

## **MIDRASH/PESHER AND HERMENEUTICS**

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*Midrash/Pesher* is a principle in Rabbinic hermeneutics that often seems to go against the plain meaning of the text, which seems to contradict the historical/grammatical interpretation of a text. Based upon a faulty definition as to what it meant by the *midrash* and *pesher* principal, has led to two negative scenarios. In liberalism, this has tended to lead to a denial of biblical authority and a denial that the New Testament is the inspired Word of God. Among some evangelicals, such as Robert Gundry in his commentary on the Book of Matthew, claims that the visit of the wise men is a *midrash* and should not be taken as a real historical event. The implication here is that when rabbis practice *midrashic* interpretation, they deny the actual literal intent of the passage itself. These issues will be dealt with in this paper.

### **DEFINITIONS**

Rabbi Jacob Neusner defines *midrash* follows:

Midrash – *Midrash* corresponds to the English word “exegesis” and carries the same generic sense. So far, as the writers of the Yerushalmi or the Bavli read and interpreted the Mishnah, they engaged in a process of midrash, and so too for Scripture. But the word “midrash” bears a more limited meaning, namely, “interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures, for the purpose of discovering a pertinent rule (in the Mishnah) or theological truth (in Scripture).”<sup>1</sup>

The same rabbi defines *pesher* as follows:

Pesher – An interpretation or explanation of a verse of Scripture, in which a given statement (e.g., of a prophet) is identified with an event or personality in the present time.<sup>2</sup>

What should be noted is that *pesher*, in Jewish usage, is a subdivision of *midrash* and *midrash* follows a specific principle in rabbinic exegesis of Scripture.

Martin Pickup, in a recent article published in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, entitled “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament: The Theological Rationale of Midrashic Exegesis” spells out what the actual issue is in reference to liberal and conservative theology:

Many OT verses that are cited as eschatological prophecies of Jesus Christ, when read in their original context do not appear to have been speaking of the *eschaton* or the Messiah at all. Such cases provided grist for advocates of a liberal view of

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<sup>1</sup> Jacob Neusner, *What is Midrash?* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press Books, 1987), 108-109.

<sup>2</sup> Neusner, 109

biblical authority.<sup>3</sup> The challenge for evangelical scholars, then, was determining whether NT writers presented something other than a grammatical-historical interpretation of the OT and, if so, how such interpretations could square with conservative views of biblical inspiration and inerrancy.<sup>4</sup>

Pickup goes on to provide different evangelical's perspective as to how they dealt with the issue and then concludes:

Despite the lack of consensus after two decades of debate, virtually all evangelical scholars acknowledged that, to some degree at least, the NT's method of exegesis resembled Jewish hermeneutics of late antiquity. Yet this admission was usually made reluctantly.<sup>5</sup> Ancient Jewish exegesis of the OT – a methodology that may be designated broadly as midrashic exegesis<sup>6</sup> – at times offered interpretations far more fanciful than anything found in the NT, and often those interpretations were associated with unhistorical embellishments of OT narratives. The additional fact that liberal critics began to suggest that the four Gospels of the NT might themselves be classified as Christian “midrash” (in the sense of unhistorical literary creations) could not help but turn conservative minds away from considering the possibility that midrashic hermeneutics might be the overall explanation for why the NT departed on occasion from the grammatical-

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. D. Beegle, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963) 81-83; P. Achtemeier, “How the Scriptures Were Formed,” in *The Authoritative Word* (ed. D. McKim; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983) 11-12; C.K. Barrett, “The Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New,” in *The Authoritative Word* 46-50; R. Evans and I. Berent, *Fundamentalism: Hazards and Heartbreaks* (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1988) 123-31.

<sup>4</sup> Pickup, Martin, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 51/2 (Lynchburg, VA June 2008) 353-352

<sup>5</sup> E. Earle Ellis (*Prophecy and Hermeneutic* 147-236) and Richard Longenecker (*Biblical Exegesis* 51-220) were exceptional in their emphasis upon the similarities of NT hermeneutics and Jewish hermeneutics.

