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P. A. H. DE BOER

VOLUMEN QUARTUM

LEIDEN
E. J. BRILL
1961
SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION IN JUDAISM

HAGGADIC STUDIES

BY

GEZA VERMES

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1961
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PREFACE

Although each of the eight studies included in this volume is independent and in a sense complete in itself, it is the purpose of the collection as a whole to situate haggadic exegesis within an historical perspective.

I wish to thank the many friends and colleagues who offered me support and encouragement whilst I was engaged on this work between 1955 and 1959. In particular, Professor P. E. Kahle greatly facilitated my task by lending me numerous manuscript facsimiles and rare books, and Mr. I. J. C. Foster, Keeper of Oriental Books at the University of Durham, was most helpful in providing me with publications not always easy to obtain. In addition, a generous grant from the King's College Research Fund enabled me to acquire some indispensable research material and manuscript photographs.

I proffer my thanks also to the Publisher and to the Editor, Professor P. A. H. de Boer, for including this volume in the series *Studia Post-Biblica*.

My greatest debt of gratitude is, however, due to my wife, whose advice and criticism have helped to clarify many of the ideas developed in these pages, and who has coped with the dull and ungrateful business of re-writing and typing my English text.

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G. Vermes
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge with gratitude the permission granted me by the Editors of The Journal of Theological Studies and New Testament Studies to reemploy (in chapters II and VII) two articles which first appeared in these periodicals, and also thank the Editors of the Loeb Classical Library, with its publishers Messrs William Heinemann Ltd. and Harvard University Press, for allowing me to quote from H. St. J. Thackeray’s translation of Josephus’s Jewish Antiquities and from F. H. Colson’s translation of Philo (De Abrahamo and De Vita Mosis, i).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARN I</td>
<td>Aboth de-Rabbi Nathan, first recension.</td>
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<td>ARN II</td>
<td>Aboth de-Rabbi Nathan, second recension.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>Biblical Archaeologist.</td>
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<td>BASOR</td>
<td>Bulletin of the American School for Oriental Research.</td>
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<td>Ber.</td>
<td>Berakhoth.</td>
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<td>CS</td>
<td>Cahiers Sioniens.</td>
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<tr>
<td>DD</td>
<td>Damascus Document.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discovery</td>
<td>G. Verme, Discovery in the Judean Desert, New York, 1956.</td>
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<td>GA</td>
<td>Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran.</td>
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<td>Giț.</td>
<td>Giṭṭin.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hod.</td>
<td>Hodayoth or Thanksgiving Hymns from Qumran.</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Talmud of Jerusalem, followed by the title of a treatise.</td>
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<td>JA</td>
<td>Flavius Josephus, Jewish Antiquities.</td>
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<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature.</td>
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<td>JJS</td>
<td>Journal of Jewish Studies.</td>
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<td>JQR</td>
<td>Jewish Quarterly Review.</td>
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<td>JSS</td>
<td>Journal of Semitic Studies.</td>
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<td>JTS</td>
<td>Journal of Theological Studies.</td>
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<td>Jub.</td>
<td>The Book of Jubilees.</td>
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<td>JW</td>
<td>Flavius Josephus, Jewish War.</td>
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<td>LAB</td>
<td>Pseudo-Philo, Liber Antiquitatem Biblicarum.</td>
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<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint.</td>
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<td>Meg.</td>
<td>Megillah.</td>
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<td>Mekh.</td>
<td>Mekhila de-Rabbi Ishmael.</td>
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<td>Milh.</td>
<td>1 Q Milhamah or the War Scroll from Qumran.</td>
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<td>M.T.</td>
<td>Masoretic Text.</td>
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<td>M. Tann.</td>
<td>Midrash Tannaim.</td>
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<td>Ned.</td>
<td>Nedarim.</td>
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<td>Neof.</td>
<td>Codex Neofiti 1.</td>
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<td>p.</td>
<td>Pesher, followed by the biblical reference.</td>
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<td>PEQ</td>
<td>Palestine Exploration Quarterly.</td>
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<td>P.L.</td>
<td>Migne, Patrologia Latina.</td>
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<td>PRE</td>
<td>Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer.</td>
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<td>PRK</td>
<td>Pesikta de-Rab Kahana.</td>
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<td>Q</td>
<td>Qumran Cave.</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>Midrash Rabbah; e.g. Gen. R.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RB</td>
<td>Revue Biblique.</td>
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<td>REJ</td>
<td>Revue des Etudes Juives.</td>
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<td>RScR</td>
<td>Recherches de Science Religieuse.</td>
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<td>Sanh.</td>
<td>Sanhedrin.</td>
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<td>Ser.</td>
<td>1 Q Serekh or Manual of Discipline from Qumran.</td>
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<td>Shab.</td>
<td>Shabbath.</td>
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<td>Sheb.</td>
<td>Shebi'ith.</td>
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<td>Syr.</td>
<td>Syriac; i.e. the Peshitta.</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Tosefta, followed by the title of a treatise.</td>
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<td>Ta'an.</td>
<td>Ta'annith.</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tanḥ.</td>
<td>Midrash Tanḥuma.</td>
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<td>Tanḥ. B.</td>
<td>Midrash Tanḥuma, ed. S. Buber.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TJ</td>
<td>Targum of Jerusalem; i.e. Palestinian Targum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1TJ</td>
<td>Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan.</td>
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<td>2TJ</td>
<td>Fragmentary Targum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>TO</td>
<td>Targum Onkelos.</td>
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<td>Tos.</td>
<td>Tosefta of the Palestinian Targum.</td>
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<td>VM</td>
<td>Philo, De Vita Mosis, Book I.</td>
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<td>VT</td>
<td>Vetus Testamentum.</td>
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<td>Vulg.</td>
<td>Vulgate.</td>
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<td>Yalk. Sh.</td>
<td>Yalkut Shim'on.</td>
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<td>Yashar</td>
<td>Sefer ha-Yashar.</td>
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<td>Yeb.</td>
<td>Yebamoth.</td>
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INTRODUCTION

TOWARDS A NEW SYNTHESIS

There are two possible approaches to the study of haggadic exegesis. One method, – followed by Louis Ginzberg in his masterly *Legends of the Jews,¹* – is to collect all the available material from every possible source, and paying no attention to chronological data, to construct a synthesis of the various interpretations.

The second method is to follow the development of exegetical traditions by means of historical criticism. It is my intention in this book to show that such an historical approach is possible, to suggest how to apply it, and to illustrate its advantages for a better understanding of Jewish exegesis.

As far as the sources are concerned, few of them are new. They were examined and re-examined many times during the last century, especially during the period from the second half of the nineteenth century until the first world war. The remarkable efforts of pioneers like L. Zunz² and A. Geiger³ were followed, at the end of the nineteenth century, by the work of W. Bacher, who may be considered the founder of modern haggadic studies. His contribution to the understanding of the exegesis of the Tannaim⁴ and the Amoraim⁵ still retains much of its value.

It should also be mentioned that during the same period, efforts were made to treat Rabbinic literature systematically. Five consecutive editions of H. L. Strack’s *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* appeared between 1887 and 1920.⁶

² *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden.* 1832; 2nd ed., 1892.
The highly improved literary knowledge of post-biblical Judaism resulted, after the end of the 1914-18 war, in a new attempt to produce a synthesis, and an historical appreciation, of the results of previous research. One of the best known and valued works of this kind is G. F. Moore’s *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, which was published in three volumes in Cambridge (Mass.) in 1927. Since Moore’s work is representative of the generally accepted ideas of the nineteen-twenties, a survey of the positions held there may serve to give a clearer picture of later developments.

The second section of the Introduction (pp. 125-216) is devoted to *The Sources*. Moore’s intention was “to exhibit the religious conceptions and moral principles of Judaism ... in the form in which, by the end of the second century of the Christian era, they attained general acceptance and authority” (p. 125). In order to achieve this, he had to draw on sources recognized as authentic by Judaism itself, i.e. Rabbinic literature, as opposed to the apocrypha, pseudepigrapha, or sectarian writings which “are not intrinsically of immense importance” (p. 127).

His estimate of exegetical literature is typical of the opinion of his time. According to this, the “older” Aramaic versions of the Pentateuch and the Prophets, viz., the Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan, reflect the Tannaitic interpretation of the Bible. They are verbal translations, with an occasional admixture of midrashic elements suspected of being later accretions. The Palestinian Targums, preserved in late recensions, are hardly worth mention (pp. 175-176). The true value of the Targums “lies in the evidence they give to the exegesis of the Tannaite period – to the real understanding of what the Bible said for itself” (p. 176).

As for the haggadah or homiletical midrash, it is only loosely connected with the Bible, and bears the teacher’s, or preacher’s, own individual stamp. It is consequently characterised by a “free diversity”; there is no “orthodox” haggadah (p. 162). This is not surprising since the Rabbinic conception of Scripture naturally leads to “an atomistic exegesis, which interprets sentences ... and even single words, independently of the context or historical occasion as divine oracles; combines them with other similarly detached utterances; and makes large use of analogy of expression, often by purely verbal association” (p. 248).

1 The French counterpart of this study is *Le Judaïsme palestinien au temps de Jésus-Christ* by J. Bonsirven. 2 vols., Paris, 1935.
MOORE sums up the nature of the haggadah as follows:

The high aim of the Haggadah is religious and moral instruction and edification; but its authors are aware that to catch and hold the attention it must make itself interesting, and it is not beneath its dignity to be entertaining. It is supposed to be interpretation and application of Scripture...; but it brings freely to the illustration of the text and its lessons matters not only from all over the Bible, but from far outside, and is in some ways the most characteristic product of Jewish literature and life through many centuries (p. 162).

Reduced to its simplest expression, the critical approach to early Jewish haggadic exegesis of thirty years ago appears to have been built on the following basic assumptions:

1) The Targums of Onkelos and Jonathan represent the Tannaitic interpretation of the Torah and the Prophets. Both Targums date from the second century AD and are preserved in a Babylonian recension produced in the third century.¹

2) The haggadah is essentially an individual discipline. It is the teacher's own creation. Its very nature and purpose are opposed to stereotyped reiteration. Apparent haggadic "traditions" are the result of the adoption, and anonymous repetition, of popular interpretations by favourite preachers.

3) The Tannaitic midrashim contain the most ancient form of the haggadah.

Such was the average opinion concerning non-halakhic exegesis when MOORE wrote his book. If it were still in force, the present study would lack a raison d'être; but as the following short survey shows, due to new studies, editions, and discoveries, some of the basic assumptions of the previous synthesis have been completely shattered, and others substantially modified.

Three years after the first publication of MOORE's Judaism, two works were published in Germany which somewhat affected his line of approach. One of these, S. RAPPAPORT's Agada und Exegese bei Flavius Josephus,² went almost unnoticed. In a detailed study, the author not only demonstrates that a large amount of haggadic material parallel to Rabbinic haggadah is to be found in Jewish Antiquities, but rightly conjectures that Josephus did not invent them but followed well

¹ G. DALMAN is responsible for this hypothesis. Cf. Grammatik des jüdisch-palästinischen Aramäisch. 2nd ed. Leipzig, 1905, pp. 11-16.
² Frankfurt am Main, 1930.
established traditions, and borrowed the haggadic elements from an Aramaic Targum.¹

The second book, published in the same year, represents a milestone in biblical and Jewish studies. In the second volume of his Masoreten des Westens, Paul Kahle edited a great number of Geniza fragments of the Palestinian Targum of the Pentateuch.² From the study of these new texts, especially of their language, he concluded that the Palestinian Targum corresponds to a stratum of targumic tradition older than the official Targum Onkelos.³ It should be added that in his Schweich Lectures delivered in 1941 to the British Academy, and published after the war under the title The Cairo Geniza,⁴ Professor Kahle re-examined the same problem, and presented new evidence to confirm his previous estimate of the antiquity of the Palestinian Targum, including its midrashic elements.⁵

During the nineteen-thirties also, the French biblical scholar, A. Robert, was the first to suggest that the roots of the midrashic genre may be traced in post-exilic scriptural writings. Old biblical phrases reappear in these books, but deprived of their original meaning. They have been reinterpreted and recast, with the result that in their new context a new significance has been found for them. What Robert calls "style anthologique" is, in fact, a process strangely similar to the midrash.⁶

In 1948 the discoveries in the Judaean desert were announced, and with them a new era opened in the study of Jewish biblical exegesis.⁷

¹ Pp. xx-xxii. — Many Rabbinic parallels to Josephus were previously collected by J. Weill in his translation of Jewish Antiquities (Oeuvres complètes de Flavien Joseph), edited by Th. Reinach, vol I. Paris 1900.
³ Cf. pp. 9-12.
⁷ For the main problems arising from these discoveries, see e.g. M. Burrows,
These finds have not only stimulated a general interest in Palestinian Judaism at the turn of the two Testaments, but have yielded a certain amount of new material bearing on the subject of biblical interpretation by Jews living between the second century BC and the first century AD. The clear resemblances, in both method and content, between the exegesis of the Scrolls and that of Rabbinic writings, have once more turned the attention of scholars to the question of the pre-Tannaitic, and even pre-Christian haggadah.¹

With the Dead Sea Scrolls acting as a focus of enthusiasm and interest, another document from a very different background, but quite as important for midrashic studies as the manuscripts from Qumran, ran the risk of being overlooked. In 1949 G. KISCH republished, for the first time since the sixteenth century, the Latin text of Pseudo-Philo's Biblical Antiquities.² The editio princeps of 1527, by Johannes SICCARDUS, had been quickly forgotten, but at the end of the nineteenth century it was re-examined by L. COHN,³ and subsequently translated into English by M. R. JAMES,⁴ and into German by P. RIESSLER.⁵ Both COHN and JAMES showed convincingly that the Latin version is based on a Greek text which, in its turn, was a translation from a Semitic original.⁶ The character of the work is summarized by its latest editor as follows:


³ An Apocryphal Work ascribed to Philo of Alexandria, in JQR, OS x, 1898, pp. 277-332.


⁵ Althäindisches Schrifttum ausserhalb der Bibel. Augsburg, 1928, pp. 735-861.

⁶ Cf. G. KISCH, op. cit., p. 16.
Pseudo-Philo’s version of Jewish history has many roots in the ancient Jewish traditions and legends. ... The spirit of Rabbinic Judaism and its typical ancient literature permeates the work in its entirety ... The book, therefore, is rightly counted among ‘the oldest specimens of historical Haggadah’.\(^1\)

It is generally agreed that *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* dates from the first century AD, otherwise a Jewish work of this kind could not have been taken over by Christians. COHN and JAMES date it – on highly questionable grounds – from the last quarter of the first century,\(^2\) but it may be much older. Its exegetical traditions certainly are.\(^3\) The point of interest is, however, that the traditions recorded in this work, coincide, almost without exception, with those found in Rabbinic haggadah.

Mention must finally be made of the discovery of *Codex Neofothi*. This manuscript of four hundred and fifty folios was identified by A. DÍEZ MACO in 1956 as being the first complete version of the Targum Yerushalmi; it is closely related to the Geniza fragments of the Palestinian Targum published by P. KAHLER.\(^4\) As a result of its identification, the so-called Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan, which certainly represents a secondary form of the Palestinian Targum, is no longer the only source available for the study of passages not covered either by the Fragmentary Targum or the fragments from the Geniza.

From the progress outlined here, it will be seen that conditions of research into early Jewish exegesis have altered greatly. Important new theories and data include the biblical origin of the midrashic process (ROBERT), the priority of the midrashic (Palestinian) Targum to the Targum-translation (KAHLER),\(^5\) and the pre-Tannaitic origin of a great number of haggadic interpretations which figure in works such as the Dead Sea Scrolls, PSEUDO-PHILO, and JOSEPHUS, etc. In other words both the nature and the antiquity of the haggadah now appear in an entirely different perspective. Also, various problems

\(^2\) Cf. KISCH, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
\(^5\) KAHLER dates TO from the fifth century AD. Cf. *The Cairo Geniza*, p. 130.
have come to maturity and the moment has arrived for the elaboration of a new synthesis.

Renée Bloch attempted to do this, but her tragic death in 1955 prevented her from doing much more than grapple with the preliminaries. Even as it stands, however, her work has opened new prospects to midrashic research. Two of her studies merit special attention: the article Midrash, in the Supplément au Dictionnaire de la Bible, and Note méthodologique pour l'étude de la littérature rabbinique. The former gives a sketch of a new synthesis, and the latter, rules for a comparative historical study.

In her work on the synthesis, R. Bloch first determines the meaning of and, both in the Bible and in Rabbinic literature, and then goes on to describe the characteristics of the Rabbinic midrash as follows:

1) Its point of departure is Scripture; it is a reflection or meditation on the Bible.

2) It is homiletical, and largely originates from the liturgical reading of the Torah. The Palestinian Targum probably reflects the synagogal homilies which followed the reading of the Bible.

3) It makes a punctilious analysis of the text, with the object of illuminating any obscurities found there. Every effort is made to explain the Bible by the Bible, as a rule not arbitrarily but by exploiting a theme.

4) The biblical message is adapted to suit contemporary needs.

5) According to the nature of the biblical text, the midrash either tries to discover the basic principles inherent in the legal sections, with the aim of solving problems not dealt with in Scripture (halakhah); or it sets out to find the true significance of events mentioned in the narrative sections of the Pentateuch (baggadah).

In the following two sections of her article, R. Bloch investigates the biblical origins of the midrash in the post-exilic books of the Bible.

---

1 She was thirty-one when she died, shot down by Bulgarian fighters when travelling in an Israeli airplane from Paris to Lydda.


3 To search, to try to understand the meaning of a scriptural text; to explain, to interpret in public the meaning of Scripture.
She ascribes the birth of the midrashic genre to the progressive fixation of the text of Scripture during the Persian period, and suggests that its most characteristic examples appear in the Wisdom literature; but other examples are included in the exilic and post-exilic Prophets, and in Chronicles, the latter being a midrash on Samuel-Kings combined with the Priestly source of the Pentateuch (genealogies). The evolution of the midrash is followed within the “biblical milieu”: the Apocrypha, (Ecclesiasticus, Wisdom of Solomon), Pseudepigrapha (Jubilees, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs), the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint, the choice of Kere (text to be read) to replace Ketib (written text), the Palestinian Targums, and finally the New Testament, where all the midrashic forms are represented.

The wholly novel element in this synthesis is the systematic effort to situate the problem of the midrash within a proper historical perspective, not only as regards halakhah,¹ but also haggadah. If all midrash, even haggadic, is an historical phenomenon whose origins are to be traced to post-exilic biblical times, the condition sine qua non for its understanding is to consider it within the setting of its evolution, to distinguish the stages of this evolution, and determine the causes of change. The whole significance of a midrashic theme cannot be understood without some knowledge of its history, and possibly of its pre-history. For example, the same interpretation of a scriptural story may be discovered in a mediaeval midrash, in the Talmud, in the Targum, in a Tannaitic collection, in Josephus, and – let us say – in Jubilees or Ecclesiasticus. This would mean that the fundamental exegesis is at least as old as the second century BC. The differences in its application at various periods may result from changes in aims, needs, or even doctrines; but such changes cannot be detected without knowing what exactly has been altered. To phrase it differently, the real significance of a Tannaitic haggadah can only be determined by comparing it with an interpretation of the same text by a pre-Tannaitic author and by an Amora.

In short, Renée Bloch demands that midrashic literature should be studied according to the same principles of historical and literary criticism as is the Bible itself. The aim and method of such a study are expounded in an impressive fashion in her Note méthodologique:

Le problème est donc de déterminer, par un travail attentif de critique historique et surtout littéraire, et par une étude comparative, le chemine-

¹ For an attempt to study the Mishnah historically, cf. P. R. Weiss, Mishnah Horayoth – Its History and Exposition. Manchester, 1952.
ment et l’ancienneté respective des traditions, la formation, la situation historique et l’interdépendance des écrits rabbiniques.¹

In order to classify and to date traditions, she proposed that, in addition to the employment of historical and philological criteria, etc., analysis should proceed in two stages; by means of external and internal comparison. In her view, external comparison consists in confronting Rabbinic writings recording undated traditions with non-Rabbinic Jewish texts which are at least approximately dated. These external criteria should be sought in Hellenistic Jewish works, the pseudepigrapha, PSEUDO-PHILO,² JOSEPHUS, glosses in the Bible, the ancient Versions, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the New Testament, ancient Christian writings deriving their inspiration from Jewish sources, (e.g. ORIGEN, APHRAAATES, EPHREM, etc.) and in the ancient Jewish liturgy (Kerobot of Yannai). Internal comparison, on the other hand, follows the development of a tradition within the boundaries of Rabbinic literature itself. The biblical text must afford the point of departure because it is the object of study, prayer, teaching, and preaching. The midrashic form most closely bound to the Bible is that of the Palestinian Targum, and for this reason R. BLOCH places it first in order of importance.

En étudiant le Targum de Jérusalem,³ il nous est apparu d’une manière évidente que celui-ci est à la base de la tradition aggadique postérieure; que, se placant dans le prolongement immédiat du donné scripturaire, il constitue une sorte d’articulation, un passage entre la Bible et la littérature rabbinique postérieure; qu’il représente le point de départ, non certes du genre midrashique comme tel (qui est déjà présent dans la littérature biblique), mais du midrash proprement dit, dont il contient déjà toute la structure et tous les thèmes.⁴

The future orientation of midrashic studies depends on whether this preliminary synthesis, and the suggested method, can stand up to a rigorous test. Does R. BLOCH’s working hypothesis actually work? And how? Her intuition concerning the importance of the Palestinian Targum has, on the whole, been found exact in a recent

¹ RSJR, 1955, pp. 202 f.
² R. BLOCH preferred, rightly I believe, the text of the editio princeps of Liber Antiquitatum Bibliarum to the recension published by G. Kisch. (Cf. Note méthodologique, p. 206, n. 13). For practical purposes, however, Kisch’s edition is quite adequate because the reading of the editio princeps is always given in the critical apparatus.
³ R. BLOCH meant to publish a critical edition of the Palestinian Targum; Professor KAHLER provided her with the rich manuscript material which he possesses.
⁴ RSJR, 1955, p. 212.
study by P. Grelot.1 This cannot, however, be considered conclusive, and in the present book I mean to carry the test a stage further with four problems of general importance in mind:

1) the origin and development of exegetical symbolism;
2) the structure and purpose of the re-writing of the Bible;
3) the historical bond between the Bible and its interpretation;2
4) the impact of theology on exegesis, and vice versa.

At the same time, each chapter is intended to illustrate various methods by which problems of interpretation may be tackled.

This study is essentially devoted to Jewish exegesis, but the last two sections will also contribute, I hope, towards a sounder understanding of some fundamental questions relative to both Old and New Testaments alike.

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PART ONE

THE SYMBOLISM OF WORDS

CHAPTER ONE

PHARAOH

AN EXEGETICAL TRADITION AND ITS LITERARY ANALYSIS

Judah approached him and said, I pray you, O my lord, let your servant speak a word in the ears of my lord, and let not your anger be kindled against your servant, for you are like Pharaoh. My lord asked his servants saying, “Have you a father or a brother?” (Gen. xlv. 18-19)

In his address to Joseph, Judah goes on to plead for Benjamin’s freedom, saying that he promised their father to return the young man safely, and that Jacob will die of sorrow if Joseph keeps Benjamin as a slave in Egypt. He begs to be allowed to take his brother’s place.

It is quite obvious to modern readers that Judah’s words in the biblical narrative are intended as a humble, and even obsequious appeal to Joseph. The ancient commentators, however, varied in their interpretation of this passage. Septuagint, Jubilees,¹ and Targum Onkelos, follow the scriptural story almost literally; Jewish Antiquites² includes a moralising speech similar in tone to Genesis, but considerably longer; and Pseudepigrapha omits the entire episode. On the other hand, Genesis Rabbah,³ and the various versions of the Palestinian Targum and its Tosefta, offer a lengthy haggadic explanation which completely alters the meaning of Judah’s words.

These latter sources provide an ideal ground for the literary analysis of a fully developed exegetical tradition. Here the conditions of a synoptic study are fulfilled because the main theme is preserved in two different recensions. The student’s first aim is, therefore, to determine

¹ xliii. 11-13.
² II. vi. 8. §§ 140-159. There is, however, a difference between the biblical account and Josephus. In Genesis Judah offers himself for Benjamin’s salvation; according to J.A, he speaks in the name of all his brothers.
³ xciii. Tanh. offers the same explanation with no notable variants compared with Gen. R.
which recension represents the primitive exegesis. This done, he can reconstruct the process of later development and eventually discover, by comparing the primitive version of the exegesis with its scriptural basis, the origin of the midrash.

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As a first step in analysis, the tradition is examined in its targumic versions as represented by three characteristic documents — the Fragmentary Targum, Neofiti, and the Tosefta of Targum Yerushalmi.¹

2TJ Judah approached him,
Neof. Judah approached him,
Tos. Judah approached him,

2TJ . . . . . . . . . . .
Neof. (first) speaking furiously, then softening his tongue.
Tos. . . . . . . . . . .

2TJ . . . . . . . . . . .
Neof. He roared like a lion,
Tos. strong and mighty as a lion,

2TJ and said:
Neof. and said:
Tos. and said:

2TJ I pray you my lord,
Neof. I pray you my lord,
Tos. Hear me, O king¹

2TJ let your servant speak a word,
Neof. let your servant speak a word,
Tos. . . . . . . . . . . .

¹ For a more detailed textual study of the targumic tradition, cf. A. Díez Macho, *Nuevos fragmentos de Tosefia Targumica*, in *Sefarad*, 1956, pp. 319-324; and G. Vermès, *Le discours de Juda devant Joseph d’après le Targum Palestinien*, to appear in *Mémorial Renée Bloch*. Neofiti I had not yet been discovered when these articles were written. A shortened version of the Tos. text, followed by that of TO, figures also in *Ms. Add*. 9404 f 39b of the British Museum.
2TJ  into the ears of my lord,
Neof. ........................................
Tos. ........................................

2TJ  and let not your anger be kindled against your servant.
Neof. and, my lord, let not your anger be kindled against your servant.
Tos. ........................................

2TJ  Did you not say to us, the first time we came
Neof. Did you not say, the first time we came
Tos. Did you not say the first time we came

2TJ  down to you in Egypt,
Neof. to you,
Tos. to you,

2TJ  I worship the Lord?¹
Neof. I worship the Lord?
Tos. I worship Pharaoh?² You have accused us falsely, and have spoken hard words to us. You have treated us as spies and put us in prison for three days. On the third day you said: I worship the Lord. One of you must remain with me until you bring back to me Benjamin your brother. We did according to your word, and we led back Benjamin our brother. You placed your cup in his sack in order to take him as a slave.

2TJ  And now your decision is revoked
Neof. And now your decision is revoked
Tos. ........................................

2TJ  so that it has become like those of Pharaoh, your master.
Neof. and has become like that of Pharaoh, your master.
Tos. ........................................

2TJ  by whom you swear.
Neof. ........................................
Tos. ........................................

¹ Cf. Gen. xlii. 18.
² Cf. ibid., 15-16. What follows here is an abridged account of Gen. xlii-xliv.
2TJ

Neof. He said: Now, our lord, the first time we came to you, did you not say: I worship Pharaoh? Have you not heard, have you not been told, of the deed of my two brethren, Simeon and Levi,\(^1\) at the fortress of Shechem; that they entered in, and slew there all the men because they had defiled Dinah, our sister, who is not of the number of the tribes, and has no part nor heritage in the division of the Land? How much more for Benjamin our brother, who is of the tribes, and who has part and heritage in the division of the Land! As for me, my strength is mightier than theirs — than that of Simeon and Levi. By oath! If I draw my sword from the scabbard, I will not return it until I have slain all the Egyptians. With you I will begin, and with Pharaoh, your master, I will end.

Tos. 

2TJ For I am as glorious as you are, and my father (is as glorious) as Pharaoh, your master,

Neof. For I am as glorious as you are, and my father (is as glorious) as Pharaoh, your master.

Tos. 

2TJ by whom you swear.

Neof. 

Tos. 

2TJ Do I not swear by the living head of my father,

Neof. For I swear to you by the living head of my father,

Tos. 

2TJ and I do not lie,

Neof. 

Tos. 

2TJ as you swear by the living head of Pharaoh, your master,

Tos. 

\(^1\) Palestinian tradition considers Simeon and Levi as the principal authors of the plot against the life of Joseph. Cf. 1TJ on Gen. xxxvii. 19-20; 2TJ on Gen. xlix. 6; Gen. R. xcix. 7, etc.
that if I draw my sword from the scabbard, I will not return it there

that if I draw my sword from the scabbard, I will not return it there

until we have filled all the land of Egypt with the slain.

until all the land of Egypt is filled with the slain.

I will not return it to the scabbard until we have laid waste all the land of Egypt, (leaving it) unpeopled. With you, its chief minister, I will begin; and with Pharaoh, your master,

I will not return it to the scabbard until we have laid waste all the land of Egypt, (leaving it) unpeopled. With you, its chief minister, I will begin; and with Pharaoh, your master,

by whom you swear,

by whom you swear,

I will end, because of the deed against the will of my father.

I will end, because of the deed against the will of my father.

Have you not heard, have you not been told, of the deed of my two brethren, Simeon and Levi;

Have you not heard, have you not been told, of the deed of my two brethren, Simeon and Levi,

Have you not heard, have you not been yold, of the deed of my two brethren, Simeon and Levi;

that they entered

that they entered

into the fortress of Sechem,

against the fortress of Shechem,

into the city of Hamor, the father of Shechem,
2TJ which was at peace,
Neof. which was at peace;
Tos. .

2TJ .
Neof. that they entered in,
Tos. .

2TJ and put all the men to the sword
Neof. and put all the men to the sword
Tos. and slew all the men

2TJ because they had defiled Dinah
Neof. because they had defiled Dinah
Tos. because of Dinah

2TJ their sister,
Neof. our sister,
Tos. our sister,

2TJ who was not counted among the tribes,
Neof. who was not counted with us among the tribes,
Tos. who was not of the number of the tribes,

2TJ and receives no part or heritage with them
Neof. and receives no heritage with us?
Tos. and has no part or heritage

2TJ in the division of the Land?
Neof. .
Tos. in the division of the Land; upon whose ground the Shekhinah shall dwell, and upon whose heritage the Sanctuary shall be built?

2TJ How much more because of Benjamin our brother, who is counted with them among the tribes, and receives with them part and heritage in the division of the Land!
Neof. How much more because of Benjamin our brother, who is counted with us among the tribes, and receives with us part and heritage in the division of the Land!
Tos. .
2TJ  And my strength is greater than theirs.
Neof.  For I am mightier than they, and my strength is greater than theirs.
Tos.  But I am mightier than both of them.

2TJ  . . . . . . . . . . .
Neof.  . . . . . . . . . . .
Tos.  By the life of the Lord, the God of Israel, my father! If I draw my sword from the scabbard, I will not return it there until I have slain all the Egyptians. With you I will begin, and with Pharaoh, your master, I will end.

2TJ  I took the boy as a pledge from the hands of my father, and I said to him: If I do not bring him back to you, and do not return him to you, may we be
Neof.  I took the boy as a pledge from my father, and said to him: If I do not bring him back to you, and do not return him to you, may we be
Tos.  . . . . . . . . . . .

2TJ  guilty before you, and
Neof.  . . . . . . . . . . .
Tos.  . . . . . . . . . . .

2TJ  forever removed from your salutations.
Neof.  forever removed from the salutations of my father.
Tos.  . . . . . . . . . . .

2TJ  Have you not heard, have you not been told, that we are kings and rulers like you in the land of Canaan?
Neof.  Have you not heard, have you not been told, that we are kings and rulers like you in the land of Canaan?
Tos.  . . . . . . . . . . .

2TJ  . . . . . . . . . . .
Neof.  As you and Pharaoh your master are rulers in the land of Egypt, so also I and Jacob my father are rulers in the land of Canaan.
Tos.  . . . . . . . . . . .
2TJ . . . . . . . . . .
Neof. . . . . . . . . .
Tos. Joseph said to him: If you draw your sword, I will turn it back against your throat. Judah said to him: Could I but open my mouth and swallow you up! Joseph said to him: If you open your mouth, I will stop it with a stone. 1 Judah said to him: The fire of Shechem burns in my heart! Joseph said to him: With the fire of Tamar your daughter-in-law, I will put it out. 2 Judah said to him: Could I but stain the land of the Egyptians with blood! Joseph said to him: You stain always, as you stained the tunic of Joseph your brother. You killed a goat, and dipped the tunic into the blood, and brought it to your father, saying: Seek to know whether or not this is the tunic of your son. 3

2TJ When the well-beloved and glorious Joseph saw the wrath of Judah, his brother, that the hairs of his breast stood up so that they pierced through his garment,
Neof. When the well-beloved and glorious Joseph saw the wrath of Judah, his brother, that the hairs of his breast stood up so that they pierced through his garment,
Tos. . . . . . . . . .

2TJ . . . . . . . . . .
Neof. . . . . . . . . .
Tos. Then Judah gave a loud cry so that all the Egyptians were afraid. All the babes issued from the wombs of their mothers, as also half the cattle in the land of Egypt.

2TJ then Joseph
Neof. then Joseph, who was very afraid and trembled before Judah,
Tos. Then Joseph, who was very afraid,

2TJ made a sign to Manasseh, his first-born son,

1 This may be an allusion to Gen. xlix. 24.
3 Cf. Gen. xxxvi. 31-32.
Neof.  made a sign to Manasseh, his son,  
Tos.  made a sign to Manasseh, his son,  

2TJ  . . . . . . . . . . . . .  
Neof.  . . . . . . . . . . . .  
Tos.  and he laid his hand upon his shoulder (Judah’s).¹  

2TJ  and he struck with his shoe,  
Neof.  and he struck with his foot,  
Tos.  Then Joseph struck the pillar  

2TJ  and all the palace of Joseph shook.  
Neof.  and all the palace shook.  
Tos.  of the palace and caused it to shake.  

2TJ  Then Judah said:  
Neof.  Judah answered and said:  
Tos.  . . . . . . . . . . . . .  

2TJ  Unless  
Neof.  Unless this power is from the house of my father,  
and this great might  
Tos.  . . . . . . . . . . . . .  

2TJ  this (man) is a rib of the house of my father, such a thing could not happen.  
Neof.  from a man who is a rib of my father, such a thing could not happen.  
Tos.  . . . . . . . . . . . . .  

2TJ  . . . . . . . . . . . . .  
Neof.  . . . . . . . . . . . . .  
Tos.  Judah turned from his great wrath  

2TJ  Then Judah began to soften his speech and said:  
Neof.  From this moment Judah lowered his voice and said humbly:  
Tos.  and began to speak gently before the governor of the land and said:  

¹ The grasp of Manasseh’s hand revealed his strength.
My lord asked his servants, saying: Have you a father or a brother.

Neof. My lord asked his servants, saying: Have you a father or a brother.

Tos. Allow your servant to speak a word before my lord, and may your anger not be kindled against your servant; for you are like Pharaoh.

* * *

Comparison of the above three texts shows: a) that the Fragmentary Targum and Tosefta represent two different types of interpretation; b) that Neofiti attempts to harmonize the Fragmentary Targum and Tosefta, and contains a long repetition; and c) that whereas the Fragmentary Targum and Neofiti expound verses 18 and 19, the Tosefta exegesis is solely concerned with verse 18.

Since Neofiti is a mixed version, its study is postponed until later, and emphasis laid on the literary analysis of the two autonomous interpretations.

In the Fragmentary Targum, the opening of Judah’s address corresponds to the biblical account. He politely reminds Joseph of his profession of faith in God, and points out, still with restraint, that by changing his mind, and by not remaining true to his word, he becomes as inconsistent as Pharaoh. Then, suddenly, his attitude changes. He becomes furiously angry, declares himself Joseph’s equal and threatens to kill all the Egyptians, Joseph and Pharaoh included. He reminds Joseph that two of his brothers exterminated all the male inhabitants of Shechem because of the violation of Dinah, and boasts that he is stronger than Simeon and Levi together. Benjamin, he says, as the father of a whole tribe, is more important than Dinah, and his loss will cause the death of Jacob to whom he had promised his son’s safe return. At this point, Judah is beside himself with fury; but once again, his attitude suddenly alters. When Joseph’s son, Manasseh, performs a feat of strength, Judah recognizes him as a member of his own family, and subsequently lowers his voice and takes up his former humble and courteous approach.

The literary structure of Tosefta is quite different. Judah shows Joseph no courtesy at all. On the contrary, he approaches him “strong

1 This example indicates that Neof. cannot be considered as a pure version of Targum Yerushalmi.

2 See below, p. 22.
and mighty as a lion” and immediately proceeds to threaten him. By the time he has come to the end of his angry dispute with Joseph, his rage is almost beyond control; but although Manasseh’s strength is hinted at in this version also, it is an action of Joseph himself which calms his furious brother, and causes him to speak mildly for the first time.

This same Tosefta exegesis appears in the opening words of Neofiti: “Judah approached him, (first) speaking furiously, then softening his tongue”; but the words immediately following reveal disharmony. “I pray you, my lord,” etc., has little in common with a roaring lion.¹ For the rest, it agrees generally with the Fragmentary Targum.

Tosefta’s account of the altercation between Judah and Joseph, in which the governor of Egypt reveals an astonishing knowledge of Judah’s past, is clearly an independent development, and to judge from the structure of both documents, the exegesis of the Fragmentary Targum would appear to remain closer to the biblical narrative. Nevertheless, before arriving at any positive conclusion, it is first necessary to discuss the contributions of midrashic literature.

The most important midrashic source for the purpose of this study is the commentary on the Seder Wayyiqqash in Genesis Rabbah xciii. Although it provides no complete haggadah comparable to those found in targumic writings, certain passages correspond to the exegesis of both the Fragmentary Targum and Tosefta. A typical example of the Tosefta version is to be found in xciii. 7:

When Joseph saw the signs by which he knew that Judah was angry, he trembled and was terrified, thinking to himself, Woe is me, he may kill me. ... What did Joseph do in that hour? He kicked the stone column on which he was sitting and reduced it to a heap of fragments. At this, Judah was astonished and exclaimed: He is as powerful as we are!

An outline of the version given in the Fragmentary Targum appears in xciii. 6:

Just as Pharaoh makes decisions and does not fulfil them, so do you. As Pharaoh is king, and you are his deputy, so is my father king in the land of Canaan and I am deputy to him. If I draw my sword, I will begin with you and finish with Pharaoh. – Now if he had said, “I will begin with Pharaoh and finish with you”, he would have left Joseph

¹ The Tos. reading is also included in Ms. 440 of the Vatican Library, one of the best manuscripts of the Fragmentary Targum.
till the last. But when he said, “I will begin with you”, Joseph made a sign to Manasseh, who stamped his foot so that the whole palace trembled. Woe! cried Judah, such a stamp can only be from my father’s house. Seeing this, he began to speak gently: “My lord asked etc”.

In the same paragraph there is also reference to the sack of Shechem, mentioned in both the Fragmentary Targum and Tosefta, and called here simply “a great city”.

In fact, textual criticism of Genesis Rabbah confirms the provisional conclusion already arrived at concerning the secondary character of the Tosefta version. The passage in which it figures, xciii. 7, is considered by J. Theodor as an interpolation.

As for the targumic exegesis, it can safely be stated that Genesis Rabbah does not create the haggadah, but presupposes it. This is apparent from the fact that it comments on the targumic expression “I will begin with you and finish with Pharaoh”, and subsequently establishes a logical connection between Judah’s threat and Joseph’s further action. In other words, the passage from Genesis Rabbah is a commentary based on the targumic exegesis of Gen. xliiv — which is consequently older than the final composition of this most ancient part of the Midrash Rabbah. This chronological sequence, established by pure literary analysis, has certainly some significance but is still, needless to say, merely relative. No precise date can be attached to the haggadah in question.

Despite this handicap, however, it is possible to make some progress in the matter of establishing its link with the biblical text on the interpretative level. The key appears to lie in the phrase “For you are like Pharaoh”. It is from this point onwards that the targumic exegesis moves away from the biblical narrative. Genesis presents the phrase as a compliment, but in the Targum it is clearly a reproach. The comparison implies inconstancy, weakness, the promise of goodness and the doing of evil. Why? Because the name of Pharaoh was indissolubly bound, in the minds of the interpreters of the Bible, with the Pharaoh of Exodus, the ruler who vacillated between his promises to the children of Israel and his refusal to grant them their freedom. The whole

1 The underlying idea is that if Judah had said “I will kill Pharaoh first, then all the Egyptians, and finally you”, Joseph, who was believed to have detested the Egyptians, would have allowed him to carry on until no-one remained but himself. Then he would have revealed his true identity to Judah. But since the massacre of the Egyptians was to begin with himself, he had to quieten his brother.

haggadah is, in fact, founded on this pejorative interpretation. As so often happens, tradition was stronger than the exigences of the context and its general significance.

This observation is confirmed by external evidence. Under the heading “For you are like Pharaoh”, Genesis Rabbah xciii. 6 summarizes this whole targumic exegesis.

The further development of the haggadah, in which Judah’s reproaches are followed by threats and increasing rage, derives its inspiration from the scriptural tradition (Gen. xlix. 8-9) concerning his strength and courage and fierce temperament. The same biblical passage is similarly expounded in the Testament of Judah,¹ as well as in various targumic and midrashic sources.²

According to the usual midrashic process, Gen. xliv. 18 is interpreted in connection with the relevant passages from Ex. vii-xi referring to Pharaoh’s behaviour, and Gen. xlix with reference to the character of Judah. However, by introducing this particular exegesis of “For you are like Pharaoh”, the Targum interrupts the harmony between verses 18 and 19. In Genesis, both verses belong to the same supplicatory prayer, but in the Targum, Judah’s address opens quietly and courteously and then moves straight on to threats and reproaches. Finally, in v. 19, it reverts to its former tone. The sudden change from hostility to reason is explained by Judah’s discovery of kinsmen in the persons of Manasseh and Joseph. He realizes that he is addressing, not an enemy but a friend. In this way, the targumic haggadah is fashioned into a coherent, and psychologically well-constructed, albeit popular, interpretation.

Unlike the Fragmentary Targum, the starting point of the Tosefta exegesis does not lie in the name “Pharaoh”. Its whole haggadic development is based on the opening words of verse 18, “Judah approached him”. The remainder of this verse is quoted as having been pronounced by Judah after he had overcome his rage. His reproaches and threats and the altercation as a whole relate, therefore, to the verb “to approach”. The Hebrew שֵׁלָל, as also ברפ in Aramaic, are often employed with reference to approaching armies: the Aramaic ברפ signifies war, battle.³ According to Tosefta, Judah approached Joseph in order to fight him, and his bellicosity is compared to that of a furious lion (Gen. xlix). His relapse into obsequiousness was due

¹ Cf. Test. of Judah, ii-vii; J.A., II. vi. 8 § 139.
² Cf. 1 and 2TJ, loc. cit., and Midr. Wayyissa‘u.
³ Cf. below, p. 24.
not to his recognition of Joseph as a member of his family, but simply to his fear of Joseph’s strength.

This examination of the exegetical process underlying the interpretation of Tosefta appears definitely to indicate its secondary character compared with the Fragmentary Targum. The exegesis as a whole requires a pejorative understanding of “Pharaoh”, but Tosefta distorts this meaning by applying the phrase to Joseph, at the end of the passage, as a mark of flattery. In addition, the fragment referring to this Tosefta section discovered in the Cairo Geniza clearly shows that in that version — which is older than the text given in the printed sources — the Tosefta text is closer to the Fragmentary Targum.¹ In short, by assembling all these arguments, it may be said that Tosefta presents a later development of the tradition recorded in the Targum, a conclusion not in itself surprising, considering the complementary character of Tosefta.

The principal results of this analysis may therefore be summed up as follows:

a) The more primitive form of the exegetical tradition connected with Gen. xlv. 18 is contained in the Fragmentary Targum. It results from an association of Gen. xlv, xlvi, and Ex. vii-xi.

b) Tosefta is dependent on the Fragmentary Targum, but builds its interpretation upon a different base.

c) Neofiti principally represents the Fragmentary Targum, but tries, in addition, to combine the exegesis of both the Targum and Tosefta.

d) The two traditions (Targum and Tosefta) were known as such at the time of the redaction of Genesis Rabbah.

Although, as has been said, it is not possible to date the appearance of the targumic tradition, one further step may be made. In a discussion on the meaning of “Judah approached him”, i.e. the scriptural basis of the Tosefta exegesis, Genesis Rabbah records the following opinions:

R. Judah, R. Nehemiah, and our masters differed. R. Judah commented: He approached for battle, as it is written, “Joab and the people who were with him approached for battle” (2 Sam. x. 13). R. Nehemiah commented: He approached for conciliation, as it is written, “The sons of Judah approached Joshua” (Josh. xiv. 6), to conciliate him. Our masters commented: This is an approach for

¹ Cf. the present writer’s Le discours de Juda... See above, p. 12, n. 1.
prayer, “Elijah the prophet approached and said, O Lord, etc.” (1
Kings xviii. 36).\(^1\)

This may signify that the kernel of the Tosefta exegesis is to be
traced to R. Judah, a disciple of R. Akiba, who lived in the first half
of the second century AD. Should this be true, the targumic exegesis
must have originated before R. Judah’s time. On the other hand, its
absence from pre-Rabbinic sources would seem to indicate that even
if it were known before the time of Akiba, it can hardly have been
very widely accepted.

\(^1\) Gen. R., xciii. 6; cf. xlix. 8.
CHAPTER TWO

LEBANON

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF AN EXEGETICAL TRADITION

The foregoing study of exegetical traditions relative to Genesis xlv. 18-19 has demonstrated the importance of the metaphorical value of a word in ancient biblical commentary.

In the present chapter, instead of examining this phenomenon in one scriptural passage, I mean to conduct a more or less comprehensive survey of the symbolical use of a particular word — Lebanon — in several exegetical sources.¹

In contrast to the preceding study also, where the only possible vehicle of research was literary analysis, the present investigation will benefit from an availability of historical data. That is to say, the relative sequence of exegetical changes will be determined, and in addition an attempt will be made to discover datable historical motives responsible for them.

The enquiry is to proceed in three stages:

I) a presentation of all targumic passages in which Lebanon is interpreted symbolically;

II) an examination of other evidence in ancient Jewish literature;

III) a reconstitution of the historical development of the tradition.

I The metaphorical use of Lebanon in the Targums

An examination of the Targums for sixty passages or so in which the word Lebanon occurs in the Hebrew Bible reveals that in almost half of them the word is not understood in its literal sense; Lebanon is not taken to mean a mountain to the north of Palestine. The symbolical interpretation of Lebanon is found in none of the other ancient versions; it is proper to the Targums, and to the Palestinian milieux whose ideas are expressed there.

The biblical texts, and their corresponding targumic commentaries, are set out below, but passages merely giving an exact translation are omitted. The texts are grouped according to the different categories

¹ This chapter is a revised version of an article which appeared under the title The Symbolical Interpretation of Lebanon in the Targums, in JTS, NS ix, 1958, pp. 1-12.
of symbolical interpretation, viz., the king, the rich, the nations, Jerusalem, and the Temple.

Lebanon = The King

I Kings v. 13. (iv. 33)
Solomon spoke of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of the walls.

Targum
He prophesied concerning the Kings of the house of David who shall reign in this world, and concerning the Messiah who shall reign in the world to come.

I Kings vii. 2
He built the House of the Forest of Lebanon.

Targum
He built the summer house of the kings.

Ez. xxxi. 15
I will clothe the Lebanon in gloom for it.

Targum
The face of the kings is clathed in gloom for it.

Lebanon = The rich

Is. xiv. 8
The cypresses rejoice at you, the cedars of Lebanon saying...

Targum
The mighty rejoice at you, the rich men saying...

Ez. xxxi. 16
All the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, will be comforted in the nether world.

Targum
All the kings of ancient times, the mighty and the rich, all the servants of the kingdom, shall be comforted in the nether world.

Lebanon = The nations

Is. ii. 13
(For the Lord of hosts has a day) against all the cedar of Lebanon that are lofty and lifted up.

Targum
. . . . . against all the strong and mighty lords of the nations.

Is. x. 34
The thickets of the forest are struck down with iron, and Lebanon shall fall by the mighty one.

Targum
God shall slay the warriors of his army strong as iron, and they shall fall that make war against the land of Israel.

1 The Targum of the preceding verse identifies the invader with Sennacherib, and then adds a development on the subject of the army of Gog and Magog.
Zech. xi. 1
Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars!

Targum
Open your gates, O nations, that the fire may destroy your strongholds!

Lebanon = Jerusalem

Song vii. 5 (vii. 4)
Your nose is like a tower of Lebanon, overlooking Damascus.

Targum
The chief of the house of Judah is like King David, who built the stronghold of Zion. It is called the tower of Lebanon, for whoever ascends there may count the towers of Damascus.

Lebanon = The Temple

Deut. i. 7
Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountain of the Amorites, and to all their neighbours in the Arabah, in the mountain and in the lowland and in the Negeb, and by the sea coast, the land of the Canaanites, and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.

1TJ
Turn and take your journey to Arad and Hormah. Go to the mountain of the Amorites, to all the inhabitants of Ammon, Moab, and Gabla,1 to the Plain of the Forests, the lowland and the south, to the sea coast, the land of the Canaanites, to Cæsarea and to Lebanon, the place of the Mountains of the Temple, as far as the great river Euphrates.

Deut. iii. 25
Let me go over I pray, and see the good land beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain and Lebanon

1TJ
that goodly mountain on which is built the city of Jerusalem and the mountain of Lebanon upon which the Shekinah shall dwell.

TO
that goodly mountain and the Temple.

Deut. xi. 24
Every place upon which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours; your territory shall be from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the river, the river Euphrates, to the western sea.

ITJ

1 Gebal or Gabla is the Aramaic name of the biblical Seir.
of the Temple; your territory shall be to the sea of the Ocean, which are the waters of Creation, to the western shore.

**II Kings xix. 23**  
(Is. xxxvii. 24)

By your messengers you have mocked the Lord, and you have said: With my many chariots I have gone up the heights of the mountains, to the peaks of Lebanon. I will cut down its tall cedar trees and loveliest cypress trees.

**Targum**

By your messengers you have mocked the people of the Lord. You have said: With my many chariots I have gone up to their fortified city. I will possess their Temple. I will slay their finest fighting men and the flower of their governors.

**Jer. xxii. 6**

You are as Gilead to me, as a peak of Lebanon.

**Targum**

Should you be more dear to me than the Temple which rises to the peak of the mountains?

**Jer. xxii. 20**

Go up to Lebanon and cry out, and lift up your voice in Bashan.

**Targum**

Go up to the Temple and cry out; to the gates of the Mountain of the Sanctuary and lift up your voice.

**Jer. xxii. 23**

O inhabitants of Lebanon, nested among the cedars.

**Targum**

You who dwelt in the Temple, among the kings.

**Hos. xiv. 8 (xiv. 7)**

They shall return to sit in his shadow. They shall cause the wheat to prosper, they shall grow vines which shall be famed as the wine of Lebanon.

**Targum**

They shall gather together from their exile, and shall sit in the shadow of their Messiah. The dead shall live again, and goodness shall abound in the land. The memory of their happiness remains and ceases not, as the memory of the sound of trumpets upon the old wine which was poured in the Temple.

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1 The Targum suppresses the blasphemy.

2 Concerning this verse, St. JEROME notes: “Per metaphoram Libani et Basan, regionum et montium trans Jordanem, ad Jerusalem sermo dirigitur”. Cf. *Commentarium in Jeremiam Prophetam*, Migne, PL, xxiv, 992 D.
Hab. ii. 17

For the violence done to Lebanon will overwhelm you, and the slaughter of beasts will terrify you. For you have poured out human blood, and have done violence to the land, to the city, and to all who dwell therein.

Targum

For the spoiling of the Temple will overwhelm you, and the pillaging of its people will crush you. For you have poured out human blood; you have spoiled the land, the city of Jerusalem, and all who dwell therein.

Zech. x. 10

I will bring them home from the land of Egypt, and gather them from Assyria; I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, but that will not suffice them.

Targum

As I brought them home from the land of Egypt, so will I bring their exiles out of Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and the Temple, but that will not suffice them.

Song iv. 8

With me from Lebanon, O bride, with me from Lebanon. Enter in!

Targum

You shall dwell with me as a chaste bride, O congregation of Israel. You shall enter with me into the Temple.

Song iv. 15

A garden fountain, a well of living water, streams from Lebanon.

Targum

The waters of Siloah flow sweetly, with the other streams which spring from Lebanon to water the land of Israel. For they (the Jews) attend to the precepts of the Torah which are like a well of living water, and they attend to the virtuous practice of the offering of water poured upon the altar in the Temple which is built in Jerusalem, and is called Lebanon.

In three other passages of the Targum of the Song of Songs, Lebanon figures in a context of worship without being directly identified with the Temple.

1 Translating literally the Masoretic Text יַנּ.  
2 This targumic interpretation combines the literal and symbolical meanings of Lebanon.
King Solomon made himself a palanquin from the wood of Lebanon.

King Solomon built a sanctuary from the wood which comes from Lebanon.

Your lips, O bride, drip wild honey; honey and milk are under your tongue. The smell of your garments is like the smell of Lebanon.

When the priests pray within the bounds of the sanctuary, their lips drip honey. Your tongue, when you speak, is like that of a chaste bride. The songs and praises are sweet as milk and honey; and the smell of the vestments of the priests is like the smell of incense.

His countenance is like Lebanon. He made white as snow the sins of the house of Israel.

In Ecclesiasticus, as in the Targum of the Song of Songs, the word Lebanon is used in relation to the Temple. We have the original Hebrew of two of these texts.

xxiv. 10-13

I (Wisdom) served in the holy Tabernacle in His presence. So was I established in Zion, and found my rest in the beloved City; and I wield my power in Jerusalem. I am exalted there as the cedar in Lebanon, and as the cypress on Mount Hermon.

In chapter l. 8-9, the Hebrew text describes the High Priest Simon as the flower of Lebanon in the summer time, as the fire of incense upon the evening offering;

and in l.12,

He stood near to the altar, circled with a crown of sons like the cedars of Lebanon.

II Lebanon in other post-biblical writings

The study of early Palestinian literature makes it possible to situate the targumic exegesis historically, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the

1 A pun on לָבוֹן.
2 Cf. Is. i. 18. This verse is frequently employed in Jewish tradition to explain why the Temple is called Lebanon, the White Mountain: namely, because there the sins of Israel are made white. Cf. infra, p. 34.
3 Cf. Pr. xcii. 13-14. Concerning this text, see infra, p. 37.
Tannaitic midrashim, and a few other Palestinian sources, are examined below with this end in view. The numerous passages of the Midrash Rabbah and the Babylonian Talmud which, though relevant, merely repeat the Palestinian interpretation, are not analysed in detail.

1. The Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1956 J. M. Allegro published four very mutilated fragments of a Commentary on Isaiah (4 Q pIsa).\(^1\) Fragments B and C of this Commentary contain scraps of an interpretation of Isaiah x. 33-34. Although too incomplete for translation, they nevertheless show that the commentator understood these verses to refer to the eschatological war against the Kittim, and that he consequently followed the traditional interpretation seen in the Targum of Isaiah cited earlier. The Targum alludes to the defeat of the army of Gog and Magog, and the Commentary to the defeat of the Kittim;\(^2\) there seems to be little doubt that the second document, as the first, interprets Lebanon as signifying the nations, the last enemy.

