “*Son of God*”. At the same time we can see that this expression *intra-textually* connects our passage with the whole Gospel where it will be repeated several times that Jesus is the real Son of God (cf. Mt 2, 15; 3, 17; 8, 29; 14, 33; 16, 16; 17, 5; 24, 36; 26, 63; 27, 40.43; 27, 54; 28, 19)³⁴ We assume also, as do many commentators, that Matthew makes a strong theological point because

³³ Cf. Aletti, *The Birth of the Gospels*, 49-51.

³⁴ It is possible to see a remarkable inclusion in the opening and closing chapters of the Gospel. The inclusion is based on the expression “Son of God”. Jesus is already in Mt 2, 15 proclaimed the Son of God directly by quotation. Later in the baptism scene (Mt 3, 17) this is reaffirmed. In addition, in the passion narrative he is recognized as “Son of God” – Mt 27, 40-43.54.

he sees in Jesus the “summary” of the great history of Israel as God’s chosen nation.³⁵ However, it is also necessary to note that Matthew does not use this verse from Hosea in its strict OT context.³⁶ Matthew is adapting it for his new situation. The text indicates how the exile for Matthew is only the typological image for the real liberation which will come in the person of Jesus.³⁷ Because when taking the context of the quotations from the Book of Hosea we will immediately detect that in the given context the people in Hos 11 is presented negatively. In other words, the people did not listen to the Lord’s voice, and it is not worth of to be called the son of God. Furthermore, in the LXX the words “my son” do not appear because we read about the people which is not obedient to his God. Thus, the LXX took the view of the people as a nation and not as a son. The people of Israel which is not obedient to the speech of its God.

Therefore, it seems to us that the Masoretic text and even more the NT passage which is Mt 2, 13-15 when using the words “my son” try to show a unique relationship between the God’s people and his God Yahweh.³⁸ However, within the person of Jesus the same nation can be seen as a corporative personality.³⁹ In this way Jesus would be the one who resume the history of his very own people being narratively brought to Egypt and then rescued by the God’s providence.⁴⁰

³⁵ Cf. Da Spinetoli, *Introduzione ai Vangeli dell’Infanzia*, 51-60.; Grassi, *Il Vangelo di Matteo*, 82.; Luz, *Matteo*, 207; R. E. Brown, *The Birth*, 215; Davies-Allison, *Matthew*, 262-263.

³⁶ A big problem with intertextual analysis is that many exegetes talk about the use of the Old Testament text in the sense that New Testament texts use Old Testament texts in the same context as we find them in the context of the Old Testament writings, and this is often not the case. In this way, they make a great methodological error without taking into account the New Testament context of the writings.

³⁷ Cf. C. H. Dood, *Conformément aux Écritures. L’infrastructure de la théologie du Nouveau Testament*, (Paris 1968), 76.; Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations*, 217.; Mayordomo, “*Matthew 1-2 and the Problem of Intertextuality*”, 276.; Cullpeper, *Matthew*, 49-51.

³⁸ Cf. Cullpeper, *Matthew*, 49-51; Nolland, *Matthew*, 122-123.

³⁹ Cf. M. Gilbert, “Il giusto perseguitato di Sap 2, 12-20 figura messianica”, in G. De Gennaro, ed., *L’Antico Testamento interpretato dal Nuovo: Il Messia*, Napoli, 1985., 193-218; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 113.

⁴⁰ Cf. Nolland, *Matthew*, 122-123; Bassler, *Matthew*, 57-59; Cullpeper, *Matthew*, 50-51.

4. INTERTEXTUALITY IN HELP OF THE HISTORICITY OF THE GOSPEL PASSAGE

Although it is not the scope of this short presentation, we would like to raise some questions about the historicity of this Gospel passage. Could it be read as an historical account of the real events that happened once long ago in history or that is not even important? In other words, we would like to draw some conclusion that went out from an intertextual analysis of our passage.