<sup>6</sup> As my former professor Jacob Neusner points out, the term *midrash* has been used in multitudinous ways, and the result has been great ambiguity and confusion (see J. Neusner, *What Is Midrash?* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987] xi-xii, 1-3; also R. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989] 10-14). I want to make it clear that I do not use the term in this article to speak of a literary genre, or of the practice of creating homiletic stories or expansions of OT narratives, and I certainly am not suggesting that the Gospels themselves may be categorized as midrash. I restrict the use of this term to an exegetical procedure, the methodology of which I explain in detail in the following pages. Yet even in the context of exegesis, many writers use the word “midrash” to designate the particular form of exegesis we observe in rabbinic literature as distinguished from the so-called *peshar* exegesis of the Qumran scrolls. Some writers use the phrase “*midrash-peshar*” to refer to the practice of incorporating exposition into the text of an OT quotation itself. For some writers, “*midrash*” has become a virtual designation for the *gezerah shawah* technique of joining together passages sharing a common word. Such varied uses of terminology can be quite misleading. Many scholars simply use “*midrash(ic)*” as a generic designation of the hermeneutics used by virtually all Jewish groups of late antiquity, and that is how I use the term in this article (see, e.g., Neusner, *What Is Midrash?* 7-12, 46-47; I.H. Marshall, “An Assessment of Recent Developments,” in *It Is Written* 13-14; B. Chilton, “Commenting on the OT (with Particular Reference to the Pesharim, Philo, and the Mekhilta),” in *It Is Written* 137-38; G. J. Brooke, “Qumran Peshar: Towards the Redefinition of Genre,” *RevQ* 10 [1981] 485-503). In this sense, the term “*midrash(ic)*” denotes an exegetical methodology characterized by non-grammatical-historical interpretations that often read OT words or phrases in new contexts drawn from other portions of divine revelation. While the generic use of this term indicates the broad commonality of ancient Jewish groups in their hermeneutics, it should not cause one to overlook the permutations that properly differentiate the exegetical techniques of the Qumran scrolls, the rabbinic literature, the NT, etc. Let me also say that I am not wedded to the use of *midrash* as a generic designation of ancient Jewish hermeneutics. The advantage of the term is that it suggests the non-grammatical-historical aspect of the methodology, but if a less confusing term will serve better, I am open to its implementation.

historical sense of the OT. Still, the “Jewishness” of the NT’s use of the OT was too glaring to dismiss entirely. So while evangelicals were willing to acknowledge a degree of Judaic influence in the NT’s use of the OT, most still felt uncomfortable with the questions that arose if NT exegesis were categorized as fundamentally midrashic.<sup>7</sup>

In the footnote Pickup makes the following clarification:

In rabbinic documents, for example, one finds not only numerous embellishments of OT narratives, but midrashic interpretations based on the individual letters of a Hebrew word, or even on the visual appearance of the written letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Semantic significance is sometimes assigned to minor particles of speech, that serve no actual semantic function in Hebrew grammar (D. Aaron, “Language and Midrash,” in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* [ed. J. Neusner and A. Avery-Peck; Leiden: Brill, 2005] 406-9). These kinds of fanciful manipulations of the text are basically a peculiarity of rabbinic literature, and one does not observe this kind of extremism in the NT’s exegesis of the OT. It should be noted, however, that even with Rabbinic exegesis, at least some of its apparent fancifulness is due to our failure as modern readers to appreciate the presuppositions of the rabbis (see D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990] 119).<sup>8</sup>

As to why the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic has been primarily dealt with in liberalism rather than conservatism, Pickup explains as follows:

It is fortunate that the major scholarly studies on midrashic exegesis have come, not from evangelicals, but from theological liberals in the field of religious studies or from postmodern literary critics.<sup>9</sup> Scholars from both of these liberal camps often perceive the theological rationale of midrashic interpretation that I explain below, but they tend to undervalue it in their analyses because of their

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<sup>7</sup> Pickup, Martin *JETS*, 355-356

<sup>8</sup> Pickup, Martin, *JETS*, 356

<sup>9</sup> For discussions of midrashic exegesis from a religious-studies perspective, see J. Neusner, *What Is Midrash?*; idem, *Midrash in Context: Exegesis in Formative Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983); G. Porton, “Defining Midrash,” in *The Study of Ancient Judaism: Mishnah, Midrash, Siddur* (ed. J. Neusner; New York: 1981) 55-92; idem, *Understanding Rabbinic Midrash: Texts and Commentary* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1985); idem, “Definitions of Midrash,” in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* 1:520-34. For discussions from a literary-critical perspective, see G. Hartman and S. Budick, ed., *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986); G. Bruns, “Midrash and Allegory: The Beginnings of Scriptural Interpretation,” in *The Literary Guide to the Bible* (ed. R. Alter and F. Kermode; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987) 625-46; J. Kugel, “Two Introductions to Midrash,” in *Midrash and Literature* 77-103; D. Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996); D. Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990). For the history of academic studies of midrash, see T. Lim, “Origins and Emergence of Midrash in Relation to the Hebrew Bible,” in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* 2:595-612; Stern, *Midrash and Theory* 1-13.