Since this is the earliest evidence in our possession on the subject of the identification Lebanon = the nations, and since the interpretation of this verse was modified after 70 AD,\(^3\) the Commentary on Isaiah appears to prove that in this case the Targum has preserved a pre-Christian tradition.

The interpretation Lebanon = the Temple is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, though somewhat indirectly.\(^4\) It figures in the Habakkuk Commentary xii. 3-4 on Habakkuk ii. 17:

Lebanon is the Council of the Community, and the beasts are the Simple of Judah.

It will be recalled that in the Targum Lebanon = the Temple, and beasts = the people of Israel. Closer examination, however, reveals that the change of symbolism is only apparent, and can be explained by a belief peculiar to the Qumran Community. According to this, the

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1 Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature, in JBL, lxxv, 1956, pp. 177-180.
2 In the same document there is question of the dominion of the Messiah over the nations. Magog is also mentioned there in a fragmentary text. (Frag. D, line 4, art. cit., p. 151). Cf. also IQ Milano, xi. 15-16.
3 Cf. infra, pp. 34 f.
Temple of Jerusalem, fallen into the hands of wicked priests, was to be considered defiled until its purification at the return of the Sons of Zadok in the last days. The War Scroll prophesies that this capital event will occur in the seventh year of the eschatological war against the Sons of Darkness. In the meanwhile, the Council of the Community is the one true sanctuary in which God is to be worshipped:

When these are in Israel, the Council of the Community shall be established in the truth as an eternal plantation, a sanctuary for Israel and a foundation of the holy of holies for Aaron...

The theologico-exegetical reasoning of the commentator may be traced as follows:

Traditional belief: Lebanon = Temple
Particular belief: Temple = Council of the Community
Conclusion: Lebanon = Council of the Community

2. The Tannaitic midrashim

Following this evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls, it is not surprising to find, in the form of a universally accepted tradition, the metaphorical use of Lebanon in Tannaitic literature also. There are, however, certain divergences from the Targum and the writings of Qumran: the identification Lebanon = the nations disappears in the Tannaitic midrashim, and the destruction of the sanctuary by the Romans in AD 70 is absorbed into the tradition Lebanon = the Temple. Of the many examples available, only the most characteristic are given here.

_Mekhilta on Ex. xvii. 14_

That goodly mountain (Deut. iii. 25): this is the mountain of the King. And Lebanon (ibid.): this is the Temple, as it is written (Zech. xi. 1): Open your doors, O Lebanon, etc., and elsewhere (Is. x. 34): Lebanon shall fall by the mighty one.

_Sifre on Deut. i. 7_

And the Lebanon: When you enter into the Land, you will establish a king for yourselves, and will build the chosen House (Temple).

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1 Cf. 1_Q.p.Hab. xii. 7-9; DD, vi. 11-20.
2 Cf. 1_Q. Milh. ii. 1-7. For the attitude of the Qumran Community to the Temple and sacrifice, see my _Discovery in the Judean Desert_, p. 213.
3 _1Q Ser._, viii. 4-6.
Whence is it known that Lebanon signifies the king? Because it written (Ez. xvi. 3): The great eagle ... came unto Lebanon and seized the top of the cedar tree, and also (2 Kings xiv. 9): The thorn of Lebanon said to the cedar of Lebanon, "Give your daughter to my son for wife."

Whence is it known that Lebanon means Temple? Because it is written (Jer. xxii. 6): You were Gilead to me, and the peak of Lebanon. And again (Is. x. 34): And Lebanon shall fall by the mighty one.

Another interpretation: Why is the Temple named Lebanon? Because it makes white the sins of Israel. It is indeed written (Is. i. 18): Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.¹

3. Lebanon and the destruction of the Temple in the Palestinian haggadah

After the destruction of the Temple by Roman legionaries in AD 70, two prophetic passages, Isaiah x. 34 and Zechariah xi. 1, were thought to relate to this catastrophe. The interpretation is attributed to Yohanan ben Zak`kai, who succeeded in escaping from the city when it was besieged by Vespasian and Titus, and was the last survivor of the Great Sanhedrin.

Our masters taught: Forty years before the destruction of the Sanctuary ... its doors opened of themselves, and remained open until Yohanan ben Zak`kai rebuked them, saying: O Temple, Temple, why are you afraid? I know that finally you will be destroyed. Zechariah son of Iddo has already prophesied concerning you: Open, O Lebanon, your doors, and let the fire devour your cedars.²

With the aid of Isaiah x. 34, the same doctor is thought to have foretold Vespasian’s accession to the imperial throne.

Rabban Yohanan ben Zak`kai went forward among the soldiers of Vespasian, and asked them: Where is the king? They went to tell him: A Jew seeks to greet you. He replied: Let him come. When he

¹ Siphre zu Deuteronomium, ed. H. S. Horovitz - L. Finkelstein, Breslau, 1935-38, § 6, pp. 14-15. Cf. also, D. Hoffmann, Midrasch Tannaim zum Deuteronomium, Berlin, 1908, p. 5; and Yalkut Shim'on, I, § 801. Other parallel texts from Tannaitic writings include Sifre-Num., § 134 (= Yalk., I, § 816); Sifre-Deut., § 28 (= Yalk., I, § 816); Midrasch Tannaim on Deut. iii. 25 (ed. cit., p. 17). The same tradition is repeated in Gen. R., xv. 1 (= Ex. R., xxxv. 1); xvi. 2 (= Ex. R., xxxv. 1, Midr. Teb., on Ps. civ. 33, § 13); Ex. R., xxiii. 5; Lev. R., i. 2 (= Num. R., viii. 1); Yalk. II, § 533; Num. R., xi. 3; Song R., iv. 8, § 1; vii. 5. § 3 (= Song Zutta, iv. 8); Song Zutta iv. 15; Tg. Sheni of Esther i. 2; J. Yoma, iv. 41d; Yoma 21b; Yalk., II, § 986 (on Song iii. 9).
² Yoma 39b. Cf. Yoma 21b; Yalk., II, § 579. Flavius Josephus mentions this mysterious opening of the gates of the Temple as having occurred in 70 AD, a few months before its final destruction (JW, VI. v. 3, § 293). Cf. also Mt. xxvi. 51; Mk. xv. 38.
was in his presence, he said to him: *Vive Domine Imperator!*\(^1\) Vespasian said to him: Although I am not king, you give me a royal greeting. Were the king to hear this, he would kill me. Yohanan answered: If you are not yet king, you shall be later. Indeed, this Temple shall not be destroyed except by a king, for it is written, *And Lebanon shall fall by the mighty one.*\(^2\)

It is not without interest to compare this exegesis with the Targum interpretation, and with the Qumran Commentary on Isaiah. In these, *Lebanon* signifies the nations, and the mighty one refers to God or the Messiah.\(^3\) In Lamentations Rabbah and its parallels, *Lebanon* signifies the Temple, and the mighty one refers to the pagan king, as *Gittin* 56b explicitly states.

This modified exegesis of *Lebanon* is further developed in accordance with one of the well-known laws of Jewish exegesis, viz., that a biblical text must be interpreted in conjunction with a contiguous one.\(^4\) Isaiah x. 34, "*Lebanon shall fall*", is followed in xi. 1 by "There shall come forth a branch from the stem of Jesse". These two verses are linked together in an haggadic narrative preserved in the Talmud of Jerusalem, but it is probable that the association already existed in *4 Q Pisa*\(^5\).

It happened to a Jew that while he was labouring his cow began to low. An Arab passed near him and hearing the noise, said: Son of Judah! Son of Judah! Untie your cow; untie your plough! For behold, the Temple is destroyed.

The cow having lowered a second time, the Arab said: Son of Judah! Son of Judah! Tie up your cow; tie up your plough! For the King Messiah is born...

R. Abun replied: What have we to learn from this Arab? Does not Scripture itself say, *And Lebanon* shall fall by the mighty one? What is written after? — There shall come forth from the stem of Jesse.\(^6\)

### III The Origin of the Tradition

Bearing in mind that the biblical commentaries of Qumran probably

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\(^1\) This phrase has been somewhat maltreated by Jewish copyists. For the correct reading, see S. Buber, *Midrasch Eecha Rabbati*, Vilna, 1899, p. 67, n. 261.

\(^2\) Lam. R., i. 5. § 31. Cf. *Ekkab Rabbati*, i. 5 (ed. Buber, p. 67); *Aboth de-R. Nathan*, i, ch. 4 (ed. Schecter, p. 12a); ii, ch. 6 (*ibid.*, p. 10a); *Git.,* 56a-56b; *Yalk.*, II. § 415.

\(^3\) יריב נאות in *4 Q Pisa*, Fragment C, line 8 (*Allegro, art. cit.*, p. 180) probably refers to the Messiah of Israel.


\(^5\) *J. Ber.*, ii, 5a.
go back to the first half of the first century BC,\textsuperscript{1} and the passages quoted from Ecclesiasticus to the beginning of the second century BC, it is clear that for as far back as one may search in post-biblical literature, the symbolical interpretation of \textit{Lebanon} appears, not as a new creation, but as an established tradition requiring no explanation on the part of the interpreters. Furthermore, the tradition was to alter scarcely at all during the coming centuries.

The identification of \textit{Lebanon} with the \textit{king, the rich, or the nations}, is founded on biblical verses whose literal sense is either itself symbolical, or lends itself easily to an allegorical interpretation. In such cases, exegetical tradition only explains what is already implicit in Scripture. This is, however, not so with the most prevalent interpretation, viz., the exegesis \textit{Lebanon} = \textit{Temple} (or Jerusalem), which is a \textit{created} tradition.

To judge from the frequency of its use, the basic text upon which the symbolism in question is founded must be Deuteronomy iii. 25.\textsuperscript{2} Nevertheless, it would be rash to establish the origin of the tradition in this single verse, taken by itself.

It is certainly strange that, when he implored God to grant him the grace to be allowed to visit the land beyond the Jordan, Moses should have expressly mentioned "that goodly mountain and \textit{Lebanon}" – doubtless to be understood as "that goodly mountain of \textit{Lebanon}". It is not surprising that later tradition should have attached a symbolical significance to it. However, a comparison of this verse with two other passages from Deuteronomy where \textit{Lebanon} appears in a geographical context, shows that Moses, at that time at the foot of Pisgah in the south, was asking to be allowed to travel through the Promised Land as far as its northern boundary. That this verse should have been so often singled out by the doctors of Judaism is due to their desire to found all tradition upon the Torah; and, in fact, of the three passages of the Pentateuch in which \textit{Lebanon} is named, Deuteronomy iii. 25 does provide the likeliest ground upon which to build a symbolical interpretation.

Isaiah x. 34 and Zechariah xi. 1 are also often quoted, but do not appear to furnish any sounder basis. Their use is too bound up with the historical fact of the destruction of the Temple. Furthermore, in

\textsuperscript{1} For 1 \textit{Q p Hab.}, cf. my \textit{Discovery in the Judean Desert}, p. 84.

\textsuperscript{2} The symbolical interpretation is given not only in the Palestinian Targum, but also in Onkelos. This verse is quoted in \textit{Mekh.}, vol. II, p. 151; \textit{Sifre-Num.}, § 134; \textit{Sifre-Deut.}, § 28; \textit{M. Tann.}, p. 17; \textit{Gen. R.}, xv. 1; xvi. 2; \textit{Ex. R.}, xxxv. 1; \textit{Lev. R.}, i. 2; \textit{Num. R.}, viii. 1; \textit{Song R.}, vii. 5. § 3; \textit{Giq.}, 56b; \textit{Yalk.}, II, §§ 415, 533.
the Targum, and in 4 Q pIsa\(^a\), both texts are interpreted of the nations. All the passages studied in the preceding pages could be eliminated in this way, one by one. None of them is likely to have been responsible, by itself, for the exegesis Lebanon = the Temple.

It seems that the origin of this symbolism is to be found in the association of Deuteronomy iii. 25 with Isaiah lx. 13 and Psalm xcii. 13-14. The passage from Trito-Isaiah places Lebanon in direct relation with the eschatological Temple of Jerusalem.

The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, (Jerusalem), the cypress, the pine and the cedar, to make beautiful the place of my Sanctuary, and I will glorify the place of my feet.

In Psalm xcii. 13-14, which, it should be remembered, is used again in Ecclesiasticus l. 12, a clear parallel is made between the righteous “planted” in the Temple, and the cedars of Lebanon.

The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree; he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. They that are planted in the House of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

Considering its midrashic character and its probable relation to Trito-Isaiah and Psalm xcii, it is almost certain that the interpretation Lebanon = Temple was created in the post-exilic epoch – the terminus post quem being the beginning of the fifth century BC, – and that it may be reckoned as an established tradition from the beginning of the second century BC, the terminus ante quem.

Is there anything to show what happened between these two dates? In itself, the identification Lebanon = Temple has no theological importance, nor any connection with an historical event; yet it must, a priori, be supposed that during the centuries in question some new factor came into force to fix, make known, and impose this exegetical tradition.

The intermediary appears to have been the Song of Songs.

The argument for this hypothesis runs as follows. a) The Song was composed during the period indicated, viz., after the middle of the fifth century, and probably during the fourth or third century BC.\(^1\) b) It is the only post-exilic book of the Bible in which Lebanon has special importance; it is, in fact, mentioned seven times. c) Since it was

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inserted into the canon of the Scriptures (it is also part of the Passover liturgy), this must surely have been on the basis of its symbolical significance. Indeed, post-biblical Jewish tradition has always considered the Song as an allegory.

It would follow from all this that the interpretation Lebanon = Temple must have been adopted by Judaism simultaneously with its acceptance of the allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs.1

The identification Lebanon = Temple having become traditional before 200 BC, it was afterwards easy for Jewish exegesis to discover supplementary confirmation. It was recalled that the Temple of Solomon was built from the cedars of Lebanon; that the words Lebanon and נחלב (incense) derive from the same root; that this root signifies “to be white”, “to make white” – whence the association of Lebanon (white mountain = the Temple) with Isaiah i. 18:

Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow.

In short, once the tradition was established, everything combined to confirm it.

This enquiry into the birth and development of a particular interpretative tradition has resulted in six observations which are of importance to the study of the haggadah in general:

1) A word, or key expression, acquires its new value from an association of various biblical texts. Subsequently, this new meaning is applied almost automatically to numerous other passages including the same word, irrespective of the context.

2) A change in exegetical tradition may be due to an historical event (e.g., the destruction of the Temple), or to the influence of a new doctrine (e.g., Council of the Community = the New Sanctuary).

3) Historical events are recognized as having fulfilled ancient prophecies, not only in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the New Testament, but also in Rabbinic literature, (e.g., the destruction of the Temple was the fulfilment of Isaiah x. 34).

4) The conservative character of the haggadic portions of the

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1 From the conclusions reached in this chapter it would appear that if the Song of Songs, as a literary unit, ever had a meaning other than symbolical, the interpretative alteration must have followed very shortly on the commitment of the work to writing. However, such a process would, a priori, demand a fair amount of time, and those who maintain that the Song, as a whole, was primitively conceived as a love poem, must explain why and how this profane poetry was so rapidly adopted as a religious allegory.
Targum is confirmed by the fact that in the case of Isaiah x. 34 and Zechariah xi. 1, the Targum has preserved a pre-Christian exegesis (Lebanon = the nations), despite the acceptance and establishment of a more recent tradition (Lebanon = Temple).

5) The probable role of the Song of Songs in the formation of the tradition Lebanon = Temple indicates that an exegetical tradition may issue directly from post-exilic biblical tradition. It would follow that, in some cases at least, the exegesis of the Old Testament itself should profit from a critical study of haggadah.

6) As a final consideration, I wish to refer to a parallel investigation undertaken by H. F. D. Sparks into the symbolical interpretation of Lebanon in early Patristic literature.¹ He has reached the conclusion that “some Fathers were familiar with at least some features in the Jewish tradition of the symbolical interpretation of Lebanon and recognized them for what they were — i.e. the Jewish and Christian traditions were not merely parallel, there were also points of contact”.² Moreover he believes “the influence of Jewish tradition generally” to have been “far greater than we might suspect”, and expresses the opinion that, examined jointly, his study and my original enquiry bring out into relief an historical problem of the highest importance, namely, that of “the interrelation and interaction of Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions generally”.³

¹ The Symbolical Interpretation of Lebanon in the Fathers, in JTS, NS, X, 1959, pp. 264-279.
² Art. cit., p. 279.
³ Ibid.
CHAPTER THREE

LION — DAMASCUS — MEḤOKEK — MAN

SYMBOLICAL TRADITION IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

In the following pages, a few characteristic interpretative traditions from the Dead Sea Scrolls are examined side by side with parallel traditions recorded in targumic and midrashic literature. My purpose is to draw attention to similarities in exegetical method, inspiration, and teaching, and also to indicate the partial differences. Because they reflect the influence of history and dogma, these differences are of the greatest importance in the study of the actual process of exegetical evolution.¹

From the methodological standpoint, the importance of the Qumran exegesis is emphasized, not as a particular phenomenon, but as an integral part of early Jewish exegesis as a whole. Well documented Jewish traditions illuminate many of the apparently disconcerting passages in the Scrolls; and, in their turn, the Qumran traditions, owing to the greater facility of their dating, are of extraordinary help in establishing the antiquity of an exegesis included only in some dateless compilation.²

1. Lion — Young Lion

There is some metaphorical use of the terms “lion” and “young lion” in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The basic symbolism is lion = king, but the symbolized king is as likely to be a wicked or Gentile ruler, as God’s Messiah.

a) Lion = Wicked King

The first text is taken from the Nahum Commentary (4 Q pNah) on Nah. ii. 11-12:³

[Where is the den of lions and the cave of the young lions.
This means ...] a dwelling place for the ungodly of the nations.

¹ E.g., the symbolism Lebanon = Temple. Cf. above, pp. 32 f.
² I have repeatedly insisted on this sort of approach. See Quelques traditions de la Communauté de Qumrân, in Cf, ix, 1955, p. 26; La littérature rabbinique et le Nouveau Testament, ibid., pp. 121 f; The Torah is a Light, in VT, viii, 1958, pp. 437 f.
Where the lion went and the young lion shall enter there, and there is none to disturb it.

This means: Deme]trius, king of Yawan, sought to enter Jerusalem upon the counsel of seducers [but God did not permit the city to be delivered] into the hands of the kings of Yawan from Antiochus until the coming of the rulers of the Kittim, and then she shall be trampled...

From the point of view of exegesis, and not of history, the most interesting feature of this text is that for the Qumran interpreter of Nahum "lion" and "young lion" are kings. He even identifies them as Antiochus and Demetrios and their successors until the time of the Kittim. A few lines further on, and also in a fragment of a commentary on Hosea, there is again identification of a wicked ruler as a "furious young lion."

This particular symbolism lion, young lion = wicked or Gentile king is not, however, peculiar to Qumran exegesis. It is found very frequently in the Targum of the Prophets, and is a widely recorded and accepted tradition. The biblical word is יְרֵא or יִרְאָה.

Targum on Nah. ii. 12

Where are the dwelling places of kings and the habitations of rulers, where the kings went and left their children, like a lion which stays on its own ground in security, and there is none to drive them away?

Is. xxxv. 9
No lion shall be there.

Targum
No wicked king shall be there.

Jer. iv. 7
A lion has gone up from his thicket, a destroyer of nations has set out.

Targum
A king has gone out of his fortress, a destroyer of nations has set out with his army.

Jer. v. 6
Therefore a lion from the forest shall slay them.

Targum
Therefore a king with his army shall set out against them like a lion from the forest.

1 The translation follows the Commentator's interpretation by reading יְרֵא instead of יִרְאָה (lioness) of MT. Incidentally, this agrees with LXX and the Targum.
2 Cf. lines 5-6 of the same fragment.
3 Cf. Allegro, art. cit., p. 93.
Ex. xix. 6

He prowled among the lions, he became a young lion, and he learned to catch prey. He devoured men.

Targum

He walked among kings, he was a king. He learned to slay the slain. He slew men.

Compared with targumic literature, the exegesis of 4 Q pNah appears to correspond closely to the general Palestinian tradition, and furnishes evidence of its early employment. The individuality of the Qumran text lies in the actual identification of the royal persons symbolized as lions.

In parenthesis, it may be of interest to recall that in the New Testament, Satan, the Prince of the world, ‘prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he can devour’.

b) Lion = King Messiah

The same basic symbolism, lion = king, is used in a very different sense in another Qumran text. Instead of referring to a wicked ruler, it symbolizes God’s Elect, the Prince of the Congregation; i.e., the King Messiah. The Blessing reserved for him runs as follows:

May the Lord raise you up to everlasting heights, and as a fortified tower upon a high wall. May you [smite the nations] by the might of your [hand,] and destroy the earth by your sceptre, and bring death to the wicked by the breath of your lips. (Upon you shall rest) the [spirit of counsel] and eternal might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of God. Righteousness shall be the girdle [of your loins;] your reins shall be girdled with [faithful]ness. May He make you horns of iron and hooves of brass. May He cause you to toss with your horns like a young bull [and trample the nations] as the mud of the street. For God has established you as a sceptre. The rulers [shall come before you, and shall bow down, and all the] nations shall serve you. And He shall strengthen you by His holy Name. You shall be as a lion... the prey, and no person shall flee it...

The messianic interpretation of “lion” is, of course, bound to the exegesis of Genesis xliv. 9 – a passage recognized as messianic by both Jews and Christians.

MT

Judah is a lion’s whelp.

TO

A mighty one shall be at its beginning, and at the end a king shall arise from the house of Judah.

1 1 Pet. v. 8.
3 See also the Qumran Commentary on Gen. xliv, below, p. 53.
4 Ezra xii. 31-32

As for the lion which you saw roused from the wood and roaring... this is the Messiah whom the Most High has kept for the end...

Rev. v. 5

Then one of the elders said to me: Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.

It is clear that this symbolical interpretation was known in all sectors of Palestinian Judaism. It was employed for different purposes, historical and doctrinal, but always with confidence and assurance in that it represented a tradition familiar to all.

2. Damascus

In his book, More Light on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Millar Burrows concludes a chapter on the meaning of the phrase “the land of Damascus”, and on the historical implications of the exodus of the Zadokites to that country, with the words: “The only solid fact we have, however, is that widely divergent views of this matter are still quite possible.” The problem is certainly an intricate one, and in place of the usual historical approach, I intend here to tackle it by means of exegesis.

Two passages from the Zadokite Fragments mention an exodus of the Penitents of Israel (or the Captivity of Israel), from the land of Judah to the “land of Damascus”, or “the land of the North”, which is Damascus. Several other passages record their settlement there.

There is no doubt about the truth of this emigration – it is confirmed by many other Qumran documents – but, as Professor Burrows writes, opinions differ widely as to the significance of the actual phrase “the land of Damascus”. It may be understood either literally, as signifying a particular geographical region; or allegorically, as designating the place of exile of the Zadokites.

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2 Although I. Rabinovitz argues strongly against it, I think the reading עִשְׂרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, “the Penitents of Israel”, is preferable to עִשְׂרֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, “the Captivity of Israel”, especially in view of the parallel texts in DD, ii. 5 and xx. 17. Rabinovitz’s opinion is given in A Reconsideration of “Damascu” and “390 Years” in the “Damascu” (Zadokite) Fragments, in JBL, Lxxiii, 1954, pp. 16-17, n. 20.
3 DD, vi. 4-5, and vii. 13-19.
4 DD, vi. 5, 19; vii 19; viii. 21; xx. 12.
5 Cf. 1 QpHab., xi. 6; Hod., iv. 8-9; Milh., i. 3.
At first, the term was accepted in its concrete geographical sense. Indeed, it still is interpreted in this way by many scholars, one of the most recent being J. T. Milik.\textsuperscript{1}

I. RabinoWITZ was the first to suggest a metaphorical interpretation.\textsuperscript{2} In his view, which is shared by A. Jaubert,\textsuperscript{3} Damascus was "the locale of the captivity", not of the Zadokites, but of the Judeans exiled by Nebuchadnezzar. R. North follows a middle way by holding that "the land of Damascus" lay, not in Syria, but in the region of Qumran.\textsuperscript{4} He argues that the designation is not purely symbolical because at the beginning of the first century BC, the country of Damascus, as well as some parts of the Judean desert, belonged to the Nabatean kingdom. Qumran, therefore, was in that sense the land of Damascus. T. H. Gaster believes that the expression was used merely to indicate that the sojourn of the Sect in the wilderness was a fulfilment of the prophecy of Amos,\textsuperscript{5} and Millar Burrows proposes a compromise: "The truth of the matter may very well lie in a combination of North's and Gaster's views".\textsuperscript{6}

It is not essential to this study to solve the historical problem, viz., whether the Zadokites settled in Syria or in the Qumran area. Wherever it was, their exile was interpreted as the fulfilment of prophecy because they firmly believed that their whole experience was predestined by God and revealed by the Prophets. If they did travel to Damascus, it was because God had decreed and foretold that they would live in that area. If, in fact, they went somewhere else, they still called this place "the land of Damascus" because their exegesis of Holy Scripture obliged them to do so. In other words, they spent the time of their exile in "the land of Damascus" wherever it may have been.

This leads to the main subject – the exegetical traditions relating to the phrase in question. It will be simplest first to outline the doctrinal significance of the Sect's exile in "the land of Damascus", and then to examine the scriptural evidence which it offers as proof of the predestined inevitability of that event.

According to the Damascus Document, the Zadokites abandoned the Temple of Jerusalem because of the unlawful worship performed

\textsuperscript{1} Dix ans de découvertes dans le désert de Juda, Paris, 1957, pp. 57, 107.
\textsuperscript{2} Art. cit., p. 33.
\textsuperscript{3} Le Pays de Damas, in RB, lxv, 1958, pp. 214-248.
\textsuperscript{4} The Damascus of Qumran Geography, in PEQ, lxxxvii, 1955, pp. 34-48.
there by wicked priests.\(^1\) In “the land of Damascus” they were able
to observe the Law according to its true meaning.\(^2\) They lived in
camps, like the Israelites after the exodus,\(^3\) and they made a new
Covenant there as their forefathers had done on Sinai.\(^4\) Their exile
would last for about forty years\(^5\) to correspond with the wandering in
the wilderness before the conquest of the Promised Land, and with its
end would come the dawn of the messianic era.

Briefly, the Community’s sojourn in “the land of Damascus” is in
line with the well known Jewish doctrine of the New Exodus which
was to precede the coming of the Messiah.\(^6\)

For the author of the Damascus Document, these events were the
fulfilment of prophecy provided that the words of Amos were under-
stood correctly. The journey to “the land of Damascus” was not a
divine punishment, but an act of mercy and deliverance. In fact,
every word of Amos v. 26-27 was interpreted favourably,\(^7\) as is
clear from \textit{DD}, vii. 13-21:

All the unfaithful were given over to the sword, but those who
remained faithful escaped to the land of the north, as He said: I have
exiled the tent of your king and the bases of your images from my
tent to Damascus.\(^8\)

The tent of the king are the books of the Law, as He said: I will
raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen. (Am. ix. 11)

The king is the Assembly. The bases of the images are the books
of the Prophets whose words Israel despised. The Star is the Inter-

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\(^1\) Cf. \textit{DD}, iv. 1 ff: vi. 12 ff.
\(^2\) Cf. \textit{ibid.}, vi. 12-viii. 9.
\(^3\) Cf. \textit{ibid.}, xii. 22-xiv. 6.
\(^4\) Cf. \textit{ibid.}, vi. 19; viii. 21; xx. 12.
\(^5\) Cf. \textit{ibid.}, xx. 15; 4 \textit{Q} \textit{pPr.} xxxvii. 10 (ed. J. M. Allegro, \textit{A newly discovered Fragment of a Commentary on Psalm xxxvii from Qumran}, in \textit{PEQ}, lxxxvi, 1954, p. 71);
\(^6\) \textit{1Q} \textit{Mill.}, ii.
\(^8\) Compare this with the contrasting LXX exegesis: “And you took up the
tent of Moloch, and the star of your god Raephon, the images of you that
you made for yourselves. And I will carry you away beyond Damascus.”

The quotation is abridged and altered. The phrase “the star of your god
which you made for yourselves”, whose meaning is obviously pejorative, is
purposely omitted. In the commentary, it is replaced by Num. xxiv. 17, in which
the “star” is thought to refer to the Messiah. I acknowledge here my debt to C.
Rabin’s \textit{The Zadokite Documents}, Oxford, 1954, p. 28-29, especially for his inter-
pretation of הָיָה מַלְיַל הָיָה, “from My tent to Damascus”. It should be mentioned
that in vii. 19 also, \(^b\) is omitted before הָיָה. A. Jaubery follows the same
preter of the Law\(^1\) who shall come\(^2\) to Damascus, as it is written: A Star shall come out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel. (Num. xxiv. 17)

The Sceptre\(^3\) is the Prince of all the Congregation.\(^4\) When he comes he shall smite all the sons of Sheth.

This intricate exegesis means, in plain words, that as foretold by Amos, the House of the Law,\(^5\) i.e. the Community, would be transferred from Jerusalem to “the land of the north”,\(^6\) to Damascus. The Interpreter of the Law and the Prince of the Congregation, two messianic characters associated not only here, but also in 4 Q Testimonia, would appear there also.\(^7\) The emphasis is laid, not on the fact that the Sect would be exiled to Damascus, but that the House of the Law in the messianic era would be established in the land of the north instead of in Jerusalem.

The eschatological and messianic bias of his interpretation of Amos shows that, in the mind of the author of the Damascus Document, Damascus was associated with more than one biblical proof-text, and that he was influenced by some previous exegetical tradition connected with the word. Several authors, among them MOWINCKEL,\(^8\) NORTH,\(^9\) ALLEGRO,\(^10\) and especially A. JAUBERT,\(^11\) have drawn attention to Zechariah ix. 1 in this respect.

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1 Interpreter of the Law is a function and a title. There was a נבון in every local assembly of the Community (Ser., vi. 6). DD, vi. 7-10, mentions an Interpreter of the Law par excellence who belongs to the past, while in 4 Q Testimonia on 2 Sam. vii. 11-14 he will appear in the future, and work beside the Davidic Messiah. Cf. J. M. ALLEGRO, Further Messianic References in Qumran Literature, in JBL, lxxv, 1956, pp. 176 f.

2 The translation of不准 in the future tense follows the messianic interpretation which, on the basis of the Testimonia passage, I have adopted here. Mademoiselle JAUBERT (art. cit., p. 231) employs the same argument.

3 Cf. below, p. 59.

4 The Prince of the Congregation is the Davidic Messiah. Cf. the last Blessing in BARTHELEMY-MILIK, Qumran Cave I, pp. 127-129, and also Milkh, v. 1.

5 Cf. DD, xx. 10, 13.

6 It should be remembered that, according to the Targum on Zech. vi. 8, those who go to “the land of the North” are invited to do there what pleases God.

7 Cf. above, n. 1.


9 Art. cit., p. 34.


11 Cf. art. cit., p. 226. Damascus, according to the interpretation of A. JAUBERT, is only a symbolical name for Babylon. The following survey of targumic and midrashic traditions appears not to confirm her view on this point.
MT

The oracle of the word of the Lord is in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus is his resting place.

LXX

The oracle of the word of the Lord is in the land of Sedrach, and his sacrifice shall be in Damascus.

Targum

Oracle of the word of the Lord upon the land which will be raised up: and Damascus shall rejoin the land of the house of His Presence.

The phrase דמשק מנוהת requires further investigation. In both the Septuagint and the Targum Manoah has a cultic connotation – sacrifice, and house of the Shekinah, i.e., the Sanctuary. Among the biblical passages where מנוהת signifies the place of the Temple of the Lord, the following are the clearest and the most important:

Deut. xii. 9

For you have not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance which the Lord your God gives you.

Is. lxvi. 1

Heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool. What is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?

1 Chron. xxviii. 2

Then King David rose to his feet, and said: Hear me, my brethren and my people. I had it in my heart to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the footstool of our God, and I made preparation for building.

It is apparent from these parallels that the ancient translators, representatives of the exegetical traditions of their time, understood Zechariah 1:13 as referring to a

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1 “The land of Hadrach”, and “Damascus” appear to be synonymous. Note consequently the connection between “land” and “Damascus”.

2 The LXX reading is הַמֶּנֶה instead of חַמֶּנֶה.

3 The vocalisation נְהַרְתָּן, “of height”, seems to me preferable to נְהַרְתָּן, “the south”. For the underlying idea, see Isa. ii. 2.
rialh ix. 1 as prophesying that in the future the land of Damascus would be the place of God's Sanctuary. Since this chapter of Zechariah is devoted to the events of the messianic era, it would follow that the eschatological Temple would be established in Damascus. Of course, this exegesis appears very remote from post-deuteronomistic biblical teaching, and from the traditional Jewish belief that the true Temple can be nowhere but in Jerusalem. For this reason, the interpretation of the passage was altered in orthodox circles by means of a classic midrashic process. Zechariah's prophecy was interpreted as meaning that at the end of time, the Temple of Jerusalem would extend as far as Damascus. In other words, Jerusalem and Damascus would form one and the same city. The Targum cited above contains an abridged version of this exegesis, but it is given in full, with all the proof texts, in Sifre on Deuterononmy § 1. Two Rabbis of the second century AD, Judah ben Il'ai and Jose ben Dormaskit, disagree on the interpretation of רֶבַע. Jose, who was born in Damascus, knows of a place there called Hadrach; but Judah's haggadic commentary is that "the land of Hadrach" is the land of the Messiah who will be severe (יה) towards the nations, and mild (רו) towards Israel. Both, however, more or less agree on the meaning of רֵדָא מַעַלְתַּה:

How do you explain, Damascus is His resting place? Because Jerusalem shall reach Damascus, as it is said: Damascus is His resting place. But God has no resting place except Jerusalem, as it is written: This is my resting place for ever (Ps. cxxxii. 14). Behold how I explain, There was a spreading upwards and about on every side, for the spreading of the House went upwards about the House. Therefore the House was spread upwards (Ez. xli. 7). The land of Israel shall spread and rise up on every side, like a fig-trees whose branches are bound below, but stretched out above. The gates of Jerusalem shall reach Damascus, as it is said: Your nose is like the tower of Lebanon looking towards Damascus. (Song vii. 4) The exiles shall come and camp there, as it is written: Damascus is His resting place. It is also said: It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the House of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills, and all the nations shall flow to it. (Is. ii. 2)

1 Cf. ix. 9.
2 Ed. Horovitz-Finkelstein, § 1, pp. 7-8. Cf. also Yalkut Sh., ii, 574 (on Zech. ix. 1); Song R., vii. 5; Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 143a.
3 Jose, the son of a woman from Damascus, was a disciple of Eliezer b. Hircanus, and a contemporary of Akiba. Judah b. Il'ai belongs to the following generation (the third generation of the Tannaim). It is, however, not impossible that Jose disagreed with R. Judah's father, R. Il'ai, who was Jose's co-disciple at the school of Eliezer. Cf. H. L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, Philadelphia, 1945, p. 113.
To sum up the various doctrinal points connected with Zechariah ix. 1 in targumic and midrashic tradition, Damascus was expected to be the seat of the eschatological Sanctuary, the gathering place of the exiles, and the place of the Messiah’s coming; and these traditions were brought into line – though not explicitly in the Septuagint – with the fundamental Jewish belief which referred everything to Jerusalem.

If these findings are compared with the doctrine expounded in the Damascus Document and in other Qumran scrolls, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that, apart from the Rabbinic attempt at harmonisation, the same exegetical traditions are incorporated in both. The exiles of Israel lived in “the land of Damascus”. The House of the Torah was there, and the Council of the Community which was the true Sanctuary. And there they expected the coming of the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel. Put differently, according to Qumran teaching, the true Sanctuary of God lay within the Community which had temporarily moved from Jerusalem, but intended to return there.¹ According to the traditional understanding of Zechariah ix. 1, the messianic Temple would be founded in Damascus before returning at last to Zion.² Therefore, the exilic abode of the Community was called, correctly, the land of Damascus.

I would repeat, however, that this conclusion does not necessarily affect the historical problem.

3. Mehokek

All the exegetical traditions discussed so far derive from Palestinian sources which, as has been shown, constitute the natural background to the corresponding Qumran interpretations. In the present study of the word Mehokek attention is turned, instead, to the relationship between the Septuagint exegesis, the Targum, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, in order to assess more accurately the traditions recorded in each of these groups.

The primary fact to be taken into consideration is that whereas plainly developed, and substantially divergent traditions are attached to the word mehokek in the Septuagint on the one hand, and in the Palestinian documents on the other, both interpretations are found in the Qumran writings.

The term in question occurs seven times in the Hebrew Bible. In

¹ Cf. above, p. 33.
² According to ix. 9, the Messiah will come to Zion.
three of them – Deuteronomy xxxiii. 21, Judges v. 14, and Isaiah xxxiii. 22 – it is generally interpreted as ruler. In the other four, viz., Genesis xl. 10, Numbers xxi. 18, and Psalms lx. 9 and cviii. 9, it is given as commander’s staff, or sceptre. It should be noted immediately that this second meaning appears nowhere in ancient documents,¹ and is known only to modern scholars.

The following is an analysis of the Septuagint exegesis of ἡμᾶς:

Deut. xxxiii. 21

Καὶ εἶδεν ἀρχὴν αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἑκεῖ ἐμερίσθη γῆ ἄρχοντων συνηγκένων ἀμιὰ ἄρχηγοις λαῶν

And he saw his first-fruits, that there the land of the princes² assembled with the chiefs of the nation was divided.

Judg. v. 14

'Εν ἑμοὶ Μαχίρ κατέβησαν ἐξερευνῶντες
Machir came down with me, searching.³

Is. xxxiii. 22

Κύριος ἄρχων ἡμῶν Κύριος βασιλεὺς ἡμῶν
The Lord is our Prince. The Lord is our King.

Gen. xl. 10

Ὅτι ἐκλείψει ἄρχων ἐξ Ἰουδακαὶ ἡγούμενος εξ τῶν μηρῶν αὐτοῦ
A prince⁴ shall not fail from Judah, nor a ruler from his loins.

Num. xxi. 18

"Ωρυήξαν αὐτὸ ἄρχοντες ἐξελάτομησαν αὐτὸ βασιλείας ἐθνῶν ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ κυριεύσαι αὐτῶν
Princes dug it, kings of nations⁵ delved it, in their kingdom, in their realm.⁶

¹ I have dealt briefly with this subject in La figure de Moïse au tournant des deux Testaments, in Moïse, l’Homme de l’Alliance, Paris, 1955, pp. 81-82.
² The plural form is doubtless due to an attempt to establish a complete parallelism between “princes” and “chiefs”.
³ The inference is obviously that they were “searching” out the enemy. But the same word is used in 1 Pet. i. 10 to convey the idea of the prophets searching into the future.
⁴ Both symbols — sceptre and commander’s staff — are interpreted as persons, viz. a prince, and a ruler.
⁵ MT: “the nobles of the people”. According to the LXX interpreters, the song expresses God’s solicitude for Israel; their thirst is quenched by the water which the rulers of a strange land dug.
⁶ MT: “with the sceptre and with their staves”. 
Ps. lx. 9: cviii. 9
(lxx. 7xx: cvii. 8xx)

καὶ Ἐφραὶμ κραταίωσις τῆς κεφαλῆς μου Ἰουδας βασιλεύς μου

Ephraim is the strength of my head; Judah is my king.

Apart from the somewhat obscure Judges v. 14, the Septuagint exegesis of παχαμ is unanimous. The word refers to a person with royal prerogatives: a prince, ruler, or king. Or else, as in Numbers xxi. 18, it alludes to a kingdom. It is in any case clear that, in the mind of the Greek translators of the Bible, the noun παχαμ was almost automatically associated with the notion of royal power.

Turning to the Targums and the Tannaitic midrashim, a very very different interpretation is discovered.

2TJ on Deut. xxxiii. 21

He saw from the beginning that a place was prepared there for a sepulchre. Precious stones and pearls were set in it. Moses the Prophet, the Scribe of Israel, is buried there. And it shall come to pass that as he formerly walked at the head of the people in this world, so shall he walk in the world to come.

Sifre on Deuteronomy § 355

For there was the ruler’s portion reserved. This is the tomb of Moses which is in the portion of God.

Judg. v. 14

Men came down from the house of Makhir when record was made in the battle.

Is. xxxiii. 22

The Lord is our Teacher who gave us from Sinai the doctrine of the Torah. The Lord is our King. He shall deliver us and perform a punishing judgment upon the army of God.

1 MT: “helmet”. Ps. cviii must have had a different translator, since “strength” (κραταίωσις) is altered to “help” ἀντίληψις.
2 From the post-Tannaitic midrashim may be quoted. Gen. R., xciii. 8; Deut. R., ii. 9; and Yalk. Sh., i. § 962.
3 2TJ and TO give a substantially identical interpretation.
4 Mehokek is often identified as Moses. Cf. N. Wieder, The “Law-Interpreter” of the Sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Second Moses, in JJS, iv, 1953, pp. 161, 175. See also my article (cited on p. 50, n 1) p. 82.
Kings shall not fail from the house of Judah, nor scribes, teachers of the Torah, from his sons.

O Well which the fathers dug – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the masters of old; which the chiefs of the people dug – Moses and Aaron, the scribes of Israel.

The valiant men of the house of Ephraim are the strength of my head; and from the house of Judah are the scribes of my house of teaching.

With the exception of Judges v. 14, Palestinian exegetical tradition relates ἔφημι to the teaching of the Torah. The Teacher is either God, who gave the Law; or Moses, who is the ἀρχέω par excellence; or the scribes in general.

This exegesis is the direct result of etymological evolution. The original meaning of ἔφημι was “to engrave”. Laws, divine or human, were engraved upon tablets. τιμή, “law” or “commandment”, is literally “an engraved thing”, and ἔφημι is “an engraver”. This etymological meaning may be applied to God, who gave Moses “the two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the fingers of God” (Ex. xxxi. 18); or to Moses, who “wrote upon the (second) tables the words of the Covenant, the ten words” (Ex. xxxiv. 28). According to Ps. Jonathan on Ex. xx. 2-3, each of the personified divine words of the ten commandments engraved itself (ἔφημι) upon the tables of the Covenant.

Where, therefore, the Septuagint sees a ruler, Palestinian tradition, as recorded in the Targums and midrashic literature, recognizes a Law-Giver or Interpreter.

Finally, in the Qumran writings both these interpretations, the Hellenistic and the targumic, are represented. The former appears in a commentary on Genesis, and the latter in the Damascus Document.

1 1TJ and TO contain a similar exegesis.
2 2TJ and TO agree with 1TJ.
3 Both LXX and Targ. take ἔφημι as a verbal form, and not as the plural of a noun.
4 He is often called “the great Scribe” in the Targums. Cf. TO on Deut. xxxiii. 21; Song i. 2; ii. 4; iii. 3; Pr. ixii. 12.
5 “Scribe” is synonymous with “Torah teacher”, not with “copyist”. Ezra, the promulgate of the Law, is given the title ἀρχέω. Cf. passim in Ezra vii, and Neb. viii, xii.
Commentary on Gen. xlix. 10

The sovereign [not] fail from the tribe of Judah.

When Israel shall rule, he that is seated upon the throne shall [never] be cut off from David. For the mehokek is the royal covenant, and the thousands of Israel are the feet until shall come the Messiah of Righteousness, the Branch of David. For unto him, and to his seed, shall be granted the royal covenant of his people for everlasting generations.

The author of this text explicitly identifies פְּנֵמִי with a “royal covenant”, thereby adopting the Septuagint tradition. His interpretation of this classic messianic text appears as follows. Despite the disappearance of the Davidic kingship, the royal covenant granted by God to David in Israel’s favour still stands. In the time of the Messiah, the throne of Israel will again be occupied by a descendant of David from the tribe of Judah.

DD vi. 2-11

But God remembered the Covenant He had made with the forefathers, and He raised up from Aaron men of understanding, and from Israel men of wisdom, and He commanded them to dig the Well: The Well which princes dug, which the nobles of the people delved with the Mehokek. (Num. xxi. 18)

The Well is the Torah. They that dug it are the Penitents of Israel

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2 The biblical verse is quoted according to its traditional interpretation: sephtre = sovereign.
4 In accordance with targumic tradition, the commentator understands נלייש as signifying “he to whom belongs” (the kingship). Cf. N. Wieder, Notes on the New Documents from the Fourth Cave of Qumran, in JJS, vii, 1956, p. 74. The author of the Genesis Commentary freely uses Jer. xxiii. 5, and xxxiii. 15. — I think the expression פְּנֵמִי requires a little attention. T. H. Gaster (op. cit., p. 351) translates this phrase “the legitimately anointed (king)”. Such an interpretation would be justified in some polemical script against false Messiahs, but this does not appear to be the case here. The above quoted passages from Jer. may indicate the true meaning: “I will cause a Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land”. Note that פְּנֵמִי פְּנֵמִי figures in Targ. Jer. xxxiii. 15.
5 Dr. Wieder’s opinion that this Commentary is posterior to Justin Martyr appears to me to be questionable. (Cf. art. cit., p. 74). There is absolutely no sign of any anti-Christian polemics in this or any other Qumran text. The author’s only purpose was to emphasize that, despite the provisional cessation of the Davidic monarchy — since the 6th century! — the royal covenant remained valid. It should also be noted that Gen. xlix. 10 is used as a messianic proof-text well before St. Justin, in Rev., v. 5: Ἰδοὺ ἐνυφάητον ὁ λέων ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς ᾿Ιουδαίας η ῥῆξα Δαυίδ.
who went out from the land of Judah, and dwelt in the land of Damascus. God named all of them Princes because they sought Him, and their fame was not disputed by any mouth. The Mebokek is the Interpreter of the Torah, of whom Isaiah said (liv. 16): He brings forth a tool\(^1\) for His work. The nobles of the people are those who come to dig the Well according to the commandments (תִּקְנַה) which the פְּנֵיהוּ commanded (פְּנֵיהוּ), and in which they must walk during all the time of iniquity. And without them, they shall find nothing until the coming of him who shall teach righteousness\(^2\) at the end of time.

In complete agreement with Palestinian tradition, the author of the Damascus Document understands פְּנֵיהוּ to mean Interpreter of the Torah. The person to whom this title refers belongs to the past, and is to be identified with the Founder of the Community, who is called elsewhere the Teacher of Righteousness.\(^3\) He is to be followed at the end of the eschatological era by a final Teacher of Righteousness, or Interpreter of the Law,\(^4\) i.e., the Priest Messiah.

The same concept of a new Moses, or messianic Teacher of Righteousness, appears also in the Palestinian tradition relating to Joel ii. 23, whence the title was taken. The Targum reads:

Sons of Zion, rejoice and be glad in the Memra of the Lord your God, for He shall return to you him who teaches you righteousness.\(^5\)

Since, in the Commentary on Genesis xlix, פְּנֵיהוּ is the royal covenant, while in the Damascus Document it refers to the Interpreter of the Torah, it is tempting to conclude that the first work belongs to the Hellenistic sphere of exegesis, and the second to the Palestinian. There is, however, nothing properly Hellenistic in the identification of פְּנֵיהוּ with קִרשָׁא, or prince. As a parallel to “sceptre” in Gen. xlix. 10, the Septuagint interpretation is indeed the most logical one. It could scarcely have been completely unknown in Palestine, and I would indeed,

\(^1\) For ancient allegorical interpretations of יְלִל, “tool, vessel”, see C. RABIN, The Zadokite Documents, Oxford, 1954, pp. 22-23, note 88. N. WIEDE (art. cit., p. 161), points out that “vessel” is a figurative designation of Moses in Rabbinic literature.

\(^2\) Cf. Hos. x. 12, where the expression refers to God. Here, in my opinion, the reference is to the Priest Messiah. (Cf. Discovery, p. 165).

\(^3\) For a more detailed discussion, see my article (quoted on p. 50, n. 1) pp. 80-85. See also N. WIEDE, art. cit. on p. 51, n. 4; A. JAUBERT, “Le pays de Damas”, in RB, lxxvi, 1958, pp. 224-225.

\(^4\) Cf. above, p. 46.

\(^5\) מְדִינָא דְּבָרִי נְבֵי, doctor iustitiae in the Vulg. In Ps. lxxxiv. 7, מְדִינָא is translated by the LXX (lxxiii. 6) as “Law-Giver” (ὁ νομοθέτης). But the possibility cannot be disregarded that targumic tradition identifies the Teacher whom God will restore, not with Moses, but with Elijah.
venture to recognize it as the oldest exegesis in both sectors of post-biblical Judaism.

It is rather the Palestinian tradition which requires further explanation. Its scriptural basis is given above, but it is not clear why it was adopted so unanimously and applied to such texts as Genesis xlix. 10, or to the relevant passages from the Psalms where the Septuagint interpretation would appear the most reasonable.

Genesis Rabbah xciii. 8 on Genesis xlix. 10 seems to provide the key to this problem when it identifies the “sceptre” of Judah with the Sanhedrin, the highest authoritative body in Palestine after the fall of the Davidic dynasty. The post-exilic exegesis *mēbōkek = scribe*, is an adaptation of the biblical text to contemporary conditions, when, instead of being ruled by kings, Judaism was governed by Interpreters of the Law. The earliest datable literary evidence of this is doubtless the Greek translation of Ecclesiasticus, which in x. 5 renders ἡγιασμένος as γραμματέως.

This is to say, the exegesis *Mēbōkek = scribe* was accepted in both Palestine and the Diaspora from at least the end of the second century BC. The pressure responsible for its emergence in Palestine was, however, less strongly felt in the Dispersion, which would explain why the Septuagint interpretation (*ruler*) was not revised.

As far as the Qumran texts are concerned, the Genesis Commentary holds to the original meaning of the metaphor because it looks towards a future restoration of the kingship; but when the recent past is recalled, the Damascus Document gives the exegesis *Interpreter of the Law*.

Furthermore, the historical predicaments and religious ideals of the writer’s own time are also projected into the future, and together with the coming of the King Messiah, the author of DD awaits the advent of a messianic Teacher and assigns to him a role of great importance in the establishment of God’s kingdom.

In short, the primitive biblical symbolism *mēbōkek = ruler*, is preserved in the Septuagint translation, and no account is taken there of historical change. But altered circumstances obliged the Palestinian interpreters to revise their previous exegesis in order to maintain a congruity between life and Scripture. Eventually, this re-interpretation was inserted into new syntheses of eschatological expectation: the Teacher of Righteousness or Interpreter of the Law at Qumran, and the return of Moses in Rabbinic literature.

This example excellently illustrates the interdependence of history, haggadah, and theology in early Judaism.
4. Man

This final section is devoted to the re-examination of the much disputed messianic significance of the term Geber, “the Man”, in Qumran writings.

W. H. Brownlee¹ and I² were the first to suggest a messianic interpretation of the word. Since then, it has been firmly challenged by Millar Burrows.³ I have not so far encountered any new Dead Sea text capable of clarifying the problem, but have examined most of the relevant scriptural references and their interpretation in the Septuagint and the Targums. The results of this enquiry may illustrate what appears to be a symbolical tradition of considerable doctrinal interest.

The first of the two Qumran texts to be discussed is Hodayoth iii. 7-10. This poem describes the great tribulation and distress which will precede the final defeat of wickedness and the imprisonment of “all the spirits of nothingness”.⁴ The poet is the spokesman of the Community of the Sons of Light, and employs various images to describe his sentiments. He compares himself to a ship upon the deep sea and to a fortified city besieged by the enemy, but mainly to a woman in labour. This last image, with its allusions to the birth of Geber, forms the most important part of the work.

(They caused me to be) like a woman
the first time in labour⁵
whose belly is seized with pangs and terrible pain.
The crucible (kūr) of the pregnant one
is filled with anguish.
For the children are come even to the waves of death⁶

¹ The Servant of the Lord in the Qumran Scrolls, II, in BASOR, 135, 1954, pp. 36-38.
² Quelques traditions de la Communauté de Qumrân, in CS, ix, 1955, pp. 55-57. Cf. also Discovery, pp. 220-221.
³ More Light ..., pp. 316 f, 330, 334.
⁴ Hodœ, iii. 18.
⁵ The following lines contain many implicit references to biblical passages describing the pains of childbirth: Jer. xiii. 21; 2 Kings xix. 3; Is. xxxvii. 3; Is. ix. 9; lxvi. 7; Mic., iv. 9-10. Some of these are also used in Rev., xii. Cf. also A. Dupont-Sommer, Le Livre des Hymnes découvert près de la Mer Morte (IQH) Paris, 1957, p. 36, n. 8.
⁶ The line is taken from 2 Kings xix. 3 (Is. xxxvii. 3): “For the children are come to the womb (mishbere) and there is no strength to bring forth”, in combination with 2 Sam. xxii. 5-6 (Ps. xvii. 5-6): “For the waves (mishbere) of death encompass me”. According to targumic tradition,  יִפְלָע in all these passages is understood to refer to the birth-stool. 2 Kings xix. 3 (Is. xxxvii. 3): “For you surrounded us with distress, like a woman who sits upon the birth-stool”. 2 Sam. xxii. 5: “For
and she labours in her pains who carries Geber in her womb. Amid the waves of death shall she bring forth Zakar; and amid the pains of hell shall spring from the crucible of the pregnant one Pele Yo‘eq with his might, and out of the womb Geber shall be delivered.

The second text interpreted messianically by Brownlee and myself is taken from the section of the Manual of Discipline devoted to the doctrine of the Two Spirits. According to this teaching, the history of mankind is a continuous struggle between the spirits of truth and wickedness, and the war between good and evil will not end without God’s special intervention. The final victory will be the last event of human destiny.

But God, through the mysteries of His intelligence and His glorious wisdom, has appointed an end for the existence of wickedness, and at the season of visitation He will destroy it for ever. Then truth shall arise in the world for ever, for it wallows in the ways of wickedness under the influence of iniquity until the season of ordained judgment. (iv. 18-20)

Here follows the passage with which we are concerned, iv. 20-22:

Then will God purify in His truth all the fabric of Geber, and shall refine unto Himself the frame of Ish, rooting out all spirit of wickedness from the bounds of his flesh, and purifying it of all impurity by the holy Spirit. As water of purification He will pour upon him the spirit of truth (cleansing him) from all the abominations of falshood. He shall be plunged into the spirit of purification in order to teach the knowledge of the Most High to the righteous, and to cause the perfect to understand the wisdom of the sons of heaven.

The words in italics – Geber, Zakar, crucible, and Pele Yo‘eq in the Hymn, and Geber, Ish, refine, purifying, teach, and cause to understand in the Manual – indicate a definite link between the two passages. They are you did surround us with distress, like a woman who sits upon the birth-stool”. Ps. xviii. 5: “For you did surround us with distress, like a woman who sits upon the birth-stool, and is in danger of death”. The line in the Hymn may be interpreted similarly: she who is about to give birth is afflicted with deadly pains. For the same simile applied to a man, see LAB, xii. 5: “Factus est (Moses) similis mulierii parturienti in primitivis suis, que cum tenetur in doloribus et manus eius super pectus illius, et virtus non erit que adiuvet partum eius”.

1 I take מותש as an orthographic variant of מותש, and understand it, not in the sense of “the deeds of Geber”, but the “work” or “fabric” of Geber, meaning his body.

