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## Lazarus and Eliezer (Slides)

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# **Lazarus and Eliezer:**

## **The Name and Role of the Poor Man in Luke 16:19-31**

**EGLBS 2018 Annual Meeting**

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**Warring States Project**

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# Lazarus and Eliezer

**Thesis:** The name and role of Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31 reflect literary influence from the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Bible, a conflation of Abraham's servant Eliezer and of Job. *Eliezer* was “sent” by Abraham in the guise of Job-like *Lazaros* to “test” if his rich “child” would heed Moses and the Prophets by showing mercy to the wretch at his gate.

**Epitaph for the Rich Man of Luke 16:19-31—**

ἡ γὰρ κρίσις ἀνέλεος  
τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος·  
κατακαυχᾶται  
ἔλεος κρίσεως - James 2:13

# Lazarus and Eliezer

- **Abraham Geiger (1868) and J. Duncan M. Derrett (1970)** *suggested that Luke drew his Lazarus from rabbinic midrash then developing around Eliezer Servant of Abraham.*
- **John P Meier: (referring to Derrett)** *“...attempts to explain Lazarus by way of the Eliezer (notice the different name) who is Abraham’s steward in Gen 15:2 border on **pure fantasy**”*  
**(Marginal Jew, 2:826)**

# Lazarus and Eliezer

- **John P Meier:** *“What is absolutely unparalleled and demands an explanation is occurrence of a proper name <Lazarus> in a parable” (Marginal Jew, 2:825)*
- What about **Abraham**, who is named here six times with a dominant speaking role? Is he not also a “named character”? Just because he is from the Old Testament, does he not count as a named character? Or, even Moses who is also named but appears offstage.
- What if *Lazaros* is also be a name from the Old Testament, as a colloquial Greek variant of Hebrew *Eliezer*, the name of Abraham’s faithful steward (Gn 15:2-3), and of Moses’ second son (Ex 18:4)...

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## The Story Begins:

**Variations on common incipit in three Lk consecutive parables,**  
(Prodigal Son, Unrighteous Steward, Rich Man and Lazarus):

**Lk 15:11** ἄνθρωπος τις εἶχεν δύο υἱούς  
**Lk 16:1** ἄνθρωπος τις ἦν **πλούσιος** ὃς εἶχεν οἰκονόμον  
**Lk 16:19** ἄνθρωπος δέ τις ἦν **πλούσιος**

Only two LXX texts that begin with ἄνθρωπος τις ἦν

**Job 1:1** Ἄνθρωπος τις ἦν ἐν χώρᾳ τῇ Αὐσίτιδι ᾧ ὄνομα Ιωβ  
**Bel (OG) 2** ἄνθρωπος τις ἦν ἱερεὺς ᾧ ὄνομα Δανιηλ

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## Job as potential precedent text for Luke 16:19-31—

### Job 1:1-3 (LXX) => he is righteous, blessed, and ...

- **rich**: he had 7 sons and 3 daughters / 7000 sheep and 3000 camels / 500 yoke oxen and 500 she-asses / many servants
- his children banqueted “every single day” (*kath’ hekastēn hēmeran* Job 1:4), just as Luke’s Rich Man celebrated “daily” (*kath’ hēmeran* Lk 16:19)

# Lazarus and Eliezer

Precisely because of his riches and blessedness Job is then:

- **Tested:** transformed in a single day from *rich* to *poor*, all his children and possessions are destroyed, and the devil “struck him with evil sores (helkei) “from feet to head” (2:7) just as *poor* Lazarus was “covered-with-sores” (heilkōmenos, Lk 16:20-21);
- **Virtually Died:** though still alive, Job frequently contemplates dying, which he calls “sleeping in hadēs” (21:13), just as Luke’s Rich Man after dying awakes in hadēs (Lk 16:23);
- **Experiences Reversal:** taken from rich to poor, just as Luke’s Rich Man and Lazarus experienced opposing reversals. Job said if he would first “receive the good” (ta agatha edexametha) from God then he should also submit to “the bad” (ta kaka) in his life (Job 2:10), just as the Rich Man had “received the good” in his life, but Lazarus “the bad” (parelabes ta agatha...Lazaros homoiōs ta kaka, Lk 16:25).



# Lazarus and Eliezer

Thus Job provides a pattern for both of Luke's characters and for his central feature of **reversal between rich and poor**. At the very least, Luke echoes Job in key *verbal* and deeper *thematic* allusion.