own anti-supernatural perspectives.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the reason why evangelicals have not taken a lead in the study of ancient Jewish interpretation of the Bible is because of a latent desire to distance the NT from a Jewish hermeneutic milieu that is perceived to be unfriendly to an evangelical view of Scripture. Many people think of midrashic exegesis as just a fanciful way of making Scripture say whatever one wants it to say – which, if that were true, would make it a hermeneutic that undermined biblical inspiration and authority. But the irony here is that midrashic exegesis is actually dependent upon the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the OT – a fact that even liberal scholars of midrashic literature have pointed out.<sup>11</sup> Evangelical scholarship is actually in the best position to appreciate fully the theological rationale of this Jewish method of exegesis.<sup>12</sup>

Pickup also adds in a footnote:

Liberal biblical scholars have been more willing than conservatives to point out the Jewish nature of the NT's exegesis of the OT, yet these liberals – like many conservatives – often disparage the hermeneutic, since it departs from a strictly grammatical-historical method (e.g. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture* 8-9, 180; R. Grant, "Paul and the OT," in *The Authoritative Word* [ed. D. McKim; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983] 19-36; C.K. Barrett, "Old Testament in the New Testament," in *Authoritative Word* 37-58; H. Shires, *Finding the OT in the New* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974] 25-26, 35-38). In such cases, liberals and conservatives share the same problem: a misguided assumption that grammatical-historical exegesis is the only valid method of reading the Old Testament.<sup>13</sup>

Contrary to liberal theology and also to statements made by Gundry, when the rabbis applied the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic, they never denied the actual simple meaning of the text. This is made clear by a Jewish writer, Halivni:

R. Kahana most likely knew that with a few exceptions a *derash*, an exposition, does not displace the *peshat* (and thus differs from the readings in of the earlier periods). So that even if the word *sword* in the above-quoted verse from Psalms is a metaphor of the words of Torah, the very choice of the word *sword* to convey that metaphor is an indication that a sword shares a common property with Torah, that it too, to the mighty, is glorious and majestic even as it serves a metaphor for the words of Torah.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> For example, while there is value in studies that explain midrashic exegesis according to literary-critical categories, if one treats midrashic exegesis only as an extreme case of literary "intertextuality," its fundamental theological impetus may be minimized or even overlooked entirely (see, e.g., Hays, *Echoes of Scripture* 154-78).

<sup>11</sup> E.G. Neusner, *What is Midrash?* 10-12; J. Kugel, "Ancient Biblical Interpretation and the Biblical Sage," in *Studies in Ancient Midrash* (ed. J. Kugel; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001) 15-23.

<sup>12</sup> Pickup, *JETS*, 357-58.

<sup>13</sup> Pickup, *JETS*, 358.

<sup>14</sup> Halivni, David Weiss, *Peshat and Derash, Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) 60.

Later on the author points out the rabbinic sense of the plain meaning:

Moreover, there is good evidence that the rabbis' sense of plain meaning (more accurately stated, their sense of what is not *derash*) does not correspond to ours...they often attributed to the Samaritans (and the Sadducees) halakhic expositions that are far from the plain meaning of the text while claiming all along that the Samaritans and the Sadducees considered obligatory only those laws that were written explicitly in the Torah. Laws that are not written explicitly in the Torah, that are obtained through interpretation, are not obligatory (see, for example, *b. Sanh.* 32b). Yet the rabbis assumed that the Samaritans (and the Sadducees) observed certain laws that to our understanding are not written in the Torah at all (see, for example, *b. Hor.* 4a).<sup>15</sup>

Rabbi Neusner provides the following definition/usage of *midrash*:

First I present three types of Midrash-processes likely to be found in the Judaic Midrash-compilations of late antiquity. By comparing different approaches to the exegesis of the Hebrew Scriptures, we will see how Midrash leads to either paraphrase, prophecy, or parable.

In *paraphrase* the exegete of the Hebrew Scriptures will state in other words the self-evident and ordinary sense of the Hebrew. Much of the Targumim render in Aramaic a fairly straightforward version of the Hebrew, through the line between the simple sense and interpretation is not infrequently crossed.

In *prophecy* the exegete will read Scripture as an account of things that are now happening or are going to happen. In general, the more common approach was the second: "This verse refers to that event." Scripture was taken to provide an account of the present and near-term future. The Pesharim of the Essene library at Qumran and passages of Matthew will show us how Midrash works as prophecy.

In *parable* the exegete will read Scripture as an account of what the words say but with deeper meanings. While important Christian exegetes of Scripture, especially Matthew and Paul, present examples of the reading of Scripture as allegory or parable, for our purposes the vast rabbinic corpus of Midrash-collection readily illustrates this approach.<sup>16</sup>

*Definition:* The word "Midrash" stands for many things, but it is mainly understood in three ways.