2 המנין, i.e., “building”, “frame”. Cf. Y. Yadin, A note on DSD, IV, 20, in JBL, lxiv, 1955, pp. 40-43. The expression may have been inspired by Is. xliv. 13: השבטי אשי.
likely to furnish the key to the interpretation of the problem as a whole, and in the following pages their exegetical background is scrutinized in order to see how the ancient interpreters of the Bible understood them, and to discover the doctrinal themes to which they are related.

a) יבש

In his paper quoted above, Brownlee draws attention to the biblical passages in which this word is employed messianically; viz. 2 Samuel xxiii. 1, Zechariah xiii. 7, and the Septuagint interpretation of Numbers xxiv. 17. To these he adds two passages based on Numbers xxiv. 17\textsuperscript{LXX} from the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: Testament of Judah xxiv. 1 and Testament of Naphtali iv. 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT</th>
<th>Targum</th>
<th>LXX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oracle of David the son of Jesse, and oracle of the man who was raised on high, the Messiah of the God of Jacob.</td>
<td>Thus spoke David the son of Jesse. Thus spoke the man who was raised to the kingship, the Messiah by the Memra of the God of Jacob.</td>
<td>Faithful\textsuperscript{1} is David the son of Jesse, and faithful is the man whom the Lord raised up to be the Messiah of the God of Jacob.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textit{Man} in these texts obviously refers to the King, the Anointed One of God, but it can scarcely be held that this apparently accidental association attaches any symbolical value to \textit{Geber}.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT</th>
<th>Targum</th>
<th>LXX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man who is my fellow.</td>
<td>Reveal yourself, O sword, upon the King of Babylon, and against the ruler, his fellow, who is like him.</td>
<td>Awake, O sword, against my shepherds\textsuperscript{2} and against the man, my citizen.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here, the Targum offers an allegorical interpretation of \textit{Geber}; viz., \textit{ruler} or \textit{sovereign} (יָהֲלֵם). This should be remembered, and it

\textsuperscript{1} Ἰησοῦς (twice). LXX appears to have read יָדִ֖ים instead of יָדִ֖ים.

\textsuperscript{2} The plural is the reading of LXX\textsuperscript{P}. Other manuscripts give the singular, like M.T.
should also not be forgotten that the title is applied to a Gentile, the
colleague of the King of Babylon. In the Damascus Document xix.
7-9, the same verse is cited with regard to the unfaithful rulers of
Israel. According to all these texts, therefore, the Man is a ruler, but
not God’s Messiah.

On the other hand, it may be of interest to note that the second
half of this verse, slightly modified, is applied to Christ in Mark xiv.
27 and Matthew xxvi. 31: “I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep
(of the flock) will be scattered abroad.”

Num. xxiv. 17

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{MT} & \textit{LXX} \\
There shall come forth a star & A star shall come forth out of \\
of Jacob, and a sceptre shall rise & Jacob; a man shall rise out of Israel. \\
out of Israel. & \\
\end{tabular}

As Brownlee correctly remarks, \textit{Man (ἔσσωμεν)} clearly refers to
the Messiah. This biblical verse has indeed been used messianically
by all the exegetical sources, by the Targums (Targum Onkelos =
the Messiah; Ps. Jonathan = the Messiah, the mighty Sceptre of
Israel; the Fragmentary Targum = Saviour and Sovereign); by the
Peshitta (= the Chief); and by the Qumran writings, namely, the Bless-
ing of the Prince of the Congregation,\textsuperscript{1} and the Damascus Document
vii. 19-20.\textsuperscript{2} Needless to say, in the Dead Sea Scrolls this Messiah
is the Prince of the Congregation, the King of the latter days.

A few additional examples may be added to the three texts cited
by Brownlee. Jeremiah xxii. 30 is a parallel to 2 Samuel xxiii. 1, so
it is sufficient merely to mention it here. But in Psalm xviii. 26, the
Targum identifies \textit{a merciful one (דָּבָר)} with Abraham, and \textit{a perfect man
(נְבֵר הָמוֹן)} with Isaac. Despite the absence of the article in the Hebrew,
definite persons are recognized by the interpreters.

Two further texts are, however, of greater interest.

Num. xxiv. 7

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textit{MT} & \textit{LXX} \\
Water shall flow from his buckets, & A man shall come forth out of his \\
and his seed shall be in many waters. & seed and shall rule over many \\
& nations. \\
\end{tabular}

\textsuperscript{1} Cf. above, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{2} Cf. above, p. 46.
As in Numbers xxiv. 17, the messianic tradition is unanimous, although the biblical inspiration is very much less straightforward.\footnote{For both Num. passages, see below, pp. 159 ff, 165.} Thus, PHILO, in Vita Mosis liii, § 290, follows the Septuagint:

There shall come forth from you one day a \textit{man}, and he shall rule over many nations.

TJ

Their King shall rise from them, and their Saviour shall come them, from the midst of them.

TO

The King who shall be raised out of his sons shall be great.

Peshitta

There shall come forth a \textit{man} (רַעִישָׁהּ) out of his sons.

Lastly, there is the Targum of Jeremiah. At first sight, the interpretation of \textit{Geber} seems very odd, but this does not, I think, justify its omission.

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{Jer. xxxi. 21} & \\
\textit{MT} & \textit{Targum} \\
The Lord has created a new thing upon the earth; a woman shall seek after a \textit{man}. & Behold, the Lord has created a new thing upon the earth, and the people of Israel shall run towards the Torab. \\
\end{tabular}

In this exegesis, \textit{the woman} is the daughter of Zion, i.e. the people of Israel, and her search for a \textit{man} results in her return to the Torah. The missing link in this interpretation is that Israel's conversion to the Law will follow from her adherence to the Teacher, the \textit{man}, i.e. the Messiah, at the time of the new Creation.

In conclusion, the foregoing texts provide evidence enough of the symbolical value of the word \textit{Geber} in its relation to the notion of a King Messiah and if the present exegesis of the Targum of Jeremiah is correct, we have in addition at least one example of an association between \textit{Geber} and a messianic Teacher.

The \textit{terminus technicus} character of this noun which may stand without an article will be discussed later.\footnote{Cf. below, p. 63.}
b) זכר

The parallel mention of זכר and נבר in Hodayoth iii is clearly prompted by Isaiah lxvi. 7. The return of the Israelites from captivity is represented as a wonderful new birth, so sudden and unexpected that the new-born man child arrives even before the start of the birth pains.

**M.T**

Before she travailed, she brought forth. Before her pain came, she was delivered of Zakar.

**Targum**

Before she was distressed, she was delivered. Before the pains caused the woman to tremble, her King was revealed.

Zakar, although undefined in the scriptural text (literally “a man-child”), is understood to allude to a definite person. Indeed, the rebirth of Israel in the image of a son is interpreted by the Targum as the birth of the King Messiah. This, as a parallel, confirms the result of the study of Geber.

c) מלך ייעץ

The third title, Wonderful Counsellor, is borrowed from Isaiah ix. 5, where this name is given to the new-born child who will sit on the throne of David and establish everlasting peace.

**MT**

The government shall be upon his shoulder, and he shall call his name Pele Yo'etz, El Gibbor, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace.

**Targum**

He shall take upon him the Torah to observe it, and the Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Eternal One shall call his name the Messiah who shall increase peace upon us in his days.

According to this peculiar targumic exegesis, the Messiah is expected to be the Guardian of the Law, and the King of Peace, but only the name מלך ייעץ is applied to him; all the others – Wonderful Counsellor, etc., – refer to God! The chief reason for this is that it appeared unthinkable to award the title “Mighty God” to a human being. But the interpretation is rendered simpler by the fact that the literal meaning of the verb וַיָּקֵר is “and he shall call”. If all the following phrases referred to the child, the subject of the sentence would remain vague.

1 Symmachus also uses ἡ παράδεξις, “correction”, “instruction”, instead of “government”.
The exegesis is traditional in Judaism. Rashi, for instance, follows it in his commentary:

The Holy One, blessed be He, who is a Wonderful Counsellor, a Mighty God, and the Father of Eternity, called the name of Hezekiah¹ “Prince of Peace”.

It would be incorrect to see an anti-Christian bias in this. The Septuagint shows that the whole verse, and in particular, the phrase “Mighty God”, was already a **crux** in pre-Christian times:

"Ὅτι παιδίον ἐγεννήθη ἡμῖν υἱὸς εὐδόθη ἡμῖν οὗ ἡ ἀρχὴ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄμων αὐτοῦ καὶ καλεῖται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Μεγάλης βουλῆς ἀγγελος ἔξω γὰρ εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τοὺς ἄρχοντας καὶ ὑγείαν αὐτῷ

For a child is born to us, and a son is given to us, whose government is upon his shoulder. And his name is called Messenger of great counsel.² For I will bring³ peace upon the princes and health to him.

Although paraphrased instead of translated, *Pele Yo'etz* remains the name of the Messiah in the Septuagint. Emphasis seems to be laid here too on his mission as messenger, or teacher. The phrase “Mighty God”, which is the root of the trouble, disappears from the Greek, and the other titles are interpreted in a totally different manner.⁴

In short, *Wonderful Counsellor* is a messianic title in both the Bible and the Septuagint. Moreover, in all the versions this title conveys, more or less explicitly, the idea of a teaching mission. The idea of royal power is less emphasized because of the difficulty arising from the phrase *El Gibbor*.

Against this exegetical background, the *Pele Yo'etz* of the Qumran Hymn appears as a messianic figure whose main task is to instruct his followers in their search for God.

¹ Note that this identification, favoured by many ancient and modern interpreters, does not appear in the Targum.
² LXXB, LXXA follows MT.
⁴ Although Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion differ from LXX, and are nearer to MT, (θεωματος συμβουλος; παραδοξομος βουλευτος; θεωματος βουλευων), without exception, they all translate **בְּרוֹאַל** as “powerful one”, “mighty one”, *Ἰσγυρος δυνατος*. Taking this context into account, it is not surprising that in *Hod*. iii the Isaiah text is altered to **מִלְאַל יִקְמַם בִּבּוֹרָתָה**.
d) שָׁנַה

It is enough to quote Zechariah vi. 12 to demonstrate the messianic reference of *Ish*. Its doctrinal content is the same as that of *Geber*, i.e. the anointed King of the Lord.

**MT**

Behold a man, his name is Branch. And he shall grow up out of his place.

**Targum**

Behold, the man whose name is Messiah shall be revealed and raised up.

If it should seem unlikely that a peculiar significance was lent to nouns as commonplace and ordinary as *Geber*, Zakar, or *Ish*, which are not even provided with the definite article, the answer is that they acquired the characteristics of a proper name in the same way as *gemah* (a branch) in the Zechariah quotation, and *Mashiah* (an anointed) in many post-biblical passages.2

**CRUCIBLE, PURIFICATION, ETC**

a) רֵכֵב

The crucible used to melt and refine precious metals is employed metaphorically with reference to the purification of man.

**Prov. xvii. 3**

**MT**

The crucible is for silver, and the furnace for gold; but the Lord tries the hearts.

**LXX**

As silver and gold are tried in the furnace, so are the chosen hearts by the Lord.

Since metals are refined by fire, the image of the crucible is chosen in both the Bible and in the Qumran writings to convey the idea of trial by suffering.

**Is. xlviii. 10**

Behold I have tried you... I have tested you in the crucible of affliction.

**Hod. v. 16-17**

Thou hast tried me as gold in the fire, and as silver in the crucible of the blowers, to be purified seven times. The ungodly and violent have stormed against me with their affliction; daily they crush my soul.

1 *The Man* = נָבֵרֵב.

2 I think for the same reason that נָבֵרֵב in *Ser.*, ix. 11 is not an undefined prophet, but the messianic Prophet foretold in *Deut.* xviii. 15-18. *Cf. La figure de Moïse...*, pp. 80-81.
In Hodayoth iii, דה is used symbolically to signify the womb of the woman who gives birth to the Man. His body will be refined and purified, even before his birth, by the pains of his mother, the Community. He will come into the world amid the "pangs of the Messiah", as Gaster rightly remarks.\(^1\)

b) קָקִים - מֵתוֹא

The notions of purification and refinement figuring in the Manual of Discipline correspond to the image of the crucible in Hodayoth iii. The body of the Man is refined by the "holy Spirit", the "spirit of purification". Freed from all wickedness and impurity, it will become an instrument of sanctification for those to whom he will teach the knowledge of God. To try, to purify, to refine, are synonyms both literally and figuratively.

Ps. xii. 7

\[MT\]
The words of the Lord are pure; silver filtered in the furnace on the earth, refined seven times.

\[Targum\]
The words of the Lord are pure; silver filtered in the crucible on the earth, refined seven times.

Zech. xiii. 9

\[MT\]And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined; and I will try them as gold is tried. He shall call on my name and I will answer him.

\[Targum\]And I will bring the third part to distress, to the crucible of fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them as gold is tested. He shall pray my Name and I will accept his prayer.

Here it is the "remnant" of Israel which is required to undergo the ordeal of purification by suffering; yet the same idea points also the figure of the Suffering Servant.

Is. liii. 10

\[MT\]It pleased the Lord to bruise\(^2\) him.

\[LXX\]And the Lord is pleased to purify him.

\[Targum\]It was a pleasure before the Lord to try and purify the remnant of His people.


\(^2\) נַגֵּז, i.e. "to bruise" in Hebrew, is taken by both Targ. and LXX in its Aramaic meaning, "to purify".
For a better appreciation of this parallel text, it is important to remember that, according to the Targum, God’s intention was to purify His Servant so that he might become a Teacher of Righteousness and persuade men to submit themselves to the Torah.

Finally, Malachi iii. 1-3 provides another important biblical parallel.

\[MT\]

Behold, I send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek shall suddenly come to his Temple, and the messenger of the Covenant in whom you delight, behold, he comes, says the Lord of hosts. ... He is like the tester’s fire, and like the fuller’s soap. And he shall sit as a tester and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer to the Lord offerings of righteousness.

\[Targum\]

He shall reveal himself to test and purify as a man who tests and purifies silver.

The Messenger of Malachi, i.e. Elijah, destined to return at the end of time to prepare the way of the Lord,\(^1\) is given the same mission of purification and teaching as Geber in the Manual of Discipline. This Messenger is not, however, a Messiah. Malachi envisages the establishment of the Kingdom of God by God Himself, and the Messenger as a forerunner of that Kingdom.

The various concepts examined in these pages point to two different figures: 1) a King Messiah (Geber and its synonyms) and 2) a messianic Teacher (crucible and its parallels). Nevertheless, as has been underlined more than once, there is a noticeable inclination in Palestinian exegesis to attach a teaching mission to Geber also, i.e. to view the Messiah as the final Interpreter of the Torah. This notion appears to be associated with both the Suffering Servant and the Messenger of Malachi.

Despite all the fluctuations and the vagueness, it can safely be assumed, I believe, that Geber is the symbolical title of a messianic character, though it is still not possible to determine exactly whether it refers to a messianic Prophet or to a prophetic Messiah. The

\(^1\) Cf. Mal. iii. 23.
Messenger motif hints at the former role, and the texts from Hodayoth and the Manual point to the latter.¹

It appears that at a certain stage in its doctrinal evolution, the theology of the Qumran Community began to identify the Man with their Teacher of Righteousness. This identification emerges from a fragment of the Commentary on Psalm xxxvii. 23—24.²

The steps of Geber are established by the Lord, and He delights in all his ways.

Its interpretation concerns the Priest, the Teacher of [Righteousness] ... whom God established in order that he might build for Him a Congregation of...

This interpretation conforms to the methods common to both Palestinian and Qumran exegesis and is acceptable provided that the allegorical value of Geber, which I have tried to demonstrate here, is correct.

It should be added that a similar duality of concept may be discovered in the New Testament also. On the one hand, most of the characteristics of Geber are applied to John the Baptist. The figure of the Messenger, the new Elijah, is constantly related to him.³ He is the messianic Prophet sent to baptize, to purify, to teach the way of the Lord, and like Geber, he is believed to have been purified in his mother’s womb by the Holy Spirit:

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord. ... and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother’s womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God.⁴

On the other hand, it may be of interest to note that in more than one Targum passage, Geber is translated וֹ כָּה,⁵ the title which Jesus gave to himself as the Teacher par excellence, the prophetic Messiah. It is consequently not impossible that this enquiry may lead to one of the unknown sources of the Son of Man theology of the New Testament.

¹ Cf. my Quelques traditions de la Communauté de Qumrân, in CS, ix, 1955, p. 58. For the various messianisms, see La figure de Moïse..., pp. 85-86.
³ Cf. Mt. xi. 10; Mk. i. 2; Lk. i. 17, 76; vii. 27.
⁴ Lk. i. 15-16.
⁵ Cf. e.g., Ps. lxxxviii. 5; Job. xvi. 21; xxxiii. 29.
PART TWO

THE REWRITTEN BIBLE

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM (1)

HAGGADIC DEVELOPMENT: A RETROGRESSIVE HISTORICAL STUDY

The biblical history of Abraham begins with his departure from Ur of the Chaldees. Of his earlier life very little is written. Genesis xi. 27-32 merely records his genealogy:

Now these are the descendants of Terah. Terah begot Abram, Nahor and Haran, and Haran begot Lot. Haran died before his father Terah, in the land of his birth, in Ur of the Chaldees. Abram and Nahor took wives. The name of Abram’s wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor’s wife, Milkah, the daughter of Haran, the father of Milkah and Iskah. Sarai was barren; she had no child.

Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran, his grandson, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, the wife of his son Abram, and they set forth together from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan. They came to Haran, and they settled there. The days of Terah were two hundred and five years; and Terah died in Haran.

Joshua xxiv. 2 adds a few bare details concerning Abraham’s religious background:

Your fathers dwelt of old beyond Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor; and they served other gods.

Isaiah xxix. 22 refers to God as the Redeemer of Abraham, thereby implying that Abraham was saved from some unspecified danger:

Therefore, thus says the Lord to the house of Jacob, He who redeemed Abraham.

1 By a retrogressive historical study, I mean a study which takes as its point of departure a comparatively late midrashic compilation with greatly developed traditions, and which determines, by means of the older material, the history and origin of all its constitutive elements.

2 This is only in MT. LXX reads: “Thus speaks the Lord about the house of Jacob which He had set apart”.
From this meagre material, Sefer ha-Yashar, one of the latest examples of the rewritten Bible (circa the eleventh century AD), has composed a most detailed story of Abraham's life, from his birth until his arrival in Haran. Much of it is, indeed, the sort of legendary development common to all popular hagiography, but its inspiration derives from the biblical passages quoted above.

In the course of this chapter, I propose to trace the history of the major midrashic themes in the Yashar story, and to enquire into the motives, exegetical or doctrinal, which originally prompted interpreters to develop, and even to supplement, the biblical narrative.

The first fifty years of Abraham's life according to Sefer ha-Yashar.

1) Terah, the son of Nahor, the commander of Nimrod's army, was very great in the eyes of the king and his servants. The king and the princes loved him, and greatly exalted him. Terah took a wife whose name was Amitlai, the daughter of Karnabo. Terah's wife conceived and brought forth a son in those days. Terah was seventy years old when he begot him. He called the name of his new-born son Abram, saying that the king had raised him up in those days, and had exalted him above all the princes, his colleagues.

It came to pass on the night of the birth of Abram that all Terah's servants, and all the sages of Nimrod, and all his magicians, came to Terah's house, and ate and drank there, and rejoiced with him that night. And it came to pass that when they left the house of Terah the sages and magicians lifted up their eyes towards the heavens that night, towards the stars. They saw a great star come from the east and run through the heavens, and it swallowed forty stars from the four sides of the heavens. All the sages of the king, and all the magicians were afraid because of this vision, and the sages understood the thing, and knew that it concerned the child. They said one to another: This is nothing but the child, born this night to Terah, who shall grow and flourish and multiply, and shall inherit for himself and his sons the whole earth forever. He, and his descendants also, shall kill great kings, and they shall inherit their lands.

All the sages and magicians went and returned home that night, and the next morning they all rose up and gathered in their assembly room. They (spoke and) said one to another: Behold, the vision which we saw last night is hidden from the king, and is not known to him. Should this thing become known to him later, he will say to us, Why have you hidden it from me? He will command us all to be killed. Let

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2 The midrashic process will be analysed in due course.
3 The translation of the entire text, with its many digressions, seems unnecessary. The omitted passages are summarized in brackets. The original is to be found in Goldschmidt's edition, pp. 24-45.
us go now and tell the king of the vision, and the interpretation of the things, and we shall be cleared.

So they did. They all departed, and went to the king, and bowed down to the ground before him and said: Long live the king! Long live the king! We heard that a son was born to Terah, the son of Nahor, the commander of your army. Therefore we went last night to his house; we ate bread, and drank and rejoiced with him. And it came to pass that when your servants had left the house of Terah to go home, to pass the night in their own houses and lodgings, we lifted up our eyes towards the heavens, and looked, and behold a great star came forth from the east. This star moved very fast, and swallowed forty great stars from the four sides of the heavens. Your servants were astonished by this vision which they saw, and were greatly confused. We considered this vision, and in our wisdom we knew its true interpretation. This thing concerns, indeed, the son born to Terah, who shall grow and increase in wealth and property. He shall kill all the kings of the earth, and inherit their lands for himself, his sons, and his descendants forever. Now, O king, our lord, we tell you truthfully what we have seen concerning this child. Should it seem good to the king to give the price of the child to his father, we will kill him before he grows and multiplies on the earth, and before his evil increases upon us in the land, and before we all, as also our sons and our descendants, are destroyed by his evil.

The king listened to these words, and they seemed good in his eyes. He sent to Terah and called him, and Terah came before the king. The king said to him: I have been told that a son was born to you yesterday, and that at his birth such and such things were seen in the heavens. Now give that child to me so that they may kill him before his evil increases upon us, and I will give you his price and fill your house with silver and gold. Terah answered the king saying: I have heard your words, O king, my lord. Whatever is the pleasure of the king, my lord, his servant shall do it.

(Here follows a parable explaining the wickedness of the king's demand).

Terah saw that the wrath of the king was kindled against him. Therefore he replied saying: Behold, all that I have is in the king's hands.

(A delay of three days was granted to Terah so that he might speak to his household. On the third day he sent to the king the son of one of his concubines, born on the same day as Abraham, and he received his price. This child was killed in the place of Abraham.)

The Lord was with Terah in this affair that Nimrod might not kill Abram. Terah took Abram, his son, secretly, and his mother, and his wet-nurse, and brought them to a cave, and every month he gave
them their provisions. The Lord was with Abram in the cave. He grew, and lived there ten years, and the king, and all his princes and servants, all the magicians and sages of the king, imagined that Abram was slain.

2. (In the meantime Haran, Abraham's brother, married. Sarai, his third child and second daughter, was ten years younger than Abraham.)

3) In those days, when the king and his servants had forgotten the affair of Abram, he, and his mother, and his nurse, departed from the cave. And when they had departed from the cave, Abram went to Noah, and to Shem, his son, and he stayed with them in their house to learn the discipline of the Lord and His ways; and no man recognized him. He spent thirty-nine years in the house of Noah. Abram knew the Lord from the age of three years, and he walked in the ways of the Lord until he died, according to the teaching which he had received from Noah and Shem his son.

4) All the children of the earth sinned greatly against the Lord in those days, and rebelled against Him. They served other gods, and forgot the Lord who had created them upon the earth. All the children of the land made for themselves their own gods in those days, gods of wood and stone which could neither hear nor speak nor save. And the sons of men served them, and they were their gods. The king and his servants, Terah and his house, were the first among the servants of wood and stone in those days.

(Terah had twelve great idols and he served one each month. He made offerings and sacrifice, and so did all the people. Apart from Noah and his household, none knew the Lord.)

Abram, the son of Terah, grew in Noah's house in those days. No man knew of it, and the Lord was with him. He gave to him an attentive heart, and understanding, and he knew that all the works of that generation were vain, and that all the gods which they served were vain and useless.

5) Abram saw the sun above the earth and said in his heart: Now the sun which shines over the whole earth is God, and I will serve it. Abram served the sun that day, and prayed to it. When evening came, and the sun disappeared as always, Abram said in his heart: Well now, this cannot be God!

Again Abram said in his heart: Who is He that made the heavens and the earth, and created all mankind upon the earth? Where is He?...

Abram saw the moon, and the stars around it.

(He thought they must be God and His servants; then the sun rose once more.)

Abram saw all the things which the Lord God had made in the world and said in his heart: These are not the Deity which made all the earth, and all mankind, but the servants of God.
(Here follows the account of the building of the town and of the tower of Babel in the days of Nimrod, the dispersion and census of the peoples, and the story of the war of Kedorlaomer.)

6) In his fiftieth year, Abram the son of Terah left the house of Noah, and returned to the house of his father.

(Terah was still the commander of the army, and a worshipper of idols. Very angry, Abraham vowed to destroy all the statues within three days.)

Abram asked his father, saying: Tell me, my father, where is the God that created the heavens and the earth, and all the children of men upon the earth, and you and me upon the earth?

Terah replied to Abram his son, saying: Behold, he who created all this is with us in the house.

Abram said to his father: Please, my lord, show them to me.

(Terah showed his gods, and worshipped them. Abraham asked his mother twice to prepare a meal for his father's gods. He brought it to the sanctuary, but they did not eat. He became angry and quoting a Psalm, declared the idols to be vain.)

He hastened, and took a mattock in his hand, and went into the room towards the gods of his father, and he broke all the idols of his father. And when he had broken them, he placed the mattock in the hand of the greatest of the gods there, and he left.

Terah, his father, came to his house, and heard the noise of the mattock in the room of the idols. He ran to this room towards the idols, and found Abram, his son, leaving. Terah entered the room, and found all the idols fallen down and broken, and the mattock in the hand of the greatest among them which was not broken, and the meal which Abram his son had made was still before them. Terah saw this, and his anger was greatly kindled, and he went out hastily from the room to Abram.

He found him still sitting in the house, and said to him: What is this thing which you have done to all my gods?

Abram answered: Nothing at all, my lord; for I only brought a meal to them. And when I placed the meal near them, they stretched out their hands to eat before the greatest among them stretched out his hand to eat. The great one saw what they did, and his wrath was much kindled against them. He went and took the mattock which is in the house, and approached them, and broke them all. And behold, the mattock is still in his hand, as you can see.

Terah's anger was kindled against his son Abram when he spoke these words, and he said to Abram his son in his wrath: What is this word which you have spoken? You lie to me. Is there spirit and soul in these gods, and power to do what you say? Are they not wood and
stone? It is I who made them. Why do you lie to me saying that the greatest god among them struck them when you yourself placed the mattock in its hand; yet you say he struck them all?

Abram answered his father, saying: Why do you make these idols, in which there is no power to do anything? Will these idols save you, in which you put your trust? Will they hear your prayer when you cry to them?

(There follows a long rebuke and an admonition to abandon idolatry. Abraham destroyed the last remaining idols in the sight of his father, and Terah hurried off to the king to complain to him of Abraham.)

The king sent three of his servants. They went, and brought Abram before the king. Nimrod, and all his princes and servants sat that day, and Terah sat before them. The king said to Abram: What have you done to your father and to all his gods?

(Abraham repeated his story about the largest idol having destroyed the others. When the king expressed his doubts as to the ability of a statue to do such a thing, he accused Nimrod of knowingly deceiving and corrupting the people, and exhorted him to alter his ways so as to escape a dishonourable death. The king sent Abraham to prison, and he remained there for ten days.)

And it came to pass at the end of these days that the king called all his princes together, and all the princes of the provinces, and the sages.

(Nimrod told them what Abraham had done, and what he had said to him, and how he cursed the king.)

They all answered the king, saying: A man who has cursed the king should be hanged upon a tree. But since he did all the things of which he spoke, and despised our gods, he should be burnt with fire; for such is the judgment concerning this case. If it should seem good in the eyes of the king to do this thing, let him send his servants, and they will light your brick kiln for three days, day and night, and then we will throw this man into it.

(The king gave this command. All the population gathered around the furnace to see Abraham. The women and children went up to the roofs of the houses and to the towers.)

7) And it came to pass that when Abram arrived, the magicians of the king and the sages saw him, and they cried to the king saying: O king, our Lord! Is not this the man whom we know to be the child whose great star swallowed forty stars at his birth, as we told the king fifty years ago?
(To the king’s question, Terah confessed that he gave him the son of one of his concubines to be put to death in the place of Abraham. Nimrod promised to spare his life if he would tell him the name of his counsellor. Terah falsely denounced his son Haran. Thereupon the king decided to burn Haran with Abraham. Meanwhile, Haran hesitated whether he should follow Abraham; he final decision would depend on the issue of his brother’s ordeal. But unexpectedly he was arrested, and both the brothers were bound and thrown into the furnace.)

8) The Lord was merciful to Abram. He came down and He saved him from the fire, and he was not burnt. All the ropes with which they bound him were burnt, but Abram was spared, and he walked in the midst of the fire. But Haran died after they had thrown him into the fire. He burnt, and was turned to ashes, for his heart was not perfect with the Lord. A flame sprang up also against the men who threw them into the fire, and they all burned in the fire, and about twelve men died from among them.

Abram walked in the midst of the fire for three days and three nights.

9) (This was announced to the king. At first, he did not believe it, but finally he saw it for himself, and commanded that Abraham should be taken out. But no one dared approach the furnace. Then the king threatened to kill them unless they extracted Abraham. As a result of the new attempt another eight men died. Finally, the king ordered Abraham to come out, and he left the kiln safe and sound. To the king’s question, he explained that the God of heaven and earth, in whom he put his trust, had saved him from the fire.)

The king, and the princes, and all the inhabitants of the land saw that Abram had been saved from the fire, and they came and bowed down before him.

(He exhorted them to worship the everlasting God who delivers those who trust in Him. Nimrod presented Abraham with many gifts, and two servants, Oni and Eliezer, and all the princes gave him presents also. Three hundred men from among the servants of the king attached themselves to Abraham.)

10) (Three years later, Nimrod dreamt that Abraham threatened the king and his people. One of his counsellors advised him to get rid of Abraham. Informed of this by Eliezer, who was present at the council, Abraham again fled to Noah and hid there. Terah visited him, and was encouraged by his son to flee with him to the land of Canaan. Abraham also exhorted his father not to attach himself to the vanity of honour and wealth. Terah listened to Abraham’s advice, and to-
gether with Lot and Sarai, they left Ur of the Chaldees, i.e. Babel, and set out for Canaan by way of Haran.)

11) The people of the land of Haran saw that Abram was good and just towards God and man, and that the Lord was with him. Men from among the inhabitants of the land of Haran came to him, and attached themselves to him, and he taught them the discipline of the Lord and His ways. These men stayed with Abram in his house and attached themselves to him. Abram lived three years in Haran.

The literary components of the Yashar story may be summarized as follows:

1) It opens with a reference to the parents of Abraham, and goes on to give a detailed report of the vision of the Chaldean magicians which followed Abraham's birth, and which was interpreted as ominous for the king and the inhabitants of the country. They advise the king to put the child to death, but Terah foils the king's plan by replacing his legitimate son by the son of a concubine.

2) While Abraham is in hiding, Haran, his elder brother, marries. Haran's second daughter is Sarai, Abraham's future wife.

3) Abraham spends the next thirty-nine years of his life with Noah and Shem, learning the knowledge and service of God.

4) During the same period, idolatry makes its appearance and spreads among the peoples. It is strongly propagated by the king and his nobles, including Terah.

5) In contradiction to section (3), which describes Abraham as knowing God from his childhood, it is now stated that his discovery of the true religion followed his experience of the uselessness of worshipping the heavenly bodies.

6) When he returns to his father's house, Abraham immediately declares war against idolatry and destroys his father's gods. Denounced to the king, he remains faithful to his belief and rebukes the monarch. On the advice of the magicians, he is condemned to be thrown into the fire of a brick kiln.

7) The magicians identify Abraham as the child whom they had thought dead, and Terah only escapes disfavour and chastisement by laying the responsibility on his son Haran and offering him as a scapegoat.

8) Abraham is miraculously saved from the fire, but Haran dies in the furnace.

9) The king and all his people are forced to recognize that Abraham's god is the only true God.
10) Obliged once more to flee from the king to Noah, Abraham persuades his father to emigrate to Canaan so that the whole family may live in security.

11) On their way to Canaan they halt in the land of Haran, and during the three years which he spends there Abraham devotes himself to preaching faith in God.

It will facilitate the study of the history of the various exegetical sections, to group them into five major themes:

i. The kinship of Abraham and Sarah (section 2).
ii. Abraham’s knowledge of God (sections 3, 4, 5).
iii. Abraham’s fight against idolatry (section 6).
iv. Abraham in the fiery furnace (sections 8, 9, 10, 11).
v. The infancy story of Abraham (sections 1, 7).

i. The kinship of Abraham and Sarah

Whereas Genesis xii. 13 introduces Sarah as the sister of Abraham, the daughter of his father (xx. 12), in Yashar she is Abraham’s niece. This appears to be the traditional belief. In Ps.-Jonathan on Genesis xi. 29, we read:

The name of Abraham’s wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor’s wife was Milkah, the daughter of Haran, who was the father of Milkah, and father of Iskak, who is Sarai.¹

Ancient as it is (it appears in Josephus),² this exegesis is not the only one to be found in Jewish writings. According to the same Ps.-Jonathan on Genesis xx. 12, Sarah is Abraham’s first cousin, the daughter of his paternal uncle. Jubilees xii. 9 follows Genesis and describes her as Abraham’s sister.

These variations are due to doctrinal preoccupations. The redactor of Genesis desired, above all, to show that Abraham did not lie when he introduced Sarah as his sister when he was in danger of his life in Egypt. But later commentators had to contend with a legal difficulty. Since Leviticus xviii. 9 and xx. 17 forbids marriage between brother and sister, it seemed scandalous to them that the father of the Chosen People should have disobeyed a divine law. Therefore the word “sister” was broadened to include “niece”. Although the corresponding nephew-aunt relationship was forbidden in marriage,³ the uncle-niece

¹ TJ, like Yashar, identifies Sarah with Haran’s younger daughter.
² JA, i, vi. 5, § 151. Here Sarah seems to be Haran’s elder daughter.
³ Cf. Lev. xviii. 13. It is interesting to note that DD, v. 7-11 states that marriage between uncle and niece is equally forbidden. See Discovery ..., p. 163. Similar opposition seems to have been expressed by other Jewish groups. Cf. Ch. Rabin,
degree of kinship was not explicitly prohibited. It may be that Ps.-Jonathan's interpretation of Genesis xx. 12, that Sarah was Abraham's cousin, was an attempt to satisfy everyone. Whether this is correct or not, the Yashar exegesis is at least as old as the first century AD.

ii. Abraham's knowledge of God

Sections 3, 4, and 5, describe Abraham's initiation into the monotheistic faith. According to Yashar, shortly before the time of Abraham the whole world turned to the worship of idols with the exception of Noah and his household. This apostasy from the worship of the one true God was followed by the arrogant attempt to build the city and tower of Babel.

Yashar is not alone in tracing the beginnings of idolatry to this period. Josephus, in a general statement, writes that polytheism was universal during the lifetime of the Patriarch.\(^1\) Jubilees, on the other hand, records that the fabrication of molten and graven images started during the life of Serug, Abraham's great-grandfather, and that Abraham's grandfather was taught astrology.\(^2\)

Genesis xi gives no indications of this kind. The building of the tower of Babel is presented there as a revolt against God, but no idolatry is mentioned. Nevertheless, to judge from the evidence of the Palestinian Targums, that enterprise was definitely thought to have been inspired by idolatrous worship.

Gen. xi. 4

Then they said: Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower, with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.

1\(^T\)J

They said: Come, let us build for ourselves a city and a tower, whose top will come near to the heavens, and let us make for ourselves an idol\(^3\) on its summit, and put a sword in its hand, that it may fight against the armies before we are scattered over the surface of the earth.


\(^1\) Cf. J.A, I, vii. 1, § 155.

\(^2\) According to LAB, iv. 16, astrology began during the lifetime of Serug, but neither he nor his sons practised it.

\(^3\) The term employed is "נֶפּוֹלָה", literally "idol worship", but the following sentence clearly shows that it is to be understood as "idol". 2\(^T\)J gives "נֶפּוֹלָה תְּרֵך", but this is obviously wrong because of the mention of a sword in "its" hand. The tradition itself must have been founded on a reminiscence of the structure of Mesopotam-
in the biblical text, is interpreted “idol”, and this rendering is explicitly confirmed by Genesis Rabbah xxxviii. 8:

means nothing but an idol.1

The antiquity of the interpretation is corroborated by Ps.-PHILO; indeed, LAB, vi. 2-4 is incomprehensible unless “nomina nostra” is taken to mean “our gods”.

Et dixerunt unusquisque ad proximum suum: Accipiamus lapides et scribamus singuli quique nomina nostra in lapidibus et incendamus eos igne... Et accepterunt singuli quique lapides suos, extra viros duodecim, qui noluerunt accipere... Et comprehendit eos populus terre et adduxerunt eos ad principes suos, et dixerunt: Hi sunt viri qui transgressi sunt consilia nostra et nolunt ambulare in viis nostris. Et dixerunt ad eos duces: Quare noluitis mittere singuli quique lapides cum populo terre. Et illi responderunt dicentes: Non mittimus vobiscum lapides, nec coniungimus voluptati vestrae. Unum Dominum novimus, et ipsum adoramus.

As regards that particular form of apostasy from the Creator of the world represented by the worship of the stars and astrology, its practice in Mesopotamia in ancient times is unanimously attested in both Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism, as well as in classical literature. As dictionaries clearly show, astrology was called the “Chaldean science” and a “Chaldean” was an astrologer.

Again, Yashar follows an old midrashic tradition which can be traced back to the first century AD in ascribing to Nimrod the principal onus for the general abandonment of true religion.2 In Ps.-PHILO too, he appears as the chief persecutor of the opponents of idolatry.3

Terah’s adherence to idol worship is also a prominent feature of common tradition based on Joshua xxiv. 2. It is interesting to note that Ps.-PHILO (vi. 3) does not include his name among the twelve men who refused to abandon God.

mian temple towers, ziggurat, with the god’s shrine and statue on the uppermost floor.

1 Cf. also Sanb. 190a. In the post-biblical period, “name” was a substitution for “God”. In the mind of the targumists and of the Tannaitic schools, therefore, “Let us make a name for ourselves” signified “Let us make a god for ourselves”.

2 This is based on a reinterpretation of Gen. x. 9: “He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore it is said, like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord”. In the Palestinian Targums, “hunter” is interpreted “rebel” or “sinner”, and Gen. R., xxxvii. 2 also understands “hunter“ metaphorically: ”He snared the people by their words“. JOSEPHUS (J.A 1, iv. 2, §§ 113-114) represents Nimrod as the first atheist.

3 Cf. LAB, vii. 14. See also iv. 7.
Against this general religious background, the author of Sefer ha-
Yashar obviously felt that the phenomenon of Abraham's monotheism
needed some explanation. These he provides, but with some striking
discrepancies. Nor is any attempt made to harmonize the three con-
tradictory statements, viz., that Abraham was introduced to the
knowledge of God at the age of three; that he was taught the know-
ledge of God and His ways in the house of Noah where he arrived
when he was ten years old; and that he began by worshipping the sun
and the moon, but was dissatisfied, and came to the conclusion that
both were created objects.

Abram saw all the things which the Lord God had made in the world,
and said in his heart: These are not the Deity which made all the earth
and all mankind, but the servants of God.

These three points spring from two distinct currents of traditional
belief. Abraham was either a worshipper of the true God from the
beginning; or he was a convert.

As a matter of fact, the assumption that Abraham came to the
knowledge of God when he was three years old appears to be the
most recent interpretation. It is transmitted in the name of Simeon ben
Lakish, an Amora of the second generation, in the third century AD.
By means of *gematria* he understood "Because Abraham hearkened to
my voice" (Gen. xxvi. 5) to mean that the Patriarch knew God for
one hundred and seventy two years, since 172 is the numerical value of
יִתְנָה, "because". Abraham died when he was one hundred and seventy
five years old, so this does indeed imply that he arrived at his know-
ledge at the age of three.¹ It also implies that he received it from
within the family circle.

To the same current of belief belongs the story of Abraham's
religious education in the house of Noah and Shem. Notwithstanding
the absence of direct parallels in Jewish writings, it appears to result
from the tradition that true religion was preserved, and transmitted,
by a few faithful men even during those sinful times. Ps.-PHILO, for
instance, writes of the families of Serug and Joktan that they continued
to serve God even after the apostasy of the masses.² He writes that
when Abraham refused to associate with idol-worshippers, he was
followed by eleven companions, five of whom were the sons of

¹ Cf. Gen. R., xcv. 3; Song R., v. 16, § 1. This exegesis may, of course, be an
try to provide a tradition received by Simeon b. Lakish with scriptural evi-
dence.
² Cf. LAB, iv. 6; vi. 6.
Joktan. It is also worth mentioning here that according to R. Berekiah, an Amora of the fourth century, Abraham sent Isaac to Shem in order to study the Torah, which would imply that the Patriarch owed his own knowledge of God to the same "school".

By contrast to this tradition crediting Abraham with belief in God from the beginning, the greater number of sources represent him as a convert. In the Book of Jubilees, his early idolatry, though taken for granted, is glossed over, and the emphasis is laid on his discovery of God.

And the child began to understand the errors of the earth, that all went astray after graven images, and after uncleanness; and his father taught him writing. And he was two weeks of years old, and he separated himself from his father that he might not worship idols with him. And he began to pray to the Creator of all things that he might save him from the errors of the children of men, and that his portion should not fall into error after uncleanness and vileness.

JOSEPHUS attributes Abraham’s conversion to his great intelligence:

He was a man of ready intelligence in all matters... Hence he began to have more lofty conceptions of virtue than the rest of mankind, and determined to reform and change the ideas universally current concerning God. He was thus the first boldly to declare that God, creator of the universe, is one.

Yashar’s assertion that Abraham adhered to astral worship before his discovery of God also has its parallels, but it was an idea so scandalous to pious Jews that there was a definite effort to minimise it. Nevertheless, he is known in all sections of Judaism as an astrologer.

For PHILo, Abraham’s conversion from astrology to faith in the God-Creator symbolizes the passage of man’s mind from the visible to the invisible order. The Patriarch’s adherence to astrology, considered by this writer as being strictly opposed to monotheism, is thought by him to have resulted from Abraham’s upbringing within an idolatrous environment. It is this basic assumption, not its allegorical development, which concerns the present enquiry.

The migrations as set forth by the literal text of the scriptures are made by a man of wisdom, but according to the laws of allegory by a virtue-loving soul in its search for the true God. For the Chaldeans

1 Cf. LAB, vi. 3; xxiii. 5.
2 Cf. Gen. R., lvi. 11. See also 1 T J on Gen. xxii. 19, where angels are supposed to have brought Isaac to the school of Shem.
3 Jub., xi. 16-17.
were especially active in the elaboration of astrology and ascribed everything to the movements of the stars. They supposed that the course of the phenomena of the world is guided by influences contained in numbers and numerical proportions. Thus they glorified visible existence, leaving out of consideration the intelligible and invisible. But while exploring numerical order as applied to the revolution of the sun, moon and other planets and fixed stars, and the changes of the yearly seasons and the interdependence of phenomena in heaven and on earth, they concluded that the world itself was God, thus profanely likening the created to the Creator. In this creed Abraham had been reared, and for a long time remained a Chaldean. Then opening the soul’s eye as though after profound sleep, and beginning to see the pure beam instead of the deep darkness, he followed the ray, and discerned what he had not beheld before, a charioteer and pilot presiding over the world and directing in safety his own work... And so to establish more firmly in his understanding the sight which had been revealed to him, the Holy Word follows it up by saying to him, “Friend ... Dismiss, then, the rangers of the heavens and the science of Chaldea, and depart for a short time from the greatest of cities, this world, to the lesser, and thus you will be better able to apprehend the overseer of the All.”

Furthermore, PHILO thinks the change of name from Abram to Abraham to be “a change of great importance”.²

The former signified one called astrologer and meteorologist, one one who takes care of the Chaldean tenets as a father would of his children: the latter signified a sage.³

While PHILO, like Yashar, distinguishes astrology from true religion, the Palestinian Jews are, on the whole, less severe. They never encourage astrology, but neither do they consider it a denial of belief in God. They do nothing to suppress the tradition that Abraham was an expert astrologer, but merely regard his activities in this sphere as slightly doubtful. On the other hand, the Jewish Hellenists support the Patriarch wholeheartedly, and find his astrological prowess splendid and praiseworthy.

The views of the Hellenistic writers are known through ALEXANDER POLYHISTOR’s book, Ἱστορία Ἰουδαίων. This was compiled in the first half of the first century BC, and important extracts from it are incorporated into the ninth book of the Preparatio Evangelica of EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA. The author cites EUPOLEMUS and ARTAPANUS as honouring Abraham for the invention of astrology and the teaching of this science to the Phoenicians and Egyptians.

¹ Cf. De Abrahamo, xv, §§ 68-71.
² Ibid., xviii, § 81.
³ Ibid., §§ 82-83.
Eupolemus says that Abraham was born in Camarina, a city of Babylon, called by some Uria, and by the Greeks, Chaldeopolis. He surpassed all in nobility and wisdom. He also invented astrology and the Chaldean science, and by his pursuit of piety he pleased God. After transferring his domicile to Phoenicia by Divine command, he taught the Phoenicians the movements of the sun, and the moon, and all things of this kind, so that their king was very pleased.¹

Artapanus writes that Abraham went together with his whole family, to Pharethon, king of the Egyptians, and taught him astrology.²

Finally, Josephus quotes Berosus as evidence of Abraham's fame among the Gentiles:

Berosus mentions our father Abraham without naming him, in these terms: In the tenth generation after the Flood, there lived among the Chaldeans a just man and great, and versed in celestial lore.³

A critical attitude towards astrology first appears in the Book of Jubilees. Its author, who doubtless held the same opinion as the writer of the Book of Enoch concerning the ungodly origin of the science of the stars,⁴ hesitates even to consider Abraham as an astrologer proper, but as what is nowadays known as a meteorologist. But even so, astrology and meteorology were so inseparable in antiquity that Jubilees is able to rebuke Abraham for his attempt to forecast the weather.

Abraham sat up throughout the night of the new moon of the seventh month⁵ to observe the stars from the evening to the morning, in order to see what would be the character of the year with regard to the rains; and he was alone as he sat and observed. And a word came into his heart, and he said: All the signs of the stars, and the signs of the moon, and of the sun, are all in the hand of the Lord. Why do I search them out? If He desires, He causes it to rain morning and evening; and if He desires, he withholds it, and all things are in His hand.⁶

The source of the midrashic tradition concerning Abraham's interest in the stars is Genesis xv. Verse 3 is interpreted by Genesis Rabbah xlv. 10, as follows:

¹ Cf. Praep. En., ix. 17, 3-4. This text is ascribed not to Eupolemus but to an anonymous second century BC writer by F. Jacoby, in Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker, Dritter Teil, C, No 724, Leiden, 1958, p. 678.
² Cf. ibid., ix. 18, 1. Artapanus also refers to books of unknown authorship as containing the same assertion.
³ Jā, i, vii. 2, § 158. Cf. also I, viii. 2. §§ 166-168: Abraham taught arithmetic and knowledge of the stars to the Egyptians.
⁴ Cf. En., viii. 3.
⁵ i.e. the Jewish New Year.
⁶ Jub., xii. 16-18.
Abraham said: My astral fate oppresses me because it declares that Abraham cannot beget a son.

Again, in Exodus Rabbah xxxviii. 6, God answers Abraham’s complaint about his childlessness:

So you are afraid of the planets? As certainly as you live, it will be as impossible to count your descendants as it is to number the stars in heaven.

With regard to Genesis xv. 5, “Look now towards the heavens”, the Rabbis find it necessary to specify that Abraham was commanded to do so as a prophet, and not as an astrologer, because in the language of the Midrash the phrase “to look into the heavens” implies the practice of astrology.

The Torah cannot be found among astrologers, whose work is to look into the heavens.¹

It is apparent from this historical survey that both explanations given in Sefer ha-Yashar concerning the origin of Abraham’s monotheism are based on old traditions. Ps.-PHILO indicates his belief in the Patriarch’s continuous adherence to God from his childhood, and Jubilees, PHILO, and JOSEPHUS, testify to his conversion. This conversion caused him to abandon either idolatry (Jubilees), or astrology (PHILO), and of the two alternatives, PHILO’s exposition appears to be representative of the most ancient tradition. Indeed, even those writers to refuse to record it plainly, feel nevertheless obliged to mention the Patriarch’s sympathy for astrology, not only before, but also after his conversion. The Hellenists even go so far as to honour Abraham for the invention of astrology, with the intention of convincing the Gentiles that the benefits of this much appreciated “science” were due to a Jew.² Eventually, however, doctrinal reaction against astrology led to the elimination of the story of Abraham’s conversion.

This change in doctrinal attitude may, therefore, be partly responsible for the exegetical variations, but a real and adequate understanding of the discrepancies is impossible without sufficient knowledge of their origin. In fact, the question of doctrinal option for or against astrology is preceded by a purely exegetical problem; namely, whether

¹ Cf. Deut. R., viii. 6.
² For the same reason, Eupolemus and Artapanus present Moses as the greatest inventor of all time. According to them, he was the inventor of the alphabetic script adopted by the Phoenicians and the Greeks (Eupolemus), and of the Egyptians hieroglyphs, philosophy, etc., (Artapanus). Cf. Praep. Ev., ix. 26. 1 and 29.
4. See also my La figure de Moïse..., pp. 68-69.
Abraham was, or was not, a convert. As biblical scholars have already noted,\(^1\) when, in Genesis xii, God first addresses the Patriarch, Abraham appears already to know Him. This previous knowledge of God may derive from tradition or discovery, or from a special divine revelation. The latter is never envisaged, doubtless on the assumption that such an event would have been recorded in Scripture. The remaining alternative depends on whether Joshua xxiv. 2 is, or is not, taken into account. If it is accepted, the ground is prepared for the haggadah on Abraham’s conversion. If it is ignored, the theory of a traditional transmission of the true religion is adopted instead.

Such appears to be the history and prehistory of the exegetical traditions relating to Abraham’s knowledge of God. So far as their prehistory is concerned, the foremost result of this analysis has been the discovery of the chief preoccupation of the Midrash. Before any other consideration, homiletical or doctrinal, the task of the interpreter was to solve problems raised by the Bible itself.

iii. Abraham’s fight against idolatry

Yashar presents Abraham as the first and most resolute opponent of the worship of “other gods”. His zeal for the Lord was manifested by the destruction of his father’s statues, and by his polemics against idolatry addressed to both Terah\(^2\) and Nimrod.

Terah’s religious attitude is, in the eyes of the author, thoroughly incoherent. On the one hand, he seems to believe that one of his idols is the Creator of the world: “Behold he who created all this is with us in the house”. On the other, he is well aware that these same statues have no power whatsoever: “Are there spirit and soul in these gods...? Are they not wood and stone? It is I who made them”. The inference is that Terah’s beliefs must be based either on stupidity or, which is worse, bad faith.

In this judgment of idolatry, Yashar, in fact, reflects the common Jewish attitude. From biblical times it was held that only fools could imagine God to be a wooden or stone image;\(^3\) perhaps this would explain why idolatry was rarely imputed, as in the Apocalypse of

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\(^2\) According to Jub., xii. 8, Abraham also admonished his two brothers, but they did not listen to him.

\(^3\) The idea that such images should be merely symbols seems never to have occurred to Jewish teachers.
Abraham,\(^1\) to stupidity alone. Usually, other motives were added, such as self-interest, or fear.\(^2\) In Terah’s case, midrashic literature suggests the first motive by introducing Terah as a maker and merchant of idols.\(^3\) Though well aware that the work of his hands was not God, it was obviously of vital importance to him, as also to the priests engaged in idol worship, to defend and maintain their religion most vigorously.\(^4\) The author of Jubilees, conscious of the part played by fear in the apostasy of the Jews during the time of the Hellenistic crisis, imputes this emotion to Terah. Admonished by his son to abandon idolatry, which is vain and useless, he declares: “I also know it my son, but what shall I do with a people who have made me to serve before them? And if I tell them the truth, they will slay me, for their soul cleaves to them to worship them and honour them. Keep silent my son, lest they slay you.”\(^5\)

The story of the destruction of Terah’s idols is borrowed by Yashar from a haggadah figuring also in Genesis Rabbah xxxviii. 19, but the tradition itself must have originated in the second century BC since it is found already in Jubilees:

And in the sixtieth year of the life of Abraham... Abraham arose by night and burned all that was in the house.\(^6\)

Yashar’s presentation of Abraham’s polemics against idolatry follows the popular traditional pattern described above. A more subtle refutation by Abraham of a particular form of “idolatry”, viz. philosophical pantheism, appears only in the works of Philo and Josephus.

It should be remembered that in the Hellenistic world, and especially in Stoic circles, there was widespread belief in the divine character of the universe; no distinction was made between God and creation. It was held to be one living Being moved by a divine Logos, or anima mundi,\(^7\) specially present in the stars. The Stoic sage was full of admiration for its beauty and harmony, and desired above all to conform to the will of the World-God.

By means of a patent anachronism, both Philo and Josephus depict

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4 Cf. *Acts* xix. 23 f.
5 *Jub.*, xii. 6-8.
6 *Jub.*, xii. 12.
Abraham as a convert from this philosophy. Philo describes him as the first man to have discarded astral determinism and, from a consideration of the harmony of the universe, to have reached a belief in the existence of a transcendent Organiser, a God-Creator. Discovering this, he ceased to be an astrologer.¹

Josephus, in his turn, ascribes to Abraham an argument against the divinity of the universe based on the absence of harmony in the world and the observable irregularity of the movements of the stars:

He was the first boldly to declare that God, the Creator of the universe, is one, in that, if any other being contributed aught to man’s welfare, each did so by His command and not in virtue of its own inherent power. This he inferred from the changes to which land and sea are subject, from the course of the sun and the moon and from all the celestial phenomena; for, he argued, were these bodies endowed with power, they would have provided for their own regularity, but, since they lack this last, it was manifest that even those services in which they cooperate for our greater benefit they render not in virtue of their own authority, but through the might of their commanding sovereign, to whom alone it is right to render homage and thanksgiving.²

Finally it must be said that, whatever their other divergencies, both branches of Jewish tradition, the popular as represented by Sefer ha-Yashar, and the philosophical, agree in this: namely, that Abraham battled against idolatry, and that his fight was a solitary one exposing him to considerable danger.

iv. Abraham in the fiery furnace

Because of his opposition to idolatry Abraham was condemned to be cast into the fire of a brick kiln, but was miraculously delivered by God. The bulk of this Yashar story of Abraham’s ordeal, and also of the death of Haran in the flames, is common tradition in Rabbinic literature.³ Genesis Rabbah records the dispute ending with Abraham’s death sentence as follows:

Terah seized Abraham and delivered him to Nimrod. Nimrod said: Let us worship the fire! Abraham answered: Let us rather worship the water which extinguishes the fire! Nimrod said: Then let us worship the

¹ Cf. De Abrahamo xv. § 70, quoted above p. 79. See also Festugière, op. cit., pp. 567-572.
³ Only the features connected with the Yashar legend of the birth of Abraham, viz., the intervention of the magicians and the denunciation of Haran, are without parallel.
water! Abraham replied: Let us rather worship the clouds which carry the water! Nimrod said: Then let us worship the clouds! Abraham answered: Let us rather worship the wind which disperses the clouds! Nimrod said: Then let us worship the wind! Abraham said: Let us rather worship man who stands up to the wind! Nimrod said: This is but empty argument. We worship only fire, so I will cast you into it, and may the God whom you worship come and deliver you out of it.\footnote{Gen. R., xxxviii. 13.}

The Genesis Rabbah account of the episode of the fiery furnace reads:

Haran stood there undecided. He thought: If Abraham triumphs, I will say that I am on his side; but if Nimrod triumphs, I will say that I am on his side. After Abram had descended into the fiery furnace and had been saved, Haran was asked: On whose side are you? He replied: On Abram’s side. Thereupon they seized him and cast him into the fire so that his inward parts were burnt and he died before his father.\footnote{Gen. R., \textit{ibid.} Cf. \textit{ITJ} on Gen. xi. 28. An abridged version of the legend may be found in \textit{Neofiti}: Haran died during the life of Terah his father, in his homeland, in the fiery furnace (ןוֹרָרָה) of the Chaldeans.}

The antiquity of this tradition has been questioned by R. H. Charles because of the silence of Jubilees.\footnote{Cf. \textit{The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament}, vol. ii, Oxford, 1913, p. 30.} This great scholar appears to have overlooked Ps.-\textit{Philos}’s version of the story. I give it here in its entirety,\footnote{\textit{LAB}, vi. 4-18.} despite its length, because of its great importance in the matter of dating this tradition.