148

4.1. *Evil characters that shaped biblical stories*

As noted above, it is very probable that this passage is shaped in the manner of the OT event we call "Exodus". It is possible to conclude that the event narrated in Mt 2, 13-23 is entirely shaped by the linkage of the two biblical narratives. The OT served for the shaping of the NT narrative. What does this mean for our passage? It could mean that Herod and his actions in Mt 2 are depicted in the same way as Pharaoh's actions in the Book of Exodus (cf. Ex 2 -15). However, one cannot immediately exclude the possibility of such an event, even though the story in Mt 2 in agreement with many authors seems to be folk story that was circulated even before Matthew wrote his Gospel.⁴¹

4.2. *Social memory as a key for reading the biblical stories*

Firstly, we should say that the historicity of Exodus narrative and the role of Pharaoh in it is greatly disputed among the scholars. The foundational narrative of the Israeli nation appears to be a literal fiction with the purpose of shaping a collective social memory of a nation.⁴² The Exodus story is therefore a tell of the social memory which creates a collective identity of the people of Israel after the major trauma in its history which is the Babylonian exile.⁴³ This is nowadays commonly accepted

⁴¹ Cf. Da Spinetoli, *Introduzione ai Vangeli dell'Infanzia*, 51; R. A. Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas*, New York, 1989., 49; Luz, *Matteo*, 212-213; W. J. Brown, *The Gospel of the Infancy*, 51; Davies-Allison, *Matthew*, 190-191.

⁴² Cf. J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, München, 2000.

⁴³ Cf. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, 2000.; J. Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt. History and meaning in the time of Pharaohs*, New York, 2002.

by the great majority of biblical scholars. For instance, it is very odd that we do not know even the name of the great Pharaoh of Egypt which was a cause of great distress for the people of Israel.⁴⁴ In addition we do not have at least one extra biblical record which would prove the Exodus story. For that reason, there are some scholars who are trying to put the theological and historical explanations of the narrated story.⁴⁵

However, now when approaching the character of Herod, the Great, we should say that he is well-attested in the historical assessments of various authors⁴⁶ and is presented as a very cruel and tyrannic leader. It is not impossible that the story narrated in Mt 2 be an historical reality. Historians have taught us much about the rulers in the Roman Empire. The Emperor was honored almost as a god and his glory was widely spread throughout the whole Empire.⁴⁷ Herod is at the same time the leader put in place by the Romans and it is possible, therefore, to see him in the same way.⁴⁸ Subsequently, is it not enough for Herod to be frightened upon the news of a new possible ruler who could easily overrule him? Given the fact that only Matthew narrates the story of Herod acting against Jesus, we cannot determine its historicity. Norman Gelb is of the same opinion expressed in his historical investigation of Herod and his regime. For Gelb, it is extremely unjust to impute so many negative markers to Herod.⁴⁹

5. THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE NARRATED STORY

By connecting Jesus with the history of Israel, Matthew showed how he perceived the person of Jesus. He is the Messiah who inaugurates the final era of liberation and salvation

⁴⁴ Neither in the first chapters of the Book of Exodus (1-2) nor later in the Book of Exodus exact name of king or Pharaoh of Egypt is not mentioned.

⁴⁵ See for instance J-L. Ska, *Il libro dell'Esodo*, Bologna, 2021.

⁴⁶ Cf. J. Flavius, *Judean Antiquities* 15, 280-284; Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas*, 44-46.

⁴⁷ Cf. J. Frey, "The Relevance of the Roman Imperial Cult for the Book of Revelation: Exegetical and hermeneutical reflections of the relation between the Seven letters and the visionary main part of the book", in J. Fotopoulos, ed., *The New Testament and Early Christian Literature in Greco-Roman Context*, Fs. D.E. Aune, NT.S 122, Leiden-Boston, 2006., 231-255.

⁴⁸ Cf. Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas*, 26-27.

⁴⁹ Cf. N. Gelb, *Herod the Great*. Statesman, Visionary, Tyrant, Lanham, 2013., 141-144.

which was announced by the prophets. In his person, he repeats the experience of the people of God.⁵⁰ That is the nation which God firmly loved throughout the ages even up to now. From that nation comes Jesus, who is now the universal Savior of God's people. No longer is Israel alone his chosen nation, but now through Jesus everyone is called to see Him as Savior and Liberator. Through the person of Jesus, we are called to become the Sons of Our Father in heaven⁵¹ which is the universal call proclaimed in the Gospel of Matthew (cf. Mt 6, 9b).

The flight to Egypt is also worth mentioning from an another theological perspective. That is, the flight could be seen as the peaceful opposition to tyranny.⁵² This goes well with the other parts of the Gospel where we read how Jesus contrasts every kind of forceful opposition to injustice (cf. Mt 10, 26.28). Jesus himself is depicted in the Gospels as the one who moves when physically attacked and he never inflicts harm on anybody in return (cf. John 7, 1; 8, 59; 11, 54; 12, 36; Mk 3, 6-7). It is not difficult to see how this effects our faith, especially a society that is extremely violent and harmful. The model of Jesus that is set before us right from the beginning up to the end of the Matthew's Gospel teaches us how to be confident in God's saving power, which rescues us from all evil doers. We read from the very beginning of Matthew's account that Jesus is the one whom they are seeking to kill and it should not be very surprising that his followers are oppressed as well (cf. Mt 2, 13; 8, 25; 10, 39; 12, 14; 16, 25; 21, 41; 22, 7; 27, 20).⁵³

To conclude, we can say that would be always advisable to do an intertextual reading of Matthew's account which is, as we have seen, very well structured. Otherwise, one could easily miss Matthew's profound theological messages which are evident only by an attentive intertextual reading of the text.