First, Midrash refers to the types of scriptural exegesis carried on by diverse groups of Jews from the time of ancient Israel to nearly the present day. (In "Gary G. Porton's definition, given below, these processes are characterized in greater detail.) For instance, people may say, "He produced a Midrash on the verse," meaning "an exegesis." Or "Life is a Midrash on Scripture," meaning that what happens in the everyday world imparts meaning or significance to biblical stories and admonitions. It is difficult to specify what the word "Midrash" in

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<sup>15</sup> Halivni, David Weiss, *Pehat and Derash*, 77-78.

<sup>16</sup> Neusner, Jacob, *What is Midrash?*, (Philadelphia: Harper & Row, Fortress Press, 1087) 1-2.

Hebrew expresses that the word “exegesis” in English does not. How “exegesis” in English differed from “Midrash” in Hebrew, or why the Hebrew will serve better than the more familiar English, I do not know.

Overall, then, the first usage seems so general as to add up to nothing. That is to say, “Midrash,” a foreign word, simply refers to the same thing – the activity or process or intellectual pursuit – as “exegesis,” an English word.

Second, Midrash also refers to a compilation of Scriptural exegeses, as in “that Midrash deals with the Book of Joshua.” This statement means “that compilation of exegeses deals with the Book of Joshua.” A “compilation” or a composite in the formal literary sense is clearly more accurate than “Midrash.”

Third, Midrash stands for the written composition (e.g., a paragraph with a beginning, middle, and end, in which a completed thought is laid forth). In this setting “a Midrash” refers to a paragraph or a unit of exegetical exposition, in which a verse of the Hebrew Scriptures is subjected to some form of exegesis. One may say, for instance, “Let me now cite the Midrash,” meaning a particular passage of exegesis, a paragraph or other completed whole unit of exegetical thought, a composition that provides an exegesis of a particular verse.<sup>17</sup>

For instance, we find certain passages in Matthew, cited below, *Midrash exegesis*, assembled into a *Midrash-compilation*, generated by a particular *Midrash-process*. If someone calls Matthew a Midrash, he or she may mean any one of these three.

The best definition of Midrash known to me derives from Gary G. Porton<sup>18</sup> who states:

Midrash is “a type of literature, oral or written, which has its starting point in a fixed, canonical text, considered the revealed word of God by the Midrashist and his audience, and in which the original verse is explicitly cited or clearly alluded to.”...For something to be considered Midrash it must have a clear relationship to the accepted canonical text of Revelation. Midrash is a term given to a Jewish activity which finds its locus in the religious life of the Jewish community.<sup>19</sup> While others exegete their revelatory canons and while Jews exegete other texts only Jews who explicitly tie their comments to the Bible engage in Midrash.<sup>20</sup>

Three elements are important in Porton’s definition: (1) exegesis, (2) starting with Scripture, and (3) ending in community. Porton identifies five types of midrashic activity: the rabbinic (see part 3 of this book); the Midrash found in the

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<sup>17</sup> Neusner, Jacob, *What Is Midrash?*, 8-9

<sup>18</sup> Gary C. Porton, “Defining Midrash,” in *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner (New York: Ktav, 1981), 1:55-92 the quote is from 62). See also his “Midrash: The Palestinian Jews and the Hebrew Bible in the Greco Roman Period,” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, ed. H. Temporini and W. Hasse (Berlin and New York; 1979), II.19.2:104, and his entry on Midrash in the forthcoming *Anchor Bible Dictionary*.

<sup>19</sup> I distinguish between “midrash” and “exegesis” only by assigning the former word to activity within the Israelite community. It should be clear, however, that there may be extensive parallels between midrash which occurs within an Israelite context and exegesis which occurs in other religious and cultural systems.

<sup>20</sup> For examples of the same rabbinic comments appearing as midrashic statements and non-midrashic statements, see Gary G. Porton, *Understanding Rabbinic Midrash: Texts and Commentary* (Hoboken, NJ.: Ktav, 1985), 6-8

Hebrew Scriptures themselves, for example, Deuteronomy's rewriting of Exodus, Numbers, and Leviticus; translations (Targumim); the rewriting of the biblical narrative; the Peshar-Midrash of an apocalyptic order.<sup>21</sup>

Rabbinic Midrash is so called because it derives from the Judaic sages, who bear the honorific title of rabbis. While it is simply one more mode of biblical interpretation, it does exhibit traits of particular interest. Specifically, Porton surveys some of the internal technology that guides the rabbinic exegete in the reading of Scripture. The first point is that all details of a given verse of Scripture lay open for explanation and interpretation.

Every letter, every verse, and every phrase contained in the Bible was important and written as it was for a specific reason. The Bible contained no needless expressions, no "mere" repetitions, and no superfluous words or phrases. The assumption that every element of the biblical text was written in a specific way in order to teach something underlies the Midrashic activity of the rabbis.<sup>22</sup>

The advantage of relating one's comment on a verse to the character of that verse is simple. It bears the implication that what the exegete says now is the particular and inevitable message of the verse itself. Hence, this kind of Midrash, however fanciful, bears the claim of expressing the original meaning of Scripture—that is, God's meaning.