Refusing to abandon God,\footnote{Cf. above, pp. 76.} Abraham and his companions have to face their accusers:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

Ps.-PHILO’s account not only demonstrates the antiquity of this tradition, but points also to the origin of the haggadah.

At first sight, the whole midrash appears to be built on popular etymology. By interpreting רָאָשׁ as “fire”, ancient commentators of Genesis xv. 7 (“I am the Lord who brought you out of רָאָשׁ of the Chaldees”) created a legend out of a pun.² Beyond this play on words, however, there are possible links between the scriptural basis cited above and other biblical passages. From among these, R. BLOCH selects Isaiah xxix. 22 and Daniel iii (the story of the three young men in the fiery furnace).³

These observations need further attention. To begin with, the exegetical association between Genesis xv. 7 and Daniel iii is not mere hypothesis, as Genesis Rabbah xlv. 13 demonstrates:

¹ The Hebrew translation of LAB, partially preserved in manuscript in the Bodleian Library (Ms. Heb. d. 11) gives for the complicated Latin just רָאָשׁ הַבָּרוֹחַ (³⁰ 25a, last line). Thus, “God of Abraham” became the name of the Patriarch’s former hiding place. According to Nicolas of Damascus, cited by JOSEPHUS in JA, I, vii. 2, § 160, “the name of Abram is still venerated in the region of Damascus, and a village is shown that is called after him Abram’s abode”.

² Cf. I. HEINEMANN, דָּרֶךְ וְדָרֶךְ, Jerusalem, 1949, p. 18.

R. Liezer b. Jacob said: Michael descended and rescued Abraham from the fiery furnace. The Rabbis said: The Holy One, blessed be He, rescued him, as it is written: "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur (i.e. the fire) of the Chaldees". When did Michael descend? In the case of Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah.

The haggadah of Abraham in the fiery furnace does not therefore originate from a verbal pun, but from the reinterpretation of one scriptural passage by another.

Further consideration of the scriptural context and of pre-Rabbinic sources brings to light another, even more primitive, motive for the creation of this haggadah. Since none is furnished by Genesis, some reason had to be found for Abraham’s migration from Chaldea to Haran. Ps.-PHILO plainly states that this was due to the fact that his life was endangered because of his religious faith. Jubilees and JOSEPHUS infer this to be the reason also, although neither of them mentions the haggadah of the fiery furnace. In Jubilees, for instance, the story of the burning of the temple of idols by Abraham is immediately followed by an account of Terah’s departure:

And in the sixtieth year of the life of Abram… Abram rose by night, and burned the house of the idols, and he burned all that was in the house, and no man knew it. And they arose in the night and sought to save their gods from the midst of the fire. And Haran hastened to save them, but the fire flamed over him and he was burnt in the fire, and he died in Ur of the Chaldees before Terah his father, and they buried him in Ur of the Chaldees. And Terah went forth from Ur of the Chaldees, he and his sons, to go into the land of Lebanon and into the land of Canaan, and he dwelt in the land of Haran.¹

JOSEPHUS writes:

It was in fact owing to these opinions (concerning God) that the Chaldeans and other peoples of Mesopotamia rose against him.²

Taking into account the biblical context as a whole, the legend of the fiery furnace establishes a definite link between the brick kiln used for the baking of the materials needed in the construction of the Tower of Babel, the deliverance of Abraham by God (Gen xv and Is. xxix), and his flight abroad. Yet here as elsewhere, the midrash has also a doctrinal purpose, namely, the exaltation of the saving virtue of faith

¹ Jub., xii. 12-15. It should be noted that the tradition of the death of Haran by fire goes back to Jubilees.
² J.A., I, vii. 1, § 157. This is an explanation for the departure of Abraham from Haran, but the Chaldeans must have been mentioned purposely. The loss of the lamented Haran is given as Terah’s motive for leaving Ur. Cf. ibid., I, vi. 5, § 152.
(Abraham versus Haran). Here Daniel iii is the main source, and in this respect Yashar follows Daniel even more closely than the other versions because, like Nabuchadnezzar, Nimrod is forced to recognize for a time the God of Israel.¹

From the point of view of dating, the terminus a quo for the legend of the fiery furnace is the Book of Daniel, and the terminus ad quem, Ps.-PHILO, i.e., roughly the period between 150 BC and 50 AD.

v. The Infancy Story of Abraham

The Yashar legend of Abraham’s birth and of his introduction to the knowledge of God in the house of Noah has no parallel either in the pseudepigrapha or in midrashic literature. Nevertheless, a thorough examination of ancient sources shows that even in his “creative” work — to be distinguished from his activities as a collector of traditions — the author either uses traditional material (Noah the teacher), or follows a traditional literary pattern (Infancy Stories).

The Noah episode demands little comment. The biblical hero of the Flood, like his Mesopotamian counterpart Utnapishtim, is known as the transmitter of antediluvian wisdom. According to Jubilees, he handed down to his sons the books of his ancestor Enoch and also his own writings.² In short, if Abraham had required a teacher,³ no better persons could have been found to initiate him into the true knowledge of God than Noah and Shem his son.⁴

Infancy stories, on the other hand, belong to a well-defined class of midrashic literature. Ancient writers were persuaded that the birth and childhood of figures prominent in the history of salvation were surrounded by miraculous signs and marvellous events such as light phenomena, dreams, etc. None of these, beyond the miraculous bird-scareing activities of his boyhood related in Jubilees,⁵ are recorded

¹ This alleged temporary conversion of Nimrod obliges the author of Yashar to invent a new plot against the life of Abraham in order to explain his exodus from Ur to Haran.
³ According to Rabbi Joshua b. Perahiah (cca 100 BC), one of the great obligations of a Jew is to have a teacher. Cf. Pirke Aboth, i. 6.
⁵ “A cloud of ravens came to devour the seed and Abram ran to meet them before they settled on the ground and cried to them... and said: Descend not. Return to the place whence you came. And they proceeded to turn back. And he caused the cloud of ravens to turn back that day seventy times, and of all the ravens throughout all the land where Abram was, there settled there not so much
concerning Abraham except in Sefer ha-Yashar, although such facts or events are mentioned in other documents with regard to Noah and Elijah, and especially to Moses and Jesus. The anduse of the Matthean infancy story is justified from the point of view of method because of its undeniable connection with the haggadah of the birth and childhood of Moses.¹

I will endeavour now to confront the principal features of the Yashar story of the birth of Abraham with parallel features in other infancy stories. These have four main themes:

1) a miraculous sign,
2) its interpretation,
3) the condemnation to death of the new-born child,
4) the deliverance of the child.

1. A miraculous sign

In writings prior to Yashar, miraculous phenomena are associated, as has been said, with the birth of Noah, Moses, Elijah and Jesus. Either the place of birth is said to have been filled with light, or a star is believed to have heralded the arrival into the world of the new elect.

The light which shone at the birth of Noah is mentioned in the Book of Enoch, and in a fragment from the first cave of Qumran. The former tells the following story:

as one. And all who were with him throughout all the land saw him cry out, and all the ravens turn back, and his name became great in all the land of the Chaldees.”


¹ For the haggadah of the birth of Moses in Jewish literature, see the present writer's La figure de Moïse..., pp. 89-90, and also R. Bloch's Quelques aspects de la figure de Moïse dans la littérature rabbinique, in Moïse..., pp. 102-118. Renée Bloch also discusses the link between this haggadah and the First Gospel (pp. 161-166), and concludes that in the first two chapters the Evangelist had the midrashic story of the birth of Moses constantly in mind with the aim of describing Jesus as the New Moses, the New Saviour of Israel, within the general expectation of a New Exodus. For P. Winter, the emphasis in this Infancy Gospel is rather on the New Law-Giver, to replace the more primitive apocalyptic conception of Jesus as the man appointed by God to judge a corrupted age. To effect this transformation, Matthew used the legends of Moses to bring into relief the concept of the Giver of the New Law. Cf. Jewish Folklore in the Matthean Birth Story, in Hibbert Journal, liii, 1954-55, pp. 34-42, especially pp. 35, 42. D. Daube's hypothesis that Jewish literature contains traces of a legendary conception independent of human agency and that the child may well have been Moses, is built on a chain of conjectures (a conjectural interpretation of the obscure Ex. ii. 25 by means of an equally obscure midrashic explanation). Cf. The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism, London, 1956, pp. 5-9.
And after some days, my son Methuselah took a wife for his son Lamech, and she became pregnant by him and bore a son (Noah). And his body was white as snow and red as the blooming of a rose... And when he opened his eyes, he lighted up the whole house like the sun, and the whole house was very bright.¹

The Dead Sea fragment reads:

He lighted the chambers of the house like the rays of the sun.²

A similar tradition is reported in Rabbinic literature of the birth of Moses:

R. Amram in the name of Rab said: Miriam prophesied, “My mother shall bear a son who shall save Israel”. And when, at the birth of Moses, the house was flooded with light, her father arose and kissed her head, saying: “My daughter, your prophecy is fulfilled”.³

As regards Elijah, the various recensions of Vitae Prophetarum⁴ recount a dream in which Sobak saw his son clothed in garments of fire and fed with flames:

Sobak, his father, saw in a vision that radiant men greeted Elijah, and enveloped him with fire, and gave him flames of fire to eat.⁵

The canonical Gospels make no mention of the new-born Jesus having lighted the place of his birth, but this Jewish theme, with only slight modifications, found its way into the second century Proto-Evangelium of James (xix. 2):

And they (Joseph and the midwife) stood in the place of the cave. And behold, a bright cloud overshadowing the cave. And the midwife said: My soul is magnified this day because my eyes have seen marvelous things; for salvation is born to Israel. And immediately the cloud

¹ Enoch cvi. 1-2.
² Cf. Barthélemy-Milik, Quumran Cave I. Oxford, 1955, p. 85, n. 3. To judge from the preserved text of Genesis Apocryphon, col. ii, the lost end of the preceding column appears to have contained the same tradition.
³ Ex. R., i. 22. Cf. Sofab 13a; Meg., 14a; etc.
⁴ Cf. Th. Schermann, Propheten- und Apostellegenden, in Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur. Leipzig, 1907, 31 Band, Heft 3. For the Jewish sources of this Christian work, see ibid., § 40: Verhältnis der vitae prophetarum zur jüdischen Literatur, pp. 118-126. The Elijah account reveals its Jewish background by ascribing to the prophet a priestly character. Thus, TJ on Num. xxv. 12, PRE, xlvi, etc., identify Elijah with the grandson of Aaron, Phinehas. Cf. L. Ginzberg, art. Elijah, in JEW. Enc., vol. v, p. 122. The same tradition is known to LAB, xlviii. 1. Cf. A. Spiro, The Ascension of Phinehas, in Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research, vol. xxii, 1953, pp. 91-114. "At the end of his earthly career... he (Phinchas) was transformed into the immortal Elijah" (p. 114).
THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

withdrew itself out of the cave, and a great light appeared in the cave, so that our eyes could not endure it. And little by little that light withdrew itself until the young child appeared.¹

Another kind of heavenly sign, the appearance of a new star announcing to astrologers the birth of a great man, is common to Yashar and to the First Gospel. Secondary divergencies in these parallel accounts do not obscure the more essential characteristics which they exhibit in common.²

2. The interpretations of the miraculous signs

The miraculous signs which, in the infancy stories, accompany the birth of great men, are deciphered for the benefit of the reigning king by wise men, and usually by professional sages, i.e., astrologers, dream-interpreters, or appointed commentators of sacred writings.³

This particular theme may be traced to the haggadah of the birth of Moses. The legend results from an attempt to explain Pharaoh’s decree that every boy born in Israel should be killed. The reason given is that he wished to put to death the one destined to deliver the nation, and of whose imminent birth he had foreknowledge. This midrashic tradition is preserved in two versions, the Palestinian haggadah (Targum and Midrash) and JOSEPHUS.

Ps.-JONATHAN on Exodus i. 15 probably gives the oldest version:

Pharaoh said that while he slept he saw a dream; and behold, the whole land of Egypt was in one scale of a balance and a lamb (שׁילוּשׁ), the little one of a ewe, was in the other scale, and the scale holding the lamb weighed down. Immediately he sent to call all the magicians of Egypt, and repeated to them his dream. Immediately Yanis and Yimbres, the chief magicians,⁴ opened their mouths and said to Pharaoh: A son (בְּנוֹ)⁵ is about to be born in the congregation of Israel, by whose hand the whole land of Egypt will be ruined.

² Thus, the star of the Magi heralds the forthcoming birth of Jesus; the star of Abraham shines in the night after he was born.
³ Sometimes the parents are told of their son’s destiny. Noah’s future is revealed by Enoch; Elijah’s, by the priests and prophets of Jerusalem; Moses’s by the prophecy of Miriam (LAB, ix. 10, Mekh., ii, p. 81), or by a dream of Amram (JA, II, ix. 3, §§ 212-216). Jesus’s destiny is foretold to Joseph by an angel in a dream (Mt. i. 20), and to Mary by Gabriel (Lk. i. 26-35).
⁴ The most comprehensive list of the numerous sources, Jewish and Christian, in which these two characters appear, is to be found in R. BLOCH, art. cit., in Moet, p. 105, n. 21.
⁵ In Palestinian Aramaic, the word שׁילוּשׁ is used for both “son” and “lamb”. Cf. the similar employment of “kid” in English. This explains why Pharaoh’s vision
With slight variations, the same midrashic theme appears in both
Yashar (astrologers) and Matthew (Magi).\(^1\)

3. The condemnation to death

The royal decree by which the future saviour is sentenced to death
is the next common feature of the infancy stories. The principal
differences lies in the fact that whereas in the Yashar legend of Abra-
ham Nimrod knew that the child to be killed was the son of Terah,
the identity of Moses and Jesus was unknown to Pharaoh and Herod.

4. The deliverance

Finally, the condemned child is saved, either by the intervention of
Providence (Moses and Jesus), or by the rather immoral stratagem
devised by Terah.

It is worth noting that the subsequent discovery of Abraham’s iden-
tity by the magicians during the episode of the fiery furnace is also
not wholly unparalleled. In the Gospel of Nicodemus, or Acts of
Pilate, Jesus is denounced to the governor as the person to whom the
Magi brought gifts and Herod sought to kill.

of a “lamb” is interpreted as “son”. This text from 1\(\text{TJ}\) has not been considered,
so far as I am aware, by those scholars who have conjectured that an Aramaic
phrase underlies the Greek δαμνὸς ἱεοῦ in \(\text{Jn.}\) i. 29. According to one of the
latest exponent of this hypothesis, J. Jeremias, “Lamb of God” derives from
שלום דוד אל which, in its turn, is the equivalent of “Servant of God”. This inter-
pretation in two phases is rendered necessary by a “factual difficulty”, viz. that the
image of a lamb symbolizing a Saviour, is unknown in Judaism. Cf. W.
Zimmerli-J. Jeremias, The Servant of God, London, 1957, pp. 82f. – It is not my
intention to discuss here this question, or the validity of the above mentioned
hypothesis. I wish only to point out that, should this explanation be fundamentally
acceptable, 1\(\text{TJ}\) on Ex. i. 15 eliminates the “factual difficulty”, since there Moses is
referred to, in his quality of Saviour, as a “Lamb”. It should also be noted that this
parallel to \(\text{Jn.}\) i. 29 may even dispense with the figure of the Servant in interpreting
“Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world”. If δαμνὸς stands for
ישראל, and δαμαρτίαν for רַשִּׁיָּה יְשֵׁבֵי לְרַחְבָּם (he who looses and for-
gives sins, cf. \(\text{TJ}\) on Ex. xxxiv. 7), the meaning of the words of John the Baptist
should be: Behold the Son of God who forgives the sin of the world.

\(^1\) Another form of the haggadah of Moses is given by Josephus and has its
parallel in the New Testament. The king (Pharaoh-Herod) is informed of the birth
of a Deliverer by the interpreters of Holy Scripture: “One of the sacred scribes –
persons with considerable skill in accurately predicting the future – announced to
the king that there would be born to the Israelites at that time one who would
abase the sovereignty of the Egyptians and exalt the Israelites, were he reared to
manhood, and would surpass all men in virtue and win everlasting renown.” JA,
II, ix. 2, § 205. – Whereas in the haggadah of Moses the two themes – magicians,
and sacred scribe – are preserved separately, in Mt. ii. 1-8 they are combined; the
Magi inform Herod of the time, and the interpreters of Scripture of the place of
the Messiah’s birth.
And he (Pilate) rose from the judgment seat and sought to go forth. And the Jews cried out, saying: We know our king, even Caesar and not Jesus. For indeed the wise men brought gifts from the east unto him as unto a king, and when Herod heard from the wise men that a king was born, he sought to slay him...¹

The structure of Sefer ha-Yashar manifests a direct continuity with the corresponding tradition of the time of the Second Temple, but reflects also the influence of the haggadah of the Tannaim and Amoraim. Moreover, even when its author creates a new story (Abraham’s infancy), he works with traditional material which he freely manipulates. The result is an excellent illustration of the organic growth of midrashic exegesis.

The present enquiry clearly shows how unwise and unscholarly it is to neglect, in the study of early Jewish exegesis, the testimony of a midrashic collection merely on the grounds of its late appearance. Sefer ha-Yashar can hardly have been written before the eleventh century AD, yet it preserves a valuable amount of pre-Tannaitic exegetical traditions.

Another important observation is that almost all the haggadic stories included in Yashar are intended as an answer to real exegetical questions. Doubtless the nature of the solutions they offer differ from that of modern critical exegesis, but the actual problems are very often identical.

Finally, this examination of the Yashar story fully illustrates what is meant by the term “rewritten Bible”. In order to anticipate questions, and to solve problems in advance, the midrashist inserts haggadic development into the biblical narrative – an exegetical process which is probably as ancient as scriptural interpretation itself. The Palestinian Targum and Jewish Antiquities, Ps.-PHILO and Jubilees, and the recently discovered “Genesis Apocryphon” (the subject of the following chapter), each in their own way show how the Bible was rewritten about a millenium before the redaction of Sefer ha-Yashar.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM (2)

HAGGADIC DEVELOPMENT: A PROGRESSIVE HISTORICAL STUDY

The relatively well preserved columns xix-xxii of the Aramaic Genesis Apocryphon\(^1\), discovered in Qumran Cave I, serve as a useful basis for the historical survey of midrashic interpretations of Genesis xii.8 - xv. 4. This document is recommended for such a purpose both by its antiquity\(^2\) and by its strictly midrashic literary genre.

The study is divided into the following three sections:

I. an English translation of the Abraham story,\(^3\)  
II. a comparison of its exegesis with parallel sources,  
III. an assessment of the results of the enquiry with regard to haggadic development in general.

I

The text of Genesis Apocryphon

The first part of the account, relating to Genesis xii and xiii, is given in the first person: Abraham tells his own story. This section is rich in haggadic amplifications, and despite its numerous contacts with the Book of Jubilees it is distinguished by a more popular and lively tone. The remainder of the narrative is told in the third person and, with some notable exceptions, follows the biblical text more closely.


\(^2\) The script is dated by the editors, on palaeographical grounds, as having been written between the end of the first century BC and the middle of the first century AD (op. cit., p. 38). Cf. also N. AVIGAD, The Paleography of the Dead Sea Scrolls, in Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Scripta Hierosolymitana, vol. iv, Jerusalem, 1958, p. 72 (between cca. 50 BC and 70 AD). E. Y. KUTSCHER reaches a similar conclusion on philological grounds, viz. the first century BC - first century AD. Cf. The language of the "Genesis Apocryphon"; a preliminary survey, ibid., p. 22. Both the editors and Mr. KUTSCHER recognize that an even earlier date is not entirely to be excluded. P. KAHLER, although he criticizes KUTSCHER's linguistic approach, agrees with his dating of the scroll, but definitely thinks the original composition to be earlier. Cf. Das palästinische Pentateuch-targum und das zur Zeit Jesu gesprochene Aramäisch, in ZNW, 49, 1958, pp. 107-108. I myself would also prefer an earlier second century date for this work, mainly because of the freshness and simplicity of its haggadah, and because of its freedom from any sectarian bias.

\(^3\) Other English translations may be found in AVIGAD-YADIN, op. cit., pp. pp. 41-48; Th. GASTER, The Scriptures of the Dead Sea Sect, London, 1957, pp. 330-
The Genesis text and its interpretation are given in parallel columns. Other relevant biblical, pseudepigraphic and Rabbinic passages are listed in the notes.

**Gen. xii. 8**

From there he journeyed towards the mountain which lies to the east of Bethel and pitched his tent with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. He built there an altar for the Lord and called on the name of the Lord.

**GA, col. xix**

[. . . and I called on the name of God] and I said: Thou art [the Most High God . . .] Until now you have not reached the Holy Mountain.

**xii. 9**

And Abram continued his journey towards the Negeb.

**xii. 10**

There was a famine in the land. Abram descended to Egypt to sojourn there for the famine was severe in the land.

**xii. 11-13**

When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife: Now I know that you are a beautiful woman. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, “This is his wife”, I went away . . . and I travelled towards the south . . . until I came to Hebron (at the time) of the building of Hebron. And I dwelt [there two] years.

There was a famine in all this land and hearing [there was] prosperity in Egypt I went . . . to the land of Egypt. . .

When he was about to enter Egypt, he said to Sarai his wife: Now I know that you are a beautiful woman. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, “This is his wife”, I [came] to the river Karmona which is one of the branches of the River . . . now we . . . our land. [I cro]ssed the seven branches of the river which . . . Now we travelled


1 All the interpreters appear to have understood "עֲבֵד הַמֵּתִיב" as though the verb were in the first person with an anticipatory suffix. Cf. E. Y. Kutscher, *art. cit.*, p. 30. Since the anticipatory suffix is used nowhere else in the document – see especially the parallel passages in xxi. 16-18 – the verb in the second person would seem the better reading. In that case, the words are to be attributed to God. The same reading has been adopted by A. Dupont-Sommer, *Les écrits esséniens découverts près de la mer Morte*, Paris, 1959, p. 298.

2 This may be an anti-Samaritan remark. For the Samaritans, Gerizim, the mountain opposite Shechem (cf. *Gen. xii. 6*), was the holy place chosen by God. Cf. Gaster, *op. cit.*, p. 340, n. 12. Eupolemus (*Praep. Ev.*, ix. 17) mentions the “city of Argizim which is interpreted the *Mountain of the Most High*”, as the place where Abraham and Melchizedek met. But for the author of GA the “holy mountain” lies further south, doubtless in Jerusalem.

3 Cf. *Num. xiii. 22*; *Jub.*, xiii. 10.

4 Cf. *Parab* viii. 10; *Baba Batra* 74b.
and they will kill me; but they will let you live. Please say that you are my sister so that I may be treated well for your sake and my soul may live because of you.

across our land and entered into the land of the sons of Ham, into the land of Egypt.

During the night of our entry into Egypt I, Abram, dreamt a dream. And behold, I saw in my dream a cedar and a palm tree\(^1\) ... men came and sought to cut down the cedar, and to pull up its roots, and to leave the palm tree (standing) alone. The palm tree cried out saying: Do not cut down this cedar tree, for cursed be the man [who shall pull up its roots.] And the cedar was spared because of the palm tree, and was not [cut down.] I woke from my dream during the night and said to Sarai my wife: I have dreamt a dream ... [I am] afraid [because of] this dream. She said to me: Tell me your dream and I shall know. So I began to tell her this dream ... that they will seek to kill me and will spare you. On that day all prosperity ... in all things ... Say to them concerning me, “He is my brother”, and I shall live because of you, and my soul shall be saved because of you ... of me and to kill me. Sarai wept that night because of my words.

[Then we journeyed onward, I and] Sarai, towards Zoan\(^2\) ... in her soul that no man would see her ...

\(\text{xii. 14}\)

When Abram arrived in Egypt the Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful.

After these five years\(^3\) ... three men, princes of Egypt\(^4\) ... Pharaoh of Zoan concerning [me[

\(^1\) Cf. Gen. R., xli. 1; Tanb. Lekh, 5.
\(^2\) Cf. Jns., xiii. 12.
\(^3\) Cf. Jns., xiii. 11.
\(^4\) Despite the lacunae, it is possible to follow the main events. Three Egyptian princes are sent by the king of Zoan to enquire about Abraham whom they probably suspect of being a spy (cf. Gen. xlii). He tells them that famine is the only cause of his journey to Egypt. The officials must have seen Sarai in spite of her
and concerning my wife, and they gave ... goodness, wisdom, and truth. And I cried out before them ... my words ... in the famine which ... not ... and they came to the place as far as ... to her ... my words ... much food and drink ... wine.

xii. 15

The princes of Pharaoh saw her and they praised her to Pharaoh and the woman was brought into the house of Pharaoh.

Col., xx.

... how ... and beautiful is her face! How ... fine are the hairs of her head! How lovely are her eyes! How desirable her nose and all the brilliance of her countenance ... How fair are her breasts and how beautiful all her whiteness! How pleasing are her arms and how perfect her hands, and how desirable all the appearance of her hands! How long and slender are their fingers! How comely are her feet, how perfect are her thighs! Neither the virgin, nor the bride led into the marriage chamber, is more beautiful than she. She is fairer than all other women. Truly, her beauty is greater than theirs.¹ Yet with all this grace she possesses also abundant wisdom² so that whatever is in her hands³ is perfect.

When the king heard the words of Harkenosh⁴ and of his two companions, for all three spoke as with intention to remain hidden. The mention of food and drink probably refers to a feast given by the hospitable Abraham to the Egyptians.

¹ Cf. Gen. R., xl. 5.
² Cf. Philo, De Abrahamo, xix. § 93.
³ The editors translate נִזֶּה יְדֵי as "the tip of her hands" and Dupont-Sommer (op. cit., p. 299) as "la gracilité de ses mains". No dictionary contains the noun יְדֵי. Gaster and Burrows avoid translating it altogether. In the manuscript there appears to be no separation between יְדִי and יְדֵי, so I suggest that יְדֵי be read as a relative pronoun. Cf. Kutscher, art. cit., p. 6.
⁴ The vocalisation of חָרְכָּנוֹשׁ is uncertain. The editors, and Gaster, transcribe the consonants only. Dupont-Sommer suggests 'Horanosh' whereas Burrows reads Hyrcanus. The latter interpretation is only acceptable on condition that the rules for transcribing Greek into Hebrew or Aramaic were either unknown to the tcrife of Genesis Apocryphon, or were not yet established as in the Mishnah and she Talmud, where Hyrcanus is written חָרְכָּנוֹשׁ.
one mouth, he desired her greatly, and he sent out at once that she be taken. Seeing her, he was amazed by all her beauty, and he took her to be his wife and sought to kill me.

xii. 16

Abram was treated well because of her, and he had flocks and cattle and asses, slaves and maidservants, she-asses and camels.

Sarai said to the king, “He is my brother”, that I might be spared because of her. And I, Abram, was spared because of her and I was not slain.

And I, Abram, wept aloud that night, I and my nephew Lot, because Sarai had been taken from me by force. I prayed that night. I begged and implored and I said in my sorrow, while my tears ran down: Blessed art Thou, O God Most High, Master of all the worlds. Thou art Lord and King of all things and Thou rulest over all the kings of the earth and Thou judgest them all. I cry now before Thee my Lord, against Pharaoh of Zoan the king of Egypt, because of my wife who is taken from me by force. Judge him for me, and I shall see Thy mighty hand lifted against him and against all his household, that he may not defile my wife this night (separating her) from me. And they shall know Thee, my Lord, that Thou art the Lord of all the kings of the earth.

xii. 17

The Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues on account of Sarai, the wife of Abraham.

I wept and was sorrowful. And on that night the Most High God sent a spirit of affliction, an evil

2 Cf. Tanh. Lekh, 5; Yathar, p. 51.
3 The expression רָזָא מַכְתָּב לַמָּכָה, “a pestilential spirit to strike him”, is understood differently by the editors, who translate מָכָה as “wind” – “a pestilential wind to afflict him”. The present interpretation is based firstly on the statement that this מָכָה was an evil מָכָה (line 17), and secondly that the magicians affected
spirit, to afflict both him and his house. He was afflicted and all his household, and he could not approach her and he knew her not.

He was with her for two years, and at the end of those two years the plagues and afflictions became greater and more grievous upon him and all his household. Therefore he sent for all the sages of Egypt, all the magicians, and all the healers of Egypt,1 that they might cure him and all his household of this plague. But not one single healer nor magician nor sage could come to cure him, for the afflicting spirit had afflicted them also, and they fled.

Then came Harkenosh to me, beseeching me to go to pray for the king and to lay my hands upon him that he might live, for [the king had dreamt] a dream. Lot said to him: Abram my uncle cannot pray for the king while Sarai his wife is with him. Go therefore, and tell the king to send back to her husband the woman who is his wife. Then he will pray for him and he will live.

When Harkenosh heard the words of Lot, he went to the king and said: All these plagues and afflictions with which my lord the king is smitten and afflicted are because of Sarai the wife of Abram. Let Sarai be restored to Abram her husband, and this scourge and the spirit of festering shall depart from you.2

xii. 18

Pharao called Abram and said: He called me and said to me:

by this נורי were put to flight and were not able to present themselves to the king (lines 20–21). But the principal argument is drawn from a comparison with the Targums on Deut. xxxii. 24: מְשַׁעְרַת נִוָּרִים, “struck by evil spirits”. The same interpretation figures also in A. Dupont-Sommer, Les écrits esséniens..., p. 300, n. 2.


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What have you done to me? Why did you not tell me that she is your wife?

_xii. 19_

Why did you say “She is my sister”, so that I took her as a wife for myself. Now here is your wife. Take her and depart!

You told me “She is my sister”, whereas she is your wife. And I took her to be my wife. Behold your wife who is with me. Depart, and go hence from all the land of Egypt.

And now pray for me and my household that this evil spirit may depart from me.

I prayed for him, and I laid my hand upon his head, and the plague went from him, and the evil spirit departed from him, and he lived.

The king rose up to tell me ... and the king swore to me an oath that ... and the king gave to her much [silver and gold], and much raiment of fine linen and purple ... before her, and Hagar also ... and he appointed men to lead me out of [all the land of Egypt.]

And I, Abram, went away with great flocks and with silver and gold, and I went out of Egypt together with my nephew Lot. Lot also had great flocks, and he took a wife to himself from [among the daughters of Egypt.]

Col. _xxi_

I camped] at every place where I had camped (before) until I came to Bethel,

_xiii. 3_

He went to his camping places from the Negeb to Bethel, to the place where his tent was pitched formerly, between Bethel and Ai,

And I, Abram, went away with great flocks and with silver and gold, and I went out of Egypt together with my nephew Lot. Lot also had great flocks, and he took a wife to himself from [among the daughters of Egypt.

Col. _xxi_

I camped] at every place where I had camped (before) until I came to Bethel,

_xiii. 4_

to the place where he had first made the place where I had built an altar.

1 Cf. Gen. xx. 17.
2 Cf. Gen. xx. 15.
3 Cf. J-A, I, viii. 1, § 165; PRE, 26; Yastbar, p. 52.
4 Cf. Gen. R., xlv. 1 on Gen. xvi. 1.
an altar. And there Abram called on the name of the Lord.

I built a second altar and I placed upon it a sacrifice and an offering to the Most High God, and there I called upon the name of the Lord of worlds, and I praised the name of God, and I blessed Him, and there I gave thanks to Him for all the riches and favours which He had granted to me. For He had dealt kindly towards me and had led me back in peace into this land.

Lot also, who went with Abram, had flocks and cattle and tents, so that the land could not support them together, for their possessions were so great that they could not dwell together. There was trouble between the herdsmen of Abram and the herdsmen of Lot. The Canaanites and the Perizzites dwelt then in the land. Abram said to Lot: Please let shere be no quarrel between me and you, between my herdsmen and yours, for we are kinsmen. Is not the whole land before you? Depart from me. If you go left, I will go right. If you go right, I will go left. Lot lifted up his eyes and he saw that the whole region of Jordan in the direction of Zoar was well watered. It was like a garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot chose for himself the whole region of Jordan and he travelled eastward and they parted from each other. Abram dwelt in the land of Canaan and Lot dwelt in the cities of the (Jordan) region, and camped as far as Sodom.

God appeared before me in a vision at night, and said: Go to

\(^1\) Cf. Gen. xix. 2f.
eyes and look from the place where you are, to the north and the south and the east and the west. For all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants for ever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth. If the dust of the earth can be counted, so also can your descendants be counted. Rise, walk through the land, through its length and breadth, for I will give it to you.

Ramat Hazor\(^1\) which is north of Bethel, the place where you dwell, and lift up your eyes towards the east and towards the west, towards the north and towards the south. And behold, all this land I give to you and to your seed for ever.

The next morning I went up to Ramat Hazor and I beheld the land from that high place; from the River of Egypt to Lebanon and Senir, from the Great Sea to Hauran, all the land of Gebal as far as Kadesh, and all the Great Desert to the east of Hauran and Senir as far as Euphrates. And God said to me: I will give all this land to your seed, and they shall possess it for ever. I will multiply your seed as the dust of the earth that no man may number. Neither shall any man number your seed. Rise, and go forth. Behold the length and the breadth (of the land) for it is yours, and after you I will give it to your seed for ever.

And I, Abram, set out to see the land. I began my journey at the river Gihon\(^2\) and travelled along the coast of the Sea until I came to the Mountain of the Bull.\(^3\) I departed from the coast of the Great Salt Sea and I journeyed towards the east by the Mountain of the Bull across the breadth of the land until I came to the river Euphrates. I journeyed along Euphrates until I came to the

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1 Ramat Hazor, the biblical Baal Hazor (2 Sam. xiii. 23), is probably Gebel el 'Azur, north-east of Bethel.

2 The editors (cf. op. cit., p. 32) have not convincingly established that Gihon is the Nile. It is certain that this river forms the south-western frontier of the land of Israel.

3 The Mountain of the Bull (אָבֶּל נַחֲוֵד) is Amanus, part of the Taurus range running from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean (Avigad-Yadin, p. 30). According to Jewish tradition, it forms the northern frontier of the land of Israel. To the references given by the editors (Sheb., vi. 1; J. Hallah, iv. 60a: Taurus-Amanus; Ex. R., xxiii. 5), must be added T. Terum., ii. 12, T. Hallah, ii. 11, Git., 8a, and Song R., iv. 5, § 2.
THE LIFE OF ABRAHAM

Red Sea\(^1\) in the east. I travelled by the shore of the Red Sea until I came to the tongue of the Sea of Reeds\(^2\) which goes out from the Red Sea. I pursued my way in the south until I came to the river Gihon. And then I returned and came to my house in peace. I found all things prosperous there.

**xiii. 18**

Abram moved his tent and he came to dwell at the Oaks of Mamre which are at Hebron, and he built there an altar to the Lord.

I went and stayed at the Oaks of Mamre, which is at Hebron, north-east of Hebron. And there I built an altar and I placed upon it a sacrifice and an oblation to the Most High God. There I ate and drank, I and all the men of my house hold. And I sent for Mamre, Ornam,\(^3\) and Eshkol, the three Amorite brothers, my friends, and they ate together with me and drank with me.

**xiv. 1**

In the days of Amrafel king of Shinar, Ariok king of Ellasar, Kedorlaomer king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goim,

Before these days, Kedorlaomer king of Elam set out together with Amrafel king of Babylon,\(^4\) Ariok king of Kaptok,\(^5\) and Tidal king of the nations which lie between the rivers;

**xiv. 2**

they waged war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemeber king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela which is Zoar.

and they waged war against Bera king of Sodom, Birsha king of Gomorrah, Shinab king of Admah, Shemiabad king of Zeboim, and against the king of Bela.

**xiv. 3**

All these joined each other in the

All these gathered to do battle in

\(^{1}\) I.e. the Indian Ocean.

\(^{2}\) I.e. Arabia, with the Sinai Peninsula and the Red Sea of the modern atlas.

\(^{3}\) Aner in *Gen.* xiv. 13; *Avvov* in *LXX*.

\(^{4}\) For Shinar identified with Babylon, see *TO* and *Neofiti* 1.

\(^{5}\) The editor's identification of Kaptok as Cappadocia follows a suggestion made by B. Mazar.
valley of Siddim, which is the Salt Sea.

xiv. 4

They served Kedorlaomer for twelve years, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled.

xiv. 5

In the fourteenth year, Kedorlaomer and the other kings with him came and slew the Refaim in Ashteroth-Karnaim, the Zuzim in Ham, the Emim in Shaveh Kiriathaim,

xiv. 6

and the Horites in their Mount Seir as far as El Paran, which is near the desert.

xiv. 7

Then they returned and came to En Mishpat, which is Kadesh, and they smote all the country of the Amalekites, and also the Amorites who dwelt in Hazezon Tamar.

xiv. 8

The king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Admah, the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bela, which is Zoar, went out and waged war against them in the valley of Siddim

the valley of Siddim,¹ and the king of Elam and the other kings who were with him prevailed over the king of Sodom and his companions, and imposed a tribute upon them.

During twelve years they paid their tribute to the king of Elam, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled against him.

In the fourteenth year, the king of Elam placed himself at the head of all his allies, and went up by the Way of the Wilderness. They smote and pillaged from the river Euphrates onward. They smote the Refaim who were at Ashteroth Karnaim, the Zuzamim who were at Ammon, the Emim who were at Shaveh ha-Keriyyoth,

the Horites who were in the mountains of Gebal, until they came to El Paran which is in the Wilderness.

And they returned . . . . . at Hazezon Tamar.

The king of Sodom went out to meet them, together with the king [of Gomorrah], the king of Admah, the king of the Zeboim and the king of Bela. [And they fought[ a battle in the valley [of Siddim]

¹ The glosses in Gen. identifying Bela with Zoar, and Siddim with the Dead Sea, are omitted.
against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, Tidal king of Goim, Amraphel king of Shinar, Ariok king of Ellasar, four kings against five.

xiv. 10
In the valley of Siddim there are many bitumen pits. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled and fell there, and the rest fled to the mountains.

xiv. 11
They took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah, and all their food, and departed.

xiv. 12
They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who dwelt in Sodom, and they took his possessions and departed.

xiv. 13
One who had escaped came to tell Abram the Hebrew who was living at the Oaks of Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshkol and Aner, the allies of Abram.

xiv. 14
Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive, and he against Kedorlaomer king of Elam, and the kings who were with him.

The king of Sodom was vanguished and fled, and the king of Gomorrah fell into the pits

The king of Elam [bore away] all the riches of Sodom and Gomorrah.

and they took Lot the nephew of Abram, who dwelt with them in Sodom, and all his possessions.

And one of the shepherds of the flocks which Abram had given to Lot, having escaped from among the captives, came to Abram. At that time Abram dwelt in Hebron. He told him that Lot his nephew and all his possessions had been taken, that he had not been slain, and that the kings had gone by the road of the Great Valley towards their land, taking captives, plundering, smiting and slaying, and that they were journeying towards the land of Damascus.

And Abram wept because of Lot his nephew.

1 Cf. Jub., xiii. 22; Gen. R., xliii. 7.
mustered his trained men, born in his house, and he pursued them as far as Dan.

xiv. 15

He divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants. And they slew them and pursued them as far as Hobah, north of Damascus.

xiv. 16

He brought back all the booty and also Lot his kinsman, and his possessions, and also the women and the people.

xiv. 17

After his return from the slaughter of Kedorlaomer and of the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the valley of Shaveh, which is the valley of the King.

xiv. 18

Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was the priest of the Most High God.

xiv. 19

He blessed him and said: Blessed

He strengthened himself. He rose, and chose from among his servants three hundred and eighteen fighting men trained for war. Ornam, Eshkol, and Mamre went with him also. He pursued them until he came to Dan, and he came upon them while they were camped in the valley of Dan.

xiv. 16

He fell upon them from four sides and he slew them that night. He crushed them and put them to fight. They all fled before him till they came to Helbon, which is north of Damascus.

xiv. 17

He rescued from them of all their captives which they had taken, all their booty and all their goods. He delivered also his nephew Lot and all his possessions, and he led back all the captives which they had taken.

xiv. 18

When the king of Sodom learned that Abram had led back all the captives and all the booty, he came out to meet him and went to Salem, which is Jerusalem. Abram camped in the valley of Shaveh, which is the valley of the King, the valley of Beth ha-Kerem.

xiv. 19

Melchizedek king of Salem brought out food and drink to Abram and to all the men who were with him. He was the priest of the Most High God.

1 Cf. 1TJ.
2 Cf. Targums.

He blessed Abram and said:
be Abram by the Most High God, the Maker of heaven and earth;

xiv. 20

and blessed be the Most High God who has delivered your oppressors into your hand. Abram gave him the tithe of everything.

xiv. 21

The king of Sodom said to Abram: Give me the men and take the goods for yourself.

xiv. 22

Abram said to the king of Sodom: I lift up my hand to the Lord, the Most High God, the Creator of heaven and earth,

xiv. 23

that I will take nothing which is yours, not even a thread or a strap of a sandal, lest you should say, "I have made Abram rich".

xiv. 24

I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten and the portion of the men who came with me. Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre shall take their share.

Then Abram said to the king of Sodom: I lift up my hand this day to the Most High God, Lord of heaven and earth,

that I will take nothing which belongs to you, not even a lace or strap of a shoe, lest you should say, "Abram's riches come from my possessions".

(I will take nothing) except what the young men who are with me have already eaten, and the portion of the three men who have come with me. They shall decide whether they will give you their portion.

Abram returned all the flocks and all the captives and gave them to the king of Sodom. He set free all the captives from that land who were with him, and sent them all back.

1 Cf. Yashar, p. 54.
After these things, the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying: Fear not Abram, I am your shield. Your reward shall be very great.

After these things, God appeared to Abram in a vision and said to him: Behold, ten years have passed since you came away from Haran. You dwelt here for two years and you passed seven years in Egypt; and one year has gone by since your return from Egypt. Now examine, and count all you have, and see how it has grown and multiplied twice over compared to what you brought out of Haran.

And now fear not; I am with you. I will be your help and your strength. I am a shield above you, and I will protect you against him who is stronger than you. Your wealth and possessions shall multiply greatly.¹

Abram said: O Lord God, what wilt Thou give me? For I am childless and Eliezer of Damascus is the heir of my house. Abram said: Behold, Thou hast given me no descendant and a servant born in my house shall inherit from me.

Abram said: My Lord God, I have great wealth and possessions: what good will they do me? Naked shall I die and childless go hence. A child from my household shall inherit from me. Eliezer son... shall inherit from me.

And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying: This one shall not inherit from you, but your issue shall be your heir.

He said to him: He shall not be your heir, but he who shall spring from your body shall be your heir.

II

Biblical exegesis in Genesis Apocryphon

The haggadic developments of Genesis Apocryphon are now to be compared, firstly with the biblical text itself, and secondly with the corresponding interpretations in ancient Jewish literature,² in order to determine the three following points:

¹ Cf. Tj and Gen. R., xlv. 4.
² A similar attempt to collect parallel midrashic material may be found in
a) passages requiring special attention,
b) the solutions of problems arising from the Abraham story, the
c) relationship between these solutions and those found in the
rest of the exegetical literature of Israel.

1. And Abram continued his journey towards the Negeb (xii.9)

GA records that Abraham went to live in Hebron the year the city
was founded, and that he stayed there for two years.
Jubilees xiii. 10 confirms this:

He came to Hebron, and Hebron was built at that time, and he
dwelt there two years.

2. When he was about to enter Egypt (xii. 11)

I.e. when he reached the seven-branched river dividing Canaan from
Egypt. The first branch is called here Karmona, which is probably the
equivalent of Keramyon.

As the editors of Genesis Apocryphon remark,¹ the same stream is
mentioned in the Mishnah:²

The waters of Keramyon and the waters of Pugah are unfit because
they are marsh waters.

It appears also in the Babylonian Talmud:³

Four rivers surround the land of Israel: Jordan, Jarmuk, Keramyon
and Pugah.

M. R. Lehmann’s 1 Q Genesis Apocryphon in the Light of the Targumim and Midrashim,
in Revue de Qumran, I, 1958, pp. 249–263. I agree with his conclusion that "1 Q
Genesis Apocryphon offers important evidence of the existence of early targumic
versions of Genesis" (ibid., p. 263), but I wonder whether, because of a lack of
historical perspective, his use of midrashic sources would convince those who
hold a different opinion. I also doubt whether he is correct in thinking that parallels
between Zohar and GA are of any value in research into the age of Zohar (ibid.,
p. 259). The only legitimate inference to be drawn from such parallels is that Moses
ben Shemtob de Leon used earlier midrashic material in writing the Zohar at the
end of the thirteenth century AD. On the origins of the Zohar, see G. G. Scholem,
from Jubilees figure in Eva Osswald’s Beobachtungen zur Erzählung von Abrahams
Aufenthalt in Ägypten im "Genesis Apocryphon", in ZAW, 72, 1960, pp. 7–25.

¹ Cf. op. cit., p. 25.
² Parab, viii. 10.
³ Baba Batra, 74b.
3. *Now I know that you are a beautiful woman* (xii. 11)

Would Abraham not have noticed the beauty of his wife before? This question, which does not appear to have troubled the author of GA, is asked in Midrash Rabbah:

She lived with him all those years, and now he says to her: Behold, now I know that you are a fair woman to look upon.\(^1\)

Ps.-Jonathan provides an answer. It was only when crossing the river boundary between Canaan and Egypt that Abraham saw his wife naked in daylight for the first time, and the sight of her beauty made him foresee trouble:

They came to the river and they uncovered their bodies for the crossing. Then Abram said to Sarai his wife: Until now I have never looked on your body, but now I know... etc.\(^2\)

4. *And when the Egyptians see you... they will kill me* (xii. 12)

Genesis Apocryphon, having so far not mentioned Sarah's beauty introduces at this point a premonitory dream which Abraham is able to interpret: his life is in danger on account of his wife and he must take precautions to conceal their relationship. Sarah resolves to hide herself (GA, xix. 23).

In midrashic literature, Abraham conceals Sarah in a coffer before crossing the frontier so that the guards will not see her. His stratagem fails and Sarah is immediately taken:

He put her into a coffer and locked her in. When he came to the customs house, they (the officers) said to him: Pay the duty. Abram answered: I will pay. They said: You carry vessels. Abram replied: I will pay the duty on them... They said: You must open the coffer so that we can see what is inside. When he opened it, all the land of Egypt was brightened by her beauty.\(^3\)

In GA, however, Sarah avoids the notice of the Egyptians for five years.

The cedar and the palm tree in Abraham's dream are inspired by Psalm xcii. 13, where the just man is compared to them. This verse, in conjunction with Genesis xii. 17, is applied to Abraham and Sarah in the Midrash.\(^4\)

\(^1\) *Gen. R.*, xl. 4.

\(^2\) See also *Tanb. Lekh*, 5.


\(^4\) *Gen. R.*, xii. 1; *Tanb. Lekh*, 5.
5. When Abram arrived in Egypt (xii. 14)

Abraham settled in Egypt in the region of Zoan (Tanis). Nothing troublesome occurred for five years. Jubilees contains the same tradition:

And Abram went into Egypt... and dwelt in Egypt five years before his wife was torn away from him. Now Tanis in Egypt was built at that time, seven years after Hebron.¹

6. And when the princes of Pharaoh saw her (xii. 15).

Genesis Apocryphon specifies that they were three in number, and even names one of them.

7. The princes of Pharaoh... praised her (xii. 15)

GA develops this short phrase into a panegyric by Harkenosh on Sarah’s beauty.

In the Midrash also, Sarah possesses the beauty of Eve and even surpasses it:

The Egyptians saw that the woman was very beautiful: this means that she was even more beautiful than Eve’s image.²

The Egyptian prince in GA praises Sarah’s wisdom as well as her beauty. Philo does the same:

He had a wife distinguished greatly for her goodness of soul and beauty of body, in which she surpassed all the women of her time.³

8. And the woman was brought into the house of Pharaoh (xii. 15)

In his distress Abraham began to weep and pray.

The same tradition appears in Tanhumah Lekh, 5, where emphasis is laid on Abraham’s confidence in God while the object of his prayer, which is in any case obvious, goes unmentioned.

In Yashar (p. 51) the Patriarch begs God to save his wife:

Abram became very angry because of what had happened to his wife and he prayed the Lord to save her from the hands of Pharaoh.

² *Gen.* R., xl. 5. For parallel texts see Theodor-Albeck’s edition, p. 383, n. 3.
³ *De Abrahamo*, xix, § 93.
9. *Abram was treated well because of her* (xii. 16)

This embarrassing verse is reinterpreted. According to Genesis Apocryphon, Abraham is indebted to Sarah for his life but not for his prosperity, whose origin is explained in column xx. 30 ff.

Jubilees xiii. 14 shows the same apologetic trend; it also suppresses the connection between Abraham’s wealth and Sarah’s abduction by Pharaoh.

*Josephus* and *Pliio* are silent on this subject.

10. *But the Lord struck Pharaoh and his house with great plagues* (xii. 17)

Genesis Apocryphon infers that Pharaoh’s chastisement was due to Abraham’s prayer, and in common with other representatives of Jewish tradition, it sets out to dispel any doubts raised by the surprisingly laconic biblical text. Sarah was protected (Gen. xx). Although she lived in his palace for two years, the king was never able to approach her because of the evil spirit which plagued him and his household, afflicting them with sores and sickness. The description corresponds to an image of a spirit armed with a stick, whose business it was to keep every man away from Sarah. It even put to flight the approaching magicians.

Rabbinic tradition gives an analogous interpretation of this verse:

R. Berekiah said: Because he dared approach the lady’s shoe. R. Levi said: An angel stood there all night long with a whip in his hand. When Sarah said to him “Strike”, he struck. When she said “Cease”, he ceased.¹

*Flavius Josephus*, although drawing his inspiration from haggadic tradition, tries, as he often does, to minimise the miraculous. In *Jewish Antiquities*, God prevents Pharaoh from indulging his passion by visiting him with the plague and by fomenting political troubles:

But God thwarted his criminal passion by an outbreak of disease and political disturbance, and when he had sacrifices offered to discover a remedy, the priests declared that his calamity was due to the wrath of God, because he had wished to outrage the stranger’s wife.²

The Bible says nothing of the GA invitation to the Egyptian magicians and healers, and this idea must derive from an association with Pharaoh’s magicians in Exodus.

¹ This haggadah, quoted from *Gen. R.*, xli. 2, (xi in the *Theodor-Albeck* edition), is repeated in lii. 13; *Tanḥ. Lekh*, 5 (ed. Buber, I, pp. 66-67); *Yashar*, p. 51; etc.

² *JA*, I, viii. 1, § 164.
Hellenistic tradition also reports the intervention of diviners or Egyptian priests, but they are called not to cure Pharaoh, but to discover the cause of the calamities. They reveal the true identity of Sarah to the king, and thus provide a solution to the problem of how he found out that she was the wife of Abraham.

The soothsayers, having been called by him, told him that the woman was not a widow. Thus the king of the Egyptians learned that she was Abraham's wife.¹

Genesis Rabbah xli. 2 offers another explanation: Sarah herself told Pharaoh that she was a married woman.

Genesis Apocryphon faces this classic difficulty in its own way. The king learns in a dream that Abraham can cure him. His messenger is received by Lot who then tells him the truth about Sarah. The emissary hastens to propose the remedy to Pharaoh, namely, the return of Sarah to her husband. Pharaoh's dream, and the efficacious intervention of Abraham, derive from Genesis xx. Both Genesis xii and xx are intimately linked in GA.

11. Now here is your wife. Take her, and depart! (xii. 19)

Whereas, without explicitly saying so, the Bible allows it to be understood that Pharaoh was cured, Genesis Apocryphon makes the return of Sarah to her husband a necessary preliminary to this. It imputes the king's healing to Abraham's prayer when he laid his hands on Pharaoh's head.² The king's oath (of friendship?), and the mention of presents offered by him to Sarah, and through her to Abraham, are again borrowed from Genesis xx. In this way, the gap created in

¹ Eupolemus in Praep. Ev., ix 17.
² The healing of the sick by expelling, with the laying on of hands, the evil spirits responsible for the disease is unknown in the Old Testament but a familiar rite in the Gospels. Though it makes no mention of evil spirits, the nearest Old Testament parallel appears in 2 Kings, v. 11. When, instead of being received by Elisha, Naaman is told by the prophet's messenger to go and bathe in the river Jordan, the Syrian official declares: "I have said to myself that he will come out, stand, and invoke the name of the Lord, his God, lift up his hand towards the place (of the disease) and the leprosy will disappear." Now the phrase, "he will lift up his hand" (wubahiph yado) is translated in the Septuagint, ἐπιθύμει τὴν χείρα αὐτοῦ, i.e. "he will lay on his hand". For a detailed study of the GA passage, see A. Dupont-Sommer, Éxorcismes et guérisons dans les écrits de Quômrân, in Supplements to Vetus Testamentum, vol. VII (Congress Volume, Oxford, 1959), pp. 246-261. On the Essenes as healers, see the present writer's The Etymology of Essenes, in Revue de Qumran, no. 7, tome 2, fasc. 3, June 1960, pp. 427-443, and Essenes - Therapeutai - Qumran, in The Durham University Journal, N.S., Vol. xxi, no. 3, June 1960, pp. 97-115.
the story by the omission of Genesis xii (the gifts given to Abraham at the time of Sarah’s abduction) is filled. The Patriarch obtained his riches, not because he had handed over his wife, but for curing the king.¹

According to a well known tradition whose antiquity is now attested by Genesis Apocryphon, Hagar was included in the gifts offered to Sarah. Because of a lacuna in the text it is not possible to discover whether GA considers her to be one of the king’s daughters, as does Genesis Rabbah, xlv. 1:

R. Simeon b. Yohai said: Hagar was Pharaoh’s daughter. When Pharaoh saw what happened on Sarah’s behalf in his own house, he took his daughter and gave her to Sarah.²

Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer (loc. cit.) recounts that Pharaoh gave Sarah the land of Goshen, so when the sons of Jacob settled there, they occupied a land of their own.