**Yes, Job may have influenced the formation of Luke 16:19-31.**

===

"Testament of Job" – came to my attention too late to include here, pseudepigraphical work from first century BCE or first century CE:

- fed poor at his tables (TJob 3:7, 6:12, 7:30)
- 200 house dogs (TJob 3:2)
- afflicted with plagues/sores/worms (TJob 5:1-9, etc)
- 5<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of Abraham (LXX Job 42:17c)
- brother named "Nachor" (TJob 1:5)
- known for his "patience" (*hypomeinō/hypomenō* TJob 5:1, *hypomonē* in James 5:11)

# Lazarus and Eliezer

Job ==> Abraham

Job points farther back to the most iconic **rich man**, who was also righteous and blessed, and then **tested** by God, “Father Abraham”:

- Each of the three incipits could describe the biblical Abraham

Lk 15:11    ἄνθρωπός    τις    εἶχεν δύο υἱούς

Lk 16:1    ἄνθρωπός    τις ἦν    πλούσιος ὃς εἶχεν οἰκονόμον

Lk 16:19    ἄνθρωπος    δέ τις ἦν    πλούσιος

- Just as in Luke’s parable, we find Abraham in Genesis 24 with his trusted servant “Eliezer”, of whose name “Lazarus” is a colloquial Greek variant (see **Handout**)

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## Genesis 22-24 as “Eliezer Unit”

- Eliezer is named only in Gen 15:2, but developing Jewish exegesis linked him with chapters 22, 23, and 24 by identifying him as:
  - one of the two “lads” (*paidas*) who accompany Abraham and Isaac to the high country in Gen 22 (Lev. Rab. 26:7)
  - guardian of Abraham and Sarah’s cave tomb in Gen 23 (b. B. Batra, 58a)
  - Abraham’s trusted steward (*pais*) who is sent to find a wife for Isaac in Gen 24 (b. Sanh. 58a, Gen. Rab. 59:12; cf also Rabinowitz, 1967).
- Double inclusio of “love/Isaac” (outer) and “look-up with the eyes” (inner) ties the beginning of Gn 22 with the end of 24 :
  - 22:2 “your beloved son, whom you love, Isaac” and 22:4 Abraham “looked up with his eyes” matches in reverse order with
  - 24:63,64 where Rebekah and Isaac each “looked up with her/his eyes”, and 24:67, Isaac “loved” his wife Rebekah

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## Genesis 22-24 as “Eliezer Unit” (continued)

- *Gen 22 and 24* are further linked by these shared literary features:
  - **Critical journeys** involving Isaac: in Gn 22 God sends Abraham to sacrifice Isaac in a liminal place which God would show him, and in Gn 24 Abraham sends Eliezer to bring back a wife for Isaac from his “father’s house” in Haran.
  - **Divine “testing”** involving Isaac: Abraham is deeply tested by God in Gn 22, while Eliezer plots with Abraham’s God to test the women coming to the well in Gn 24. In both, key information is withheld from the tested person(s): Abraham did not know that God would stop him from slaying Isaac, and the women coming to the well did not know the identity of Eliezer and why he asked for a drink of water.
- Between 22 and 24 stands *Gen 23*, a story of **death and burial**;
  - Abraham purchased a field with a “cave” as burial site for Sarah, which is later the burial site for Isaac and Rebekah joined in marriage in Gen 24 (Gn 49:31)
  - Gen 23 and 24 each feature an extended and successful negotiation on behalf of Abraham with outsiders: in 23:3-16 Abraham bargains to purchase from the Hittites the family burial site, and in 24:34-59 Eliezer bargains with Rebekah’s family to take her to be Isaac’s wife.

# Lazarus and Eliezer

**Twelve Key Features common to Gen 22-24 and Luke 16:19-31**

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 1. Abraham and Eliezer/Lazarus in close association:

- Gen 15:3-4 (LXX), *Eliezer* is “the home-born <who> will inherit me” (*ho de oikogenēs mou klēronomēsei me*). οἰκο-γενής = “born in the house, homebred, of slaves” (LSJ p.1203)
- Gen 24:2 (LXX), *Eliezer* (unnamed) is Abraham’s “most senior servant of his house” (*tō paidi autou tō presbyterō tēs okias autou*), and “ruler of all he possessed” (*tō archonti pantōn autou*), i.e. *Eliezer* = steward of all of Abraham’s riches
- Luke 16:22-24, *Lazaros* is carried by angels to Abraham’s lap, in a place where other righteous dead were apparently present (16:26) but only Lazarus was seen to be held physically close by Abraham.