A second striking trait is the capacity to see relationships between one thing and something else, so Porton:

Furthermore, the rabbis believed that everything contained in Scriptures was interrelated. Often, one verse is explained by reference to another verse. A section of the Prophets may be used to explain a verse from the Torah, or a portion of the Torah may explain a passage from the Writings.<sup>23</sup>

The search of the rabbinic sages was for the unity of human experience under God's rule. Hence they wanted to know what connections they could locate between scriptural stories, what lessons they could learn from on biblical teaching for the interpretation of another. Yet another trait, as Porton indicates, was an interest in showing the logical and reasonable character of divine revelation contained in Scripture. They wanted time and again to prove that reason without Scripture is not reliable, but that Scripture is reasonable:

A common Midrashic activity is to refute a reasonable or logical conclusion merely by citing a verse from Scripture. The Midrashic activity was important, for without it, people might not act in proper ways and might misunderstand the realities of the world, man and God.

These form some of the principal technical aspects of how sages read a verse of Scripture. As to the theological side to matters, Porton observes:

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<sup>21</sup> Neusner, Jacob, *What Is Midrash?*, 9-10

<sup>22</sup> Porton, *Understanding Rabbinic Midrash*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Porton, *Understanding Rabbinic Midrash*, 9.

A fifth assumption of the rabbis who engaged in the production of Midrash was that their activity was a religious, God-centered enterprise. While other peoples in Late Antiquity interpreted their ancient documents and even created many of the techniques which the rabbis used and which were codified in the lists of Midrashic rules attributed to Hillel, Ishmael, and Eliezer b. Yosi the Galilean, the rabbis alone believed that their activity was related to the word of the One and Only God. For the rabbis, the Hebrew Bible contained all the secrets of the universe, and it was the ultimate source of all knowledge and wisdom.

Rabbinic Midrash was thus one means of discovering these secrets, of attaining true knowledge and wisdom. The Bible was the only true guide for human action; it was the standard against which one's deeds, the final arbiter of true and false, right and wrong. Rabbinic Midrash expounds only one document, and that text was not of human origin.<sup>24 25</sup>

In another work, Rabbi Neusner provides the following description of what constitutes *midrash*:

Rabbinic Bible interpretation read the Hebrew Scriptures as one-half, the written half, of the whole Torah, that is, the dual Torah in two media, writing and memory, revealed by God to Moses at Sinai. The other half of that same Torah, the oral part, derives from oral formulation and oral transmission of God's word, finally preserved in the teachings of the Judaic sages themselves. Midrash so works as to lead us into the world of the Hebrew Bible as that Scripture entered into Judaism. For the Holy Scriptures were transformed by the Judaic sages or rabbis in the first through seventh centuries, the formative centuries of Western civilization. *Through the workings of Midrash the Hebrew Bible became the written half of the one whole Torah, oral and written, revealed by God to Moses our Rabbi at Mount Sinai.*

Midrash works in three dimensions: first, as explanation of meaning imputed to particular verses of Scripture; second, as a mode of stating important propositions, syllogisms of thought, in conversation with verses or sustained passages of Scripture; and third, as a way of retelling scriptural stories that imparts new immediacy to those stories. In this book we shall learn how to read samples of all three ways in which Midrash works, and we shall further gain access to the lessons that Scripture has to teach us, for the sake of our own encounter with the Hebrew Bible.<sup>26</sup>

What should be made plain in conclusion to this segment is two basic points. First, rabbis did use the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic to interpret the text in a way that is not obvious in the text itself and there were different categories in the various deviations from the historical grammatical format, and these deviations will be explained later in the paper and how the New Testament writers applied the Old Testament. Second, regardless of the degree of departure

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<sup>24</sup> Porton, *Understanding Rabbinic Midrash*, 10.

<sup>25</sup> Neusner, Jacob, *What is Midrash?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).

<sup>26</sup> Neusner, Jacob, *Invitation to Midrash, The Workings of Rabbinic Bible Interpretation*, (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, San Francisco, 1989), 3-4.

from the obvious meaning of the text, rabbis never denied the actual obvious meaning of the text. On the contrary they affirmed it. But whatever else they may have derived from the life of Abraham, Moses, or others, one thing they never did was deny that the literal was true. Their approach was the literal was true, but there are some other things that can be derived from that account.