12. To the place where he had first made an altar (xiii. 4)

In Genesis Apocryphon, Abraham builds a new altar.

13. Abram called on the name of the Lord (xiii. 4)

GA describes Abraham’s prayer as one of praise, blessing and thanksgiving.

Jubilees xiii. 16 quotes only a brief formula:

O God Most High, Thou art my God for ever and ever.

14. The departure of Lot (xiii. 5-9)

Whereas in the Bible Abraham and Lot separate by mutual consent in order to avoid any future discord among their herdsmen, GA infers that the decision was made by Lot alone. Abraham was strongly affected by it, but his generosity towards his nephew remained unaltered.

Rabbinic tradition almost always presents Lot, who owed his wealth to the merits of his uncle (1TJ), in an unfavourable light.

15. Lot camped as far as Sodom (xiii. 12)

In contrast to Rabbinic literature, Genesis Apocryphon passes no judgment on Sodom. This was probably reserved for its commentary

¹ Cf. also JÃ, I, viii. 1, §165; PRE, ch. xxvi; Yashar, p. 52.
² Cf. Yashar, p. 52; PRE, ch. xxvi.
on Genesis xix. The account of the building of a house at Sodom is nevertheless borrowed from Genesis xix 2 f.

16. Look from the place where you are (xiii. 14)

The land which God promises to Abraham is so vast that he has to climb Ramath Hazor, the highest peak in the region, in order to see it.

17. To the north and the south and the east and the west (xiii. 14)

The frontiers indicated in GA are assembled from various biblical passages. The river of Egypt and the Euphrates are mentioned in Genesis xv. 18. Deuteronomy i. 7 adds the Sea and Lebanon. Gebal (Gobolitis) appears in Ps. Jonathan on the same verse, and Hauran and Kadesh are found in the eschatological description of the land of Israel in Ezekiel xlvi. 15-20.

18. Arise, walk through the land, through its length and breadth (xiii. 17)

Genesis does not tell whether Abraham obeyed this injunction, but Genesis Apocryphon describes at length the journey which led Abraham from the Mediterranean to Amanus, the Euphrates, and the Persian Gulf, before he eventually reached Hebron.

To “travel through” a land means to take symbolic possession of it. It is in this sense, in any case, that certain representatives of tradition understand Abraham’s journey:

Arise, and go into the land, and take possession of it.¹

According to an opinion attributed to R. Liezer, one method of acquiring a field was to walk through it. His halakhah is based on Genesis xiii. 17:

If a man walks in a field, whether along its length or its breadth, he acquires it as far as he walks.²

19. At Hebron ... he built there an altar to the Lord (xiii. 18)

GA records that Mamre lay to the north-east of Hebron, and also that Abraham built an altar of sacrifice. In Genesis xiv. 13 the three

¹ TJ.
² Gen. R., xii. 10. See also note 3, p. 397 in the Theodor-Albeck edition of Gen. R.
Amorite brothers are simply referred to as allies of Abraham, but in GA events are recounted chronologically: Abraham settled by the Oaks of Mamre, and a feast of friendship (or alliance) was celebrated at that time.

20. In the days of Amrafel (xiv. 1)

The biblical recital gives an inverse chronology to events. It tells of a punitive expedition of the eastern kings against the king of Sodom and his allies who, after paying tribute for twelve years, revolted against their conquerors in the thirteenth years.

Genesis Apocryphon and Josephus, (JA, I, ix. 1, §§ 171 f) follow the chronological sequence. The head of the coalition, the king of Elam, whom the Bible relegates to third place, is mentioned first. Geographic indications are adjusted or defined. Shinar, for example, becomes Babylon – as in Targum Onkelos and Neofiti 1. Ellasar is identified with Kaptok, doubtless – and as the editors believe - Cappadocia.\(^1\) The king of the Goim is the king of the nations which lie between the rivers.

Josephus describes the invaders as Assyrians with an army commanded by four generals instead of four kings.

21. Kedorlaomer ... came and slew (xiv. 5)

GA states that the allies took to the desert, and began plundering from the Euphrates onwards.

Josephus also (loc. cit.) writes that their first attacks were made in Syria.

22. Mount Seir (xiv. 6)

As in the Palestinian Targums, including Neofiti 1, Seir is identified with Gebal (Gobolitis).

23. The kings of Sodom and Gomorrah ... fell (into the bitumen pits) (xiv. 10).

The king of Gomorrah is mentioned no more in the Bible, but the king of Sodom reappears in verse 17.

\(^1\) In Neof., Pontus is substituted for Ellasar.
Genesis Apocryphon explicitly states that he escaped, and Jubilees xiii. 22 comes to the same conclusion. Furthermore, neither of these two documents refers to his having fallen into the pits.

Genesis Rabbah, xlii. 7 resolves the difficulty instead of suppressing it by finding that the king did indeed fall into the pits, but that he was subsequently rescued and was able to escape.

R. Azariah and R. Jonathan ben Haggai in R. Isaac's name: That Abraham descended into the fiery furnace and was rescued, was believed by some people and disbelieved by others. But even these believed it after the king of Sodom was also rescued from the slime pit into which he had fallen.

24. Then one who had escaped came to tell Abram (xiv. 13)

Genesis Apocryphon describes this man as one of the herdsmen whom Abraham had formerly given to Lot.

25. Abram heard that his kinsman had been taken captive (xiv. 14)

He also heard, according to GA, the direction which the kings had taken. When Lot left him, Abraham was sad; when he heard of his captivity, he wept.

26. He mustered his trained men, born in his house (xiv. 14)

Ps.-Jonathan records that all Abraham's servants were tried warriors, as does GA.

27. And Melchizedek, king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was the priest of the Most High God (xiv. 18)

In common with the Targums, and Jewish tradition in general, Genesis Apocryphon identifies Salem with Jerusalem. Bread and wine are understood in the wider sense of solid food and drink. The Most High God, whose priest Melchizedek is, is the same God who revealed Himself to Abraham.

28. He gave him the title of everything (xiv. 20)

If Abraham deducted a tithe of all the booty which he had acquired, how was he subsequently able to restore to the king of Sodom all that
belonged to him (v. 24)? The only objects which he would not, or could not, return were the food which his men had eaten and the portions belonging to his Amorite allies. No consideration is taken at all of the tithe given to Melchizedek.

To reconcile the apparent contradiction, Genesis Apocryphon and Yashar\(^1\) explain that the tithe offered to Melchizedek was subtracted from the former property of the king of Elam and his allies. By this the author of GA probably meant the booty taken in the looting which preceded the attack against the cities of the Plain.

29. *Aner, Eshkol, and Mamre will take their share* (xiv. 24)

According to the biblical text, Abraham decided on his own authority not to return the portions due to his three friends. Genesis Apocryphon allows them to decide for themselves. There is no definition of the precise role played by the Amorites in the expedition, but Ps.-Jonathan and Genesis Rabbah xliii. 9 relegate to them the care of the baggage.

The Bible is silent concerning the fate of the other captives, but GA states that all the natives of Palestine were released by Abraham, thereby proving his benevolence towards the other nations inhabiting his land.

This should be compared with Jewish Antiquities I, x. 1, § 176:

Abraham, hearing of their disaster, was moved alike with fear for his kinsman Lot and with compassion for his friends and neighbours the Sodomites.

30. *Fear not Abram, I am your shield* (xv. 1)

In Genesis Apocryphon, God reminds Abraham of all the favours which He has granted him since his departure from Haran, and then promises him His protection in the future. The divine oracle was intended to reassure him.

A similar tradition is found elsewhere in ancient Jewish literature. The Fragmentary Targum on Genesis xv. 1 reads:

After these events, after all the kings of the earth and all the governors of the provinces had gathered together and had waged war against Abram the Just, after they had fallen and after he had killed

\(^1\) P. 54: "And he gave him the tithe of all that he brought back from the booty of his enemies".
four kings from among them and had led back (the remainder of) nine armies (the four armies of the invaders and the five armies of Sodom and its allies), behold, Abram thought in his heart and said: Woe is me now! It may be that I have already received in this world the reward of the commandments, and shall have no portion in the world to come. Or perhaps the relatives and kinsmen of the slain will leave and draw after them many legions, and will come against me. Perhaps I observed, earlier, commandments of little importance, so that (my enemies) fell. Perhaps there was found in me, earlier, some merit so that they fell before me. But later none will be found in me, and the Name of heaven will be profaned because of me.¹

It must have disturbed the Rabbis to find God addressing words of encouragement to Abraham after his triumph, and ancient tradition clearly finds it necessary to interpret this biblical verse at length. In Genesis Apocryphon the oracle itself is developed, but the Targums emphasize the doubts tormenting Abraham and present God’s words as an answer to them. In both writings, the phrase “Fear not” are set into a reasonable context.

31. Your reward shall be very great (xv. 1).

Genesis Apocryphon describes Abraham’s reward as an earthly one; he will become even more prosperous. This is quite in accordance with the logic of the biblical story since in the following verse Abraham declares sadly that his property will be of no use to him:

For naked shall I die and childless go hence.

In the Palestinian Targums, both the words of Abraham and God’s reply refer to a future life:

As I have delivered up your enemies to you in this world, so also is the reward for your good works laid up for you, before Me, in the world to come (2TJ).

GA appears not to be very preoccupied with the after-life.

III

*Genesis Apocryphon and Haggadah*

Comparison of the haggadic developments of Genesis Apocryphon with other works of Jewish tradition permits certain facts to be established:

¹ Cf. Neof.; 1TJ; Gen. R., xlv. 4.
i) an absence of parallel texts draws attention to interpretations proper to GA;

ii) disagreement in exegesis indicates biblical passages requiring interpretation for which no true exegetical tradition, at any rate on the level of GA, was available;

iii) partial agreement in exegesis denotes traditions not yet, and perhaps never, wholly established;

iv) exegesis identical with that found in other Jewish writings points, on the whole, to commonly accepted traditions.

i) **Interpretations proper to Genesis Apocryphon**

On the few occasions when GA offers an interpretation of biblical passages unmentioned in other exegetical works, the matter is mostly of secondary importance. It includes details such as the number of the Egyptian princes, the mention of the second altar built by Abraham, the identification of the place from which he viewed the land.\(^1\) The GA frontiers of the ideal Palestine\(^2\) are not found in any other commentary on Genesis xiii. 14, but their elements are disseminated in various writings representative of Jewish tradition. Genesis Apocryphon is certainly an original work, but its originality lies not so much in its matter, as in its manner of interpreting the Bible.

ii) **Disagreement in exegesis**

This is also rare. It is mainly found in the passages describing how Abraham was warned of the danger to which his wife’s beauty exposed him, the precautionary measures taken to avoid it, how Pharaoh learned that Sarah was married, and the reward which God promised to Abraham.\(^3\) The texts collected for comparison with Genesis Apocryphon appear to reflect established traditions of a more recent date. They are chiefly gathered from the Palestinian Targums, Genesis Rabbah, Midrash Tanhumah, and Sefer ha-Yashar. It is impossible to determine whether the GA exegesis is the creation of its author, or whether it springs from ancient traditions eventually discarded by biblical commentators. The cedar and the palm tree in Abraham’s dream may be regarded as a traditional element since the same metaphor is subsequently used in relation to Abraham and Sarah.

\(^1\) Cf. nos. 6, 12, 16, 24, 25.

\(^2\) Cf. no. 17.

\(^3\) Cf. nos. 3, 4, 10, 31,
iii) Partial agreement in exegesis

Exegetical interpretations which, without being identical to those in Genesis Apocryphon, bear a close resemblance to them, form the majority of those studied. From Eupolemus and the Book of Jubilees (second century BC) to Sefer ha-Yashar (eleventh century AD), they figure at every stage of historical development, and were evidently transmitted, with slight variations, right through to the Middle Ages. Among them may be mentioned the haggadoth of the pestilential spirit, later replaced by an angel (Gen. R., Tanḥ., Yashar), the intervention of the magicians (Eupolemus, Josephus), the cause of Abraham’s prosperity (Josephus, Pirke de-R. Eliezer, Yashar), Lot’s prosperity (1TJ, Yashar) Abraham’s journey through the land of Israel (Gen. R., 1TJ, etc.), the beginning of the account of the war of the kings and the fate of the Palestinian prisoners (Josephus), and the promise of divine protection from a powerful enemy (1TJ, Gen. R.).

All this clearly demonstrates that Genesis Apocryphon is securely established within the current of tradition whose origins, inherited eventually by targumic and midrashic literature, must derive from an earlier age. It is interesting to draw attention also to the points of encounter between GA and hellenistic Judaism.

iv) Identical exegesis

This is frequent and characteristic, and is represented at all levels. Abraham lived in Hebron for two years (Jub.). In Egypt, he settled in Zoan, i.e. Tanis (Jub.). Sarah was wise (Philo). Abraham wept and prayed after the abduction of his wife (Tanḥ., Yashar). Royal presents were given to Abraham after the return of Sarah (Jub., Josephus). Hagar was a gift of Pharaoh (Gen. R., Pirke de-R. Eliezer, Yashar). Seir is Gebal (1TJ). The king of Sodom was rescued (Jub., Gen. R.). All Abraham’s servants were warriors (1TJ). Salem is Jerusalem (Tg. etc.). No tithe was taken from the possessions of the king of Sodom (Yashar).

The great measure of agreement between Genesis Apocryphon and Sefer ha-Yashar confirms one of the conclusions of the previous chapter, namely, that mediaeval compilers collected together every known tradition, ancient and recent alike.

Conformity between Genesis Apocryphon and Hellenistic literature raises a question of considerable importance. Was GA influenced by Hellenistic Judaism, or did Jewish writers of the Greek Diaspora adopt and partly modify Palestinian tradition?
Judging from the work as a whole, and above all from its geographic
details, it may legitimately be concluded that Genesis Apocryphon is
of Palestinian origin. A Hellenistic influence must, of course, not be
precluded a priori, but in view of the numerous indications collected
throughout these pages, it is most probable that the literature of Hel-
lenistic Judaism was built upon Palestinian foundations.\(^1\)

The relationship between Genesis Apocryphon and the Book of
Jubilees presents a particular problem which cannot be solved satisfac-
torily until all the fragments of GA have been published.\(^2\) At the
present time however, from the material already accessible it would
appear – as the editors themselves believe (p. 38) – that the correspond-
ing portions of the Book of Jubilees may be no more than an abridg-
ment of Genesis Apocryphon. But even if this is so, Jubilees still
retains two peculiarities with regard to its "source"; it records the
revelations made to Moses about the Patriarchs and not their own
memoirs, and it shows evidence of doctrinal bias unknown to GA
(e.g. the calculation of jubilees, and of the calendar in general). All
things considered, the Book of Jubilees should, perhaps, be regarded
as a shortened, though doctrinally enriched, Essene recension of the
original work.

From the observations made in these pages, it will be seen that
Genesis Apocryphon occupies a privileged position in midrashic
literature in that it is the most ancient midrash of all. With its discovery
the lost link between the biblical and the Rabbinic midrash has been
found. Its freshness, its popular character, and its contribution to the
understanding of the midrashic literary genre in its purest form, are
unique. The pseudopigrapha related to it, or eventually dependent
upon it (Jub., Enoch), as also most of the later midrashim, are too
much concerned to graft upon the biblical story doctrines sometimes

\(^1\) Cf. P. Wendland, *Die hellenistisch-römische Kultur in ihrer Beziehungen zu Juden-
tum und Christentum*, 2nd and 3rd ed., Tübingen, 1912, pp. 200 f. Cf. also my
remarks in *Moïse, l'Homme de l'Alliance*, pp. 73 f.

\(^2\) The yet unpublished Hebrew fragments of *Jubilees* from Qumran Cave IV
appear to have no bearing on the present issue because none of them relates to
chapter xiii giving the story of Abraham's journey to Egypt and his war
against the kings. In general, the remainder of the five manuscripts representing
the Hebrew original attest the faithfulness of both the Ethiopic and the Latin
translations. Cf. *Le travail d'édition des fragments manuscrits de Qumrân* (Communica-
tion de J. T. Milik) in *RB*, 1956, p. 60. The publication of the fragments of an
analogous work preserved in two manuscripts from Cave IV, is however, awaited
foreign to them. Beside Genesis Apocryphon they appear artificial and laboured, even though the relative weakness of their literary quality is often compensated by a greater theological richness.

The author of GA does indeed try, by every means at his disposal, to make the biblical story more attractive, more real, more edifying, and above all more intelligible. Geographic data are inserted to complete biblical lacunae\(^1\) or to identify altered place names,\(^2\) and various descriptive touches are added to give the story substance. There were, for example, three Egyptian princes, and the name of one of them was Harkenosh. They praised Sarah as though with one mouth.\(^3\) Abraham was frightened by his dream and Sarah wept because of it. The Patriarch prayed for the deliverance of his wife and his tears flowed. He was sad when his kinsman went away from him.\(^4\) The summary statements of Genesis are often expanded to explain how the Egyptian princes praised Sarah’s beauty, how God afflicted Pharaoh, how Abraham obeyed the divine command to travel through the land, how he was informed of Lot’s misfortune, and so on.\(^5\)

To this work of expansion and development Genesis Apocryphon adds another, namely, the reconciliation of unexplained or apparently conflicting statements in the biblical text in order to allay doubt and worry. Abraham knew that Sarah would be taken from him because of his dream. Sarah’s identity was revealed to Pharaoh by Lot.\(^6\) There is no contradiction between the restitution of all his property to the king of Sodom and the tithe given by Abraham to Melchizedek.\(^7\) It even happens that a biblical statement is suppressed in order to avoid difficulty; for example, the fall of the king of Sodom into the bitumen pits is overlooked entirely.\(^8\)

The deliberate omission of Genesis xii. 16 (the gifts received by Abraham from Pharaoh “because of Sarah”) merits special attention. The omission is due to an apologetic preoccupation and a desire to avoid scandal; retention of the passage as it stands would offend pious ears. But although this leaves the enrichment of Abraham unexplained,
it is made good later on in such a way as to preserve, rearranged, all the
details of the story.

The haggadic developments of Genesis Apocryphon are therefore
organically bound to their biblical text. The author never attempts to
introduce unrelated or extraneous matter. His technique is simple and
he exercises no scholarly learning, no exegetical virtuosity, no play on
words. His intention is to explain the biblical text, and this he does
either by bringing together various passages of Genesis, or by illustrat-
ing a verse with the help of an appropriate story. The resulting work is
certainly one of the jewels of midrashic exegesis, and the best illustra-
tion yet available of the primitive haggadah and of the unbiased re-
writing of the Bible.
PART THREE

BIBLE AND TRADITION

CHAPTER SIX

THE STORY OF BALAAM

THE SCRIPTURAL ORIGIN OF HAGGADAH

It has been repeatedly emphasized in these pages that Haggadah in its earliest form is not an extraneous creation of the Jewish mind, but developed in direct continuity with the Bible itself. At one time, therefore, there must have been no divergence at all between biblical and interpretative tradition. The exegesis of the primitive Haggadah must coincide with that of the last redactors of the written Torah.

Taking into account the composite character of the Pentateuch, there can be little doubt that the first readers and commentators of the Bible were faced with the same sort of problem of harmonisation as later midrashists, and the question arises whether the biblical Midrash, the source of the post-biblical Haggadah, can be reached by means of an analysis of the historical development of exegetical tradition.

A search for the boundaries between Scripture and tradition necessarily requires a large literary unit, and the story of Balaam (Numbers xxii – xxiv) has been chosen for the purpose. It will be seen that not every part of the biblical text receives equal attention from the commentators. Also, they are far more interested in Balaam’s actions than in his prophecies. Nevertheless, even those sections not indispensable to the main object of this study are of value in that they offer reliable evidence of the nature and characteristics of the sources of Jewish exegesis.

The various interpretations are set out below the biblical text which is given verse by verse.¹

The Invitation

Num. xxii. 2-21

Num. xxii. 2-6. Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites and Moab was afraid of the people for they were many.

¹. The first section of this study appeared in Deux traditions sur Balaam – Nombres xxii. 2–21 et ses interprétations midrashiques, in CS, ix, 1955, pp. 289–302.
And Moab was fearful of the children of Israel. And Moab said to the elders of Midian: This multitude will now consume everything around us, as an ox consumes the grass of the field. And Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor, to Pethor which is by the river, in the land of the sons of his people, to call him, saying: Behold, a people has come out of Egypt. Behold, they cover the face of the earth and they dwell opposite me. Now come, please, and curse this people for me, for they are stronger than I. Perhaps I shall be able to smite them and hunt them out of the land. For I know that whoever you bless is blessed, and whoever you curse is cursed.

4. And Moab said to the elders of Midian. Interpreters have tried from earliest times to explain the intrusion of the Midianites into a story concerning only Moab. Josephus (J.A, IV, vi 2, §§ 102-104) records that Moab and Midian were friends and allies from time immemorial. When the king of Moab consulted the Midianites on the subject of Israel, they advised him to solicit the cooperation of Balaam to whom they were bound by ties of friendship. In this way he explains both why the Moabites turned to the elders of Midian for advice, and why the Midianites took part in the mission sent to Balaam.

Other writers represent the alliance between Moab as resulting merely from their common exposure to the Hebrew menace. They deduce from Genesis, xxxvi. 35 that Moab and Midian had been deadly enemies until then.

Another interpretation is found in Numbers Rabbah, xx. 4:

The Moabites saw Israel’s unusual conquests, and said: Their leader grew up in Midian; let us learn from them the nature of his power. The elders of Midian said to them: His power is only in his mouth (prayer). Thereupon the Moabites said to them: We shall also come against them with a man whose power is in his mouth!

4. And Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time. According to Ps.-Jonathan, the united kingdom of Moab and Midian was governed alternately by a Moabite and a Midianite.

5. Balaam son of Beor. Nothing more clearly reveals the antipathy of the Rabbis for Balaam than the different popular etymologies of his name.

A mad person—μάρτως λάος. Philo, De cernubim, xxxii and passim.

1 Sifre-Num. § 157 (ed. Horovitz) p. 209; Sanb., 105a.
2 Cf. also Tanb. B., iv. 134.
He went out of his mind because of the immensity of his knowledge. *1TJ*.

He who swallows up the people (of Israel). *1TJ*.

Corrupter of the people (of Israel by debauch and idolatry). *Sanh.*, 105a.

Beno Beʾor – his son is a beast. *Sanh.* 105a.¹

5. *To Pethor which is by the river*. In the biblical text, Pethor is a place name, and the Septuagint, Peshitta, and Targum Onkelos interpret it as such.

Tradition, because of Balaam’s converse with God during the night, discerns in Pethor an allusion to his profession, the root רַהֲד signifying “to interpret dreams”.

A certain Balaam hailing from the Euphrates, the best diviner of his day. *JA*, IV, vi, 2, § 104.

A man living in Mesopotamia, far-famed as a sooth-sayer. *VM*, xlviii. § 264.

Et misit ad Balaam filium Beor interpretem somniorum, qui habitabat in Mesopotamia. *LAB*, xviii. 2.

An interpreter of dreams. *2TJ*.

Hariolus. *Vulg.*

Ps.-*Jonathan*, Numbers Rabbah, and Tanḥuma (*Buber*) attempt to combine both interpretations.

To his dwelling place at Padan, which is Pethor because he interpreted dreams in Aram on the Euphrates. *1TJ*.

Pethor was his native city... Others say that he was an interpreter (pōther) of dreams. *Num. R.*, xx. 7.²

5. *In the land of the sons of his people* (יוֹם יְהוּד). The Vulgate, and certain modern exegetes, correct this equivocal expression to “the sons of Ammon”.

Ps.-*Jonathan* understands it to refer to Balaam:

The land whose children venerated and adored him.

In Numbers Rabbah, it alludes to Balak:

He came from that country. Balaam prophesied to him there that he would become king. *Num. R.*, xx. 7.³

¹ This is an allusion to Balaam’s alleged dealings with his she-ass. Cf. below, p. 138.
³ Cf. *Tanh. B.*, *ibid*. 
6. *Whoever you curse is cursed.* How did Balak know of the efficacy of Balaam’s talents? By means of the disastrous experience of the conquest of Moab by Sihon king of the Amorites. This tradition is linked to Numbers xxi. 27-29.

They that speak in parables alludes to Balaam and his father, whom Sihon hired to curse Moab. They said: Let the city of Sihon be built and established. For a fire is gone out of Heshbon... It has devoured Ar of Moab. They cursed Moab that it might be delivered into the hands of Sihon, saying: Woe to you, Moab! Num. R., xix. 30; xx. 7.

The antiquity of this tradition is proved by Ps.-PHILO:

Ecce ego scio quoniam in regno patris mei cum expugnarent eum Amorreii maledixisti eos (the Moabites) et traditi sunt in conspectu eius. LAB, xviii. 2.

Num. xxii. 7-14. The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with divinations in their hand, and they came to Balaam and told him the words of Balak. He said to them: Spend the night here, and I will bring back to you the word which the Lord speaks to me. The princes of Moab stayed with Balaam. God came to Balaam and said: Who are these men with you? Balaam said to God: Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, has sent to me saying, Behold, a people has come out of Egypt and they cover the face of the earth. Now come and curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to fight them and to drive them out. God said to Balaam: You shall not go with them. You shall not curse the people for they are blessed. Balaam rose in the morning and said to the princes of Balak: Go to your country, for the Lord has refused to let me go with you. The princes of Moab rose and went to Balak and said: Balaam has refused to come with us.

7. *With divinations in their hand.* What is the meaning of the unusual plural form, “divinations”? The simplest explanation, appearing in Numbers Rabbah xx. 8, is that they were the objects or instruments of divination which Balaam was to use.2

This is not the traditional interpretation. In the eyes of the commentators, the *kegamim* were the presents with which Balak hoped to obtain the prophet’s favours.

Having sealed objects of value in their hand. 1TI

1 Balaam’s father was also a prophet. Cf. Sanh., 105a.
3 The expression “of divination” which follows here, is doubtless borrowed from TO.
Having the sealed wage in their hand. \textit{27J}.

Habentes divinationis pretium in manibus. \textit{Vulg.}

To him Balak sent some of his courtiers, and invited him to come, offering him gifts at once and promising more to follow. \textit{VM}, xlviii. § 266.

Balaam... who loved gain from wrongdoing. \textit{2 Peter}, ii. 15.

For they ... abandon themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error. \textit{Jude} 11.

8. \textit{I will bring back to you the word which the Lord speaks to me}. For \textit{PHILO} (\textit{VM}, xlviii. § 266), this consultation with the Lord is mere pretence and proof of Balaam's vanity, the inference being that he thought no prophet of his reputation could undertake anything without a divine oracle.

What, in any case, was the object of turning to God with an unworthy request? Aggadath Bezeshith 65 quotes in this connection a saying of R. Yehudah ben Pazzi:

When Balak sent messengers to Balaam, asking him to curse Israel, Balaam said to them: What do you desire? Do you wish to touch the Holy One, blessed be He? For He is with them.\(^1\)

That Balaam, in spite of this, did his best to satisfy Balak, rendered his guilt even heavier.

8. \textit{The princes of Moab stayed with Balaam}. The commentators conclude that the Midianites had departed. As soon as they heard that Balaam intended to consult God, explains Sanhedrin 105a, they knew that their mission had failed, for no father hates his son.\(^2\)

10. \textit{Balaam said to God: Balak son of Zippor}. Balaam's reply, as given in the Bible, appears to suggest that he thought himself able to teach God something which He did not already know.

When He said to him, Who are these men with you, that villain thought: He does not know them! There are moments when He does not know. I will do with His children all that I wish. \textit{Num. R.}, xx. 9.

He should have said: Sovereign of the universe, everything is manifest to You, and there is nothing hidden from You. Why, then, do You question me? Instead, he answered Him: Balak son of Zippor ... (\textit{Ibid.}, xx. 6).

\(^1\) Cf. A. \textit{Jellinek, Bet ha-Midrasch}, vol. iv, p. 89.

\(^2\) Cf. also \textit{Num. R.}, xx. 8; \textit{Tanb. B.}, iv. 135.
Ps.-PHILO allows Balaam to answer God correctly:

Et quid Domine temptas genus hominum? Et hi ergo non possunt sustinere, quoniam tu plus scis que fieri habentur in seculo antequam fundares illud. Et nunc illumina servum tuum, si rectum est ut proficiscar cum eis. LAB, xviii. 4.

12. You shall not curse the people for they are blessed. This is an allusion to the blessing promised to Abraham and the Patriarchs.

For they are blessed by Me from the time of their fathers. 1TJ.


13. The Lord has refused to let me go with you. By adding “with you”, Balaam reveals his pride. This vice, ascribed to the disciples of Balaam in Aboth, v. 19, is interpreted as follows:

The proud spirit: For the Lord has refused to let me go with you. Shall I go with you? I will go with greater men than you. What says Scripture later? Once again Balak sent princes, more numerous and more noble than the first.1

JOSEPHUS (JA, IV, vi. 2, §§ 105-106) writes that Balaam showed the messengers how much he wished to consent to their request, but God thwarting his plan, he was only able to advise them to renounce their hatred for Israel since the Lord’s favour was with that people.

Num. xxii. 15-21. Again Balak sent princes, more numerous and more noble than the first. 16They came to Balaam, saying: Thus says Balak son of Zippor. Please let nothing prevent you from coming to me, 17for I will surely honour you greatly, and whatever you say to me I will do. Please come and curse this people for me. 18Answering, Balaam said to the servants of Balak: Even though Balak were to give me his house filled with silver and gold, in no way can I go against

the command of the Lord my God, in matters either small or great. 
19Now please stay here, you also, this night, that I may know what the 
Lord will say to me again. 20God came to Balaam in the night and 
said to him: If the men have come to call you, rise and go with them. 
21Balaam rose in the morning and saddled his ass, and he went with 
the princes of Moab.

17. For I will surely honour you greatly, and whatever you say to me I will do. This discreet promise of reward did not escape Balaam, as the following verse shows.

The Vulgate renders the allusion more obvious:

Quidquid volueris dabo tibi.

Ps.-PHILO interprets it as a formal promise:

Habebis mercedem tuam tu. LAB, xviii. 7.

PHILO goes even further:

But others, selected from the more highly reputed courtiers, were at once appointed for the same purpose, who brought more money and promised more abundant gifts. VM, lxviii. § 267.

By associating this verse with Numbers xxiv. 11, Aboth de-Rabbi Nathan (I, 23, p. 76) concludes that whoever, like Balaam, is honoured for reasons displeasing to God, will in the end be dishonoured.

17. Please come and curse this people for me. Ps.-PHILO writes that Balak no longer asked for Israel to be cursed, but only that Balaam should intercede for him to God.


18. Even though Balak were to give me his house filled with silver and gold. To the modern reader, this appears to be a refusal to sell the word of God, but the Rabbis understand it as yet another sign of Balaam's greed.

How do we know (that Balaam had) a covetous soul? Because it is written: Even though... ARN, II, xliv. p. 125.

How do we know that whoever honours his neighbour for reasons of money will end by parting from him despised? Because we find it with regard to Balaam the Villain, who honoured Balak for reasons of money. ARN, I, xxix. p. 88.
Thus we find (that the principle "whoever desires an object which he is not destined to possess, will not only not obtain it, but will even lose what he already possesses", applies to) Cain, Korah, Balaam\(^1\) ... They desired objects not intended for them; yet what they sought, they did not obtain, and what they possessed, (the prophetic spirit in the case of Balaam) was taken from them. *T. Sota*, iv. 19, p. 301.

Enticed by those offers, present and prospective. *VM*, xlviii. § 268.

Nothing of this kind appears in *Ps.-PHILO*, where a very different Balaam is described, fully conscious of the tragedy of his predicament:

Ecce insipiens\(^2\) est filius Sephor, et nescit quoniam inhabitat in gyro mortuorum. *LAB*, xviii. 8.

18. *In no way can I go against the command of the Lord in matters either great or small.* Since Balaam’s evil intention is taken for granted, this phrase is attributed to the direct influence of God.

In this way he prophesied that he would be unable to cancel the blessing wherewith the Israelites had been blessed by the mouth of the Shekinah. *Num. R.*, xx. 10.

19. *That I may know what the Lord will say to me again.* For *PHILO*, (*VM*, xlviii. § 268), this second consultation is once again pure pretence.

JOSEPHUS (JA, IV, vi. 3, § 107) remarks that it is an extremely grave offence to try to please Balak’s messengers by consulting God a second time in spite of His first categoric refusal.

20. *If the men have come to call you, rise and go with them.* The commentators discern a certain disapproval in the divine response, and conclude that permission was only given to Balaam because he so much wished to go.

From this you learn that a man is led in the way he desires to go. For at first Balaam was told, You shall not go. But when he persisted in his desire, he was allowed to go. Therefore it is written: And God’s anger was kindled because he went. *Num. R.*, xx. 12.\(^3\)

Villain! I take no pleasure in the ruin of the wicked, but since you wish to go, and to perish from the world, Arise and go! *Num. R.*, xx. 12.


\(^1\) Balaam, Korah, and Cain are also mentioned in *Jude* 11 as being models of iniquity.

\(^2\) The *editio princeps* reads “inspiciens”. Balak wishes to make sure of the future but Balaam knows that every effort is vain.

\(^3\) Cf. also *Sanb.*, 105b.
21. Balaam rose in the morning and saddled his ass. That Balaam set off as soon as possible, shows his eagerness to curse the Israelites. This verse recalls, in antithesis, how eagerly Abraham set out to sacrifice Isaac, thereby meriting the blessing of God on all his descendants.

In the name of Simeon ben Eleazar: Love dispenses with the requirements of dignity. We learn this from Abraham. It is written: Abraham rose in the morning and saddled his ass (Gen. xxii. 3).\(^1\) Hatred dispenses with the requirements of dignity. We learn this from Balaam. It is written: Balaam rose... Sanh. 105b.

Genesis Rabbah, lv. 8 repeats this saying, but attributes it to Simeon ben Yoḥai, and adds that neither Abraham nor Balaam were helped by servants.

He preceded everyone and rose with zeal, alone. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Him: Villain! Their father Abraham has preceded you on the occasion of the binding of Isaac his son. As it is written (Gen. xxii. 3): And Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his ass. Num. R., xx. 12.

Four men saddled (their mounts) with joy: Abraham (Gen. xxii. 3), Balaam (Num. xxii. 21), Joseph (Gen. xlvi. 29) and Pharaoh (Ex. xiv. 6). Follow the saddling of Abraham our father, who worked to do the will of his Creator. Avoid the saddling of Balaam the Villain, who worked to go and curse Israel. Mekh. on Ex. xiv. 6, I. 199.\(^2\)

*Balaam and his ass*

*Num. xxii. 22-35*

The traditional interpretation of this episode, with all its picturesque and popular appeal, is that Balaam’s mission was displeasing to God but was nevertheless authorized by Him so that the divine Will should triumph.

Little attention is paid by commentators to the pericope as a whole. Writings such as Numbers Rabbah and Tanḥuma, which analyse each verse in detail, add to most passages explanations extraneous to the subject itself. The Rabbis’ attention is particularly attracted to circumstances humiliating to Balaam. They notice that although he was supposed to be a famous soothsayer, he was unable to distinguish

\(^1\) This is contrary to the dignity of a man of high rank.

the Angel recognized by his ass. They remark that although his power was supposed to be in his mouth, and although he set off to curse an entire nation with it, he was unable even to use it to good effect in the control of his beast. They estimate his repentance before the Angel as an act of calculated hypocrisy.

A clear distinction has to be made here between Palestinian tradition on the one hand, and Vita Mosis and Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum on the other. The two latter works suppress, for different reasons, the dialogue between Balaam and his ass.

Philo considers that the purpose of the story is to show that the mission upon which Balaam so lightheartedly embarked was in fact ill-fated. He points out that the heavenly apparition, although visible to an animal, went unnoticed by the man who pretended to commune with the Creator of the world, and that he finally perceived the Angel, not because of his merit, but so that he might recognize his worthlessness. Despite everything he had seen, he asked the Angel whether he might continue on his way. Therefore, his prayer for forgiveness must have been dissimulation. He was told to continue, but was warned that his eagerness would be of no help to him since his tongue, without the consent of his spirit would only utter the prophetic words which God chose to place upon it.

In the short passage which Ps.-Philo devotes to the episode, the accent continues to be laid on the inevitability of Balaam's tragedy.

Num. xxii. 22-30. The anger of God was kindled because he went, and the Angel of the Lord stood in the way as his adversary. Balaam rode on his ass and his two servants were with him. 23And the ass saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, and she turned aside from the road and went into the field. Balaam struck the ass to turn her into the road. 24Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, where there was a bank on both sides. 25When the ass saw the Angel of the Lord, she pressed against the wall, and she pressed the foot of Balaam against it, and he struck her again. 26The Angel of the Lord moved again, and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn either right or left. 27The ass saw the Angel of the Lord, and she lay down beneath Balaam. Balaam’s anger was kindled and he struck the ass with his stick. 28Then the Lord opened the mouth of the ass and she said to Balaam: What have I done to you that you have struck me three times? 29Balaam said to the ass: Because you have shamed me. If
I had a sword in my hand I would kill you. The ass said to Balaam: Am I not your ass upon which you have ridden all your life until this day? Was it my habit to do so to you? He said: No.

22. And his two servants were with him

His two sons Yanes and Yimbres were with him. 1 Tlf.

As will be seen later, the first encounter between Israel and the family of Balaam took place before the exodus from Egypt. According to tradition, Balaam was one of Pharaoh’s three counsellors, and his sons Yanes and Yimbres were the chief magicians of the king.¹

23. Balaam struck the ass to turn her into the road. The Rabbis draw attention to the discrepancy between Balaam’s incapacity to control his ass and his desire to destroy a whole nation.

This villain went to curse an entire nation which had not sinned against him, yet he had to strike his ass to prevent it from going into a field! Num. R., xx. 14.

24. Then the Angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards. Ps.-Jonathan, who in xxii. 5 identifies Balaam with Laban,² once more draws on Gen. xxxi:

The angel of the Lord stood in a narrow place among the vines where Jacob and Laban had erected a pile of stones. (There was) a pillar at one side, and a watch-tower on the other, so that neither of them should go beyond that point to do wrong.

28. The Lord opened the mouth of the ass. This miracle was ordained from the beginning of the world.

Ten things were created after the completion of the world, at the start of the Sabbath, in the evening: ... the mouth of the speaking ass. 1 Tlf.

Josephus finds it necessary to qualify that the ass spoke like a man:

She, so God willed, broke out in human speech. JA, IV, vi. 3, § 109.

The Midrash sees in the miracle a lesson to teach Balaam that the power of speech is under God’s control.

The Lord opened the mouth of the ass to make known to Balaam that the mouth and the tongue are in His power, and that if he wished to curse, his mouth also was in His power. Num. R., xx. 14.³

¹ Cf. below, p. 167.
² “Balak sent messengers to Laban the Aramean, who is Balaam”. Such a procedure is not uncommon in talmudic literature which similarly identifies Shem with Melchizedek and Phinehas with Elijah.
³ Cf. also Tanh. B., iv. 138.
29. Because you have shamed me. The bithpael of the root הלל signifies not only to shame, but also to abuse sexually (Judg. xix. 25). It is understood in this sense by the commentators.

Even when he speaks the sacred tongue, the language of a Gentile is foul. Num. R., xx. 14.1

29. If I had a sword in my hand I would kill you.

The ass spoke thus to Balaam: You cannot even kill me unless you have a sword in your hand. How then do you mean to destroy an entire nation? He was silent and could not answer. Num. R., xx. 14.2

30. Am I not your ass upon which you have ridden all your life until this day? According to the Targums, which devote more attention to this verse than to any other passage of the story of the ass, she reproached her master not only with undeserved cruelty towards her, but also with lack of understanding of the ways of God.

Woe to you Balaam the Villain! You have no understanding and there is no wisdom in you. You were unable to curse me, an unclean animal that dies in this world and has no entry into a future one, in spite of all your knowledge. How much less then are you able to curse the sons of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, for whose merits the world was created since the beginning! You have deceived these people, and said to them, This ass is not mine, she was lent to me.3 But am I not your ass which you have ridden since your childhood? 2TJ.4

Woe to you Balaam, you are without understanding! You were unable to curse me, an unclean animal that dies in this world and has no entry into a future one. How much less then are you able to curse the sons of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for whose merits the world was created! How do you dare to go to curse them? You have deceived these people, and said to them, This ass is not mine, she was lent to me; my horses are at grass. Am I not your ass which you have ridden from your childhood until today? Have I not received pleasure from you? 1TJ.5

(Sh) reproached Balaam for the injustice wherewith, though he had no cause to complain of her past ministries, he thus belaboured her, failing to understand that today it was God's purpose that debarr him from serving him on the mission whereon he sped. JA, IV, vi. 3, § 109.

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1 Cf. Tanh. B., ibid; Sanh., 105a (cf. above, p. 129); 1TJ on Num. xxii. 30 (cf. below).
2 Cf. Tanh. B., ibid.
3 Balaam is thought to have pretended that the ass was not his because he was ashamed of its insubordination, but it humiliated him further by telling him he was a liar. Cf. also Num. R., xx. 14; Tanh. B., iv. 138–9.
4 The Neofiti account is substantially identical.
5 Cf. 1TJ on xxii. 5, 29.
30. *Was it my habit to do so to you?* According to a tradition appearing in Numbers Rabbah and Tanḥuma, and deriving from verse 33, the Angel killed the ass as soon as she had finished speaking.

If she had not turned aside from me, surely I would have slain you just now, and let her live. *Num. R.*, xx. 15.\(^1\)

**Two reasons are given for her death.**

After she had spoken she died, that no one might say, This is the animal which spoke, and so make of her an object of worship. Another exposition... The Holy One, blessed be He, cared for the dignity of that Villain, and did not allow it to be said that this was the animal which had shamed Balaam. Now if the Holy One, blessed be He, cares for the dignity of the wicked, clearly He also cares for the dignity of the righteous. *Num. R.*, xx. 14.\(^2\)

*Num. xxxii. 31-35.* The Lord opened the eyes of Balaam and he saw the Angel of the Lord standing in the path with his drawn sword in his hand. He knelt down and fell upon his face. \(^3\) The Angel of the Lord said to him: Why did you strike your ass three times? Behold, I have come to oppose you because your way is perverse before me. \(^4\) The ass saw me and turned aside from me three times. If she had not turned aside from me, I would have killed you now and let her live. \(^5\) Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord: I have sinned for I did not know that you stood in front of me in the path. And now if it is evil in your sight, I will return. \(^6\) The Angel of the Lord said to Balaam: Go with the men, but you shall speak only the word which I will tell you. So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak.

34. *Balaam said to the Angel of the Lord: I have sinned.* The Rabbis find it impossible to accept Balaam’s sincerity.

*(He) said so because he was a subtle villain and knew that nothing can prevent punishment except repentance, and that if any sinner says, I have sinned, the angel is not permitted to touch him.* *Num. R.*, xx. 15.\(^3\)

34. *If it is evil in your sight, I will return.* PHILO, as noted above, remarks that by asking this, despite everything he had witnessed, Balaam revealed both his lack of sincerity and his eagerness to harm Israel.\(^4\) The same interpretation is found in Numbers Rabbah in relation to verse 35.

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\(^1\) Cf. *Tanḥ. B.*, iv. 139.
\(^3\) Cf. *Tanḥ. B.*, *ibid*.
\(^4\) Cf. above, p. 135.
JOSEPHUS (J.A, IV, vi. 3, § 111) considers that Balaam’s offer to return was due to his fear of the Angel.

Numbers Rabbah emphasizes Balaam’s wickedness by making him reproach God with inconstancy. Once more, the parallelism with Abraham is underlined.

He said to the angel: I did not go until the Holy One, blessed be He, said to me, Arise and go with them (xxii. 20). Yet now you tell me to return! These are His tactics. Did He not, in the same way, command Abraham to offer up his son, and afterwards the angel of the Lord called and said, Lay not your hand... (Gen. xxii. 11f). He is accustomed to say a thing and to have an angel cancel it! Num. R., xx. 15.1

35. *And the Angel of the Lord said to Balaam: Go with the men.* Faced with so much wickedness, God no longer forbade the journey but confined Himself to preventing the fallen prophet from fulfilling his mission. The Angel’s reply was a presage of disaster but Balaam did not understand it.

Go with the men: this means, your lot is with them, and at the end you will perish from the world. Num. R., xx. 15.2

And so in displeasure he answered: Pursue your journey. Your hurrying will avail you nought. I shall prompt the needful words without your mind’s consent, and direct your organs of speech as justice and convenience require. I shall guide the reins of speech, and though you understand it not, employ your tongue for each prophetic utterance. V'M, xlix. § 274.

Ps.-PHILO’s interpretation of this text exposes the principal difference between the Palestinian tradition and the exegesis proper to Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum. Balaam was conscious from the very beginning of the ruin which awaited him.


35. *So Balaam went on with the princes of Balak.*

This shows that as they rejoiced in cursing, so did he. Num. R., xx. 15.3

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1 Cf. also Tanh. B., iv. 139.
2 Cf. Tanh. B., iv. 140.
3 Cf. Tanh. B., ibid.
Num. xxii. 36-xxiv. 25

Num. xxii. 36 - xxiii. 6. When Balak heard that Balaam had come, he went out to meet him to the city of Moab which was on the frontier of the Arnon, at the extremity of the boundary. 37 Balak said to Balaam: Did I not send to call you? Why did you not come to me? Am I really not able to honour you? 38 Balaam said to Balak: Behold, I have come to you now. What can I say? I must speak the word which God puts into my mouth. 39 Balaam went with Balak and they came to Kiriath-huzoth. 40 Then Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep and sent to Balaam and to the princes who were with him. 41 In the morning, Balak took Balaam and brought him up to Bamoth-Baal, and from there he saw the nearest of the people. xxiii. 1 Balaam said to Balak: Build for me seven altars here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams. 2 Balak did as Balaam said, and Balak and Balaam offered on each altar a bull and a ram. 3 Balaam said to Balak: Stand beside your holocaust, and I will go. Perhaps the Lord will meet me, and whatever He shows me I will tell you. And he went to a bare hill. 4 God met Balaam, and he said to him: I have prepared seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each. 5 The Lord put a word into the mouth of Balaam, and said: Return to Balak and speak thus. 6 He returned to him and behold, he was still standing by his holocaust, he and all the princes of Moab.

37. Am I really not able to honour you? Ancient tradition, as attested by JOSEPHUS (JA, IV, vi 4, § 112) and PHILÓ (VM, . § 275), describes a magnificent reception. JOSEPHUS mentions it only briefly, but PHILÓ writes of a first interview followed by a series of feasts, each more extravagant than the last.

The Vulgate, as before, translates “honour” as merces:

An quia mercedem adventui tuo reddere nequeo?

Numbers Rabbah anticipates the issue and turns the question into a positive statement, meaning “I am unable to honour you”.

He prophesied that Balaam would in the end depart from him in shame. Num. R., xx. 16.

39. And they came to Kiriath-huzoth. The Septuagint and the Vulgate simply translate the name of the town, but Ps.-JONATHAN identifies it:

They came to the town surrounded by walls, to the streets of a great city, which is the town of Sihon, Berosha.
40. Then Balak sacrificed oxen and sheep and sent to Balaam and to the princes who were with him. The Vulgate remains obsessed by the idea of gifts and states that Balak sent them munera.

Numbers Rabbah makes good use of a stylistic peculiarity – the collective singular form for oxen and sheep – to insist on Balak’s meanness and Balaam’s cupidity compared with the generosity of Abraham.

And Balak sacrificed an ox and a sheep. Righteous men speak little but do much, like Abraham. It is written (Gen. xviii. 5): I will fetch a morsel of bread. Yet afterwards (he tells Sarah): Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal (ibid. 6), And Abraham ran to the herd and took a calf (ibid. 7). – The wicked, however, promise much but do not even a little. Balak said: I will honour you greatly. But when Balaam came, he sent him only one ox and one sheep! Balaam began to gnash his teeth against him, for his soul was greedy. Is this what he sends me? Tomorrow I will lay a curse on his property! And Balaam said to Balak: Build me seven altars here. Num. R., xx. 17.


Only the Vulgate translates it literally, excelsa Baal. The Septuagint reads “pillar of Baal”.

Targum Onkelos and Philo substitute “terror” and “some deity” for the name of Baal.

Ps.-Jonathan describes it as “the high place of the divinity (terror) of Peor”, an allusion to the idolatrous debauchery practised in honour of Baal Peor.

This allusion is emphasized in Numbers Rabbah, xx 18, where Balak sees the places where Israel will sin, and makes Balaam climb Bamoth-Baal for that reason.

Josephus writes that it was Balaam himself who asked to be taken to a hill from which he could see the Hebrews.

After a magnificent reception from the king, he desired to be conducted to one of the mountains, to inspect the dispositions of the Hebrews’ camp. Balak thereupon went himself, escorting the seer with all the honours of a royal retinue to a mountain lying over their heads and sixty furlongs distant from the camp. J.A, IV, vi. 4, § 112.

1. Balaam said to Balak: Build for me seven altars here, and prepare for me

where seven bulls and seven rams. The purpose of these sacrifices is understood in various ways.

Ps.-PHILO (LAB, xviii. 7) writes that Balaam was asked by Balak to obtain God’s favour for him by means of the offerings.

JOSEPHUS (JA, IV, vi. 4, § 113) sees them as intended to obtain a sign from God, which in effect turned out to be a presage of disaster.

The same interpretation is found in PHILO (VM, li. § 282) in relation to the second lot of sacrifices (Num. xxiii. 15-16), when favourable signs were sought in birds and voices. It is inferred from Numbers xxiv. 1 that Balaam sought to “meet the Lord” by unworthy means on the first two occasions.

Another interpretation, equally dependent on scriptural association, is seen in Ps.-JONATHAN:

When Balaam saw that there was idol-worship among the Israelites, he rejoiced in his heart and said to Balak: Build me...

The prophet believed that because of Israel’s worship of the golden calf God would permit him to accomplish his mission.

2. Balak and Balaam offered on each altar a bull and a ram. Mention of Balaam and Balak celebrating together is a gloss unknown to the Septuagint. (The verb has remained in the singular, even in the Masoretic text).

PHILO follows the Septuagint tradition:

King, do you build seven altars, and sacrifice a calf and a ram on each. VM, 1. § 277.

JOSEPHUS and Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum infer from verse 4 that Balaam was the celebrant.

The king having promptly ministered to his wishes, he (Balaam) burnt the slaughtered victims whole. JA, IV, vi. 4, § 113.

Et venit in terram Moab, et edificavit sacratium et obtulit oblationes. LAB, xviii. 10.

The Targums (ONKELOS and Ps.-JONATHAN), and the Vulgate, follow the gloss. The Vulgate is the least ambiguous:

Cum fecisset iuxta sermonem Balaam imposuerunt simul vitulum et arietem super aram.

3. And he went to a bare hill. For the ancient commentators, ריל ש is a cruix interpretum. In the Bible, the phrase signifies a treeless hill, a place of idolatry. This meaning is unknown to the interpreters, and
the Targums try to solve the linguistic difficulty by means of doctrinal associations.

And Balak stood by his sacrifice. And Balaam went to enquire of God, and he went straight forward (καὶ ἐπορεύθη ἐξωτείνας). LXX.¹

He advanced outside (ἐξωτ). VM, l. § 277.

Cumque abiisset velociter. Vulg.

He went away with a quiet heart. 2TJ.²

He went away creeping like a serpent. 1TJ.³

His intention was to curse. Until that moment he had been calm; but afterwards he was confused. Num. R., xx. 18.⁴

Num. xxiii. 7-10. Balaam took up his discourse, and said: From Aram Balak has brought me, the king of Moab from the mountains of the east. Come, curse for me Jacob! Come rage against Israel! How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I rage against whom the Lord has not raged? For from the top of the rocks I see him, from the hills I behold him. Lo, a people dwelling alone, not reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number one quarter of Israel? May my soul die the death of the righteous and my end be like his!

7. Balaam took up his discourse, and said: From Aram Balak has brought me. The Septuagint introduces this verse with the words, “And the spirit of God came upon him” (cf. xxiv. 2), the implication being that not only only did God place the words in Balaam’s mouth but he was possessed by the spirit of prophecy.

Philo (VM, l. § 277) develops the same idea, explaining that Balaam’s magic arts were banished by a true prophetic spirit.

Josephus also (J.A, IV, vi. 5, § 118) remarks that Balaam had no control over his words and that his prophecies were due to divine inspiration.

It is possible that this same tradition appears in the Fragmentary Targum:

He spoke the discourse of his prophecy (משלי נבואות).

² Cf. 2TJ on Gen. xxii. 8: “They (Abraham and Isaac) went together with a quiet heart”. See below, p. 194. Abraham and Isaac went to save the Israelites; Balaam, to curse and destroy them.
³ The allusion refers to the serpent of Paradise (דרי א рын) in Gen. iii. 15.
⁴ Cf. Tanh. B., iv. 141.
A very different exegesis is found in Ps.-PHILO. According to this writer, Balaam was indeed filled with the holy Spirit, but when he saw the Israelites it gradually abandoned him.

Et cum vidisset partem populi non permansit in eo spiritus Domini. \textit{LAB}, xviii. 10.

In the following passage there are only a few allusions to Balaam’s prophecies, and Ps.-PHILO writes instead of Balaam’s great discouragement when he realizes the imminence of his impending fall:

Ecce adduxit me Balach ad montem excelsum et dixit: Veni irrue in ignem hominum quem aqua extinguere non poterit. Ignem vero qui absorbet aquam quis sustinebit? \textit{LAB.}, xviii. 10.\textsuperscript{1}

Non possum dicere que video oculis meis, quia modicum mihi superest sancti spiritus qui manet in me. Quoniam cognovi quod persuasus sum a Balach et perdidi tempus vite mee. \textit{LAB}, xviii. 11.

Ego autem stridebo dentibus pro eo quod deductus sum, et transgressus sum que dicta sunt ad me nocte. \textit{LAB}, xviii. 12.

Strange as it may seem, this particular interpretation of Ps.-PHILO, according to which Balaam was conscious of his own transgression and disgrace, is probably inspired by the first words of the biblical prophecy, “From Aram Balak has brought me”.

Numbers Rabbah echoes the same exegesis:

I was among the exalted ones (ים רוח = angels) and Balak brought me down to the nethermost pit. Another exposition of From Aram is: I was with the Most High (ים וב) and Balak brought me down from my glory. It is like a man walking with a king, who seeing a robber, abandoned the king and walked with the robber. When he returned to the king he said to him: Go with the man with whom you have been walking, for you may no more walk with me! It was the same with Balaam. He had been joined to the holy Spirit but had returned to be a diviner as at first. \textit{Num. R.}, xx. 19.\textsuperscript{2}

8. \textit{How can I curse whom God has not cursed? How can I rage against whom the Lord has not raged?} The brief discourse in Ps.-PHILO, a declaration and not a prophecy, is probably associated with this verse:

Facilius est tollere fundamenta et omne fastigium eorum, et extinguiere lumen solis, et intenebrescere lumen lune, quam qui volerit

\textsuperscript{1} Another recension of the same passage reads: “Come, throw yourself into the fire of these men! I cannot withstand fire which is extinguished by water. Who then can withstand fire which devours water?”

eradicare plantaginem Fortissimi, aut exterminare vineam eius! LAB, xviii. 10.