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 2. Abraham is in charge and Eliezer/Lazarus executes his orders:

- Gen 24:3ff, *Eliezer* is commissioned by Abraham to journey back to Abraham's ancestral home to find a bride for Isaac from Abraham's "own people", and to keep Isaac from leaving Canaan as if Abraham will soon die and leave the scene.
- *Eliezer* will make life decisions for Isaac, who to marry and where to live. *Eliezer*, not Isaac, is entrusted to execute Abraham's last will and testament in the future from which Abraham expects to be absent!
- Luke 16:24,27-30, Rich Man asks Abraham to "send" *Lazaros* on two missions, recognizing that *Lazaros* is Abraham's servant!

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 3. Intimate Bodily Contact with Abraham:

- **Eliezer** puts his hand “under the thigh (*mēros*)” of Abraham, twice in Gen 24:3 and 24:9
- **Lazarus** after dying Lazarus is taken to and seen in Abraham’s “bosom (*kolpos*)”, twice in Luke 16:22 and 16:23.

To be in Abraham’s *kolpos* (= “bosom, lap”, LSJ, 974) implies Lazarus was on or next (atop!) to Abraham’s thigh (Haupt 1921, 162-163).

- Both Eliezer and Lazarus in physical contact with Abraham’s thigh(s),
- Both were in close proximity/contact with, Abraham’s genitals.

Intimate male contact with Abraham is unique to *Eliezer* and *Lazaros*.

The sole use of *kolpos* in Genesis is significantly of Abraham’s bosom in Gn 16:5, where Sarah says “I gave my maid *eis ton kolpon sou*”, matching the *eis ton kolpon Abraam* of Lk 16:22:

- => confirms Abraham’s thigh connection.



# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 4. Angelic involvement:

- the God of Abraham will “send his angel before” Eliezer:
  - uttered by Abraham (Gen 24:7)
  - repeated by Eliezer (Gen 24:40)
- Lazarus was carried by angels to Abraham’s bosom (Luke 16:22)
  - Van der Horst: ἀπενεχθῆναι in 16:22 implies the angels took him “back” to “Abraham’s bosom”, a place where Lazarus especially belonged and to which he was entitled to return
  - Connects with previous feature => Lazarus was indeed “there” before, as Eliezer swearing by Abraham’s thigh!
  - => Abraham’s “bosom” is not an equivalent for “Paradise”, but should be read literally

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 5. Negotiating with God and humans

- Abraham and Eliezer each negotiate successfully with both God and humans:
  - Abraham: Gen 18:23-33 (God) and 23:3-16 (Hittites)
  - Eliezer: Gen 24:12-14 (God) and 24:34-49, 54b-59 (Rebekah's family)
- Luke's Rich Man negotiates un-successfully with Abraham in Lk 16:24-31, because he has nothing with which to bargain;
  - his hands are devoid of any deeds of mercy (Lk 16:24-31).

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 6. A Rich Man

- **Abraham** is very rich as YHWH had blessed Abraham in “all things” (Gen 24:1), and he “greatly blessed and exalted” Abraham and gave him “sheep and calves, silver and gold, he- and she-servants, camels and asses” (24:35);
- Luke’s **Rich Man** is obviously a “rich man”.

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 7. Death and Burial: (and Verbal Agreement #1)

- Gen. 23, Sarah dies (*apethanen*, Gn 23:2), and Abraham purchases a tomb in which he buried her (*ethapsen*, Gn 23:19)
- Luke 16:22, the Rich Man dies (*apethanen*, Lk 16:22) and is buried (*etaphē*, Lk 16:22)

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 8. Journeys, actual or contemplated:

- Abraham (Gen 22) and Eliezer (Gen 24) each journey from “here” to “there”; but Abraham orders Eliezer not to allow Isaac to go - “do not take my son back there!”;
- Rich Man and Lazarus have a “great chasm” (Lk 16:26) between them, which none can journey across from “here” to “there”

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## Sidebar: Eliezer character as “replica” of Abraham

- Abraham has many riches, of which Eliezer is “ruler of all”
- Abraham and Eliezer both speak to God and to others in elevated and dignified discourse
- Abraham and Eliezer both go on a long, critical journey involving Isaac
- Abraham and Eliezer both successfully negotiate with outsiders after the death of Sarah: Abraham for a burial site for Sarah, Eliezer for a wife for Isaac who will comfort him in the death of his mother Sarah
- Eliezer is entrusted by Abraham to act on his behalf and in his absence, ie he “is” Abraham in that situation (Gen 24).