## THE RATIONAL BEHIND THE *MIDRASH/PESHER* HERMENEUTIC

On one hand it would appear that the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic involves developing an interpretation that does not at all fit the historical-grammatical hermeneutic. On one hand, the rabbis had no difficulty accepting each verse in that context and the *midrash/pesher* was an addition to it and was not totally based on imagination. In fact, it was often based upon how a specific word might be used in a different context. Pickup describes it as follows:

This is exactly how the Jews approached their Scriptures. They read the OT not merely as a collection of different books written by different human authors on different occasions, but as if it were all one book. This book was the product of the mind of one Author who had declared to Israel in historical time the fundamental paradigmatic components of his eternal purpose. Therefore, the Scriptures God gave to Israel presented, in effect, a kind of mystery that was discernible through a consideration of the fullness of God's revelation.<sup>27</sup> Questions generated by an OT verse lacking complete or detailed information might find answers within an entirely different portion of Scripture.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, by considering the host of correlative aspects of Scripture, one gained potential insight into the fullness of God's eternal plan.<sup>29</sup>

Jewish exegetes kept in mind something that we may tend to overlook: the fact that, from the perspective of God in eternity, the Scriptures are really a "timeless unity in which each and every verse is simultaneous with every other, temporally and semantically."<sup>30</sup> As a result, the various contexts of Genesis through Malachi are ultimately all connected. So if a given verse is considered from the broader perspective, the words of the verse often call to mind an additional truth when they are read in the light of other contexts that God has revealed.<sup>31</sup> Words are vehicles of thought, and context is largely what gives them meaning. So when a Jewish reader saw that the words of a passage expressed

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<sup>27</sup> Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* 17-18. The NT, of course, teaches this very point, but affirms that the mystery of the OT Scriptures is fully revealed through Christ (Mark 4:11; Rom16:25; 2 Cor 3:14-16). The Qumran sectarians believed that the mystery was revealed through the Teacher of Righteousness (1QpHab 7:4-5; 1QS 11:5-6).

<sup>28</sup> Scholars of midrash describe this phenomenon as "gaps" in the OT text that prompted midrashic exegesis (see Kugel, *The Bible As It Was* 1-5 *et passim*). In contrast to what we commonly see in Jewish literature of late antiquity, the NT's midrashic exegesis was not for the purpose of explaining "gaps" in the text or settling halakhic disputes. The NT's purpose was to demonstrate Jesus' messiahship or otherwise support Christian doctrine.

<sup>29</sup> Pickup, Martin, *JETS*, 51/2 (June 2008). 360.

<sup>30</sup> Stern, *Language of Exegesis*, 108.

<sup>31</sup> M. Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998) 1-2, 12-13.

another truth if they were read in a different, divinely revealed context, he concluded that such a phenomenon could not be coincidental; all such intertextual connections – and therefore the fuller or multiple significations of the text that those connections brought to mind – must have been in the mind of God when he inspired the human author to state those words in the first place.<sup>32</sup>

This procedure of reading the words of one OT context in light of another context is something that is graphically illustrated in rabbinic literature, particularly in midrash compilations such as *Leviticus Rabbah* and *Genesis Rabbah*. There, a base verse is quoted and interpreted in light of the context of another verse, and typically the second verse, the intertext, is quoted also. On some occasions, the intertext is so well known as to need no express quotation, but a recontextualized reading is performed nonetheless.<sup>33</sup> We see the same basic procedure in the *peshar* interpretations of Qumran. There the words of OT texts that, on a grammatical-historical level, spoke of themes and events at a given point in Israel's history are reread as if they were situated within the eschatological setting of which Scripture elsewhere speaks.<sup>34</sup> Such a procedure vividly highlights the parallel nature of the superimposed materials. In particular, Qumran interpreters read the words of OT texts within the context of circumstances of the community and its founder, the Teacher of Righteousness. Because he was believed to be guided by the Holy Spirit, he and the community saw themselves as part of God's revelatory corpus and therefore as a legitimate new context in which to read appropriate portions of the OT.<sup>35</sup>

Pickup also clarifies in a footnote the following:

This is an important point to understand when considering the NT's messianic interpretations of the Psalter. If a midrashic exegete read a verse of a psalm within a messianic context, it did not necessarily mean that he would view the entire psalm messianically. Thus, the fact that the NT applies a portion of a psalm to Jesus does not necessarily warrant our classifying the psalm as "a messianic psalm," if what we mean is that the psalm speaks exclusively and in its entirety of Jesus.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Neusner, *What is Midrash?* 11; Aaron, *Language and Midrash* 402-03.

<sup>33</sup> The normal NT practice is not to cite an intertext when giving a midrashic interpretation of an OT verse. At times this may be because of the well-known nature of the connection, but usually it is because Jesus himself serves, so to speak, as "the intertext." Jesus becomes the new, divinely revealed context in which OT statements are read.