Josephus (JA, IV, vi. 4, § 114) places a series of blessings in Balaam’s mouth. God has blessed Israel, and will grant His favour to the people forever. They will receive an inheritance which will make of them the happiest people on the earth.

9. *For from the top of the rocks I see him, from the hills I behold him.* As already noted, Balaam was unable to curse Israel because of the merits of the Patriarchs. Palestinian tradition recalls the same teaching in association with this verse, where the “mountains” are identified with the Fathers, and the “hills” with the Mothers of Israel.

I see this people which is led by the merits of its just Fathers who were like mountains: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and by the merit of the four Mothers who were like hills; Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. 2TJ.

For from the top of the rocks: these are the Patriarchs. From the hills: these are the Matriarchs. Num. R., xx. 19.¹

9. *Lo, a people dwelling alone, not reckoned among the nations.* Targum Onkelos expands this verse into the hope that Israel, though oppressed, will eventually possess the world, and never be condemned to destruction by the nations.

There is no mention of Israel’s destruction in the Palestinian Targums, but of her protection against the infiltration of pagan customs, a major preoccupation of both Palestine and the Diaspora.

They shall not bind themselves to the laws (מַלְאֹתָם) of the nations. 2TJ.

They shall not be guided by the laws of the nations. 1TJ.

Philox gives a similar interpretation:

But I shall not be able to harm the people, which shall dwell alone, not reckoned among other nations; and that, not because their dwelling place is set apart and their land severed from others, but because in virtue of the distinction of their peculiar customs they do not mix with others to depart from the ways of their fathers. VM, l. § 278.

The Onkelos exegesis finds a certain measure of support in Josephus and Ps.-Philox.

Aye, and you shall suffice for the world, to furnish every land with inhabitants sprung from your race. ...Nay, those numbers now are

¹ Cf. Tanh. B., iv. 143.
small and shall be contained by the land of Canaan; but the habitable world, be sure, lies before you as an eternal habitation, and your multitudes shall find abode on islands and continents, more numerous even than the stars in heaven... Let the children of your foes be seized with a passion for battle against you, and be emboldened to take arms and to les close with you in strife: for not one shall return victorious or in such wise as to gladden the heart of child and wife. *J.A*, IV, vi. 4, §§ 115-117.

Nonne opportet te interrogare que misit in Pharaonem et in terram eius, propter hoc quod voluit in servitutem redigere eos?... Si autem quis dixerit in consilio suo, quoniam in vanum laboravit Fortissimus, aut superfue elegit eos, ecce nunc video salutem liberationis que futura est contingens eis. *LAB*, xviii. 11.

10. *Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number one quarter of Israel?* The Septuagint shrinks from the expression “dust of Jacob”, which might appear derogatory, and uses “seed” instead. It also substitutes “the families of Israel” for “one quarter of Israel”.

The Vulgate translates the latter phrase, *stirps Israel*.

Ps.-JONATHAN deals with the passage fully:

> When the guilty Balaam saw the Israelites cutting their foreskins and hiding them in the dust of the desert, he said: Who can count the merits of these strong men, and who can count the sum of the good works in a single camp of the four camps of Israel?

The Fragmentary Targum appears to represent the most ancient tradition, according to which dust and sand evoke the promise made to Abraham concerning his posterity (cf. Gen. xv. 5).

Who can count the children of the house of Jacob, of whom it is said that they are as numerous as the stars of heaven?

JOSEPHUS (cf. above) expresses the same concept of a great nation, and makes the same comparison with the stars of heaven, thereby reflecting the tradition preserved in the Fragmentary Targum.

10. *May my soul die the death of the righteous, and my end be like his.* Balaam hoped to share in the destiny of Israel.

The Vulgate accepts the literal meaning of the text, and so also does the Septuagint, except that it interprets the second half of the verse as, “and let my seed be like theirs”.

Palestinian tradition does not allow this wish to pass without pronouncing impossible its fulfilment.

If these Israelites kill him with the sword, Balaam himself announces that he will have no place in a future life. But should he die the death
of the righteous, his end might resemble the end of the least among them. $2TJ$.

If the house of Israel kills me with the sword, I have already said that I shall have no part in a future life. But if I die the death of the righteous, let my end resemble that of the least among them. $1TJ$.

PHILO, believing in the immortality of the souls of the just, paraphrases the verse:

May my soul die to the life of the body that it may be reckoned among the souls of the just, even such as are the souls of these men. $VM$, i. § 279.

*Num. xxiii.* 11-17. Balak said to Balaam: What have you done to me? I took you to curse my enemy, and behold, you have blessed them. $12$Answering, he said: Must I not take care to speak what the Lord puts into my mouth? $13$Balak said to him: Please come with me to another place from which you will see them. You will see only the nearest of them and will not see them all. Curse them for me from there. $14$He took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisghah, and he built seven altars and offered a bull and a ram on each. $15$Balaam said to Balak: Stand here beside your holocaust, and I shall be met there. $16$The Lord met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said: Return to Balak and speak thus. $17$He came to him, and behold, he was standing beside his holocaust, and the princes of Moab with him. Balak said to him: What did the Lord say?

11. **Balak said to Balaam: What have you done to me?** Balak’s reproach is developed in some detail by JOSEPHUS and PHILO. According to the former, Balak accused Balaam of a breach of contract:

But when Balak fumed and accused him of transgressing the covenant whereunder, in exchange for liberal gifts, he had obtained his services from his allies ... *JA*, IV, vi. 5, § 118.

In Vita Mosis, the king calls the prophet a traitor, an ally of Israel, and claims that his intention was deceitful from the beginning.

Are you not ashamed, he cried, that summoned to curse the enemy, you have prayed for them? It seems that all unconsciously I was deceiving myself in treating you as a friend, who were secretly ranged on the side of the enemy, as has now become plain. Doubtless also your delay in coming here was due to your secretly harbouring a feeling of attachment to them and aversion for me and mine. $VM$, li. § 280.

12. **Must I not take care to speak what the Lord puts into my mouth?**
Whereas, in Vita Mosis, Balaam only rejects Balak’s accusations by claiming that his words come from God, Josephus insists on his genuine desire to satisfy Balak’s wish.

The other, now liberated from the possession, replied: I suffer under a most unjust charge and calumny, for I say nothing that is my own, but only what is prompted by God, and this I do not say or you hear now for the first time, but I said it before when you sent the ambassadors to whom I gave the same answer. VM, li. § 281.

Balak, said he, hast thou reflected on the whole matter and thinkest thou that it rests with us at all to be silent or to speak on such themes as these, when we are possessed by the spirit of God? For that spirit gives utterance to such language and words as it will, whereof we are all unconscious. For myself, I remember well what both thou and the Madianites craved when ye eagerly brought me hither and for what purpose I have paid this visit, and it was my earnest prayer to do no despite to thy desires. But God is mightier than that determination of mine to do this favour; and wholly impotent are they who pretend to such foreknowledge of human affairs, drawn from their own breasts, as to refrain from speaking that which the Deity suggests and to violate His will. For nothing within us, once He has gained prior entry, is any more our own. J.A, IV, vi. §§ 119-122.

In Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum, Balaam having foretold the glory of Israel and the future destruction of Moab, declares that despite his personal failure his prophecies will be remembered:


From this, Ps.-Philo immediately proceeds to Balaam’s advice to Balak.

13. Come with me to another place from where you will see them. You will see only the nearest of them, and will not see them all. Ps.-Jonathan and the Vulgate emphasize that the wicked Balaam was not allowed to see the whole strength of Israel.

You will see only their rear camp. You cannot see all their camps. ITJ.

Totum videre non possis. Vulg.

Josephus infers that the idea of repeating the sacrifices came from Balaam, who very much wished to please Balak.

Perchance I may persuade God to suffer me to bind these people under a curse. J.A, IV, vi, § 123.
PHILO ascribes the plan to Balak.

But the king, thinking either to deceive the seer, or to move the Deity and draw Him from His firm purpose by a change of place, led the way to another spot. VM, li. § 282.

14. He took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of of Pisgah. Pisgah is translated “a hill of quarried rock” in the Septuagint, and “a high place” in Targum Onkelos and Ps.-JONATHAN.

From this point on, JOSEPHUS merely summarizes the biblical account:

Twice did the seer offer sacrifice, but failed to obtain the Deity’s consent to imprecations upon the Israelites. JA, IV, vi. 5, § 124.

The Targums and other ancient versions show very little interest, either, in the subsequent events and prophecies, but their analysis is of interest for the study of the ancient biblical translation as such.

15. Stand here beside your holocaust and I shall be met there. The verb赧א is given various interpretations. Ps.-JONATHAN, Targum Onkelos, and the Vulgate, translate it “to go forward”.

I will go thither. ITJ, TO.

Obvious pergam. Vulg.

The Septuagint enlarges the meaning by adding “to consult God.” PHILO expands it still further:

(Balak) sent him (Balaam) away to seek good omens through birds or voices. VM, li. § 282.

The Fragmentary Targum reads赧א, as deriving from רפא:

I will glorify you by my word.

16. And the Lord met Balaam.

In this solitude he was suddenly possessed. VM, li. § 283.

Num. xxiii. 18-24. Balaam took up his discourse and said: Arise Balak! Hear me, son of Zippor! 19 God is not man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not do it? Has he spoken, and will he not fulfill it? 20 Behold, I received a command to bless; he has blessed and I cannot undo it. 21 He has not beheld labour in Jacob, nor has he seen travail in Israel. The Lord their God is with them, and jubilation for their king is in the midst of them. 22 God brings them out of Egypt and his strength is like the horns of the wild ox. 23 For there is no magic in Jacob, no divination in Israel. Now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, What has God done! 24 Behold,
a people rising like a lioness and raising itself up like a lion. It shall not lie down till it devours the prey and drinks the blood of the slain.

18. Hear me, son of Zippor!
The unusual רַבָּא, “towards me”, is translated in the Septuagint and Peshitta as “witness”, μαρτυς, or “testimony”, הָאִדָּמָה, from יָדָ. The Targums substitute “my word”.

19. God is not man that he should lie. This whole verse must have sounded very shocking to the commentators, and the various attempts to paraphrase it are intended to soften its apparent disrespect.

God is not as man to waver. LXX.

God cannot be deceived as a man. Vulg.

The word of God is not as those of the sons of men who speak and lie. TO.

The word of the living God is not as those of the sons of men who speak and lie. 2TJ.

The word of the living and eternal God, Master of the world, Lord, is not as those of men. For a man speaks, and then takes back his word. 1TJ.

19. Or a son of man that he should repent.

Nor, as the son of man, to be threatened. LXX.

Ut mutetur. Vulg.

Nor are His works like the works of the children of flesh, who decide to act and then begin once more to take counsel among themselves (חיה ומשנתיכם). TO.

Nor like a son of man to hesitate (לֹא מַחֲתוּ). Syr.

Nor do His works resemble those of the children of flesh, who take counsel among themselves and then renounce their decisions. 1TJ.

Neither are the works of God like those of the sons of men, who speak and do not act, decide and do not accomplish, and who go back upon their word. 2TJ.

19. Has he said, and will he not do it?

He speaks and acts, and all His words are done. TO.

He speaks and acts, and His word is firm for ever (לָמַלך בָּ. Syr.

But God speaks and acts, decides and does, and his decisions are firm for ever (קִמְס וְצֵד לְנַעַל). 2TJ.

But the Master of all the universe declared that He would multiply

1 The connection between Syr. and the Targums, both TO and TJ, is obvious.
this people as the stars of heaven, and that He would give to it the land of Canaan. Can He speak and not act? Is He able not to accomplish that which He has declared. 1TJ.\(^1\)

20. **Behold, I received a command to bless: he has blessed and I cannot undo it.** The great variety of small divergences in the exegesis of this passage is due to textual difficulties. The affinity between the Fragmentary Targum, the Peshitta, and the Vulgate is worth noting.

**רָהָקָל.** Tradition reads either the active or the passive tense.

Behold, I have received (an order) to bless (παρελθήσως). LXX.
I have received (הָלֹויָבֺ) blessings from the mouth of the Memra of Holiness. TO, 1TJ.
I have been led. Syr., 2TJ.
Adductus sum. Vulg.

**דָּרָה** Tradition reads the first person singular.

εὐλογήσω. LXX.
Benedictionem prohibere non valeo. Vulg.
I will bless Israel and I will not recall my blessing. TO.
I will not withhold from them the order of their blessing. 1TJ.
I will bless Israel, and I will not withhold blessings from them. 2TJ.

21. **He has not beheld labour in Jacob, nor has he seen travail in Israel.** With the exception of the Septuagint, all the versions interpret "labour" and "travail" allegorically, as meaning idolatrous worship.

Idolum... simulacrum. Vulg.
Worshippers of idols... servants of lying vanity. TO.
Worshippers of error... servants of lying vanity. 1TJ.
Worshippers of untruth... worshippers of foreign rites. 2TJ.

The Targums read the verbs in the first, instead of in the third person singular, and consequently make Balaam witness to the purity of Israel’s religion.

21. **The Lord their God is with them, and jubilation for their king is in the midst of them.** Ps.-JONATHAN’s interpretation is messianic, and so, possibly, is that of the Fragmentary Targum.

\(^1\) This verse, as well as the preceding one, is used by R. Abahu in his anti-Christian polemics: “If a man says, ‘I am God’, he lies; if he says, ‘I am the Son of man’, he shall be humbled; and if he says, ‘I will go up to Heaven’, does he not speak and fail to do it? Cf. J. Tā‘an., 65b.
The Memra of the Lord their God succours them, and the Shekhinah of their king is among them. TO.

The hymn of their king is in the midst of them. Syr.

Clangor victoriae regis in illo. Vulg.

The Memra of the Lord their God succours them, and the trumpet of the King-Messiah has sounded in the midst of them. 1TJ.

The Memra of the Lord is with them, and their shield is the trumpet of their glorious King. 2TJ

22. God brings them out of Egypt and his strength is like the horns of the wild ox. The Palestinian Targums insist on God’s personal intervention in the salvation of Israel. The same emphasis appears in Isaiah, lxiii. 9 (LXX, Vulg.).

Neither a messenger, nor an angel, but He Himself delivered them.

Apart from the Septuagint and the Vulgate, which translate μαρι as “unicorn” and “rhinoceros”, Jewish interpreters find it unfitting to compare God to an animal, and in place of μαρι, they read מוה, “exaltation”.

Power and exaltation. TO, Syr.

Power and glory and exaltation. 2TJ.

Power, exaltation, glory, and might. 1TJ.

Philo does not follow the Septuagint reading either, and offers his own interpretation of the text.

This people, throughout its journey from Egypt has had God as its guide, who leads the multitude as a single column. VM, lxi. § 290.

23. For there is no magic in Jacob, no divination in Israel. The Palestinian Targums replace the abstract “magic” and “divination” with the more concrete “magicians” and “soothsayers”, but Targum Onkelos avoids even a negative association between magic and Israel:

For magicians do not wish the house of Jacob to prosper, nor do soothsayers desire the house of Israel to shine.

According to this interpretation, Balaam exposed his guilt by admitting that he blessed Israel contrary to his real intention.

23. Now it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, What has God done! Ps.-Jonathan applies this text to the miracles with which God favoured Israel in the past.
At that time it will be said to the house of Jacob and to the house of Israel: How worthy of praise are the signs and wonders which God accomplished for them!

The Fragmentary Targum considers the bliss of the world to come which God has prepared for His people.

At that time it will be said to Jacob: What happiness and consolations will God give to the house of Jacob. He says in his prophetic parable: O happy are the just! What a good reward is prepared for you in the world to come before your Father who is in heaven!

24. Behold, a people rising like a lioness and raising itself up like a lion! Ps.-Jonathan once more underlines the separate existence of Israel, voluntarily cut off from contact with other nations.

This people shall rest alone, and dwell alone, like a lion in its strength.

24. It shall not lie down till it devours the prey and drinks the blood of the slain. The verb נוש is translated “to lie down” in the Vulgate, “to rest” in the Fragmentary Targum, and “to sleep” in the Septuagint, Ps.-Jonathan, and Peshitta. This is another indication of the affinity between the Palestinian Targums and Peshitta.

The drinking of blood is a notion so abhorrent that either a circumlocution is employed, as in the Fragmentary Targum,

until they shed like water the blood of their slain enemies, or the phrase is interpreted symbolically:

until they obtain the possession of the nations, TO.,
until they obtain the booty of the slain. JT.

Numbers Rabbah, xx. 20 expounds this verse as relating to Moses and Balaam:

He prophesied that before Moses died, he would execute vengeance on him and on the five kings of Midian, as it is written: He (Moses) shall not lie down until he devours the prey.

Num. xxiii. 25 - xxiv. 2. Balak said to Balaam: If you do not curse them, at least do not bless them. 26 Answering, Balaam said to Balak: Did I not tell you that I will do all that the Lord says? 27 Balak said to Balaam: Please come, and I will take you to another place. Perhaps it will please God, and you will curse them for me from there. 28 Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor which overlooks the desert, 29 and Balaam said to Balak: Build for me seven altars here, and prepare for me here seven bulls and seven rams. 30 Balak did as Balaam said, and
he offered a bull and a ram on each altar. *xxiv.* Balaam saw that it was
good in the eyes of the Lord to bless Israel. He did not go, as at other
times, to meet omens, but he set his face towards the desert. Balaam
lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe, and the spirit
of God came upon him.

28. *Balak took Balaam to the top of Peor which overlooks the desert.*
Targum Onkelos and Ps.-Jonathan describe the geographical location
of the "desert", but omit any mention of Peor.

To the hill looking towards Beith Yeshimon. *TO.*

Philo emphasizes Balaam’s readiness to curse the Israelites.

(Balak) led the seer away to another place from which he shewed
him a part of the Hebrew host and begged him to curse them. Here the
seer proved himself to be even worse than the king; for, though he had
met the charges brought against him solely by the true plea that
nothing which he said was his own but the divinely inspired version
of the promptings of another, and therefore ought to have ceased to
follow and departed home, instead, he pressed forward even more
readily than his conductor, partly because he was dominated by the
worst of vices, conceit, partly because in his heart he longed to curse,
even if he were prevented from doing so with his voice. *VM*, lli.

1. *He did not go, as at other times, to meet omens, but he set his face towards
the desert.* As already noted above, Philo writes that the omens were
sought in birds and voices.

But he himself did not go again, as was to be expected, to seek omens
from birds and voices, for he had conceived a great contempt for his
own art, feeling that, as a picture fades in the course of years, its gift
of happy conjecture had lost all its brilliance. Besides, he at last
realized that the purpose of the king who had hired him was not in
harmony with the will of God. *VM*, lli. § 287.

Balaam’s turning towards the desert is interpreted by the Targums
as yet another manifestation of his desire to curse Israel. He intended
to remind God of the sin which Israel had committed in the desert,
the worship of the golden calf.

He set his face towards the (golden) calf which Israel had made in the
desert. *TO.*

He set his face towards the desert to recall against them the affair
of the golden calf which they had made there. *1TJ*.

He set his face towards the golden calf, desiring to curse Israel. *2TJ*. 
2. *And the spirit of God came upon him.* The expression דִּי הָרוֹחַ is translated according to the commentators' conception of prophetic inspiration.

ἐνέπνευσεν ... ἐν Χριστῷ. LXX.

Interpretatio in se. Vulg.

The spirit of prophecy from before the Lord rested on him. TO, 1TJ.

*Num. xxiv. 3-9.* He took up his discourse and said: Oracle of Balaam, son of Beor, oracle of the man whose eye is opened, 4oracle of him who hears the words of God, who, falling down, but with his eyes uncovered, sees the vision of Shaddai. 5How good are your tents, O Jacob, and your encampments, O Israel! 6Like streams stretching far, like gardens beside the river, like aloes that the Lord has planted, like cedars beside the waters! 7Water shall flow from his bucket and his seed shall be in many waters. His king shall be higher than Agag and his kingdom shall be exalted. 8God brings them out of Egypt; he has, as it were, the horns of the wild ox. He shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces, and shall smite them with his arrows. 9He settled, he lay down like a lion and a lioness; who shall rouse him? Blessed be whoever blesses you, and cursed be whoever curses you.

3. *Oracle of the man whose eye is opened.* This verse provides a most useful opportunity for the study of the ancient versions. בֵּן, a noun, means “oracle”, yet apart from Ps.-Jonathan, who gives רֵעֵם, “word”, all the versions read בֵּן, a verb.

φησιν. LXX.

Dixit. Vulg.

אֵל. TO.

יומ. Syr.

1 Q Isa\textsuperscript{a} usually spells the word בֵּן, (the active participle), thus giving a meaning similar to that found in the versions.

רִינוֹדַה בֵּן is a *crux interpretum.* It can have four different meanings:
1) בֵּן “transpierced”; 2) בֵּן “open”; 3) בֵּן (from בֵּן) “perfect; 4) בֵּן “concealed”. Each of these is represented in the ancient sources, and, in addition, the Palestinian Targums combine 2) and 4).

1) Balaam was one-eyed. Sanh., 105a.

2) מָאָנַן. Syr.
To whom were revealed the secret mysteries which were hidden from the prophets. And because he was uncircumcised, he fell upon his face when the Angel stood before him. 1TJ.

To whom was revealed what was hidden from all the prophets. 2TJ.

3) ἀληθινὸς ὁρῶν. LXX.

4) Obturatus est oculus. Vulg.

4. *Who, falling down, but with his eyes uncovered, sees the vision of Shaddai.* This passage is thought to refer to the event described in chapter xxii and the interpreters therefore render the verbs in the past tense.

εἰδεν ἐν ὤπνω. LXX.

Intuitus est. Vulg.

Who beheld a vision from before the Almighty. TO.

Who saw. TJ.

Lying down he received a revelation. TO.

When he was asleep. Syr.

When he asked that it might be shown to him, he lay upon his face, and mysteries hidden from the prophets were revealed to him. 1TJ.

When he asked that it might be shown to him, he lay upon his face, and prophetic mysteries were revealed to him. He prophesied concerning himself that he would fall by the sword, a prophecy which was later fulfilled. 2TJ.

Who in slumber saw the clear vision of God with the unsleeping eyes of the soul. VM, liii. § 289.

5. *How good are your tents, O Jacob, and your encampments, O Israel!* The Palestinian Targums read in this passage a reference to the Tent which served the Israelites as a sanctuary.

How beautiful are your schools in the tent wherein Jacob your father served, and how beautiful is the Tabernacle standing among you, surrounded by your tents, O house of Israel! 1TJ.

How good are the tents in which Jacob their father prayed, and the Tabernacle surrounded by your tents which you have made to my Name, O house of Israel! 2TJ.

6. *Like streams stretching far, like gardens beside the river, like aloes that the Lord has planted, like cedars beside the waters.* With one exception, exegetical, and not textual differences account for the diversity of interpretation of these metaphors.


The Septuagint and the Vulgate accept the word in the first sense, and the Targums in the second.

The subject of this verb in Jeremiah vi. 4 is the word “shadow”. This may explain σκιάζουσιν and nemorosae. Onkelos does not translate the word but replaces it with another familiar biblical image: “like streams in the wilderness”.

נה signifies an artificially watered garden.

παράδεισον. LXX, cf. Syr.
Horti irrigui. Vulg.
אֶּרֶץ תָּנָךְ. TO.
זָה בֵּית הִשָּׁבֵע. TJ.

Ps.-Jonathan describes the gardens as being planted beside canals, as was the practice in Mesopotamia. In Targum Onkelos the word is rendered “Euphrates”.

With the exception of Targum Onkelos, all the versions translate this word as “tents”, and not as “aloes”. The Palestinian Targum substitutes “the firmament of heaven”, in virtue of the biblical metaphor describing heaven as the tent which God has spread for Himself. (Cf. Is. xl. 22; Ps. civ. 2).

שָׁפֵט, “to plant”, is replaced everywhere, except in Targum Onkelos, by זָה בֵּית, “to spread”.

From the exegetical viewpoint, it should be noted that the scriptural metaphors are explicitly applied to Israel and that Israel is described as a “new creation”.

Like swelling streams of water is the house of Israel, which dwells together in groups and grows in the study of the Torah. Like gardens planted beside river sources, are the companies of disciples which gather together in the schools. The light of their faces shines like the brightness of the sky which the Lord created on the second day of the Creation of the world and stretched out for the glory of the Shekhinah. They are raised up and exalted above all the nations, like cedars of Lebanon planted near the springs. TJ.

Like swelling streams does Israel show herself mighty before her enemies. Her cities, sending out scribes and doctors of the Law, are like gardens planted beside fountains. Like the heavens which the Menra of the Lord has spread out for the abode of his Shekhinah,

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1 This is based on the symbolism: water = Torah.
2 “Wise men and sons of the Torah.” Neof.
3 “Like the heavens, which are as the dwelling-place of of His Shekhinah.” Neof.
such will be Israel, enduring for ever, beautiful and honoured as the cedars by the water, and raised\(^1\) above His creatures. *2TJ*.

7. *Water shall flow from his bucket and his seed shall be in many waters.* This verse is of particular interest to the study of the versions. Apart from the Vulgate, and for the second half of the sentence, Peshitta, they differ widely from the Masoretic Text. No manuscript evidence however, is to be found for any emendation, and all the variants can be explained, I believe, from the present Masoretic Text. The verse was as difficult to understand then as it is now, and for this reason was interpreted symbolically. The only probable textual difference concerns מַדְלוּיָה מִמְמַדְלוּיָה, “from his bucket”, which apparently replaces the original מַדְלוּיָה מִמְמַדְלוּיָה, “from his branches”. This would fit more aptly both the preceding metaphors (trees) and the following mention of seed. One of the indications guiding translators to interpret מַדְלוּיָה מִמְמַדְלוּיָה symbolically may have been that this noun in the plural is considered the subject of the singular of the verb לְוָי.

All the versions, except the Vulgate, are messianic in interpretation.

Fluet aqua de situla eius et semen illius erit in aquas multas. *Vulg.*
And there shall come a man (σπόρον τοιοῦτος) out of his seed, and he shall rule over many nations. *LXX.*
The king who shall rise from the midst of their children, shall be great, and he shall rule over many nations. *TO.*
A man (אֱלֹהִים) shall issue from their children, and his seed shall be in many waters. *Syr.*
Their king shall rise from among them, and their saviour shall be from out of them and in the midst of them. The seed of the sons of Jacob shall rule over many nations. *1TJ.*
Their king shall rise from among them and their saviour shall be from out of them and in the midst of them. He shall gather together their exiles from the lands of their enemies and their children shall rule the nations. *2TJ.*
There shall come forth from you one day a man, and he shall rule over many nations. *VM, lli. §290.*

It is clear from these texts that the versions as a whole interpret לְוָי as “to come forth”, “to arise”; מַדְלוּיָה מִמְמַדְלוּיָה as the Messiah; and מַדְלוּיָה מִמְגָרַע (or rather, מַדְלוּיָה מִמְמַדְלוּיָה) as “the children of Israel”. This disconcerting exegesis results from the following midrashic associations. לְוָי מַדְלוּיָה recalls יִזְכֶּר יְתוֹם (Is. xl. 8), where righteousness is symbolically expressed as water. Cf. Am. v. 24. Also, יְתוֹם is associated with the Messiah from Jeremiah xxxiii. 15 and xxiii 5. אֲנֶמֶחַ לְוָי מַדְלוּיָה מַדְלוּיָה is translated in the Targum: אֲנֶמֶחַ לְוָי מַדְלוּיָה מַדְלוּיָה מַדְלוּיָה מַדְלוּיָה מַדְלוּיָה.

\(^1\) “Praised and exalted.” *Neof.*
In short, water = righteousness = Messiah. 

If the tree is Israel, the branches are the children of Israel. In identical, or similar, circumstances, the Targum interprets בֶּן נֶבֶר וַיָּדֵל הָיוּתָו in Ezekiel xix. 11 and xxxi. 7, 9 and 12: “in the multitude of his valiant men”.

The symbolical interpretation of the second half of the sentence, “his seed shall be in many waters” is composed of the following elements: a) thúם, “he will rule” and b) הָמוֹם רבָּם, “over many nations”.

a) is read “his arm”, i.e. “his might”, whereas the Masoretic Text gives “his seed”.

b) “Many waters” symbolizes “nations” in targumic literature. Cf. Is. xxxiii. 3; Ez. xxxi. 7; etc.

As regards a), the Palestinian Targums and the Septuagint combine יְדֵי, “seed”, and יְדֵי, “arm”, “might”, in their exegesis.

The seed of the sons of Jacob shall rule. 1TJ.
Their children shall rule. 2TJ.

There shall come a man out of his seed and he shall rule. LXX.

It is not impossible that the mention of the “exiles” of Israel in the Fragmentary Targum may result from the same exegetical symbolism. Before the coming of the Messiah, Israel’s “seed is in many waters”, i.e. its children will be captives among the nations. But the Messiah’s “arm” shall be against the “waters” and thereafter the Israelites shall rule over them.

A combination of variant readings in the interpretation of a text is characteristic of midrashic exegesis.¹

7. His king shall be higher than Agag and his kingdom shall be exalted. The prophecy announces Saul’s victory over Agag, and Targum Onkelos, Ps.-Jonathan and the Vulgate interpret the text historically and understand the second half of the phrase to refer to Saul’s disgrace.

His king shall be stronger than Agag, but his kingdom shall be taken away. TO.

Their first king shall fight against the house of Amalek and he shall be raised up over Agag their king, but because he shall show him mercy his kingdom shall be taken away. 1TJ.

Tolletur propter Agag rex eius et aufertur regnum eius. Vulg.

The basis of this exegesis is that נשֵׁנ is read “shall be taken away”, instead of “shall be exalted”.

¹ Cf. above, p. 129, and Discovery . . . . p. 126 (1 Q pHab., iv. 9–11 on Hab. i. 11).
The Septuagint, Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Samaritan Pentateuch, substitute Gog, the eschatological enemy king, for Agag. The verse is interpreted messianically and consequently נושם is translated “shall be exalted.”

The Fragmentary Targum and Neofiti retain both interpretations, the historical and the eschatological alike.

He shall be stronger than Saul, who showed mercy to Agag king of Amalek, and the kingdom of the King Messiah shall be exalted.

8. He shall eat up the nations his adversaries and shall break their bones in pieces and shall smite them with his arrows. The only variant in the interpretation of these metaphors is that Targum Onkelos and the Fragmentary Targum ascribe the victory to Israel, whereas Ps.-Jonathan places the whole responsibility upon God.

The children of Israel shall eat the riches of the nations their adversaries. They shall take possession of the booty of their kings and shall possess their land. TO.

The children of Israel shall prevail over their enemies. They shall divide their cities, slay their fighting men, and disperse their remnant. 2TJ.

He (God) shall destroy the nations their enemies. He shall break their might. He shall let fly against them the destroying arrows of His punishment and shall destroy them. 1TJ.

9. He settled, he lay down like a lion and a lioness; who shall rouse him?

He shall rest, he shall dwell tranquilly in his might like the lion and the lioness. No kingdom shall shake him. TO.

They shall rest and be tranquil like the lion, and who shall awaken the lion when he sleeps? 1TJ.

Behold, this people take its rest like a lion; it shows itself strong as a lion. 2TJ.

They shall rest and be tranquil1 as a lion and a lioness; no nation or kingdom shall stand against them. Neof.

9. Blessed be whoever blesses you and cursed be whoever curses you.

Blessed like Moses the Prophet, the Scribe of Israel ... Cursed like Balaam son of Beor. TJ.

Num. xxiv. 10-14. The anger of Balak was kindled against Balaam and he clapped his hands. Balak said to Balaam: I called you to curse

1 A second scribe has substituted “warriors” for “tranquil”.
my enemy and behold, you have blessed them three times. 11 Now flee to your country! I said that I would honour you greatly, but behold, the Lord has prevented you from being honoured. 12 Balaam said to Balak: Did I not say even to your messengers whom you sent to me, 13 Even if Balak gives me his house filled with silver and gold, I cannot go against the commandment of the Lord to do good or evil of myself? What the Lord speaks, I must say. 14 And now behold, I go to my people. Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days.

14. *Come, I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the latter days.* In the biblical narrative, Balaam foretells the destruction of Moab by Israel, but Jewish tradition presents him as advising the king how to outwit the Israelites by inducing them to sin against God. This advice is mentioned in xxxi. 16, and the verb בָּשַׁם is interpreted in that sense.

Come, I will advise you how to act, and I will show you what this people shall do to your people in the latter days. *TO.*

Dabo consilium quid populus tuus populo huic faciat in extremo tempore. *Vulg.*

Come, and I will advise you what to do to this people. Cause them to sin or you will not prevail against them; but this people shall rule over your people in the latter days. *2TJ.*

Ps.-Jonathan and Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum describe the sin more precisely as fornication.

Come, I will advise you. Go and set up taverns, and appoint within them seductive women to sell food and drink cheaply. They will attract this people, who will eat and drink, and become intoxicated, and have intercourse with them. They will deny their God and will quickly be delivered into your hands, and many of them will fall; but afterwards they shall rule over your people in the latter days. *1TJ.*

Et tunc dixit ad eum Balaam: Veni et consilemur quid facias eis. Eligite speciosas mulieres, que sunt in nobis et que in Mazia, et statue eas ante eos nudas, ornatas auro et lapidibus preciosis. Et erit cum viderint et concubuerint cum eis peccabant Domino Deo suo, et incident in manus vestras, quia aliter expugnare eos non potes. *LAB,* xviii. 13.

Philo, Josephus, and the later haggadah, develop the theme still further into a general abandonment of the Jewish way of life.
“All that has been said hitherto was oracles from above. What I have now to say is suggestions of my own designing.” And, taking him by the right hand, he counselled him in strict privacy as to the means by which, as far as might be, he should defend himself against the army of the enemy. (Hereby he convicted himself of the utmost impiety...) His advice was this. Knowing that the one way by which the Hebrews could be overthrown was disobedience, he set himself to lead them, through wantonness and licentiousness, to impiety, through a great sin to a still greater, and put before them the bait of pleasure. “You have in your countrywomen, king” he said, “persons of preeminent beauty. And there is nothing to which a man more easily falls a captive than women’s comeliness. If, then, you permit the fairest among them to prostitute themselves for hire, they will ensnare the younger of their enemies. But you must instruct them not to allow their wooers to enjoy their charms at once. For coyness titillates, and thereby makes the appetites more active, and inflames the passions. And, when their lust has them in its grip, there is nothing which they will shrink from doing or suffering. Then, when the lover is in this condition, one of those who are arming to take their prey should say, with a saucy air: ‘You must not be permitted to enjoy my favours until you have left the ways of your fathers and become a convert to honouring what I honour. That your conversion is sincere will be clearly proved to me if you are willing to take part in the libations and sacrifices which we offer to idols of stone and wood and the other images.’ Then the lover, caught in the meshes of her multiform lures, her beauty and the enticements of her wheeling talk, will not gainsay her, but, with his reason trussed and pinioned, will subserve her orders to his sorrow, and be enrolled as a slave of passion.” Such was his advice. And the king, thinking that the proposal was good, ignoring the law against adultery, and annulling those which prohibited seduction and fornication as though they had never been enacted at all, permitted the women, without restriction, to have intercourse with whom they would. Having thus received immunity, so greatly did they mislead the minds of most of the young men, and pervert them by their arts to impiety, that they soon made a conquest of them. V/M, liii. § 294-lv. § 301.

Balak and ye men of Madian here present – since it behoves me despite God’s will to gratify you – doubtless this race of Hebrews will never be overwhelmed by utter destruction, neither through war, nor through pestilence and dearth of the fruits of the earth, neither shall any other unlooked-for cause exterminate it. For God is watching over them to preserve them from all ill and to suffer no such calamity to come upon them as would destroy them all. Yet misfortunes may well befall them of little moment and for a little while, whereby they will appear to be abased, though only thereafter to flourish once more to the terror of those who inflicted these injuries upon them. Ye then, if ye yearn to gain some shortlived victory over them, may attain that end by acting on this wise. Take of your daughters those who are
comeliest and most capable of constraining and conquering the chastity of their beholders by reason of their beauty, deck out their charms to add to their comeliness, send them to the neighbourhood of the Hebrews’ camp, and charge them to company with their young men when they sue their favours. Then, when they shall see these youths over-mastered by their passions, let them quit them and, on their entreatying them to stay, let them not consent or ever they have induced their lovers to renounce the laws of their fathers and the God to whom they owe them, and to worship the gods of the Madianites and Moabites. For thus will God be moved to indignation against them. J-A, IV, vi. 6, §§ 126-130.

The God of this people hates fornication. If, therefore, you offer your daughters in whoredom, you will prevail against Israel... They built for them enclosures from Beith Yeshimon to the Mountain of Snow, and they appointed there women to sell all kinds of sweetmeats. They set an old woman outside and a maid within.

While the Israelites were eating and drinking, one of them came out to walk to the market to buy something. The old woman was selling it for its price, but the maid said to the Israelite: Come, take it for less!

This happened on the first, the second, and the third day. Then she said to him: From now on, you are as a son of the house. Come in and choose!

When he entered, there was a jar of wine of the powerful wine of the Ammonites which opens the body to fornication, and its scent was penetrating... She said to him: Do you wish to drink a cup of wine? He said: Yes... When he drank, the wine burnt him like the poison of a snake, and he said to her: Give yourself to me! She asked him: Do you wish me to give myself to you? He said: Yes. She immediately took from her bosom the image of Baal Peor, and said to him: Worship this, and I will give myself to you. He asked: Can I worship an idol? But she said: To worship him you have only to uncover yourself before him. As the sages have said, To uncover (נָעַר) oneself to Baal Peor (נָעַר) is to worship him... She said to him: Cut yourself off from the Torah of Moses and I will give myself to you. J. Sanh., 28 cd. Cf. also Sifre on Num. § 137.

Tradition records in detail how Balak followed Balaam’s counsel, and thereby establishes a direct link between chapters xxiv and xxv. Israel’s debauchery was due to Balaam’s advice to the king, and caused the death of twenty-four thousand people. So although Balaam was prevented by God from cursing Israel, he nevertheless obtained what he sought, the destruction of many of its sons.

Num. xxiv. 15-19. And he took up his discourse and said: Oracle of Balaam son of Beor, oracle of the man whose eye is opened, 16oracle
of the man who hears the words of God and knows the knowledge of the Most High; who, falling down, but with his eyes uncovered, sees the vision of Shaddai. 17 I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star shall come out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel. It shall crush the temples of Moab and break all the sons of Sheth. 18 Edom and Seir his enemies, shall be occupied because of Israel’s valour. 19 Jacob shall dominate, and the survivors from the city be destroyed.

16. And knows the knowledge of the Most High. This statement scandalizes some of the commentators, who wonder how Balaam could possible know God, which they clearly understand as being the prerogative of “true religion”.

Who knows the hour of the wrath of the Most High God. 1TJ.

How can he know the knowledge of the Most High, when he cannot even read the mind of his ass? Sanh., 105b.

17. A star shall come out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel. The Septuagint, Peshitta, and the Targums, interpret “sceptre” symbolically, as referring to the Messiah. ¹

In the Palestinian Targums, “star” is also accepted symbolically as a metaphor for “king”.

When the mighty King from the house of Jacob shall reign, and the Messiah, the mighty Sceptre of Israel, shall be anointed. 1TJ.

A King shall rise from the house of Jacob, a Saviour and Sovereign from the house of Israel. 2TJ.

This passage is considered a messianic proof-text by both Judaism and Christianity² and doubtless inspired Revelation xxii. 16 where Jesus is described as a “Star”.³

In Rabbinic literature appears the famous fulfilment interpretation of R. Akiba:

R. Simeon ben Yohai taught: R. Akiba interpreted A star came forth out of Jacob as Kozba⁴ came forth out of Jacob. When R. Akiba saw

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¹ Cf. above, pp. 53 f, 59.
² Cf. below, p. 173.
³ Cf. also 2 Pet. i. 19 and Mt. ii. 2.
⁴ The real name of the leader of the Second Jewish Revolt was Simeon ben Kosba, according to the contemporary Murabba’at letters. Cf. J. T. Milik, Une lettre de Simeon Bar Kokhba, in RB, 1953, pp. 276–294. Akiba played on the words Kosba = Kokhba, “star”; but Rabbis hostile to the rebellion chose Kosba = Kozba, “liar”. Cf. Discover... p. 204.
Ben Kozba, he said: This is the King Messiah. R. Yohanan ben Torta replied: Akiba, grass will grow out of your cheekbones before the son of David comes. J. Taan., 68d.

17. *It shall crush the temples of Moab and break all the sons of Sheth.* “Temples” (מֵאֵד) is interpreted “chiefs” in all the versions. In addition, the Targums, except Neofiti, either replace “the children of Sheth” by “the children of men” (TO) and “all the children of the east” (2TJ), or else identify them with the hosts of the eschatological foe, Gog.

He shall slay the chiefs of Moab and shall destroy all the sons of Sheth, the armies of God which shall battle against Israel; but all their carcasses shall fall before him. 1TJ

18. *Edom and Seir, his enemies, shall be occupied because of Israel’s valour.* Seir is identified with Esau in the Septuagint, and with Gebal, as usual, in the Palestinian Targums.1

לי השע can either mean “to act valiantly” or “to acquire riches”. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Fragmentary Targum, accept the words in the first sense, and Targum ONKELOS and Ps.-JONATHAN in the second.

19. *Jacob shall dominate and the survivors from the city be destroyed.* Only the Vulgate represents the Masoretic vocalisation ḫḵ, “to dominate”.

Targum ONKELOS and Peshitta read ḫḵ, “he shall descend”.

The Septuagint and the Palestinian Targums translate the word freely to “he shall rise”.

All the Targums agree in regarding the “city” as the capital of the empire, but they differ in its actual identification.

Targum ONKELOS calls it simply “the city of the nations”.

In the Palestinian Targums it is “the guilty city”.


In Ps.-JONATHAN it is Constantinople.

Num. xxxiv. 20-25. He saw Amalek. He took up his discourse and said: Amalek is the first of the nations, but in the end it shall be destroyed. 21He saw the Kenite. He took up his discourse and said: Your dwelling place is firm and your nest is set on rock, 22but even so, Kain shall be laid waste. How long shall Asshur keep you captive! 23He took up his discourse and said: Woe to the man who lives when God does this! 24Ships shall come from Kittim and afflict Asshur

1 Cf. above, p. 118.
and Eber; and they also shall be destroyed. Balaam rose, departed, and returned to his country, and Balak also went his way.

20. *Amalek is the first of the nations, but in the end it shall be destroyed.* Following Exodus xvii, the Targums understand by נַחֲשָׁן, Israel’s first adversary.

The first of the wars of Israel was the war against Amalek. His end shall be an everlasting destruction. *TO.*

Amalek was the first nation to attack the house of Israel. In the end, in the time of the King Messiah, they and the sons of the east shall declare war on the house of Israel; but finally they both shall perish for ever. *1TJ.*

Amalek was the first nation to attack the house of Israel. In the end, in the latter days, they shall attack them once more, but their destiny shall be destruction and they perish for ever. *2TJ.*

According to Esther Rabbah, it was Balaam who counselled the Amalekites to fight Israel.

Then came Amalek and fought with Israel in Refidim (Ex. xvii. 8). Whence came Amalek? R. Cruspedai said in the name of R. Johanan: He came from Balaam the Villain, for Amalek went to ask advice from him saying, I know that you are a counsellor and a master of evil thoughts, and that whoever follows your advice never stumbles. See, he went on, what this nation has done to the Egyptians... If they treated the Egyptians so, who were good to them, what will they do to other nations? What counsel do you give me? Balaam replied: Go, and wage war against them. *Esther R., vii 13.*

21. He saw the Kenite. Established tradition applies this verse to Jethro the Kenite, who joined Israel in the worship of God, and was consequently considered as Israel’s first proselyte. His conversion, and the important destiny of his descendants, is compared with his former role of counsellor to Pharaoh. When asked for his opinion in the affair of the Hebrew male children, he fled from Egypt and therefore deserved to be saved and honoured.

He saw Jethro who became a proselyte. *1TJ.*

Balaam said to Jethro: Kenite, were you not with us in that counsel? Who made you dwell with the masters of the world? R. Hiyya bar Abba said, in the name of R. Simai: Three shared the same counsel – Balaam, Job, and Jethro. Balaam, who gave the counsel, was killed.

1 Neofiti adds in the margin: “And Joshua son of Nun, of the house of Ephraim, crushed them. When they fought a second time against Israel, Saul son of Kish destroyed them.”

2 “In the days of Gog and Magog.” *Neof.*
Job, who kept silent, was condemned to suffering. But Jethro, who fled, merited a seat for his descendants in the Room of the Hewn Stone (the meeting place of the Sanhedrin). Ex. R., i. 9.1

22. But even so, Kain shall be laid waste. How long shall Assur keep you captive! The expression יַעֲשֵׂה לְ לוּשָׂנָה appears to have confused the translators of both the Septuagint and the Vulgate.

רֵעַ בֶּגֶר וַעֲשָׂנָה. LXX.

Fueris electus ex stirpe Cin. Vulg.

The Septuagint reads לְ, “nest, hiding-place”, in the place of Kain, and understands רַעְב as a personal name, applying it to Balak ben Beor, king of Moab, mentioned in Genesis xxxvi. 32.

Jerome, in his turn, must have read רַעְב as רָעֵב, “to choose”.

Ps.-Jonathan interprets the verse of past history.

If it is decreed that the sons of Shalmaia (Kenites) shall be despoiled, this shall not be before Sennacherib king of Assur comes to carry you off into captivity.

23. He took up his discourse and said: Woe to the man who lives when God does this! The Septuagint sets this oracle against an historical background:

And he looked upon Og and took up his parable and said...

The Targums are plainly eschatological. The difficult expression בִּקְשָׂמָה is taken as a synonym for בִּקְשָׂם.

Woe to sinners who live when God does this. TO.

Woe to the man who lives when the Memra of the Lord reveals itself to give a good reward to the righteous, to take revenge on the wicked, to crush the nations and the kings, and to excite the one against the other. 1TJ.2

24. Ships shall come from Kittim and afflict Assur and Eber; and they also shall be destroyed. The eschatological enemy was expected to come from the land of the Kittim. They would smite the mighty Assyrians but would perish themselves. The translators try to identify the Kittim and imagine that Scripture must have referred to the Romans.3

Venient trieribus de Italia, superabunt Assyrios vastabuntque Hebraeos et ad extremum etiam ipsi peribunt. Vulg.

1 Cf. Ex. R., xxvii. 6, 9; Soṭah, 100; etc.

2 Cf. 2TJ and Samb., 106a.

Mighty armies of Livernia shall come out of the great city\(^1\) and many Roman legions shall join them. They shall take the Assyrians captive, and shall oppress all men from beyond Euphrates; but the end of them all shall be destruction, eternal destruction. \(2T\).

The Romans shall mobilize troops. They shall oppress Asshur, and shall conquer the land beyond Euphrates; but they shall all perish for ever. \(TO\).

Armies shall gather together, furnished with weapons. They shall set out from Lombardy and Italy in large companies, and shall join the legions from Constantinople\(^2\) to oppress the Assyrians and take captive the children of Eber; but the end of them all shall be to fall by the hand of the King Messiah, and they shall perish for ever. \(1T\).

**Josephus** summarizes the prophecies against the nations as follows:

Instead, falling upon his face, he foretold what calamities were to come for kings and what for cities of the highest celebrity (of which some had not yet so much as been inhabited at all), along with other events which have already befallen men in bygone ages, by land or sea, down to times within my memory. And from all these prophecies having received the fulfilment which he predicted one may infer what the future also has in store. \(J-A\), IV, vi. 5, § 125.

25. *And Balak also went his way.* That is to say, he departed to follow Balaam's advice.\(^3\)

Balak also returned to his place, and set his daughters in the market place. \(Neof\).

Balak also went his way and set Midianite girls in taverns between Beth Yeshimoth and the Mountain of the Snow, where they sold sweetmeats cheaper than their price, according to the advice of Balaam the Wicked, at the crossroads. \(1T\).

Et his dictis, avertit se Balaam et reversus est in locum suum. Et factum est post hec, seductus est populus post filias Moab. Fecit enim Balac omnia que ostendit ei Balaam. \(LAB\), xviii. 14.

**Scriptural supplements**

In addition to Numbers xxii-xxiv, Balaam is mentioned in a few other biblical passages. These are relatively short, but their importance to the development of exegetical traditions is equal, if not superior, to the main story.

All the traditional hostility towards Balaam is based on Numbers

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\(^1\) In *Neofiti*, the historical identifications are either erased, though it is still possible to read “Italy”, or omitted altogether.

\(^2\) The mention of Constantinople is obviously a later addition.

\(^3\) This has been discussed in detail in xxiv. 14.
xxxii.15-16, where, after the victory over the Midianites, Moses reproaches the Israelite officers for their clemency towards the women. These, he said, had followed Balaam’s advice and had seduced the people.

Moses said to them: Have you left all the women alive? Behold, these caused the people of Israel, by the word of Balaam, to betray the Lord in the affair of Peor, so that the plague came among the congregation of the Lord.

The Targums interpret the “word” (דב) of Balaam as the “counsel” (סנה) of Balaam, thus establishing a bond between this verse and xxiv. 14, and linking it also with the events described in chapter xxv.

Numbers Rabbah xx. 23 comments on xxv. 1-2:

The people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab, and they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods. They followed Balaam’s counsel.

Numbers xxxi. 8 tells how Balaam was killed by the Israelites together with the five kings of Midian.

They slew the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain: Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. And they also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.

The commentators wonder why Balaam rejoined Israel’s enemies, since it is recorded in xxiv. 25 that he returned to his homeland. They conclude that he went to collect the salary which was due to him for the advice which had caused the death of twenty-four thousand Israelites.

What did that Villain want with the kings of Midian? Is it not written, And Balaam... went and returned to his place (Num. xxiv. 25)? When he heard that because of his advice twenty-four thousand had fallen, he returned to get his reward from the kings. Num. R., xx. 20.

The following passage from Sifre is based on the same interpretation:

They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword. The Israelites paid him his full salary, and did not deprive him because he had come to give them (the Moabites) counsel. He said to them: If you were six hundred thousand you could not overpower them; but now you can. Therefore Israel paid him his full salary, and did not deprive him of it. Sifre on Num., § 137.

In the same section of Sifre, the Tannaitic teacher, R. Nathan, explains that Balaam was put to death, not purely from motives of
vengeance, but because as a magician he was liable to capital punish-
ment.

They sentenced him to death in the court of law, for it is written,
The people of Israel killed also Balaam son of Beor, the soothsayer, with
the sword (Josh. xiii. 22).

Some commentators read in Numbers xxxi, 8 a reference to
Balaam’s magical practices. “They slew the kings of Midian with the
rest of (72) their slain” can be translated literally, “above their slain”.
A strange haggadah is founded on this interpretation: by means of
his magic, Balaam and the five kings flew into the air in an attempt
to escape.

And it came to pass when the wicked Balaam saw the priest Phinehas
pursuing him, he performed an act of magic and flew in the air. Immedi-
ately, Phineas called upon the great and holy Name and flew after
him and seized him by his head and brought him down, and drawing
his sword he sought to kill him. But he opened his mouth in words of
supplication, and said to Phinehas: If you let my soul live, I swear
to you that never in my life shall I curse your people. He replied: Are
you not Laban the Aramean, who sought to kill Jacob our father? Then
you went down into Egypt to destroy his descendants. And when they
had come out of Egypt, you stirred up against them the wicked Amale-
kites. Afterwards you stirred your own self to curse them. But when
you saw that your work was fruitless, and that the Word of the Lord
did not listen to you, you gave evil advice to Balak that he should set
his daughters on the crossroads to lead them astray, and twenty-four
thousand of them fell. Therefore, I am not able to spare your life
again. Immediately he drew his sword from the scabbard and killed
him. 1TFJ.

In the remaining Old Testament texts Balaam is described as being
merely a docile instrument in the hands of the Moabites, and the
villainy is imputed to them, or to their king Balak.

Then Balak son of Zippor, king of Moab, rose and fought against
Israel. He sent and invited Balaam son of Beor to curse you, but I would
not listen to Balaam. Therefore he blessed you, so I delivered you out
of his hand. Josh. xxix. 9-10.

Because they did not meet you with bread and water on the road
when you came out of Egypt, and because they hired against you
Balaam son of Beor from Pethor of Aram-Naharaim to curse you. But
the Lord your God would not listen to Balaam, and the Lord your
God turned for you the curse into a blessing; for the Lord your God
loved you. Deut. xxiii. 5-6.

1 Cf. also Num. R., xx. 20.
On that day, the book of Moses was read in the hearing of the people, and it was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, for they did not meet the children of Israel with bread and water, and hired Balaam against them to curse them. But our God turned the curse into a blessing. *Neh.* xiii. 1-2.

Especially revealing is Micah vi. 5, where God asks Israel to remember all His favours, namely, their deliverance from Egypt (vi. 4), and the blessing which Balaam pronounced on them against the desire of Balak:

O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the favours of the Lord.

Finally, three passages from the New Testament complete this survey. Two of them, 2 Peter ii. 15-16 and Jude 11, mention Balaam’s salary, and the third, Revelation ii. 14, Balaam’s advice concerning idolatry and debauchery.

Forsaking the right path, they have gone astray. They have followed the path of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the salary of wickedness but was rebuked for his own transgression. A dumb ass spoke with the voice of a man and restrained the prophet’s foolishness. 2 *Peter* ii. 15-16.

Woe to them for they have gone off into the path of Cain! For the sake of gain they spend themselves in Balaam’s error and perish in Korah’s rebellion.1 *Jude* 11.

But I have a few things against you. You have there men who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to place a stumbling block before the children of Israel, namely, the eating of food sacrificed to idols, and fornication. *Rev.* ii. 14.

These three texts constitute the oldest evidence of great sinners being considered disciples of Balaam. Aboth v. 22 contrasts them to the disciples of Abraham:

Every man who has three things is a disciple of Abraham our father. Has he three other things, he is a disciple of Balaam the Villain. A good eye, a humble soul, and a lowly spirit, belong to the disciple of Abraham; an evil eye, a proud soul, and a haughty spirit, to the disciple of Balaam.

However, Balaam is also credited with disciples of another kind. He was thought to have been the founder of the Magi, and was identified with Zoroaster.

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Origen, in his \textit{In Numeros Homilia}, xiii. 7, presents this as a traditional belief:

Ex illo (Balaam) denique furtur Magorum genus et institutio in partibus Orientis vigere, qui descripta habentes apud se omnia quae prophetaverat Balaam, etiam hoc habuerunt scriptum quod “orietur stella ex Iacob et exsurget homo ex Israel”. Haec scripta habebant Magi apud semetipsos et ideo, quando natus est Iesus, agnoverunt stellam et intellexerunt adimplieri prophetiam.

Since the Infancy Gospel of Matthew is constructed from purely Jewish materials, it may safely be assumed that in those circles the Magi of Persia were known as the disciples of Balaam; not, that is to say, disciples of the Villain, but disciples of the Prophet who had pronounced blessings upon Israel and had foretold the coming of the Messiah.