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 9. Verbal Agreement #2: “send back”

- Eliezer asks to be “sent back” twice in succession (Gen 24:54,56 *ekpemp̄sate*), after Abraham had previously sent Eliezer to find a wife for Isaac ;
- Rich Man twice asks Abraham to “send Lazarus” (Lk 16:24 *pemp̄son*, 16:27 *pemp̄sēs*)

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 10. Verbal Agreement #3 “to my father’s house”

- Abraham orders Eliezer to go “to my father’s house” (*eis ton oikon tou patros mou*, Gen 24:38 and 24:7,40)
- Rich Man asks Abraham to order Lazarus to go “to my father’s house” (*eis ton oikon tou patros mou*, Lk 16:27)



# Lazarus and Eliezer

**11. Verbal Agreement #4:** “lifted-up eyes and saw from afar”, each involving “Abraham”

- At journey’s end, Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place from afar (*anablepsas tois ophthalmois ... eiden ... makrothen*, Gen 22:4)
- Luke’s Rich Man lifted his eyes and saw Abraham from afar (*epara tous ophthalmous...ora Abraam...makrothen*, Luke 16:23)

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## 12. Verbal Agreement #5: “was comforted” (without agent)

- As result of Eliezer’s work, Isaac was “comforted” (*paraklēthē*, agentless passive) after his mother’s death (Gen 24:67)
- As payment for his suffering, Lazarus is “comforted” (*parakaleitai*, agentless passive) after his own death (Luke 16:25)

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## Discussion

- Recall that the angels “carried” Lazarus “back” to Abraham’s bosom (Luke 16:22), a place to which he was entitled to return.
  - If he “returned” to Abraham’s bosom, when in the story-horizon of Luke 16 did he leave?
- Rich Man unwittingly gives answer when he asks Abraham to “send” Lazarus to warn his brothers. Abraham knows it would be futile as they are “brothers” of man who ignored Lazarus “sent” to his very gate as an invitation (test) to show mercy, as per Moses and Prophets.
- Rich Man also gives the key mercy-link in his very first words to Father Abraham, “ have-mercy on me”, he who never himself showed mercy.
- As Job’s friends “did not recognize” (*ouk epegnōsan*, Job 2:12) their comrade covered with sores from feet to head, the Rich Man never knew the true identity of the wretch clothed in sores at his gate.

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## Discussion – Eliezer and Job, Reversal and Recognition

- **3-Step Reversal and Restoration for Job and Eliezer**

<b>Step 1</b>	Job is <b>rich</b>	Eliezer is ruler of all Abraham's <b>riches</b>
<b>Step 2</b>	Job suffers <b>reversal</b> to <u>poverty</u> and " <u>sores</u> " from feet to head	Leaving Abraham's bosom as "Lazarus", Eliezer suffers <b>reversal</b> to <u>poor</u> man clothed in " <u>sores</u> "
<b>Step 3</b>	Job is <b>restored</b> to health and to double his former riches	Eliezer/Lazarus is <b>restored</b> to the "comfort" of Abraham's bosom

- Step 2: Job is **not recognized** by his friends, and Lazarus' identity is **not recognized** by the Rich Man
  - Eliezer un-named in Gen 24, acted **incognito** when testing Rebekah, even his prayer of Gn 24:12-14 was "in his mind" (24:15) to not reveal identity
  - Lazarus, different(?) name, acted **incognito** when testing the Rich Man, even his desire to eat the crumbs in Lk 16:21 was an unvoiced longing
  - Rebekah passed test: Eliezer takes her to join Abraham's family
  - RM failed test: Lazarus does not take RM to join Abraham in Paradise

# Lazarus and Eliezer

## Conclusion

- *Eliezer* left Abraham's bosom when Abraham "sent" him in the guise of Job-like *Lazaros* to test his rich "child" to see if he would heed Moses and the Prophets by showing mercy to the sore-clothed wretch at his gate.
- Thesis is confirmed: The name and role of Lazarus in Luke 16 reflect influence from the Septuagint version of the Hebrew Bible, a conflation of **Abraham's servant Eliezer** and of **Job**.
- **Meier's** puzzle over the name "Lazarus" is solved, **Geiger** and **Derrett** are vindicated from scholarly neglect.

## James 2:13

ἡ γὰρ κρίσις ἀνέλεος | τῷ μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος  
κατακαυχᾶται || ἔλεος κρίσεως

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