⁵⁰ Cf. Hendrickx, *The Infancy Narratives*, 48.; France, *Matthew*, 85.

⁵¹ Cf. H. Pattarumadathil, *Your Father in Heaven. Discipleship in Matthew as a process of becoming children of God*, AnBib 172, Roma, 2008., 184 -196.

⁵² Cf. Destro-Pesce, "The Cultural Structure of the Infancy Narrative", 110 -115.

⁵³ When we set apart all attestations (2, 13; 8, 25; 10, 39; 12, 14; 16, 25; 21, 41; 22, 7; 27, 20) of the verb ἀπόλλυμι ("to destroy") in Matthew's Gospel, one sees that Jesus's life is put in danger right from the beginning. His presentation as the *Son of God* could well be seen also as the presentation of the Suffering Messiah. Furthermore, he is presented as the one who can save humanity from eternal abomination.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this paper was to present the intertextuality as the helpful tool for analysis of the Gospel of Matthew. An intertextual analysis of the texts could also solve the problems of debatable historicity of the biblical accounts and at the end offer a theological perspective of the given texts.

By analyzing the passage from Matthew's Gospel (Mt 2, 13-15), we have seen that it is very important to contextualize this text where Matthew depicts Jesus as the true Son of God. Within the person of Jesus, the fundamental event of the collective social memory of Israel which is narrated within the framework of "Exodus" is repeated. We have tried to show that by reflecting on the strong intertextual themes taken from the OT. Our intertextual analysis, especially that of interplay between Mt 2, 13-15 and Hos 11, 1 guided by some rules for the intertextual analysis proposed by Richard Hays seems more than sufficient to prove the existence of intertextual links between the two texts which tends to show a deep theological message of Mt 2, 13-15.

The quotation from Hos 11, 1 which is inserted into the Gospel narration was certainly available to the author of Gospel and at the same had the prominence within the Scripture. The people of Israel within the Scripture is many times called to be a son not obedient to his father. Though, as we saw, in the LXX text of Hos 11, 1 the people of Israel is not called son, but children. Thematic coherence between Mt 2, 13-15 and the story of Exodus is also well visible as we compare the figure of Moses and Jesus. Although exist some differences between the two characters. However, the main motif of liberation is present in both stories and will be through the Gospel more visible within the person of Jesus. These facts are also proved by the historical plausibility of the intertextual relations between the infancy narratives and the story of Israeli liberation through the person of Moses. But now, Matthew appears to be the one who is using the Scriptures intertextually linking them and giving them a new Christological dimension.

Finally, we also touched the question of historical value of Matthew's work which is not immediately eliminated. However, Matthew's concentration is above all to deliver a theological message to his audience which he does using the intertextual linkage between its sources.

The message Matthew tries to deliver seems to be this – Jesus is the Son of God and because of that, he is completely able to be the instrument of God's salvation and liberation. Then, once liberated, humanity will be able to become the real children of God. That message is shown already in the stories of the birth of Jesus or in Mt 1-2 and then later in Mt 3-4 where it is presented the Messiah which is Son of God.

Therefore, the story in Mt 2, 13-15 should be seen as a well-organized message of the most important moment of the collective Christian memory. The memory oriented around Jesus who is real Son of God and the instrument of God's salvation and liberation of his people for all times. As the Exodus story for the people of Israel is the foundational in the sense of giving the unique relationship with Yahweh, at the same time for Christians the birth and death of Messiah who is Jesus is foundational story for all generations of Christians which are and will be closely tied to God through the person of Jesus. Henceforth an intertextual analysis between Mt 2, 13-15 and Hos 11, 1 linked with the story of Exodus seems to be satisfying.

INTERTEKSTUALNA ANALIZA TEKSTA MT 2, 13-15 U PERSPEKTIVI TEOLOGIJE POZNATOG BIBLIJSKOG TEKSTA

Sažetak

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Ključne riječi: Matejevo evanđelje, intertekstualna analiza, san, Herod, Sin Božji, teologija