Despite all his wrongdoing, Balaam has never ceased as it were to fascinate the Jews. It was even thought that Moses himself respected the deadly enemy of his people, and decided to keep for posterity the memory of his name.

This (Balaam) was the man to whom Moses did the high honour of recording his prophecies; and though it was open to him to appropriate and take the credit for them himself, as there would have been no witness to convict him, he has given Balaam this testimony and deigned to perpetuate his memory. \textit{J.-A}, IV, vi. 13, § 158.

\textit{Balaam and tradition}

Two entirely different portraits of Balaam emerge from the sources considered in these pages. The common Palestinian tradition, which in addition to the Palestinian Targums and related midrashic material includes also Josephus, Philo, and the relevant New Testament passages, records the story of Balaam the Villain. The other Balaam, Balaam the tragic Hero, appears in one document only, the Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum of Ps.-Philo.
The hostile interpretation of the Balaam story may be summarized as follows.

Balaam accepted Balak’s invitation out of greed and vanity. He wished to curse Israel because he took pleasure in malediction; he was known as an expert in that art. Moreover, he detested the Israelites and had once before tried to destroy them in Egypt. Blinded by his passions, he refused to understand the divine command not to curse those whom God had blessed, and even dared to ask permission to set out with Balak after God’s categoric refusal. Neither the miracle of his ass, nor the appearance of the Angel, was able to convey God’s displeasure to him, and when he was finally forced by God to bless those whom he wished to ruin, he openly rebelled against Him and gave evil counsel to Balak.

In the eyes of these interpreters, Balaam is the personification of cupidity, pride and hatred. He chose to become the instrument of Israel’s downfall by leading the people into idolatry and debauchery. He is the Wicked Man par excellence, and the fact that God addressed him as a prophet only increases his guilt.

Philo exaggerates this guilt even more. In Vita Mosis, Balaam is not is not even a fallen prophet. He is a liar and a hypocrite and God never appeared to him at all.

Josephus minimises the wickedness slightly, it is true, by imputing all Balaam’s wrongs to a desire to please Balak, but apart from these specific slants, both Vita Mosis, and Jewish Antiquities, show the same general bias as that found in the rest of Palestinian tradition and in the New Testament.

It must be emphasized that this whole pejorative outlook is presented as resulting from the reading and understanding of Numbers xxii-xxiv. Every word and gesture of Balaam, however apparently innocuous, is interpreted unfavourably by the commentators. Wicked are all the thoughts, aims, words and deeds of Balaam the Villain.

The Balaam of Ps.-Philo is hardly recognisable as the same person. This Balaam does not hate Israel, has no passion for money, and feels no special sympathy for the cause of Moab. His only desire is to do the will of God.

His first mistake was to ask permission to go with Balak’s envoys, when, as a confidant of God, he knew that Israel was a chosen people; but when he asked a second time, it was not for permission to curse Israel, but to offer sacrifice on behalf of Balak whom he pitied, and whose cause he knew to be hopeless. God commanded him to continue...
but warned him that the end of his mission would spell ruin both for himself and for Balak. He was then deprived of the spirit of prophecy, but through the little that remained to him he recognized that he had allowed himself to be deceived by Balak whose intention was to persuade God to alter His plans. Finally, realising that there would be no return to his former familiarity with the Lord, he decided, in his despair, to commit spiritual suicide by giving evil advice to the king. In short, having made his initial mistake, Balaam felt himself caught, as it were, in the claws of Fate, and instead of departing in joy, went off, hopeless, towards his inescapable end.

Ps.-Philo’s interpretation is not due to his unacquaintance with the Palestinian tradition, but to a deliberate refusal to follow it. His motive will appear presently.

The origins of the Palestinian exegesis of the Balaam story cannot be understood without a brief survey of the biblical tradition. In this, modern research distinguishes three different layers: J-E (Num. xxii-xxiv);¹ D (Deut. xxiii. 5-6, Neh. xiii. 2, Josh. xxiv. 9-10); and P (Num. xxxi. 8, 16, Josh. xiii. 22).²

In the main J-E account, apart from xxii. 22 and xxiv. 1 – which are probably editorial glosses – Balaam’s conduct is blameless. He obeyed the divine command, spoke the words which the Spirit put into his mouth, and can only be reproached for an absence of understanding. Balak and the Moabites, who encouraged him to curse Israel, bear a far heavier burden of guilt.

The D version of the story is also written from the anti-Moabite, and not the anti-Balaam, angle. The prophet is described as an instrument in the hands of Balak and his fatal and final counsel seems unknown.

Where then, does the portrait of Balaam the Villain draw its inspiration?

It is almost entirely based on the P supplement to the episode, namely, the killing of Balaam and his responsibility for Israel’s sin with the Moabite women.

It is scarcely necessary to recall that the P narrative is the most recent in the Pentateuch, and that the final redaction of the Torah is due to the same priestly circles which preserved and transmitted

¹ I should mention also Mic. vi, 5.
² For an excellent analysis of traditions, see M. Noth, Überlieferungsgeschichte des Pentateuch, Stuttgart, 1948, pp. 81-5.
the P tradition. The addition of the priestly supplement to the J-E-D history of Balaam, a supplement considered organically bound to the main narrative, completely altered the figure of its principal character.

This new understanding was conveyed by the last redactors of the Pentateuch to its first interpreters, who, in their turn, and by means of their commentaries, projected the P portrait of Balaam on to the main narrative of Numbers xxii–xxiv. This phase of exegetical evolution precedes the most ancient of the available post-biblical sources.

The pejorative interpretation of the Balaam story is consequently not a product of Rabbinic exegesis, but a contribution of the priestly redactors of the Torah.

On the other hand, it is enough to discard Numbers xxxi, and a wholly different picture of Balaam appears, a personality very similar to the tragic hero of Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum. Ps.-PHILO, obeying his usual inclination towards tragedy, merely brings into relief the underlying pathos of the biblical account.

This example, doubtless one among many, discloses several laws of general importance concerning the development of traditions.

1. The various currents of biblical tradition, whether oral or written, did not remain separate units. A new tradition, whatever its original purpose, neither simply supplemented, nor wholly replaced previous traditions, but through a process of vital osmosis, completely transformed them. By the addition and assimilation of the P account, the Balaam of pre-priestly tradition became a different person.

The final redaction of the Pentateuch, performed in the spirit of the most recent revision, affected, therefore, the significance of the older material, and established the meaning of the compilation as a whole according to the then contemporary understanding of biblical history. This implicit harmonisation and interweaving of scriptural tradition may be termed biblical midrash or haggadah.

2. This new understanding of the whole narrative was inherited by later interpreters of the written Bible, who in their turn, explicitly introduced the sense of the latest tradition, i.e. the contemporary one, into the former versions, and thus founded the post-biblical haggadah.

3. Such reinterpretation gave rise to exegetical traditions which, during the following centuries, governed biblical reading and understanding.

4. This fundamental law of exegetical development is to be borne in mind in the study of Old Testament themes and texts quoted in New Testament writings.
5. Since targumic and midrashic literature embodies ancient exegetical tradition, it provides a reliable basis for research into the mind of the last redactors of the Bible; into the significance, that is to say, of the final compilation of Scripture.

In conclusion, it is not necessary for the written word into which living tradition is translated to become a dead letter. This written word carries within it a germ of spiritual energy capable of generating a new living tradition, which, in its turn, should breathe new life into the word. This is, I believe, the true nature and aim of Haggadah.
PART FOUR

THEOLOGY AND EXEGESIS

CHAPTER SEVEN

CIRCUMCISION AND EXODUS IV 24-26

Prelude to the Theology of Baptism

At it came to pass on the way, at the lodging place, that the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Zipporah took a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son, and touched his feet. And she said: Surely a bridegroom of blood are you to me. And he departed from him. Then she said: A bridegroom of blood for the circumcision.

The analysis of the story of Balaam has shown to what extent narrative passages of Scripture were interpreted in the light of the latest exegetical traditions. Doctrinal exegesis was similarly influenced by the evolution of Jewish religious thought, and its impact was the more obvious because, in ancient Judaism, systematic theology was unknown, and the establishment, transmission, and development of doctrines and beliefs were effected within the framework of scriptural interpretation. Whereas the priestly reinterpretation of the Balaam story was of no very great import to the faith and religious practice of Israel, a new outlook upon such a fundamental dogma as circumcision very clearly was.

The present enquiry is a study of the history of the interpretations of Exodus iv. 24-26.1 They vary, in the datable sources, from age to age. Ancient commentators of this obscure, disconcerting, and even scandalous text were faced with many difficulties. Some were due to grammatical looseness. Whom, for instance, did the Lord seek to kill: Moses or his son? At whose feet was the foreskin thrown: the Lord’s, Moses’, or his son’s? Who was the “bridegroom of blood”: the Lord, Moses, or the child? Other problems arise from the larger context of Exodus. According to xviii. 3, Moses had two sons, Gershom and Eliezer. Why is only one mentioned in this passage, and which one? In places, the narrative itself is obscure, especially the significance of

1 The following pages are a revised form of Baptism and Jewish Exegesis, published in NTS, IV, 1958, pp. 308–319.
the words “bridegroom of blood”; in others, there are questions of a doctrinal character. There are, for example, the statements that the Lord tried to kill Moses, that Moses failed to circumcise his son (his own uncircumcision is, a priori, excluded), and that a woman performed a religious rite reserved to men alone.

The efforts of the interpreters to minimise the implications of the passage reflect their changing attitudes towards the doctrine of circumcision. A clearer understanding of this evolution is of value, not only to Jewish studies, but also to New Testament exegesis, for against the authentic background of the contemporary Jewish teaching of circumcision the Pauline theology of Baptism takes on new shape.

Exodus iv. 24-26 in the ancient versions of the Bible

For purposes of textual criticism the ancient versions of this passage are of little use. The underlying Hebrew text appears to be identical with the Masoretic Text, and this, in its turn, is closely followed by the post-Christian Greek translations, the Vulgate, and, with an unimportant exception, the Peshitta. But the Septuagint and the Targums, due to what I have called the rewriting of the Bible, i.e. the introduction of a contemporary interpretation into the translation of the text, show wide discrepancies.

The Septuagint

iv. 24. Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῇ ὡδῇ ἐν τῷ καταλύματι συνήντησεν αὐτῷ ἄγγελος κυρίου καὶ ἔζητει αὐτὸν ἀποκτεῖναι

And it came to pass on the way, in the inn, that the Angel of the Lord met him and sought to kill him.

The Septuagint, together with the whole of Jewish tradition, refuses to follow the clear indication in the biblical text concerning the identity of the attacker. It was inconceivable that the Lord in person would threaten the life of any man, and particularly not the life of His elect. The responsibility, therefore, was passed to the Angel.

The identity of the potential victim is undefined. “Him” may refer to Moses or to his son, but very likely the translator had Moses in mind.

iv. 25. Καὶ λαβὼν ὁ Σεπτῳράθ ζήφον περιέτημεν τὴν ἄκροβυστίαν τοῦ γυναίκος καὶ προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας καὶ εἶπεν
"Εστη τὸ αἷμα τῆς περιτομῆς τοῦ παιδίου μου

And Zipporah took a flint and circumcised the foreskin of her son and fell at (his) feet and said: The blood of the circumcision of my son has stood.

There are two notable departures from the Hebrew text here. Firstly, instead of touching some undefined person’s feet with the foreskin, Zipporah falls at his feet, and the context, as well as her words, indicates that the feet belong not to Moses or to the child, but to the Angel. The gesture is one of supplication following the performance of a religious rite.

Secondly, Zipporah’s words have a very different significance from the Hebrew. Although the sense of ἔστη is not at first sight obvious, a similar use of ἔστημι in Luke viii. 44 shows that it should be translated “staunched”. The rite has been performed and blood shed; the phrase has a sacrificial tone. This meaning is even more apparent in two more recent versions depending mainly on the Septuagint, namely, the Armenian and the Ethiopic. The former text, based on Exodus xxiv. 8, reads:

Behold the blood of the circumcision of my son.

The Ethiopian version is:

May the blood of the circumcision of my son be in his place.

Here, the sacrificial meaning is obvious; the blood shed by Zipporah saved Moses’ life. There is no alteration of the basic sense of the Greek text but it is rendered more explicit.

iv. 26. Καὶ ἀπῆλθεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ διότι εἶπεν "Εστη τὸ αἷμα τῆς περιτομῆς τοῦ παιδίου μου

And he departed from him because she said: The blood of the circumcision of my son has stood.

The Septuagint introduces a causal relation between the words of Zipporah and the departure of the Angel. The last word of the Hebrew text, “for the circumcision”, is untranslated; or more exactly,


2 The whole verse is omitted in LXX•B.
it is inserted both here and in the preceding verse into Zipporah's prayer.

It may well be asked how "A bridegroom of blood are you to me" came to be written, "The blood of the circumcision of my son is stanched"?

If analysed, the Septuagint exegesis gives a clear answer: Moses was delivered from death through the expiatory virtue of the blood of the circumcision. That is to say, if the words "A bridegroom of blood are you to me" had been addressed by Zipporah to her husband, they would have meant that Moses had not died, but remained her husband because of the blood shed at the circumcision of her son.

The Targums

_Targum Onkelos_

_4.iv. 24._ And it came to pass on the way, at the lodging place, that the Angel of the Lord met him and sought to kill him.

The interpretation agrees with the Septuagint. "Him" undoubtedly refers to Moses.

_4.iv. 25._ And Zipporah took a flint and cut off the foreskin of her son and approached him and said: May my husband be given to us by the blood of this circumcision.

Again, the interpretation is almost identical with that of the Septuagint, though the sacrificial character of the circumcision is more explicit in Onkelos. The avoidance of any mention of the Angel's feet is a typical feature of this Targum's fight against anthropomorphism.

_4.iv. 26._ And he desisted from him. Then she said: But for the blood of this circumcision, my husband had merited death.

The expression "a bridegroom of blood..." is paraphrased in two different ways. Verse 25 repeats the Septuagint exegesis, i.e. a supplication, but verse 26 makes a straightforward affirmation of the redemptive virtue of the blood of circumcision.

On the whole, the general pattern of the Targum Onkelos exegesis is that of the Septuagint. They follow the same interpretative tradition, and this tradition is, as will be shown, of Palestinian origin.

_The Fragmentary Targum_

_4.iv. 25._ And she cut off the foreskin of her son and brought it to the feet of the Destroyer, and said: My husband wished to circumcise, but
his father-in-law did not permit him. Now may the blood of this circumcision atone for the guilt of my husband.

Several new themes appear here. The Angel is identified as “the Destroyer”, and Zipporah proves that she has obeyed the command to circumcise by presenting him with the newly severed foreskin. Again, although she prays that the sacrificial blood of the circumcision may atone for the guilt, she makes a clearer distinction than before between the fulfilment of the law and the sacrificial value of the blood. Lastly, she makes her own father responsible for the failure to circumcise the child, though she gives no reason for Jethro’s action. An explanation of this is provided by Ps.-Jonathan and midrashic literature.

iv. 26. When the Destroyer departed from him, Zipporah gave thanks, and said: How beloved is the blood of circumcision which has saved my husband from the hand of the Angel of Death.

According to the Palestinian tradition represented here, verse 26 is interpreted as a prayer of thanksgiving. Moses is a “bridegroom of blood” because he has been redeemed by the blood of circumcision.

Pseudo-Jonathan

iv. 24. And it came to pass on the way, at the lodging place, that the Angel of the Lord met him and sought to kill him because his son Gershom had not been circumcised on account of Jethro, his father-in-law, who did not permit him to circumcise him. But Eliezer had been circumcised by virtue of an agreement they had made between them.

Ps.-Jonathan contributes fresh information on two points. He shows firstly that the Bible employs the singular “her son” in verse 25 because only one of Zipporah’s two boys, the younger son, Eliezer, had been circumcised; and secondly, that Jethro’s opposition to the circumcision of Gershom, the first-born, was based on an agreement between Moses and his father-in-law.

iv. 25. And Zipporah took a flint and cut off the foreskin of Gershom her son, and brought what had been severed to the feet of the Destroying Angel, and said: My husband wished to circumcise but his father-in-law prevented him. May now the blood of this circumcision atone for my husband.

1 The Fragmentary Targum is an aide mémoire for preachers. It provides no details of interpretative traditions since these are supposed to be known.
2 From the standpoint of exegesis, Neof. contains no new element. Apart from its language, which reveals a great affinity to the Geniza fragments, verse 24 follows TO, and verses 25–26, notwithstanding a few slight stylistic differences, agree with 27J.
Except for the mention of Gershom, the text follows the Fragmentary Targum rather than Targum Onkelos or Neofiti.

\textit{in. 26.} And the Destroying Angel desisted from him. Then Zipporah gave thanks, and said: How beloved is the blood of this circumcision which has saved my husband from the hand of the Destroying Angel.

This is almost word for word identical with the Fragmentary Targum and Neofiti.

The principal elements of the earliest pre-Christian tradition upon which the Septuagint and all the Targums – Targum Onkelos and the Palestinian versions – agree, are as follows:

1. Moses was the object of the threatened attack.\(^1\)

2. The attacker was an Angel of God – the Destroyer, the Angel of Death, but not Satan.

3. Zipporah’s words in verse 25 were addressed to the Angel.

4. Moses’ life was saved, not by the late performance of his religious duty but by the virtue of the sacrificial blood of the circumcision.

The discrepancies, ancient but unimportant, concern:

1. Zipporah’s gesture after the circumcision. In Targum Onkelos, Neofiti, and Septuagint, she approaches the Angel to entreat him; in the Fragmentary Targum and Ps.-Jonathan she presents him with the proof of circumcision before addressing her prayer to him.

2. The mention of Jethro, which is properly Palestinian. (It is omitted in Targum Onkelos and the Septuagint).

3. The meaning of Zipporah’s words in verse 26. In Targum Onkelos they are presented as a simple statement of fact; in the Palestinian sources, as a prayer of thanksgiving.

The identification of Gershom as the circumcised boy and the mention of an agreement between Jethro and Moses are peculiar to Ps.-Jonathan, but early Rabbinic literature shows that these are both ancient Palestinian traditions.

Although it is impossible to date exactly the principal elements of the targumic interpretation, the Book of Jubilees, written in the second half of the second century BC, provides a \textit{terminus ante quem}. This work lays particular stress on circumcision – an eternal institution written on the heavenly tablets, causing the children of Abraham to resemble the angels who are themselves created circumcised.\(^2\) The

\(^1\) This is also emphasized in the Peshitta, which in verse 24 replaces the indeterminate “him” with the name of Moses.

\(^2\) Cf. Jub., xv.
effort of the author of Jubilees to expound Exodus iv. 24–26 in accordance with his belief by altering completely the biblical narrative\(^1\) proves also that the targumic tradition, ascribing to Moses the responsibility for the uncircumcision of his son, could not have originated during the Hellenistic crisis, and particularly not after the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. The date of its origin may, therefore, safely be placed approximately in the third century BC.

*Exodus iv. 24-26 and the rewritten Bible*

The recital of the Aramaic Targums, and no doubt also of the Greek Targum of the Septuagint, followed the reading of the Torah as an integral part of the divine service in the synagogue. It covered the entire Pentateuch.\(^2\) Even shocking passages such as the Lord’s attack on Moses had to be explained by the *targemans*, for in no circumstances were they permitted to overlook any problematic portion of the text. It was their duty not only to translate, but to interpret, and the public reading of the Hebrew text obliged them to adhere to the original as closely as possible.

The authors of the various versions of the rewritten Bible enjoyed more liberty than the targumists, and their treatment of Exodus iv. 24-26 is consequently more distinctive. Artapanus, Ps.-Philo, Josephus, and Philo ignore the story completely, thereby showing their disturbance. Yet the first two writers must have had this passage in mind when doing their best to assure their readers of Moses’ circumcision. According to Artapanus, Moses must have been circumcised since he taught circumcision to the Ethiopians and to all the priests.\(^3\) Ps.-Philo’s account is the earliest written evidence of the traditional belief that Moses was born circumcised:

> Ipse autem puer natus est in testamento Dei et in testamento carnis eius.\(^4\)

Eventually, this belief appears to have become the common Palestinian tradition, as Exodus Rabbah i. 24 (on Ex. ii. 2) shows:

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\(^1\) Cf. below, p. 185.
\(^2\) Except the following passages: *Gen.* xxxv. 22 (Reuben’s incest); *Ex.* xxxii. 21–25 (Aaron’s responsibility in the affair of the golden calf); *Num.* vi. 24–27 (the priestly blessing). Cf. *Meg.*, iv. 10.
\(^4\) *LAB*, ix. 13.
The woman conceived and bore a son (Moses) and she saw that he was fine (ותב). R. Meir taught: His name was Tob. R. Josiah: His name was Tobiah. R. Judah: He was worthy of the prophecy. The others say: He was born circumcised.1

The Book of Jubilees is the only document to record events occurring during Moses’ journey to Egypt. It was as impossible for its author to accept that God tried to kill Moses as it was for him to believe that Moses neglected to circumcise his son on the eighth day after his birth. The only biblical element which he retains is that Moses was in danger of death. His attacker was not God, and not even God’s Angel, but Prince Mastema, Satan. The cause of the threat was no sin of Moses, who was blameless, but Mastema’s desire to protect the idolatrous Egyptians from him. His attempt on Moses’ life was foiled, not by Zipporah, but by God Himself.

And you returned to Egypt in the second week, in the second year, in the fiftieth jubilee. And you yourself know what He said to you on Mount Sinai, and what Prince Mastema wished to do to you when you were returning to Egypt, on the way, when you met him at the lodging place. Did he not with all his power seek to kill you and to deliver the Egyptians out of your hand when he saw that you were sent to execute judgment and vengeance on the Egyptians? And I delivered you out of his hand.2

It is clear from the evidence of the rewritten Bible that whereas the targumic approach is exclusively theological, in the second century BC this text was considered from an apologetical standpoint and the difficulties with which the author of Jubilees had to contend were the same as those which continued to trouble the Rabbis of the second century AD.

1 In this context, I suggest that זן ובר, “son of the Covenant” (i.e. circumcised), should be read in place of זן ובר, “a steadfast child”, in ITJ on Ex. ii. 2. It should be noted that Moses was not the only man thought to have been born circumcised. All the saints of the Bible whose circumcision is not explicitly mentioned in Scripture are supposed to have been born so marked—Noah, Shem, Melchizedek, Jacob, etc. In the same way, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (vii. 3) concludes that because of the absence of a genealogy in Gen. xiv Melchizedek was without father or mother, and because of his sudden appearance and disappearance he assumes that his life had neither beginning nor end.

2 Cf. R. H. Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, vol. II, Oxford, 1913, pp. 78-9. For a similar substitution, see Jub., xvii. 16-18. God’s shocking command to Abraham to sacrifice his son is explained here as follows. Mastema suggested that if Abraham had to choose between God and Isaac, he would choose Isaac. The Lord knew the Patriarch’s faithfulness and love, and wished to shame Mastema. For a biblical example of this sort, compare 2 Sam. xxix. 1 with 1 Chron. xxi. 1.
Early Rabbinic writings disclose a twofold tendency. The one follows and develops a traditional interpretation as it is recorded in the Targums; the other, because of apologetical reasons similar to those inspiring Jubilees, but due to a new historical factor, attempts to establish a fresh interpretation altogether.

In the present context, the tendency to amplify an existing tradition is seen in the Rabbinic treatment of Jethro, and of Zipporah’s gesture after the circumcision. In the Palestinian Targums, Jethro is responsible for preventing his son-in-law from performing his religious duty, and Ps.-Jonathan specifies that there was an actual agreement between them to this effect. R. Eleazar of Modiim, a Tannaite of the beginning of the second century AD, describes this agreement as follows:

When Moses said to Jethro: Give me your daughter Zipporah for a wife, Jethro replied: Accept a condition which I will state, and I will give her to you to be your wife. Moses asked: What is it? He said to him: Your first son shall be dedicated to idolatry, and those that follow, to God. Moses agreed. Then Jethro said: Swear to me! Moses swore... It was for this that the Angel hastened to kill him.¹

Moses committed a sin worthy of death for love of Zipporah, and although not expressly stated, it may be inferred that the ancient Rabbis found it quite normal that Moses should have been saved by the wife for whose sake he had transgressed. No attempt is made to diminish his guilt; on the contrary, it is increased. In addition to the sinful neglect of a religious duty, he is credited with having explicitly consented to rear his son as an idolater.

As regards Zipporah’s gesture after the circumcision, according to targumic tradition she either approached the feet of the Angel or brought to them the foreskin of her son. I find no mention of the former tradition in Rabbinic literature, but the latter was still taught by R. Nehemiah, a pupil of Akiba, for whom it was proof that the circumcision had been performed.

Other teachers held other views. R. Judah ben Il‘ai, the habitual opponent of Nehemiah, thought that Zipporah approached the feet of her husband saying:

Your guilt is cut off.²

² J. Ned., iii. 38b.
The general opinion, however, is that she touched the feet of the child.\(^1\)

As an example of the tendency to create new interpretations from apologetical motives, in a long exegetical section on Exodus iv. 24-26 in Nedarim 31b-32a some manuscripts substitute “Satan” for “Angel”. Again, whereas the above quoted passage from Mekh ILita mentions an agreement between Jethro and Moses, sanctioned by oath, later sources record that Moses’ oath concerned his remaining with Jethro, and not the dedication of his son to idol-worship. Moreover, when God commanded him to return to Egypt, He absolved him from this oath.\(^2\) Other teachers exculpate Moses almost entirely.

R. Joshua ben Karha\(^3\) says: Great is circumcision, for not even the merit of Moses could suspend punishment for the delay of an hour. Rabbi\(^4\) says: Great is circumcision, for all the merits of Moses were unavailing when he was in trouble because of it. He went to bring Israel out of Egypt, yet because he delayed circumcision for one hour, the Angel sought to kill him. R. Jose\(^5\) says: God forbid! To think that this righteous men shirked circumcision even for an hour! But should he have circumcised and departed immediately, the child’s life would have been endangered. Should he have circumcised, and stayed a little, God had commanded him, Go and bring Israel out of Egypt. It was merely because he rested before performing the circumcision that the Angel sought to kill him.\(^6\)

These sayings of the Rabbis interpret the story in a very different light. Moses’ only fault was that he was a little late in the performance of his duty – to his younger son, obviously.\(^7\) The underlying assumption seems to be that the child was born eight days before the divine command to return to Egypt and that Moses was consequently faced with two contradictory obligations: to perform the circumcision and wait a little, or to depart immediately. He rightly judged immediate departure to be more important but he should have circumcised the child as soon as he reached his first lodging place. By delaying there, doubtless from fatigue, he sinned. But for the fact that the principal intention of the second century Rabbis was to exalt circumcision, Moses would have been wholly excused.

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\(^1\) Cf. J. Ned., iii. 38b.
\(^3\) He flourished after the Hadrianic war.
\(^4\) I.e. Judah ha-Nasi.
\(^5\) A contemporary of Joshua b. Karha.
\(^7\) Cf. in this sense, Ex. R., v. 8: He neglected to circumcise his son Eliezer.
During the same period, and in the same milieu and perspective, appears another new approach to this passage. The person in danger because of the uncircumcision was not Moses, but the child. The child was the “bridegroom of blood”.

R. Simeon ben Gamaliel says: The Angel sought to kill not Moses but the child. For it is said; Surely a bridegroom of blood are you to me...” Who could have been called bridegroom? Moses, or the child? You must say: the child.¹

Some doctors teach that Moses was called bridegroom. Others teach that the child was called bridegroom. Those who say that Moses was called bridegroom interpret: Bridegroom, blood (i.e. circumcision) is required of you. Those who say the child was called bridegroom interpret: By means of the blood you have become my bridegroom.²

This latest, and greatly simplified representation of the story may be summed up as follows. Moses was a little late in performing the circumcision of his second son. Immediately an angel appeared to kill the infant.³ Zipporah performed the rite, or reminded Moses of it,⁴ touched the feet of her son, and called him “bridegroom” by the blood of the circumcision. The life of the child was saved by the observance of the commandment of circumcision as prescribed by the Law.

This exegesis, which entirely departs from the old targumic tradition, has two consequences. Embarrassing details are eliminated, and by relating everything to the child the narrative is given unity and coherence to emphasize the greatness and importance of circumcision.

If, omitting differences of detail, the ancient targumic tradition is compared with that established by the Tannaitic teachers, essential discrepancies may be reduced to two:

1. Rabbinic tradition attempts to diminish Moses’ responsibility, plainly acknowledged in the Targums, and to reduce the disturbing effect of God’s apparent behaviour. By doing this, the Rabbis continue a process which first appeared in the rewritten Bible, and which is, indeed, an inherent tendency of the whole of midrashic literature. Their interpretation differs from that of Jubilees etc., because of their obligation to remain closer to the biblical text, even at the price of a serious alteration of meaning.

¹ Mekh., ibid., II, 170.
² J. Ned., iii, 38b.
³ Gen. xvii. 14 threatens the uncircumcised with extinction, but not their parents.
⁴ See a discussion in Abodab Zarab 27a on whether a woman may circumcise. The answer is negative. Zipporah either merely advised Moses to circumcise the child, or else began the rite and left him to complete it.
2. From the doctrinal point of view, there is a most important variation: the redemptive observance of the law of circumcision takes the place of the sacrificial blood of circumcision. "How beloved is the blood of circumcision" is transformed to "Great is circumcision". All the doctors speaking of circumcision in Mekhîlîta lay emphasis on the greatness of the law.

It is not too difficult to discover when these changes took place. Those insisting so strictly on the necessity of circumcision, and minimizing Moses' sin, were all without exception Rabbis teaching after the end of the Hadrianic War. It will be recalled that, after the victory of the Romans against Bar Kokhba, the practice of circumcision was decreed a crime punishable by death. Thus, R. Nathan, one of the most moving preachers of that time, expounds Exodus xx. 6 ("those who love me and observe my commandments") as follows:

This refers to those who live in the land of Israel and give their lives for the commandments. Why are you brought out to be beheaded? Because I have circumcised my son to be an Israelite.\(^1\)

It is not surprising, therefore, to find the spiritual authorities of Palestinian Judaism emphasizing the greatness and necessity of this essential rite, and explaining away, for the sake of those who were afraid, or hesitated, every possible biblical excuse for delaying the circumcision of their children.

The change was obviously not immediate and complete. Although the new interpretation was propounded by the preachers in the synagogues, the traditionalism of all liturgy saw to it that the ancient targumic exegesis did not die. The passage cited above from the Palestinian Talmud contains interpretative elements belonging to both traditions. The same feature is found in Exodus Rabbah, which, in one long passage, assembles all the available exegetical traditions:

And it came to pass on the way... Beloved is circumcision for which not even one hour's delay was granted to Moses. For when he was on the way, and busied himself with lodging, and neglected to circumcise his son Eliezer, immediately the Lord met him and sought to kill him. Although this was the Angel of Mercy (i.e. the Lord), nevertheless he sought to kill him.

And Zipporah took a flint... How did she know that Moses was in trouble because of the circumcision? Because the Angel came and swallowed Moses from his head to the place of circumcision. When she saw that the Angel had swallowed him to that place, she understood that he was in trouble because of the commandment of circum-

\(^1\) Mekh., II, 247.
cision. She knew how great was the power of circumcision because he could not swallow him further.

So immediately, She cut off... She said: You will give my husband back to me by the merit of this blood. Behold, I have fulfilled the commandment. Immediately, the Angel departed from him. Then she said: Bridegroom of blood because of the circumcision. She said: How great is the merit of circumcision! For my husband deserved to be punished with death because he neglected to observe the commandment of circumcision. Without it he would not have been saved.¹

The theology of Circumcision and Baptism

Many aspects of the Jewish teaching of circumcision in New Testament times are well known and need only to be mentioned briefly. Circumcision was the rite by means of which an Israelite entered the Covenant, and also the external sign of his membership. At the same time, following the teaching of the prophets and of Deuteronomy, circumcision of the flesh was regarded as the symbol of the circumcised heart. PHILO gives this as a traditional doctrine, and distinguishes it from his own allegorical interpretation.²

In addition to all this, the targumic exegesis of Exodus iv. 24-26 reveals the importance attributed in ancient Judaism to the actual blood shed in circumcision. This blood, called “the blood of the Covenant”, became a sine qua non of the validity of its performance. It was even specified that, should there be, for any reason whatsoever, no foreskin to sever, blood must still flow for the rite to be effective.³ Moreover, whereas the rite itself represented entry into the Covenant, the blood was judged equivalent to the sacrificial blood of every covenant. This conferred on circumcision a sacrificial character less familiar than its other aspects.

The doctrine of the redemptive virtue of the blood, manifest in the targumic interpretation of Exodus iv. 24-26, is brought into even clearer relief by the association of this blood with the redemptive

¹ Ex. R., v. 8.
² Spec. Leg., i. § 6. PHILO’s personal doctrine is summed up by E.R.GOODENOUGH: “In mutilating the organ which is the symbol of material pleasure, circumcision becomes the symbol of renunciation and beitlement of all material pleasure... At the same time it pours contempt symbolically upon man’s illusion of creative power... For only... as man recognizes his own helplessness and unreality apart from God... can he hope to receive from God. That is, Philo has made circumcision into a mystic rite of abandonment of fleshly desire and confidence, as it is a rite of complete dedication to God. Cf. An Introduction to Philo Judaicus, New Haven, 1940, pp. 206-7.
³ Gen. R., xlv. 12; Shab., 137b; Yeb., 71a.
blood *par excellence* of the Passover lamb. Thus, Ezekiel xvi. 6, connected already in Tannaitic tradition with Exodus xii., 1 is interpreted as follows:

*Ez. xvi. 6*  
And when I passed by you, and saw you wretling in your blood, I said to you: By your blood, live! And I said again: By your blood live!  

*Targum*  
Because the memorial of the covenant with your fathers is before Me, I revealed Myself to deliver you, for it is known before Me that you are oppressed in your captivity. I said to you: Because of the blood of the circumcision I will take care of you. I said to you again: Because of the blood of Passover I will redeem you.

In the Midrash Rabbah, Leviticus xvii. 11, “For the life of all flesh is in the blood ... and it is the blood that makes atonement”, is paraphrased:

Life is in the blood of Passover; life is in the blood of circumcision

It is also written that the first Passover after the exodus from Egypt was celebrated by the mingling of the blood of both. 2

It is this ancient theology of circumcision, and especially its connection with sacrifice, which is latent in the Pauline doctrine of Baptism in the New Testament. For St. Paul, Baptism is not only a sacramental entry into the New Covenant and a rite of inner purification. It is, above all, a participation in the sacrificial death and resurrection of Christ, the source of salvation. It is a union with the “circumcision of Christ”. His association of Baptism with sacrifice is not due, therefore, to his own insight, but springs directly from the contemporary Jewish doctrine of circumcision which he adopted and adapted.

In this perspective, it may be of value to re-read Romans vi. 3-4, and Colossians ii. 11-12.

Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

2 *Cf. Ex. R.*, xix. 7. It is important to remark that the pre-Christian tradition preserved here and in the Targum was reinterpreted in the sense of an atoning observance of the commandments of circumcision and Passover in *Mekhb.* I, 33-4.
In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead.
CHAPTER EIGHT

REDEMPTION AND GENESIS XXII

THE BINDING OF ISAAC AND THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS

The story of the Binding of Isaac played a prominent part in the doctrinal development of Judaism. By consenting to offer to God his only son, Abraham proved his perfect love, and his example became the cornerstone of the whole Jewish theology of the love of God. As Professor VAJDA remarks, "Le thème du service d’amour d’Abraham n’a pas manqué d’être médité par le Talmud et le Midrash, le plus souvent en connexion, précisément, avec le sacrifice d’Isaac".1

In the biblical drama, the principal actors on Mount Moriah are Abraham and God. Isaac is the victim of a mysterious divine command and of his father’s unswerving trust in the Lord. The same picture appears in the mediaeval representation of the sacrifice.2

The older sources, however, somewhat surprisingly shift the emphasis and focus their interest on the person of Isaac.3 For them, Genesis xxi, as well as serving to illustrate an ideal religious behaviour of love and obedience, is the key to the doctrine of Atonement or Redemption.

It is the purpose of this enquiry to examine this exegetical change, to analyse the theological development resulting from it, and to outline the salient points of its impact on the Christian doctrine of Redemption.

Genesis xxi in the Palestinian Targums.

The biblical account of Abraham’s ordeal may be summarized as follows:

1. Abraham was ordered by God to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering on a mountain in the land of Moriah (vv. 1-2).

2. He departed the next morning accompanied by Isaac and two servants. On the third day of his journey he saw the mountain and leaving his servants behind, went on with his son. Isaac carried the wood for the sacrifice (vv. 3-6).

3. To Isaac’s question concerning the victim, the Patriarch answered evasively: God will see for Himself a lamb (vv. 7–8).

4. Abraham built an altar, bound Isaac and made ready to kill him, but an angel prevented him from doing so (vv. 9–12).

5. He discovered a ram and offered it in the place of Isaac and called the place הָאָרָס יָד וַיְהֹדֲו (vv. 13–14).

6. As a reward for Abraham’s obedience God renewed His promises to him (vv. 15–18).

7. Abraham returned to his servants and they travelled on together to Beer-Sheba (v. 19).

When the targumic sources, which usually contain the simplest form of exegetical tradition, are examined, they reveal two different types of exegesis. The primitive kernel is represented by the Fragmentary Targum and Neofiti, but Ps.-Jonathan and a Tosefta fragment of Targum Yerushalmi give a secondary version of the original interpretation.¹

The following is a translation of the Fragmentary Targum. The variant readings of Neofiti affecting the meaning of the account are given in the foot-notes.

xxii. 8. And Abraham said: The Word of the Lord shall prepare a lamb for Himself.² If not, my son, you shall be the burnt offering.³ And they went together with a quiet heart.⁴

xxii. 10. Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to kill Isaac his son. Isaac answered and said to Abraham his father: Bind my hands properly that I may not struggle in the time of my pain and disturb you and render your offering unfit⁵ and be cast into the pit of destruction in the world to come. The eyes of Abraham were turned to the eyes of Isaac, but the eyes of Isaac were turned to the angels of heaven. Isaac saw them⁶ but Abraham did not see them. In that hour the angels of heaven⁷ went out and said to each other: Let us go and see the only two just men in the world.⁸ The one slays, and the other is

² Neof: “A lamb for the burnt offering shall be prepared from before the Lord”. The 2TJ reading is given in the margin of Neof.
³ Neof: “You are the lamb of the burnt offering”.
⁴ Neof: “With a perfect heart”. The 2TJ version is inscribed in the margin.
⁵ Neof: “Bind me properly that I may not kick (resist) you and your offering be made unfit”.
⁶ Neof: omitted.
⁷ Neof: “A heavenly voice”.
⁸ Neof: “The only two in my world(?).
being slain. The slayer does not hesitate, and the one being slain stretches out his neck.

xxii. 14. Abraham worshipped and prayed the Name of the Word of the Lord, and said: ‘O Lord, You are He that sees and is unseen! I pray: all is revealed before You. It is known before You that there was no division in my heart at the time when You told me to offer Isaac my son, and to make him dust and ashes before You. But I departed immediately in the morning and did Your word with joy and fulfilled it. Now I pray for mercy before You, O Lord God, that when the children of Isaac come to a time of distress, You may remember on their behalf the binding of Isaac their father, and loose and forgive them their sins and deliver them from all distress, so that the generations which follow him may say: In the mountain of the Temple of the Lord, Abraham offered Isaac his son, and in this mountain – of the Temple – the glory of the Shekinah of the Lord was revealed to him.

The distinctive features of this oldest targumic narrative are:
1. Abraham told Isaac that he was to be the sacrificial victim.
2. Isaac gave his consent.
3. He asked to be bound so that the sacrifice might be perfect.
4. He was favoured with a heavenly vision.
5. Abraham prayed that his own obedience, and Isaac’s willingness, might be remembered by God on behalf of Isaac’s children.
6. His prayer was answered. Although God’s reply is missing here, it was obviously inferred from Genesis xxii. 17-18, as an old liturgical formula, quoted in the Mishnah, shows:

May He who answered Abraham on Mount Moriah, answer you, and may He listen to the voice of your cry this day!

In short, instead of reducing his role to that of a passive victim, as the Bible does, the Targum ascribes to Isaac an active and prominent part in the story of the Akedah. This was rightly observed by G.F. Moore when he wrote:

1 *Neof*: omitted.
2 *Neof*: “The first time”.
3 *Neof*: “Your decree”.
4 *Neof*: omitted.
5 *Neof*: “Listen to the voice of their prayer and answer them”.
6 Whereas according to the Targum on xxii. 10 Isaac saw the angels of heaven, the Targum on verse 14 states that the Shekinah of the Lord was revealed to him. The latter vision appears to express the real meaning of the legend and is supported by midrashic comments. “When his father bound him and took the knife to slay him, the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself above the angels and opened the heavens. Isaac lifted up his eyes... and saw the Holy One... and the angels.” *Tanah. B.*, ii. 141. *Gen. R.*, lxv. 10 attributes the weakness of Isaac’s eyes to this revelation. Cf. also *2TJ* on *Ex*. xii. 42.
7 *Ta’an.*, ii. 4.
In Genesis it is Abraham's faith and his obedience to God's will even to the offering of his only son, the child of promise, that constitutes the whole significance of the story; Isaac is a purely passive figure. In the rabbinical literature, however, the voluntariness of the sacrifice on Isaac's part is strongly emphasized.¹

A disconcerting detail appearing in the Cambridge fragment of the Tosefta of the Palestinian Targum may be discarded as foreign to the most ancient version of the narrative. According to this, Abraham left his home not knowing which son God required of him – Eliezer his adopted son, Ishmael, or Isaac. When they approached Moriah, Isaac and Abraham saw God in the form of a column of cloud above the mountain, but the others saw nothing. Abraham therefore concluded that Isaac was the divinely chosen victim.

And Abraham said to his servants: Do you see anything at all? They answered: We see nothing. He answered and said to Isaac his son: Do you see anything? He replied: Behold, I see a column of cloud from the heavens to the earth. Then the father knew that Isaac was chosen for the burnt offering.²

Ps.-Jonathan and Genesis Rabbah include a similar passage, but insert it much more relevantly into the general framework of the narrative to explain two problems of minor importance, viz., how the Patriarch knew where God wished him to sacrifice his son since the divine command mentioned only one of the mountains in the land of Moriah, and why the two servants were left behind on the third day. Ps.-Jonathan on xxii. 4 answers the first question thus:

On the third day, Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the cloud of Glory rising like smoke above the mountain, and he recognized it from a distance.

The same vision is mentioned in Genesis Rabbah but with reference to the second problem:

He said to Isaac: My son, do you see what I see? He answered: Yes. Then he asked his two servants: Do you see what I see? They answered: No. – Since the ass does not see it and neither do you, Stay here with the ass.³

Tosefta borrows, in this case, from the Ps.-Jonathan-Genesis Rabbah tradition, but reshapes it, apparently with the aid of xxii. 8,

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By reading לָרַא הַלָּא וּלָא הָשָׁה בָּי, the text is understood to mean: God is revealed to him; the lamb is my son. Hence the interpretation: Then Abraham knew that Isaac was chosen for the burnt offering. For the rest, Tosefta – as far as it is extant – follows the main tradition recorded in the Fragmentary Targum with its emphasis on Isaac’s self-offering.

Rabbinic exegesis develops this aspect of the story further still. Whereas in the oldest sources God tried Abraham’s love and faithfulness in order to put Satan to shame,1 or to silence the jealous angels,2 Ps.-Jonathan presents the whole episode as a test of Isaac’s fidelity as well. When Isaac and Ishmael argue which of them is worthier to be Abraham’s heir, Ishmael remarks that while he acquired merit by voluntarily submitting himself to circumcision at the age of thirteen, the eight-day-old Isaac underwent the painful rite without either his knowledge or consent. Isaac replies:

Behold, I am now thirty-seven years old, but were the Holy One, blessed be He, to ask for all my members, I would not deny them to Him. These words were immediately heard before the Lord of the world. Immediately also, the Word of the Lord tried Abraham.3

The most pregnant illustration of Isaac’s role in the sacrifice comes from R. Meir, who cites R. Akiba’s interpretation of the commandment of the love of God in Deuteronomy vi. 5 (“You shall love the Lord your God... with all your soul”)

like Isaac, who bound himself upon the altar.4

Does this mean that the targumic tradition derives from Akiba’s interpretation, and that it consequently originated in the second century AD?

The answer is simple. This tradition is implicit in the Akedah interpretations of three works dating from the previous century; namely, the Jewish Antiquities of Josephus, IV Maccabees, and Ps.-Philo’s Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum.

In his long and strongly moralising account (JA, I, xiii. 1-4, §§ 222-236), Josephus writes a rather sentimental description of Abraham’s fatherly love and of his reflections on the divine command which he had received. According to him, the Patriarch concealed his plan from

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1 Cf. Jub., xvii. 15 f.
2 Cf. LAB, xxxii. 2.
3 TTF on Gen. xxii. 1.
4 Sifre-Deut., § 32.

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Isaac was adult, as in Rabbinic chronology, but his age is given as twenty-five; and the mountain of the sacrifice was that "upon which King David would later build the Sanctuary". Josephus tells how Abraham built the altar, and then, exhorting him to be courageous, informed his son that he was to be the victim. Isaac heard his father's words with joy and ran to the altar; but God prevented the execution of the deed and promised His never-failing protection to both Abraham and his descendants. Then he revealed to them the ram for the sacrifice.

All the features of the targumic tradition appear in Jewish Antiquities, and the insistence on Isaac's merit and on his voluntary self-surrender, could not be more stressed. But, as in Genesis, Abraham's ordeal takes pride of place.

In IV Maccabees, Isaac is the proto-martyr.

Isaac offered himself to be a sacrifice for the sake of righteousness.

Isaac did not shrink when he saw the knife lifted against him by his father's hand.

Furthermore, in several other passages there is clear allusion to the virtue of the blood of martyrs, albeit without explicit reference to Isaac.

Cause our chastisement to be an expiation for them. Make my blood their purification and take my soul as a ransom for their souls.

They have become as a ransom for the sin of our nation, and by the blood of these righteous men and the propitiation of their death, Divine Providence delivered Israel.

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2 *Ibid.*, § 227. According to the Rabbis, Isaac was thirty-seven years old. They reached this conclusion from the haggadah recording the birth of Isaac to Sarah at the age of ninety, and her death - caused by the false news of his having been killed - at the age of one hundred and twenty-seven. Cf. *Gen. R.*, lviii. 5. See also H. Freedman's note in his translation of *Gen. R.*, in *Midrash Rabbah, Genesis*, vol. 1, London, 1951, p. 497, n. 5.
8 *IV Macc. xiii*. 12.
Ps.-PHILO’s testimony is even more important. Strangely enough, this writer omits the story of the sacrifice of Isaac when relating the life of Abraham, but he mentions it elsewhere on three separate occasions: in his account of a divine revelation to Balaam (xviii. 6), of the Song of Deborah and Barak (xxxii. 2-4), and of the answer of Seila to her father Jephthah (xl. 2).

This last text may be dealt with very summarily. Jephthah made a thoughtless vow to God that if he defeated the Ammonites he would sacrifice the first living being he met on his return (xxxix. 10). God was angry and decided to punish him. “If a dog is the first to meet Jephthah, shall it be offered to Me? Now let the prayer of Jephthah be on the first-fruit of his body, and his vow be on his only daughter” (xxxix. 11). On his return from victory, the divine order was fulfilled, and although his triumph filled him with joy, his vow made Jephthah sad. But his daughter answered bravely:

Et quis est qui contristetur moriens, videns populum liberatum? Aut inmemor es que facta sunt in diebus patrum nostrorum, quando pater filium imponebat in holocaustum, et non contradixit ei, sed epulans consensit illi, et erat qui offerebatur paratus et qui offerebat gaudens (xl. 2).

Isaac did not contradict his father, but gladly agreed to be his victim. Ps.-PHILO intended to underline the contrast between Abraham’s sacrifice and Jephthah’s, and doing this he presents the former according to the targumic tradition.

Incidentally, Jephthah’s offering was valueless. Ammon was destroyed, not because of Jephthah’s vow, but because of the prayers of Israel (xxxix. 11).

It is in the Song of Deborah that the principal source of Ps.-PHILO’s interpretation of the Akedah is to be found. Despite difficulties which are probably due, for a large part, to the poor quality of the Latin translation, this account shows not only the antiquity of the targumic version, but also the frank realization of its doctrinal impact, namely, that the binding of Isaac was intended to be more than just a test of Abraham’s obedience.

Et dedit ei filium in novissimo senectutis eius, et eiecit eum de metra sterilis. Et zelati sunt eum omnes angeli, et invisi sunt ei cultores miliciarum. Et factum est cum zelarent eum, dixit ad eum Deus: Occide fructum ventris tui pro me, et offer mihi in sacrificium quod donatum est tibi a me. Et Abraham non contradixit, sed profectus est statim. Et cum proficiit eretur, dixit ad filium suum: Ecce nunc offero te holocaustum Deo, in manus te trado ei qui donavit te mihi. Filius
autem dixit ad patrem: Audi me pater. Si agnus ex pecoribus acceptatur in oblatione Domini in odorem suavitatis, et pro iniquitatibus hominum pecora constituta sunt in occasionem, homo autem positus est ad inhereditandum seculum, et quomodo nunc dicis mihi: Veni hereditare securam vitam, et inmensurabile tempus? Quid si non esset natus in seculo, ut offerrer sacrificium ei qui me fecit. Erit autem mea beatitudine super omnes homines quia non erit aliud, et in me annuncia-bunt generationes et per me intelligent populi quoniam dignificavit Dominum animam hominis in sacrificium. Et cum obtulisset pater filium in ara, et ligasset ei pedes ut eum occideret, festinavit Fortissimus et misit vocem suam de alto dicens: Non interficies filium tuum, neque disperdas fructum ventris tuum. Nunc enim manifestavi ut apparerem ignorantibus me, et clausi ora maledicentium semper adversum te. Erit autem memoria tua in conspectu meo in sempiternum, et erit nomen tuum et huius in generationem generationum (xxxii. 2-4).

Although this text is patently neither clear nor easy, three important points emerge. First, Isaac offered his life freely and willingly. Second, his sacrifice is related to other sacrifices offered to God and accepted by Him for the sins of men. Third, Isaac was aware of the beneficent effect of his self-offering upon future generations.

However, the passage is too important to be dealt with thus briefly and demands further study.

According to Ps.-PHILO, Isaac’s sacrifice was provoked by the jealousy and dissatisfaction of the angels, who appear to have criticized God’s favours towards Abraham. The offering justified God by proving that Abraham was worthy of them:

Now I have revealed Myself so that I may appear to them who know me not, and shut the mouth of them that ever spoke evil against you.

For Abraham, the divine command was an order to return to God the gift which he had received from Him, ritually sanctified:

Slay the fruit of your body and offer to Me in sacrifice that which was given to you by Me.

This command is repeated by the Patriarch, almost word for word, when he tells Isaac that he is to be the victim:

Now I offer you as a burnt offering to God and surrender you into the hands of Him who gave you to me.

For Isaac, his father’s words appeared to contradict the common belief that God created man to inherit this world and appointed lambs for sacrifice; but Abraham invited him to

Come and inherit sure life and measureless time (i.e. eternity).
The command which his father had received from God proved that the purpose of his own miraculous birth was the sanctification of his life by means of a sacrificial death:

As though I had not been born into this world to be offered in sacrifice to Him who made me.

Ps.-Philo believed that by Isaac’s unique example God conferred upon human nature its true dignity, the dignity of a divinely required and freely offered self-sacrifice. The blessing resulting from it would extend to all men for ever, and they would understand that they possess the same humanity which was made holy by Isaac’s sacrifice.

Thus, the Akedah, in Ps.-Philo’s mind, is to be judged on two levels. Abraham’s obedience justified his divine election; and Isaac’s self-offering justified God in His choice of mankind as heir to the created world.

This interpretation of the Akedah becomes clearer when it is compared with the haggadah of the angels’ criticism of the creation of man. When God said, “Let us make man”, etc., (Gen. i. 26), they are supposed to have replied in the words of the Psalm: “What is man that You should remember him, and the son of man that You should visit him? Yet You have made him little less than God... You have made him to rule over all the works of Your hand, and You have put all things beneath his feet, all sheep and oxen... (Ps. viii. 5-8).

Now, one of the explanations is that “man” and “son of man” refer to Abraham and Isaac. Through the merits of the Akedah, they vindicated man’s peculiar dignity among creatures, a dignity envied even by the angels.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, sought to create the world, the ministering angels said to Him: What is man that You should remember him? He replied: You shall see a father slay his son, and the son consenting to be slain, to sanctify My Name.¹

This scriptural passage (i.e. Ps. viii) speaks of Isaac son of Abraham.²

When, at the end of Ps.-Philo’s account, God declares that He will remember for ever the names of Abraham and Isaac, it is implicitly understood that He thereby confirmed Isaac’s hope concerning the efficacy of the Akedah. This is more clearly stated in the third text from Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum relating to Isaac’s sacrifice:

Et filium eius petii in holocaustum et adduxit eum ut poneretur in

¹ Tanh. Vayyera, § 18.
² T. Soṭah, vi. 5. For further references, see S. Spiegel, art. cit., p. 526, n. 138.
sacrario, ego autem reddidi eum patri suo, et quia non contradictixit, facta est oblato in conspectu meo acceptabilis, et pro sanguine eius elegi istos (xviii. 6).

These texts from JOSEPHUS, IV Maccabees, and Ps.-PHILO, not only show that the essence of the targumic exegesis of Genesis xxii was already traditional in the first century AD, but that two of them at least – IV Maccabees and Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum – may lead to the discovery of the origin of this haggadah.

Short of an entirely gratuitous supposition that an historical tradition, unrecorded in the Bible, is latent in the targumic story, the most obvious explanation is to be sought in the usual midrashic process, namely, in the interpretation of one scriptural passage by the light of another. So far as I am aware, there is no definite mention in midrashic sources of any association of this kind between Genesis xxii and some prophetic text. But is it nevertheless possible to identify one?

In the passages quoted from IV Maccabees, the self-offering of the martyrs is considered as an atonement for the sins of Israel, and the life of the just is offered as a ransom for sinners. By offering his life in expiation, the martyr imitates Isaac. To this, Ps.-PHILO contributes the belief that Isaac’s unique sacrifice is infinitely worthier than the offering of a lamb for the sins of men, and that the merits of his deed will be known to all the peoples for ever.

At this point, it is impossible not to recall the figure of the Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah. Clearly, the whole of the fourth Song cannot be applied to Isaac, but the leading idea of Isaiah liii is parallel in leitmotiv to the targumic tradition on Genesis xxii. Isaac freely offered his life and it was accepted by God in favour of his descendants, and even of the Nations, according to Ps.-PHILO. The Servant is compared to a lamb brought to the slaughter (liii. 7); Isaac was also a holocaustal lamb. Isaac’s sacrifice was ordained by God; so also was the Servant’s (liii. 10). These common features of the two stories are on the scriptural level. On the targumic level, the resemblances are plainly realized and the nature and effect of the Servant’s passion are applied to the sacrifice of Isaac so that Genesis xxii becomes the story of a just man who offered himself for the sake of sinners.¹

This reconstruction is not based on purely hypothetical grounds.