<sup>34</sup> Resituating OT statements within an eschatological context – a process Jacob Neusner dubs "midrash as prophecy" – is what we see routinely in the sectarian literature of Qumran and in the NT (*What is Midrash?* 31-40). Many scholars point out that a primary purpose of midrashic exegesis was to make the Scripture relevant to the current-day audience (e.g. J. Neusner, *What Is Midrash?* 7-8; Longnecker, *Biblical Exegesis* 19-20). While this is true, in many instances this concept seems to be due to the presumption of the ultimately eschatological focus of Scripture and a group's belief that they themselves are living in the *eschaton*.

<sup>35</sup> Pickup, *JETS*, 361, 263; [See L. Schiffman, "Biblical Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash* 48-53; M. Bernstein, "Interpretation of Scriptures," in *The Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. L. Schiffman and J. VanderKam; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) 382. Fundamentally, this Qumran procedure is analogous to the NT's Christological reading of Scripture – i.e. reading the OT in terms of the life and person of Jesus Christ]

<sup>36</sup> Pickup, *JETS*, 362.

In his article, Pickup focuses on three Old Testament passages used messianically by the New Testament and explains how the New Testament writers could have arrived at those conclusions that seem to be very odd at the first reading based upon Jewish usage. He explains as follows:

This technique of recontextualizing a portion of Scripture so that it calls to mind other divinely revealed truths is a fundamental aspect of midrashic exegesis. If – a Jewish exegete would ask – these intertextual ideas come to our minds when we read a given passage, then how could God not have been thinking of the same thing when he first inspired the OT author to say the words that he did? This is why midrashic hermeneutics is properly defined as a form of exegesis, not, eisegesis. Theologically speaking, a midrashic reading of Scripture seeks to bring to light the fullness of what was in God’s mind as he inspired an OT statement notwithstanding the statement’s grammatical-historical meaning.<sup>37</sup> Now this explanation of the matter does not mean that the human author of a passage was necessarily aware of the polysemy of his words as he composed the text; biblical inspiration need not require such knowledge on the part of a prophet (cf. 1 Pet 1:10-12; John 11:51).<sup>38</sup> But what a midrashic reading does mean is that the fullness of truths that the words of the OT can evoke when considered in light of God’s full revelation must have been intended by God when he initially guided the human author’s wording.<sup>39</sup>

Later on Pickup explains how Paul could have arrived at his interpretation on Psalm 68:18 in reference to the rabbinic interpretation:

Before elaborating Paul’s use of the psalm, let me point out that his procedure of applying to Jesus OT statements about Yahweh parallels the way that ancient Jews midrashically applied statements about Yahweh to the agents through whom he functioned. For example, God had declared in Scripture that he would make Moses “as God to Pharaoh” (Exod 7:1), and this special role of Moses as God’s agent seems to be the impetus behind the Jewish

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<sup>37</sup> This fullness of meaning can be described as the *sensus plenior* of an OT text, and some have tried to categorize the NT’s interpretation of Ps. 8:4-6 simply as the phenomenon of *sensus plenior* (e.g. D. Hagner, “OT in the NT” 102). But this explanation does not, in itself, explain how such an interpretation of the psalm is derived (except to say that God miraculously revealed it to the NT writers), and it may also erroneously imply that the “fuller meaning” is only an elaboration on what the psalmist was talking about. This is why it is better to explain the NT’s interpretation of Ps 8:4-6 as a case of midrashic exegesis – an exegetical process that brings out the fuller, or even multiple meanings of an OT text by resituating its words within the context of other, correlative portions of God’s revelation.

<sup>38</sup> This issue, of course, has been vigorously debated through the years – both generally and with regard to the specific meaning of I Peter 1:10-12 (see e.g., W. Kaiser, “The Single Intent of Scripture,” in G. Beale, ed., *Right Doctrine* 55-69 and P. Payne, “The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Human Author’s Intention,” in *Right Doctrine* 70-81; cf. W.E. Glenny, “The Divine Meaning of Scripture: Explanations and Limitations,” *JETS* 38 [1995] 481-500. In the present case, it could be that as David composed Psalm 8 he was conscious of the fact that his statements about man’s current dominion over the world fit also with a divine promise about man’s future dominion over a world to come – but nothing in Psalm 8 indicates that this was David’s thinking.