¹ The targumic belief that at the moment of sacrifice Isaac saw a divine vision, may have originated from an interpretation of הַנַּהַר הָיוֹם, “The Lord shall be seen”, in conjunction with Is. liii. 11, צָלַל עָלֶה שָׁמָיִם, “because of the travail of his soul he shall see”.
There exist at least two midrashic passages in which the self-offering of a just man mentioned in the Torah is interpreted by quoting Isaiah liii. The first relates to Moses’ intercession for Israel after the worship of the golden calf. He implores God either to pardon his people, or else to blot his own name from the Book of Life (cf. Ex. xxxii. 32). According to Soṭah 14a, Isaiah liii. 12 refers to this event:

He delivered his soul to death... and he took away the sins of many.

The second text, Sifre on Numbers xxv. 13, § 131, applies the same verse of Isaiah to Phinehas, who was considered to have endangered his life by his zeal for God. His self-sacrifice and atonement are given a permanent value, and will continue to expiate Israel’s sins until the time of the Resurrection.

To these must be added a third text referring directly to Isaac, namely, Targum of Job, iii, 18. In the biblical poem in chapter iii, Job curses the day he was born and wishes that he had passed straight to Sheol from the maternal womb. The corresponding targumic section, whose language testifies clearly to its Palestinian origin, replaces Sheol, the common abode of both the just and the wicked, by the dwelling-place of the blessed of God. Following up this basic transformation, the Targumist, interpreting verse 18 – “The little one is there and the great one, and the servant freed from his master” – identifies the three characters as the Patriarchs, “the little one” being Jacob, “the great one” Abraham, and the freed “servant”, Isaac.

Jacob, called the young one, and Abraham, called the old one, are there, and Isaac, the Servant of the Lord (‘abda dᵉ YHWH). who was delivered from bonds by his Master.

It is precisely on account of his having been bound, i.e. because of his self-sacrifice, that Isaac appears to have been given the title, “Servant of the Lord”.

It would seem, therefore, safe to assume that the targumic haggadah on the Akedah resulted from the association of Genesis xxii and Isaiah liii. In addition, it is almost certain that this association was due to reflections on the significance of martyrdom. If the blood of martyrs is viewed by God as an expiatory sacrifice, a fortiori, the self-offering of Isaac atoned for the sins of his descendants.

If this theory is correct, the *terminus post quem* of the creation of the haggadah is the beginning of the religious persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 BC; the martyrdom of the seven sons of a pious
woman, recorded in II Maccabees vii, may have been the precise occasion. S. SPIEGEL remarks, in his excellent study, that a certain parallelism between Abraham’s sacrifice and that of the Maccabean woman is strongly emphasized in midrashic writings.\(^1\)

At its present stage, therefore, this investigation yields the following results of importance.

1. The two main targumic themes of the Akedah story, namely, Isaac’s willingness to be offered in sacrifice and the atoning virtue of his action, were already traditional in the first century AD.

2. Genesis xxii was interpreted in association with Isaiah liii. That is to say, the link between these two texts was established by Jews independently from, and almost certainly prior to, the New Testament.

3. The theological problem which apparently led to the creation of this exegetical tradition was that of martyrdom.

4. The tradition must consequently have established itself some time between the middle of the second century BC and the beginning of the Christian era.\(^2\)

It now remains to enquire into the further development of the doctrinal exegesis of Isaac’s sacrifice, and its impact upon the understanding of the sacrifice of Christ by Judeo-Christians in the apostolic age.

*Theological reflections on the targumic story in midrashic literature.*

Because of its highly important contribution to the doctrine of Atonement in ancient Judaism, the targumic account of the Binding of Isaac was the object of much reflection and discussion among the Rabbis. Relevant midrashic texts are examined in this section with the following questions in mind:

1. Was the Akedah a true sacrifice?
2. What are its fruits for posterity?
3. What was the relation between Isaac’s sacrifice and sacrifices offered in the Temple of Jerusalem?
4. Is the memorial of the Akedah attached to any of the principal festivals in the Jewish liturgy?

*The sacrificial character of the Akedah*

As already noted, to the biblical account of Abraham’s ordeal the Targum adds the story of Isaac’s self-oblation. From an early date,


and despite serious difficulties, this self-oblation came to be regarded as a true sacrifice in its own right.

The main problem was, of course, the obvious fact that Isaac did not actually die on the altar. But the Rabbis argue that even if God had not provided a ram to be offered in his place, Isaac would gladly have given his life, so the value and the merit truly belong to him.

Though he did not die, Scripture credits Isaac with having died and his ashes having lain upon the altar.¹

The expression, "the ashes of Isaac", is often used in midrashic and talmudic writings:

God regards the ashes of Isaac as though they were piled upon the altar.²

The concept of Isaac as a victim possessing all the qualities necessary for a burnt offering is another manifestation of the same doctrinal preoccupation. While building the altar, Abraham hid his son in case he should be maimed by Satan and be disqualified as a sacrificial victim.³

These arguments were, however, bound to have appeared unsatisfactory for the important reason that, according to Jewish theology, there can be no expiation without the shedding of blood: לא ירא דב נא לא.⁴ No virtue of atonement could convincingly be imputed to Isaac unless this condition were fulfilled. There is, of course, no scriptural foundation whatever for the belief that Isaac shed his blood, but, as has been shown more than once, theological theses had to be maintained even at the price of disregarding the Bible, and the new doctrine took root that atonement for the sins of Israel resulted both from Isaac’s self-offering and from the spilling of his blood. It appears already in Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum:

Quia non contradixit, facta est oblatio in conspectu meo acceptabilis, et pro sanguine eius elegi istos (xviii. 6).

The “blood of the Binding of Isaac” is mentioned four times in the Mekhilta of R. Ishmael in passages to be examined later.⁵ In addition,

¹ Midr. ha-Gadol on Gen. xxii. 19.
² Cf. Sifra, ed. Weiss, p. 102c; J. Taan., 65a; Ta'an., 16a; Gen. R., xl ix. 11; xciv. 5; Lev. R., xxxvi. 5; Tanh. Vayyera § 23, etc.
³ Cf. Gen. R., lvi. 5; Tanh. Vayyera, § 23; Lev. R., xx. 2, etc.
⁴ Yoma 5a. The antiquity of this talmudic rule is attested by the Epistle to the Hebrews ix. 22: γινεται υφεσις "without the shedding of blood there is no remission".
⁵ Mekb., I, pp. 57, 87-8.
S. SPIEGEL draws attention to the haggadah recording that Isaac shed one quarter of his blood on Mount Moriah. In the Mekhila of R. Simeon ben Yohai, the following words are quoted in the name of R. Joshua (before 130 AD):

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: I keep faith to pay the reward of Isaac son of Abraham, who gave one fourth of his blood on the altar.

All these statements referring to Isaac’s fitness as a sacrificial victim, and to his blood and ashes, leave no room for doubt that the Akedah was indeed considered a true and genuine sacrifice. But the unique feature, distinguishing it from, and raising it above, all other sacrifices is – as Ps.-PHILO emphasizes – the free consent of the victim. That this victim was the righteous ancestor of the Chosen People made it all the more inevitable that Palestinian Jews considered Isaac’s sacrifice as the sacrifice par excellence, whose lasting benefits would be felt for all time.

The effects of the Binding of Isaac

Now I pray for mercy before You, O Lord God, that when the children of Isaac come to a time of distress You may remember on their behalf the Binding of Isaac their father, and loose and forgive them their sins and deliver them from all distress.

In his prayer after the Akedah, as given in the Fragmentary Targum, Abraham asks God to remember Isaac’s merit. He beseeches Him to deliver the descendants of his son from trouble and to pardon their transgressions for Isaac’s sake. Neofiti, Ps.-JONATHAN, and other midrashim, mention only deliverance; but since distress and trouble were believed to be the consequence of sin, deliverance from them necessarily implied forgiveness also.

As midrashic literature shows, this redemptive virtue of the Binding of Isaac was recalled in the context of the most important events of Jewish history. Through his merits,

a) the firstborn sons of Israel were saved at the time of the first Passover:

And when I see the blood, I will pass over you (Ex. xii. 13). – I see the blood of the Binding of Isaac.

1 Art. cit., pp. 491-3.
2 Ed. HOFFMANN, p. 4. Cf. also Tanh. Vayyera, § 23
3 Cf. also Lev. R., xxix. 9; Tanh. Vayyera, § 23, etc..
4 Cf. Gen. R., lvi. 10; J. Ta’an., 65d, etc.
5 Mekh., I, p. 57. Cf. ibid., p. 88.
b) the Israelites were saved when they entered the Red Sea:

R. Jose the Galilean says: When Israel entered the sea, Mount Moriah was moved from its place, with the altar of Isaac built upon it, the pile of wood placed upon it, and Isaac as it were bound and put upon the altar, and Abraham as it were stretching out his hand and holding the knife to slay his son.\(^1\)

c) Jerusalem was saved from the Destroying Angel after the sinful census of David:

God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it. While he was destroying, the Lord saw and repented of the evil (1 Chron. xxi. 15). What did He see? He saw the blood of the Binding of Isaac.\(^2\)

d) forgiveness was obtained for Israel after the sin of the golden calf and deliverance from the massacre planned by Haman:

Remember, Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Ex. xxxii. 13). Why are the three Patriarchs mentioned here? Our Rabbis say: Moses said, If they are guilty to be burnt, remember Abraham who gave himself to be burnt in the fiery furnace... If they are guilty to be slain, remember Isaac their father who stretched out his neck on the altar to be slain for Your Name’s sake. May his immolation take the place of the immolation of his children.\(^3\)

May the merit of Abraham precede me! May the Binding of Isaac keep me upright! May the grace of Jacob be given to my mouth!\(^4\)

Thus, to Isaac’s merit was due Israel’s salvation and the preservation of his descendants from death and divine disfavour. Furthermore, the virtue of his offering was believed to extend even beyond the barriers of history, as is shown in certain texts establishing a bond between the Akedah and the resurrection of the dead.\(^5\)

Through the merits of Isaac, who offered himself upon the altar, the Holy One, blessed be He, shall raise the dead. For it is written (Ps. cii. 21): (From heaven the Lord looked upon the earth) to hear the groaning of the captive, to deliver the children of death.\(^6\)

Isaac was granted a new life by God. For the midrashists, therefore,

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\(^1\) "Mekh., I, pp. 222-3.

\(^2\) "Mekh., I pp. 57, 88.

\(^3\) Ex. R., xlv. 5.

\(^4\) Prayer of Esther in 2 Tg Esther, v.l.


\(^6\) This text is quoted as *PRK*, Piska 32, f. 200b by I. Lévi in *Le sacrifice d’Isaac et la mort de Jésus*, *REF*, 64, 1912, p. 170, and the same reference is repeated in H. J. Schoeps, *The Sacrifice of Isaac in Paul’s Theology*, in *JBL*, 65, 1946, p. 390, and in S. Spiegel, *Art. cit.*, pp. 492, n. 8, and p. 523, n. 120. However, in S. Buber’s edition of this midrash the quotation is to be found in the last Piska (31), f. 180a = p. 359.
he was the prototype of risen man, and his sacrifice followed by resurrection was, in some way, the cause of the final Resurrection of mankind.

In short, the Binding of Isaac was thought to have played a unique rôle in the whole economy of the salvation of Israel, and to have a permanent redemptive effect on behalf of its people. The merits of his sacrifice were experienced by the Chosen People in the past, invoked in the present, and hoped for at the end of time.

*The Akedah and the sacrifices in the Temple*

Since the Binding of Isaac was represented as a true, and in a sense unique sacrifice, with an everlasting effect, its relation to the sacrificial services of the Temple must have been the object of much speculation. If Isaac’s self-offering on Mount Moriah atoned for the sins of Israel, why should animal victims be offered daily for the same purpose in the Sanctuary on Mount Zion?

Two different aspects of Jewish sacrificial laws must be considered here: Israel’s human substitution of animal for sacrifice and the law-of the Sanctuary.

Against the Canaanite custom of child-sacrifice the Bible proclaims that God does not desire the offering of human life. The Genesis story of Isaac’s life having been spared and a ram offered in his place was probably intended to illustrate this. Among the interpreters, *Josephus*, addressing Gentile readers, insists on God’s hatred of human blood, and he makes a point of emphasizing that the whole episode was essentially a test of Abraham’s obedience.

God said that it was not because of desire for human blood that He had commanded him to slay his son... but He wished to try his soul, whether he would obey even such commands.¹

Jews living in the post-exilic era needed no such explanations.² Though all firstborn males belonged to God,³ they had subsequently to be redeemed⁴ and Rabbinic exegesis holds that this religious rite was founded on the vicarious offering of Isaac’s ram,⁵ an example repeated at the Passover in Egypt, when lambs were killed in place of the firstborn of Israel.

¹ *J.A.,* I, xiii. 4, § 233.
² Cf. *Lev.* xviii. 21; xx. 2-5, etc.
³ Cf. *Ex.* xiii. 1, etc.
⁴ Cf. *ibid.,* xiii. 11-16, etc.
⁵ Cf. *Gen. R.*, Ivi. 9, etc.
Another fundamental teaching of Judaism is illustrated in the traditional interpretation of Genesis xxii, i.e. that Jerusalem was destined to be the one place where Jews might offer sacrifices agreeable to God. For this reason, targumic tradition from at least the time of the first century (Josephus), but probably from a much earlier date, identifies Mount Moriah with the mountain of the Temple. Sacrificial victims were slain in the Sanctuary where, long ago, Abraham had erected his altar. According to Jewish theology, Mount Zion is the cosmic rock uniting heaven and earth, and all the great sacrifices of the past were offered there.

And Abraham built here the altar which Adam had built, and which was demolished by the waters of the Flood; which Noah rebuilt, and which was demolished by the generation of the Division. He placed upon it the wood, bound Isaac his son, and laid him upon the altar on the wood.

Genesis xxii counted, therefore, as biblical proof of the rejection of human sacrifice and of the eternal choice of Jerusalem, although at the time when the targumic tradition of the Akedah was formed, neither of these arguments needed any demonstration.

However, the crucial theological problem directly relating to the haggadah of Isaac’s sacrifice is its connection with the sacrifices of the Temple.

Rabbinic writings show clearly that sacrifices, and perhaps the offering of all sacrifice, were intended as a memorial of Isaac’s self-oblation. Their only purpose was to remind God of the merit of him who bound himself upon the altar. Leviticus Rabbah ii. 11 on Leviticus i. 5 and 11, provides one of the key-texts:

Concerning the ram, it is said: And he shall slaughter it on the side of the altar northward (נמצד) before the Lord. It is taught: When Abraham our father bound Isaac his son, the Holy One, blessed be He, instituted (the sacrifice of) two lambs, one in the morning, and the other in the evening. What is the purpose of this? It is in order that when Israel offers the perpetual sacrifice upon the altar, and reads this scriptural text, Northward (נמצד) before the Lord, the Holy One, blessed be He, may remember the Binding of Isaac.

The institution of a perpetual sacrifice burning day and night upon the altar was intended to remind God of the event it symbolized, the

1 Cf. 2 Chron. iii. 1; Jub., xviii. 13.
3 1TJ on xxii. 9.
sacrifice of Isaac. Ps.-Jonathan also, commenting on Numbers xxviii. 4, writes that the two lambs of the perpetual sacrifice atone for the sins of the day and of the night not in their own right, but solely through the virtue of the one true sacrifice.

The excerpt from Leviticus Rabbah is anonymous and dateless, but its conformity with the ancient targumic tradition suggests its antiquity. This, of course, does not apply to the artificial exegesis of מַעַבֶּד. The midrashist appears to have understood the word as being related to the verb מָצֵא, "to watch", "to regard". This entirely unwarranted exegesis is the result of historical necessity. When daily sacrifice perpetuating the ritual remembrance of the Akedah ceased to be offered, the memorial rite was replaced by a memorial prayer:

Let us be looked upon by the Lord (through the merit of the sacrifice of Isaac)!

The same passage from Leviticus Rabbah continues:

I call upon myself heaven and earth as witnesses that whosoever, Gentile or Jew, man or woman, slave or maid-servant, reads this scriptural text, מַעַבֶּד before the Lord, the Lord remembers the Binding of Isaac.¹

Although this last interpretation and the exegesis of מַעַבֶּד are posterior to AD 70, it does not necessarily follow that the reference to the availability of Isaac's merit to the Gentiles is of recent date; a similar opinion figures already in Ps.-Philo.²

These observations should be borne in mind when reading Israel Lévi's commentary on Leviticus Rabbah ii. 11:

L'intention de l'auteur anonyme de ce morceau n'est pas douteuse: le sacrifice journalier d'un bœuf, rappelant le bœuf offert par Abraham à la place d'Isaac,³ répète l'action accomplie sur le Moria et vaut à ceux qui le font le mérite du sacrifice d'Isaac. Bien plus, à défaut de l'immolation de la victime, la simple récitation des mots qui visent le rite produit les mêmes effets.

Ce qui met hors cadre ce passage, c'est non seulement la réversibilité du mérite de la Akèda même sur les non-juifs, mais encore le rapprochement entre cet événement et le sacrifice journalier.⁴

¹ Lev. R., ii. 11.
² Erat autem beatus mea super omnes homines quia non erit alius, et in me annunciabant generationes et per me intelligent populi, quoniam dignificavit Deus animam hominis in sacrificium (LAB, xxxii. 3). This doctrinal conclusion springs from an interpretation of Gen. xxii. 18 ("By your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed"). "By your seed" is understood to mean "because of the merit of your son" (ITJ) or "because of your son" (TO).
³ It would be more exact to write: "rappelant le sacrifice d’Isaac".
⁴ Le sacrifice d'Isaac et le mort de Jésus, in REJ, 64, 1912, p. 165.
The Palestinian Targums on Leviticus xxii. 27 (1TJ and 2TJ) go even further than Leviticus Rabbah, and reveal what may be considered the basic significance of the relationship between the Akedah and the Temple sacrifices. Whereas the scriptural text states that bullocks, he-lambs, and kids are to be offered to God, the Targums specify that these offerings are intended to atone for Israel’s sin.

Our offerings are to atone for our sins.

Concerning the lamb itself, the Fragmentary Targum reads:

The lamb was chosen to recall the merit of the lamb of Abraham, who bound himself upon the altar and stretched out his neck for Your Name’s sake. Heaven was let down and descended and Isaac saw its perfection and his eyes were weakened by the high places. For this reason he acquired merit and a lamb was provided there, in his stead, for the burnt offering.¹

The choice of bullocks and kids as sacrificial victims is explained by Abraham’s having served a calf to his heavenly visitors (Gen. xviii. 7-8), and by Jacob’s stratagem to obtain Esau’s birthright (Gen. xxvii). But although these explanations helped to maintain the doctrine of the collective merit of the three Patriarchs, the distinctive importance of Isaac’s place within the context of sacrifice can, of course, not be included in the same category as these others. Tradition was not unaware of this, as appears from the ruling that bullocks were to be chosen only if no lambs were obtainable.

When sin requires (sacrifices), but we have nothing to offer from our flocks of sheep, a bullock is chosen from before Me. 2TJ.

The meaning of these passages is clear. According to ancient Jewish theology, the atoning efficacy of the Tamid offering, of all the sacrifices in which a lamb was immolated, and perhaps, basically, of all expiatory sacrifice irrespective of the nature of the victim, depended upon the virtue of the Akedah, the self-offering of that Lamb whom God had recognized as the perfect victim of the perfect burnt offering.²

¹ The same text is written by a second copyist in the margin of Neof. The manuscript gives, however, a slightly different recension which may be translated: “After this (viz., the birth of Isaac), the lamb was chosen to recall the merit of the one man who was bound upon a mountain as a lamb for a burnt offering upon the altar. God delivered him in His merciful goodness, and when his (Isaac’s) children pray in the time of their distress and say, as they are obliged to say, ‘Answer us and listen to the cry of our prayer,’ He agreed to remember on our behalf the Binding of Isaac our father.”

² Cf. Gen. R., lxiv. 3: והנה ὡριὰ ἡμῶν
The Binding of Isaac in the Jewish liturgy

Was there any special commemoration of the Binding of Isaac in the Jewish liturgical year in addition to the daily memorial of the Akedah; any anniversary, as it were, of the great event on Mount Moriah?

The Musaf of the New Year service in the present day Jewish liturgy includes a commemoration of this kind. In a series of prayers emphasizing God’s lovingkindness towards Israel, He is asked to remember the Binding of Isaac, and to show mercy instead of justice to his children.

O our God, God of our fathers, remember us with a remembrance for good. Visit us with a visitation for salvation and mercy from the everlasting heavens. Remember on our behalf, Lord our God, the Covenant, the lovingkindness, and the oath which You swore to Abraham our father on Mount Moriah. May the binding with which Abraham our father bound Isaac his son upon the altar be seen before You, and the manner in which he overcame his love in order to do Your will with a perfect heart. Thus may Your love overcome Your wrath against us. Through Your great goodness may Your anger turn away from Your people, Your city, and Your inheritance... Remember today the Binding of Isaac with mercy to his descendants.\(^1\)

From the present commemoration of the Akedah in the Zikronoth of Rosh ha-Shanah, Israel Lévi concludes that a similar remembrance must have been associated with the same festival already in the first century AD.

Le rituel de prières de Rosch Haschana existait déjà au Ier siècle de l’ère chrétienne, et comme le morceau relatif à la Akèda en est une partie intégrante, on peut être assuré que la doctrine qui l’inspire était déjà populaire à cette époque.\(^2\)

H. Riesenberg reaches, and even overstates, the same conclusion. According to this scholar, the memorial of Isaac’s vicarious sacrifice took place, following the model of the ritual passion of the Babylonian king, in the liturgy of the pre-exilic Jewish New Year.\(^3\)

The thesis of Lévi and Riesenberg requires some comment. One is immediately struck by the emphasis laid, in the prayer cited above, upon Abraham’s role instead of on Isaac’s merit. In fact, with the exception, perhaps, of the last supplication — “Remember today...” — the whole prayer corresponds to the mediaeval, and not to the ancient targumic representation of the Akedah. On the other hand, it is equal-

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\(^2\) Art. cit., p. 178.
ly obvious that, despite a difference of perspective, this prayer is inspired by Abraham’s words as interpreted in the targumic tradition. It occurs in a very similar form, as S. SPIEGEL has proved, in the teaching of R. Yohanan and his disciples in the third century AD.¹

From the evidence of numerous talmudic and midrashic passages, it may safely be accepted that the annual commemoration of the Akedah in the New Year service was already an established tradition in the third century. According to Megillah 31a, the parashah of Isaac’s sacrifice was read on the second day of Rosh ha-Shanah. The Tosefta of the Palestinian Targum quoted above² also appears to have been written for this festival.³

The recital of particular prayers for forgiveness, and the blowing of the shofar at the New Year, appear to have created a suitable atmosphere for the remembrance of the Akedah at that time.

Thus R. Bibi bar Abba, recalling the teaching of R. Yohanan concerning Abraham’s prayer after the Akedah, concludes that it is answered at every Rosh ha-Shanah:

> So when the children of Isaac commit sin, and do evil, remember on their behalf the Binding of Isaac ... and full of compassion towards them, be merciful to them... When? In the seventh month (Lev. xxiii. 24).⁴

R. Hanina ben R. Isaac insists on the significance of the ram’s horn blown at Rosh ha-Shanah:

> All the days of the year Israel is caught in transgression and tangled⁵ in distress, but at New Year they take the shofar and blow it, and they are remembered before the Holy One, blessed be He, and He forgives them. And at their end, they will be delivered with the ram’s horn, as it is written: The Lord God shall blow the ram’s horn (Zech. ix. 14).⁶

From this, it was easily inferred that the original purpose of the blowing of the shofar was the remembrance of Isaac’s sacrifice.

Why do they blow the ram’s horn? So that I should remember the Binding of Isaac son of Abraham.⁷

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¹ Cf. art. cit., pp. 511 f.
² Cf. p. 196.
³ Cf. P. GRELLOT, art. cit., p. 22.
⁴ Lev. R., xxix. 9.
⁵ Like the ram which was offered in the place of Isaac.
⁶ Gen. R., Ivi. 9.
⁷ Rosh ha-Shanah 16a.
These ancient texts express the same intention as the present-day prayers of Rosh ha-Shanah. Israel invokes the merits of the Akedah and begs forgiveness and deliverance, and the shofar is blown so that God may remember. It will sound again at the end of time to remind Him in a final memorial of Isaac’s sacrifice.

It is tempting to conclude from all this that New Year’s day was thought to be the real anniversary of the Akedah. This idea would fit in with the belief that the great events of the past occurred in Tishri, the month of Rosh ha-Shanah, viz., the creation of the world,¹ and the birth and death of the Patriarchs.² The same month was also expected to see, on New Year’s day, and in virtue of what Israel Lévi calls the principle of “palingénésie générale”, the final salvation of Israel, and the blowing of the messianic shofar.³ But however widespread this tradition may have been, there appears to be no inherent relationship between the Binding of Isaac and Rosh ha-Shanah to account for the association of the two. The only biblical link seems to be the קרבון התרנוה, specified as a blast of a ram’s horn and symbolizing Isaac’s ram.

It is in this indirect and roundabout way that the Akedah, with all its virtue of atonement and redemption, is introduced into the New Year liturgy, and since Rosh ha-Shanah is more naturally the festival commemorating Creation – past, present, and future – it is not unreasonable to ask whether the Akedah is not out of place in this context.

Displaying similar concern, Jewish writings attempt to associate the Akedah with some other festival. The Day of Atonement would, in a sense, be suitable, but no early evidence can be discovered in its favour.⁴ Such is not the case, however, with the great spring memorial of the Passover.

In the old agricultural calendar of Israel, New Year fell in the month of Abib (later called Nisan), the month of the spring equinox.

This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be for you the first month of the year.⁵

In it occurred the festival of the offering of the firstborn,⁶ and on the  

¹ Gen. R., xxii. 4.  
² Cf. Rosh ha-Shanah 10b.  
³ Gen. R., lvi. 9.  
⁵ Ex. xii. 2.  
⁶ Ex. xiii. 1, 11-16.
fifteenth day of the month, the memorial of the Exodus, the first salvation. So it is not surprising that even after the change of the calendar, with the year beginning in Tishri, Abib-Nisan should have continued to be considered by many as the holiest of all the months because of the feast of Passover, and consequently the only fitting time to include memorials of the great events of the past and the future.

Rosh ha-Shanah 10b echoes with discussions on this subject. R. Eliezer ben Hycranus (of the first quarter of the second century AD) favoured Tishri, but his habitual opponent and contemporary, R. Joshua ben Hananiah, supported Nisan. The following haggadah on Exodus xii. 2 is anonymous, but may, perhaps, be attributed to R. Joshua:

This month shall be for you the beginning of months (Ex. xii. 2). The Holy One, blessed be He... appointed for the Israelites a month of redemption in which they were redeemed from Egypt, and in which they will be redeemed... In this month was Isaac born, and in this month he was bound.

Furthermore, there is definite evidence that the association of the Akedah with Passover was established well before the beginning of the Christian era. According to the Book of Jubilees, Mastema accused Abraham on the twelfth day of the first month. The Patriarch departed early the following morning and the Binding of Isaac took place on the third day of the journey. Although the intention of the author of Jubilees was to prove the patriarchal origin of the Jewish feasts, his dating of the Passover as the anniversary of Isaac's sacrifice was certainly not fortuitous. It represents a tradition whose voice is still to be heard early in the second century AD.

The bond between the two great events was, in fact, a doctrinal one. The saving virtue of the Passover lamb proceeded from the merits of that first lamb, the son of Abraham, who offered himself upon the altar. In this context, it may be useful to recall the saying of the Mekhila of R. Ishmael:

1 Cf. also Gen. R., xxii. 4; Mekh., I, pp. 112-3. See also Lauterbach's comment on p. 113, n. 3a.
2 Ex. R., xv. 11.
3 Doubtless on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month. Jub., xvii. 15-16; xviii. 3; xl. 1.
4 Abraham instituted a seven-day festival to be celebrated every year as a memorial of his journey to and from Mount Moriah. Cf. Jub., xviii. 18-19. H. Riezenfeld's identification of this festival with the Feast of Tabernacles is motivated rather by his general thesis than by the actual text of Jubilees. Cf. Jesus Transfiguré, p. 89, n. 47.
And when I see the blood, I will pass over you (Ex. xii. 13). — I see the blood of the Binding of Isaac.¹

The firstborn sons of Israel were spared and the people delivered from captivity because the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb reminded God of the sacrifice of Isaac. Consequently, both the Passover and its fulfilment, messianic Redemption, point to the Akedah.

It is impossible to determine the exact date of the dissociation of the Binding of Isaac from the feast of Passover, and its first introduction into the Rosh ha-Shanah liturgy. By the early second century AD it was still not a fait accompli. But the most probable cause of the change was the ending, after 70 AD, of the Passover sacrifice itself. The blowing of the ram’s horn at Rosh ha-Shanah was, of course, not affected by the destruction of the Temple and continued to provide a ritual link with the Binding of Isaac.

It is nevertheless legitimate to wonder how far the use of the Akedah theology by early Christians contributed to the suppression of all the bonds between the Binding of Isaac and the Passover. Be this as it may, the Palestinian Targums, slow to react to change, historical and doctrinal, continued to represent the pre-Christian tradition. In them, the night of Passover is the memorial of the Creation, of the Covenant with Abraham, of the birth of Isaac, of his Akedah, of the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, and finally of the coming of messianic salvation.

This is a night reserved for the Lord to bring them (the Israelites) out of the land of Egypt; this same night of the Lord is also to be observed for all the children of Israel in their generations (Ex. xii 42).

This is a night reserved and appointed by the Lord for deliverance, to bring out the children of Israel delivered from the land of Egypt.

Four nights are written in the Book of Memorials.

On the first night, the Word of the Lord was revealed upon the world to create it...

On the second night, the Word of the Lord was revealed upon Abraham between the (divided) parts (of the sacrifice of the covenant). Abraham was one hundred years old and Sarah ninety years, that the saying of Scripture might be fulfilled; Abraham aged one hundred years can beget, and Sarah aged ninety can bear. Was not Isaac our father thirty seven years old when he was offered upon the altar? The heavens were let down and descended and Isaac saw their perfection, and his eyes were weakened by the high places. God called this the second night.²

¹ Mekh., I, pp. 57, 88.
² Neofiti’s version of the passage concerning Abraham omits any mention of the covenantal sacrifice. The birth and sacrifice of Isaac are given as follows: “On the
On the third night, the Word of the Lord was revealed upon the Egyptians in the middle of the night. His right hand slew the firstborn of the Egyptians, but His right hand spared the firstborn of the Israelites, to fulfil the saying of Scripture: Israel is my firstborn son. He called this the third night.

On the fourth night, the world shall reach its end to be delivered. The bonds of wickedness shall be destroyed and the iron yokes broken. Moses shall come out of the wilderness and the King Messiah out of Rome. The one shall be led upon a cloud and the other shall be led upon a cloud,¹ and the Word of the Lord shall lead between them and they shall go forward together. This is the night of the Passover before the Lord, to be observed and celebrated by all Israel in their generations. 2TJ.²

Before passing on to consider the impact of the Jewish theology of the Akedah upon the Christian doctrine of Redemption, it would be as well to recapitulate the main results of this study of the Binding of Isaac.

Firstly, the Palestinian Targum proves quite clearly that already in the first century AD there existed a firm belief that the principal merit of the Akedah sprang from the virtue of Isaac’s self-offering. From an exegetical viewpoint, this tradition was prompted by the association of Genesis xxii with Isaiah liii.

Next, examining the theological significance of the tradition, it is apparent that the Akedah, although ritually incomplete, was indeed considered a true sacrifice and Israel’s chief title to forgiveness and redemption. The purpose of other sacrifices, including the sacrifice of the Passover lamb, was to remind God of Isaac’s perfect self-oblation and to invoke his merits.

second night, the Lord revealed Himself to Abraham, who was aged one hundred years, and Sarah who was aged ninety, to fulfil the saying of Scripture: At the age of one hundred years cannot Abraham beget; and cannot Sarah at the age of ninety years bear? Isaac was thirty-seven years old when he was offered upon the altar. The heavens were let down and descended, and Isaac saw their perfection and his eyes were weakened by their perfection. He called this the second night.

¹ 2TJ’s text appears corrupt. One scarcely expects the verb רָבָד, “he will be led” (ltpe. of רָבָד) to be followed by “on top of the cloud”, מָצֵּא נַפְעָל. In fact neither the Messiah nor Moses are supposed to descend from heaven. Neofiti’s reading appears to preserve the original text: מְצָא נַפְעָל, “The one shall lead the flock”. There is no mention here of the Messiah but the omission must be accidental because the passage goes on to describe God walking between the two leaders: “Moses shall come out of the wilderness. The one shall lead the flock and the other shall lead the flock and my Word shall lead between the two. I and they shall lead together”.

² 1TJ on Ex. xii. 40-2 contains an abridgment of this, but although 15th Nisan is given as the date of the Creation and the Covenant with Abraham, this revised version of the Palestinian Targum fails to mention the Akedah.
Finally, it has been shown that in the ancient liturgy of Israel a powerful bond linked the Binding of Isaac with Passover and with eschatological salvation.

The Binding of Isaac and the New Testament

Almost fifty years ago, IsraëI Lévr devoted an important study to the relationship between the haggadah of the Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus.¹ Refuting A. GeiGer’s thesis on the Christian origin of the Rabbinic Akedah theology, he asserts that it was already well known in the first century AD, and was used by St. Paul to interpret the death of Jesus as a sacrifice of atonement:

La théologie de Paul, opérant sur la mort de Jésus, s’est... élaborée dans une atmosphère propice. Elle a trouvé dans les idées juives du temps des matériaux qu’elle n’a qu’à mettre en oeuvre.²

This valuable contribution having passed unnoticed by New Testament scholars, H. J. Schoeps, though less skilled in Rabbinics than Lévr, judged it useful, in 1946, to write another article on the same topic.³ In it, Lévr’s arguments are re-employed to show that Paul’s symbolic use of the Akedah acts as a bridge between the genuinely Jewish teaching of atoning suffering, and the non-Jewish concept of a Saviour who was both man and God.⁴ As an illustration, he quotes Romans viii. 32, “He who did not spare His own Son...”, this being, in his view, a christological reinterpretation of Genesis xxii. 16.⁵ Further on, he writes:

When Paul says in I Cor. v. 7 that “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” and in Rom. v. 9 that his blood justifies the Christians, it seems probable to me that he is under the influence of Jewish conceptions related to the Akedah.⁶

Finally, Schoeps suggests the following key to the Pauline theology of Atonement:

Justas Paul patently identified the Servant of the Lord... with Christ..., so he built the doctrine of the expiatory power of the sacrificial death of Christ on the binding of Isaac, as interpreted in the familiar Rosh

¹ Le sacrifice d’Isaac et la mort de Jésus, in REJ, 64, 1912, pp. 161-184.
² Ibid., p. 183.
³ The Sacrifice of Isaac in Paul’s Theology, in JBL, 65, 1946, pp. 385-392.
⁴ Cf. ibid., pp. 385-6.
⁵ Ibid., p. 390.
⁶ Ibid., p. 391.
hashanah liturgy. ...Of course he developed out of it a different non-Jewish doctrine.¹

Four years later, in 1950, S. SPIEGEL contributed an article on this subject to the *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume*.² In his study, which is greatly superior to those mentioned above as far as Jewish literature is concerned, he discusses parallelisms and divergences between the doctrine of the Akedah and the theology of “Golgotha”, and repeats the conclusions of Lévi and SCHOEFS regarding the New Testament.³ St. Paul is credited with the authorship of the Christian theology of Redemption, but he freely borrowed for its construction from the Jewish model, i.e. the Akedah, and from the prophecy concerning the Suffering Servant.⁴

What is to be thought of these theories? A re-examination of Jewish material seems, at first sight, to suggest that they contain a large amount of truth. Nevertheless, it would be an unjustifiable oversimplification to subscribe to them as they stand and I suggest the following two questions: viz., whether the theology of the Binding of Isaac does in fact underlie the Pauline synthesis of the significance of the Cross, and whether the association of Cross and Akedah in the New Testament is exclusively Pauline.

*The Akedah motif in St. Paul*

That the Pauline doctrine of Redemption is basically a Christian version of the Akedah calls for little demonstration. Paul may, in addition, even be dispensed from the initiative of associating the self-offering of Isaac with the figure of the Suffering Servant and the Passover, since, in the first century AD, this association was already firmly established in Jewish theological circles. They were ritually re-enacted every year during the Passover festival. The Akedah was considered a sacrifice of Redemption, the source of pardon, salvation,

¹ *Ibid.* SCHOEFS’ hypothesis is rejected by J. DANIÉLOU because “the texts in which the theology of Isaac’s sacrifice appears plainly developed are much posterior to the Christian era”. DANIÉLOU does not even entirely discard the possibility that the authors of the Akedah theology were unconsciously influenced by the Christian doctrine of Redemption. Cf. *Sacramentum Futuri*, Paris, 1950, p. 102. From the findings of the present study, I believe his statement requires no further consideration.


³ Cf. especially, pp. 505-547.

and eternal life, through the merits of Abraham who loved God so greatly as to offer Him his only son, but principally through the merits of Isaac, who offered his life voluntarily to his Creator.

For Paul, the Akedah prophesied a higher truth, a divine mystery revealed in Christ, in that although man was able to attain such heights of love and self-surrender, God did even greater things to show His love for man. The Father was ready to offer His only Son, and the Son consented to His own sacrifice so that man might be deified. This fundamental intuition was so luminous and self-evident to Paul, governing and unifying the whole of his thought, that he was able to write without further comment:

If God is for us, who shall be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but surrendered Him for us all, will He not grant us every favour with Him?\(^1\)

In this perspective, the Akedah merely prefigures Redemption by Christ. In the Epistle to the Galatians, Paul teaches that the blessing of Abraham promised to the Gentiles is available through Jesus, "the seed" of Abraham. The Saviour is Christ, not Isaac. The source of salvation is not the Binding of Isaac, but the Sacrifice of Christ. In Galatians iii. 6-29, Paul uses Genesis xii, xviii, and xxii indiscriminately,\(^1\) but in verses 13 and 14 he obviously has Genesis xxii. 18 in mind:

Christ redeemed us... so that by Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come upon the nations.

In developing his theological interpretation of the death of Christ,

\(^1\) *Rom.* viii. 31-2. As ORIGEN notes in his commentary on Genesis (PL, 12, p. 203), Paul uses here *Gen.* xxii. 16. Compare especially οὐ ἰδοὺ ὦ δῶν οὐκ ἔφεστο with οὐκ ἔφεσα τοῦ ἐνοῦ σου τοῦ ἄγατον τοῦ. Cf. also *Rom.* v. 6-11. Concerning *Rom.* iv. 25 ("who was surrendered because of our sins, and raised up because of the justification to be granted to us"), C. K. BARRETT notes: "The parallelism between Isaac and Jesus would be even closer if it could be maintained that Paul had in mind the "binding of Isaac", which from time to time plays an interesting part in Rabbinic theology. It is just possible that this theme is in mind in v. 25; rather more likely that it appears in viii. 32. But Paul makes no serious use of it." (Cf. *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, London, 1957, p. 99). By "serious use", Professor BARRETT means, I imagine, frequent and explicit use. If the Akedah had been an obscure and little known doctrine of Judaism, Paul would indeed have needed to express himself distinctly on this subject, but as I have pointed out, in the first century AD it was, in fact, a well established doctrinal tradition. Paul did not judge it necessary to develop a proper typology because it was not yet needed (though it would be, from the second century onwards, when the Christian message was being addressed to Gentiles only). For the patristic treatment of the subject, see D. LERCH, *Isaak's Opferung christlich gedeutet*, Tübingen, 1949.

Paul, in short, followed a traditional Jewish pattern which enabled him, with no very great difficulty, to coordinate within the framework of a coherent synthesis the most profound and anomalous religious concept ever known to the human mind.

The recognition of the use made by Paul of the Akedah theology does not, as the authors quoted above seem to think, mean that the doctrine of the redemptive death of Christ is a Pauline creation, or that he was responsible for the introduction of the Akedah motif into the New Testament. For although he is undoubtedly the greatest theologian of the Redemption, he worked with inherited materials and among these was, by his own confession, the tradition that

Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.\(^1\)

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**The Akedah and pre-Pauline Christianity**

There is, of course, no developed theology of Redemption in the Synoptic Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles. Doctrinal statements are mostly implicit and conveyed by means of Old Testament quotations. It consequently remains to be seen whether Genesis xxii is used at all in these writings.

One passage from the Acts is unquestionably borrowed from this chapter of Genesis. After the healing of a lame man by Peter and John, Peter proclaims to the assembled crowd the saving virtue of faith in Jesus, who suffered to fulfil Scripture, but was glorified by God to transmit to all men, and first to Israel, the blessing promised to Abraham:

> You are the sons of the prophets and of the Covenant which God established for your fathers, saying to Abraham, And by your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen. xxii. 18). God having raised his Servant sent him first to you to bless you by turning every one of you away from your iniquity.\(^2\)

Targumic tradition ascribes this blessing to Isaac's sacrifice, but Peter reinterprets it of Jesus, as Paul does in Galatians iii.

The parallelism with Galatians might be considered an objection against the pre-Pauline character of a text from the work of Luke, Paul's disciple, but against it must be opposed the primitive and essentially Jewish character of the first chapters of the Acts, which are

\(^1\) Cf. 1 Cor. xvi. 3.

\(^2\) Acts iii. 25-6.
based on pre-Pauline documents. As regards this particular passage, there are two concrete indications of antiquity: the title "sons of the Covenant" applied to the Jews—a "mark of genuineness" according to F. F. Bruce\(^1\) and the title "Servant" applied to Jesus.

As regards the four places in the Acts (where Jesus is called "Servant of God"\(^2\)), an ancient date is suggested by the fact that the occurrence of παῖς θεοῦ is confined to Acts iii, iv; i.e. to a Palestinian stratum of tradition which in other respects, too, is marked by its ancient character.\(^2\)

Moreover, the use of Genesis xxii. 18 in Acts iii is much better suited to its theological purpose than the somewhat twisted and confused argument in Galatians iii. Of the two, the interpretation given in Acts is the more straightforward and simple, reflecting positively the original scriptural evidence. This evidence, based on the theme of the Akedah, consequently appears to belong to the primitive Palestinian tradition of Christianity.

The same pre-Christian Jewish association of the Akedah and Servant motifs reappears in the Gospel account of the baptism of Jesus. By using words borrowed from Genesis xxii. 16 and Isaiah xlii. 1, the heavenly voice implies that Jesus is destined for salvation and deliverance from sin:

You are my beloved Son. In you I am well pleased. (Mk. i. 11; Lk. iii. 22).

This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. (Mt. ii. 17).

Instead of recognizing that the Gospel tradition transmits a composite citation of Genesis xxii and Isaiah xlii, most commentators make an entirely useless and inconclusive effort to show that the Mark formula is either based on Psalm ii. 7 and Isaiah xlii. 1, or that Isaiah xlii alone underlies the quotation but translated differently from the Septuagint. It is enough to re-read one or other of the recent examples of such unrewarding attempts\(^3\) to realize the straightforwardness and extreme simplicity of the interpretation proposed here. One scholar, at least, has made the same discovery even without special reference to the Jewish background. A. Richardson, in An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament, writes:

The story of the sacrifice of Isaac is one of the Old Testament

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3 Cf. e.g., Zimmerli-Jeremias, op. cit., pp. 81-2; E. Lohmeyer, Das Evangelium Matthäus, Göttingen, 2nd ed. 1958, p. 51, n. 2, etc.
themes which underlie the Synoptic account of the baptism, for the phrase in Mark. 1. 11 σὺ εἶ ὁ υἱὸς μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, is a clear echo of Gen. 22. 12 (LXX, τοῦ υἱοῦ σου τοῦ ἀγαπητοῦ). ¹

Further evidence of the association of Genesis xxiii with Isaiah xlii may be found in the replacement of ἐλεκτός by ἀγαπητός in the quotation of the first Song of the Servant in Matthew xii. 18.

To sum up, the Akedah theme, bound, as in Judaism, to the Servant motif, belongs to the oldest pre-Marcan stratum of the Christian kerygma.² It is reasonable, therefore to wonder whether Jesus himself was conscious of his destiny as being the fulfilment of Isaac’s sacrifice. In virtue of what has been written of the inherent connection between the Akedah and the Suffering Servant (and also of the Passover lamb), it would be enough to show that, according to genuine Gospel testimony, Jesus personally applied to himself one or other of these themes.

As far as the figure of the Suffering Servant is concerned, many commentators believe that this can, in fact, be proved. J. Jeremias, after a detailed analysis of the texts,³ asserts that Jesus not only believed himself to be the Servant but let himself be known as such, not to all, but to whom he chose:

Only to his disciples did he unveil the mystery that he viewed the fulfilment of Isa. 53 as his God appointed task.⁴

If this is accepted, it would follow that the introduction of the Akedah motif into Christianity was due, not to St. Paul, but to Jesus of Nazareth.

**The Akedah and the Fourth Gospel**

Compared with the Synoptics, the Johannine account of the baptism of Jesus has two distinguishing characteristics: the heavenly voice is replaced by the testimony of John the Baptist, and the “beloved Son” by the “Lamb of God”.


² It will be necessary to re-examine the account of the Transfiguration (Mk. ix. 2-8, Mt. xvii. 1-8), where the same heavenly words are recorded. It should be remembered that in the targumic version of the Akedah, “the heavens were let down and descended and Isaac saw their perfection”. In the Gospel account of the Transfiguration, Jesus establishes a bond between His transfiguration and His resurrection from the dead.


Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world (Jn. i. 29).¹

As is well known, John i. 29 is a real *crux* for students of the Fourth Gospel. Professor Dodd, in his book *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, suggests that the “Lamb of God” is symbolized by one of the following:

1) the lamb of sin-offering;
2) the Passover lamb;
3) the lamb of Isaiah liii, i.e. the Suffering Servant;
4) the ram which is the leader of the flock (Enoch lxxxix. 46), i.e. the Royal Messiah.²

A fifth possibility, viz., the lamb of perpetual sacrifice, is also considered by some commentators.³

None of these hypotheses is generally accepted, and apparently serious objections are raised against each of them.⁴ For many, the most plausible interpretation is that of the Passover lamb, firstly because John xix. 36 identifies Christ with it, and secondly, because this evangelist alters the chronology of the Passion so that the death of Jesus may coincide with the slaughtering of the Passover sacrifice. Nevertheless, the main objection still stands; namely, that the Passover lamb was not considered an expiatory sacrifice. As Professor Dodd explains:

Although there may have been an expiatory element in the primitive rite underlying the Passover, no such idea was connected with it in historical times. It is therefore unlikely that readers could be expected to catch an allusion to the Passover here, in the absence of any clear indication in the context, or indeed in the Gospel at large.⁵

Since neither the Passover lamb, nor any of the other alternatives, appears satisfactorily to interpret the concept “Lamb of God”, the present generally accepted opinion, of which Professor C. K. Barrett is a recent exponent, recognizes in the term an amalgamation of Old Testament ideas due to the evangelist’s desire to testify “that the death of Christ was a new and better sacrifice”.⁶

¹ For the relationship “lamb” – “son” in Aramaic, see above, p. 93, n. 5.
Inserted into its proper setting, however, John i. 29 ceases to be a *crux*. For the Palestinian Jew, all lamb sacrifice, and especially the Passover lamb and the Tamid offering, was a memorial of the Akedah with its effects of deliverance, forgiveness of sin and messianic salvation. Once more, A. Richardson appears to be on the right path when he writes:

There is one more Old Testament text (which Dodd does not mention in connection with his discussion of the Lamb of God) which doubtless was present in the Fourth Evangelist’s mind when he made the Baptist speak of Christ as the Lamb of God, viz., Gen. 22. 8: “God will provide himself (Heb. “see for Himself”) the lamb for the burnt offering”. Jewish thought increasingly came to hold that the covenant-relationship with God was founded upon Abraham’s offering of Isaac: St. John is asserting that the new relationship of God and man in Christ (the new covenant) is based upon the fulfilment of the promise contained in Gen. 22. 8, that God would provide the Lamb which would make atonement for universal sin.1

The Fourth Gospel consciously emphasizes the two traditional expressions – Passover lamb and Suffering Servant – of the one fundamental reality; namely, the sacrifice of the new Isaac, the “son of God”.2 But the fullest Johannine expression of the Christian Akedah appears in John iii. 16:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son in order that whoever believes in him should not perish but should have eternal life.3

*The Akedah and the Eucharist*

Although it is not the purpose of the present study to trace all the Akedah references in the New Testament, it would certainly be a mistake to overlook the Eucharistic words of Jesus in this context.

Two fundamental aspects of Eucharistic theology in the New Testament are presupposed here: a) that the Last Supper was a ritual anticipation of the sacrificial death of Jesus, whose blood was to be poured out for the forgiveness of sin; b) that it was Jesus, not Paul, who ordered that the same rite should be repeated:

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2 In the light of the present enquiry, the reading δ υζ in the place of δ ἔκλεικτος in i. 34, seems undoubtedly to be the original term.
3 C. K. Barrett (op. cit., p. 180) recognizes here a possible allusion to Gen. xxii. 2, 16.
Do this in remembrance of me (Lk. xxii. 19).

Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you announce the death of the Lord until He comes (I Cor. xi. 25-26).

In his remarkable though much discussed study, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, J. *Jeremias* tries to prove that the expression εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν is to be translated "that remembrance should be made of me" — God being the one whose remembrance is sought.¹ *Jeremias* establishes a bond between this command and the prayer of the Passover haggadah begging God to remember the Messiah.² He further writes:

The Eucharist is an ἀνάμνησις of the Kyrios, not because it reminds the Church of the event of the Passion, but because it proclaims the beginning of the time of salvation and prays for the inception of consummation.³

I believe that *Jeremias'* premisses are correct. "Do this is remembrance of me" means more than "un rappel dans le sens d'une évocation",⁴ or a "Nachfolge und Nachahmung" of Jesus,⁵ or the observance of the annual Passover in Christ's memory.⁶ Nevertheless, there is some weakness in his reasoning because he underemphasizes the sacrificial aspect of a rite uniting, in a liturgical drama, both past and future within a continuous present. Besides, would not a Paschal Eucharist be opposed to a frequent, and even daily celebration of "the breaking of bread"?⁷

Within the context of the Akedah theology, as reconstructed here, all these problems disappear. According to its teaching, remission of sin, as well as present and future salvation, were due to the unique sacrifice of Isaac. The Passover was not only the annual commemoration of his sacrifice, but also a joyful reminder of its first decisive fruit and a prayer to God to bring about the final salvation of man. In ad-

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⁷ Cf. *Acts* ii. 42. According to *Higgins* (*op. cit.*, p. 55) there is a strong probability that Jesus desired only the Christian reinterpretation and re-enactment of the annual Passover as the anniversary of His sacrifice.
dition, God's remembrance was not only sought yearly, in Nisan, but day by day in a perpetual sacrifice of lambs invoking His forgiveness, mercy, and love. The frequent celebration of the Eucharistic meal may, therefore, be understood as the introduction into Christianity of this other element of the Akedah theology: the perpetual remembrance of the one perfect Sacrifice until the Kingdom comes.

Although it would be inexact to hold that the Eucharistic doctrine of the New Testament, together with the whole Christian doctrine of Redemption, is nothing but a Christian version of the Jewish Akedah theology, it is nevertheless true that in the formulation of this doctrine the targumic representation of the Binding of Isaac has played an essential role.

Indeed, without the help of Jewish exegesis it is impossible to perceive any Christian teaching in its true perspective.
CONCLUSION

Although this work is intended principally to demonstrate the feasibility and value of an historical approach to Jewish exegesis, and not to provide a new synthesis of Midrash, it seems fitting to conclude with a brief sketch of the historical development of Haggadah.

The earliest traces of post-biblical Haggadah are probably to be seen in the explanatory glosses which found their way into the scriptural text, the "corrections of the scribes" (םינש תקרת), and certain amended readings (הנה) which were to supplant the written word (הנה) and were adopted in the official perusal of the Bible.

In general, the period of great creative activity began in the fourth or third century BC and relaxed only towards the end of the second century AD. The first task was one of literary harmonization; harmony had first to be established within the Torah itself. Haggadah achieved this by combining and interweaving parallel accounts, eliminating discrepancies, and completing bare patches of the narrative. It carried the process still further. On the principle that the whole of Scripture is informed by the same Word of the same God, Torah, Prophets, and later even Hagiographa were considered and treated synoptically. The result was exegetical symbolism and a consequent doctrinal evolution and enrichment.

The bulk of the work was completed in the peaceful age of the Ptolemaic rule, as may be seen from the fact that in exegetical writings of the second century BC the main haggadic themes are already fully developed.

The structure of early Haggadah conforms to two patterns, of which the first, and doubtless most primitive, still carries the birthmark of its liturgical origin. The reading in the synagogue of a certain section of the Pentateuch, followed by an appropriate passage from the Prophets, was interpreted by means of an haggadic development relating to a particular verse of the Torah section but extended to include the whole passage. This haggadic form is best preserved in the Fragmentary Targum, the Geniza fragments of Targum Yerushalmi, and Codex Neofiti.

In its second form, the original haggadic unit covering the entire Torah section is either split into shorter interpretations to expound the passage verse by verse, as in the Targum of Ps.-Jonathan, or else its commentary is inserted into the completely rewritten biblica
narrative, as in Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, Jewish Antiquities, and Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum.

Haggadic extracts figuring as examples in homiletic works, or as premisses for ethical or legal conclusions in scholastic discussions, are not to be confused with authentic exegetical tradition. These are severed from their scriptural context, and although in most cases they echo the old Haggadah, they are definitely extraneous to it and secondary to what may be called, in the broadest sense, targumic exegesis.

Further doctrinal readaptation was inevitable as a result of the struggle against Hellenistic infiltration in the second century BC and the two wars against Rome in the first and second centuries AD with their far reaching consequences for Judaism as a nation and a religion. It was effected, during the period of the Second Temple, by particular religious circles for particular and varying purposes: which almost certainly accounts for the variety and freshness of the exegesis of that age. Compared with it, the scope of the Haggadah of subsequent centuries is definitely more limited. Some of the rival groups either disappeared from the scene, like the Hellenists and the Essenes, or else lost contact with the main body of Judaism, like the Christian Church of the Gentiles. From the second century onwards, the exegetical tendency was towards elaboration, codification, and compilation, but there was scarcely any new creation. Instead, biblical interpretations were collected and recorded in script, old and new, traditional and individual alike, for the benefit of future generations.

Finally it should be emphasized that the vitality and movement in the history of Haggadah was inspired by what was, in fact, the ultimate purpose of all Jewish exegesis; namely, to fuse Scripture with life. Respecting the letter of the Bible yet anxious to respond to contemporary needs, Haggadah constantly searched for fresh insight into the spirit of the ancient teachings of Moses and the Prophets. As a result, Scripture, renewed and revivified, was able to maintain its ful impact on the Jewish mind as a source of ever-present revelation and light.

Do you wish to know Him who created the world? Study Haggadah and you will know Him. Sifre-Deut. § 49.
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