<sup>39</sup> Pickup, *JETS*, 366.

practice of taking certain biblical declarations about Yahweh's actions and applying them to Moses. Both the *Psalms Targum* and the rabbinic literature take the words of Ps 68:18 – the very passage we are discussing – and interpret these words to be speaking of Moses because he “ascended on high” to receive the Torah atop Mount Sinai (*b. Shab.* 89a; *Midr. Ps.* 68.11). Ancient Jews also took OT statements about Yahweh and applied them to the angels through whom he functioned.<sup>40</sup>

The assumption that some people make that application of the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic means a rejection or a denial of the historical-grammatical hermeneutic is simply not true and Pickup footnotes as follows:

Scholars sometimes make the mistake of assuming that if a document gives a midrashic interpretation of an OT verse, its author must be rejecting the grammatical-historical meaning of the text. For example, R. Longenecker claims that the eschatological interpretations of the OT prophetic books that we observe in the Qumran *pesher* texts indicate that the Qumran community thought these prophetic books spoke exclusively of the last days rather than having any contemporary meaning for the prophet's own day: “[The Qumran sectarians] did not think of the particular prophecies in question as the message of God which was significant in an earlier period and now, *mutatis mutandis*, also relevant to them. Rather, they looked upon these selected passages as being exclusively concerned with them” (*Biblical Exegesis* 39). But there is no reasons to presume that a midrashic interpreter who gives an eschatological interpretation to a passage thereby denies the plain meaning of the text and its application in its original context. While midrashic hermeneutics may treat the plain meaning as secondary or even irrelevant to the purpose at hand, it is not opposed to grammatical-historical exegesis, and the intertextual connections that generate midrashic interpretation are related to the plain meaning of the verses in question. NT writers who state (or even argue) a midrashic interpretation of an OT verse should not be thought of as necessarily claiming that their interpretation is the exclusive meaning of the passage (see Bernstein, “Interpretation of Scriptures” 378).<sup>41</sup>

So concerning Paul's usage of Psalm 68:18 Pickup explains:

At some point in time, this manner of interpreting Ps 68:18 in terms of Moses became for Jews a standard midrashic reading of the verse.<sup>42</sup> The Targum's unusual text form – wherein the “gifts” of verse 18 are given to men rather than received from them – corresponds with the text form of Paul's citation. It may be, therefore, that Paul is playing off this Jewish conception of Moses in his interpretation of Ps 68:18. Christians – rather than emphasizing Moses as the agent of God who ascended Mount Sinai to serve

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<sup>40</sup> Pickup, *JETS*, 368.

<sup>41</sup> Pickup, *JETS* 369

<sup>42</sup> For extensive discussion of this matter, see Harris, *Descent of Christ* 64-142.

as Israel's authoritative lawgiver –needed to give their loyalty to Jesus, the incarnation of God and the one who ascended to heaven so that he might rule on the heavenly throne and give men the spiritual blessing of God's final revelation.<sup>43</sup>

Pickup's conclusion is important to note for a proper understanding of how the New Testament quotes the Old:

It has become increasingly evident in recent years how important it is to understand the Jewish background of the NT if one wants to fully understand NT Christianity.<sup>44</sup> I have tried to show in this article that much of the difficulty modern Bible students have with the NT's use of the OT is, again, the result of a failure to fully appreciate this Jewish background specifically with regard to the Judaic method of reading the OT. When we see the NT writers repeatedly interpreting the OT in something other than a grammatical-historical manner just as their Jewish contemporaries did – even to the point of giving, at times, a virtually equivalent exegesis of the same OT passages – we must admit that the same hermeneutic method is at work here. To affirm otherwise would be to “kick against the goads.” Nor can we sidestep the NT's use of midrashic exegesis by saying that it was only an accommodation to the hermeneutics of Jewish opponents without intending to endorse their methodology.<sup>45</sup> In all three of the cases we have analyzed in this article, the NT writers present their interpretations as inherently valid readings of the OT.

I believe that a failure to understand the theological rationale of midrashic exegesis is what has impeded evangelicals in acknowledging the NT's use of this hermeneutic method. A similar deficiency among liberal biblical scholars has prompted unfair criticism of the NT's use of the OT. For this reason, my purpose here has been to explain the rationale of midrashic interpretation, to defend its legitimacy, and to demonstrate its presence in the NT.<sup>46</sup>

This ancient Jewish hermeneutic subsumes the various proposals that evangelicals traditionally have offered as solutions to problematic cases of NT exegesis. The concepts of generic promise, corporate solidarity, typology, *sensus plenior*, and canonical process reading all find a place within midrashic framework, for they serve to highlight the ways in which the interconnections of God's revelation may occur, and these interconnections are what permit a

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<sup>43</sup> Pickup, *JETS*, 370-31 [M. Barth, *Ephesians* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974) 475-76; Fishbane, *Exegetical Imagination* 71. R. Taylor thinks this view unlikely because Paul does not explicitly mention the features of the Targum so as to make his argumentation evident to his readers (“Use of Psalm 68:18” 326-27). But if the Targum's interpretation of Ps 68:18 was well known, then Paul's comments would seem to be sufficient to have made it obvious to an audience what it was he was refuting. Even so, the real point here is not that Paul was necessarily refuting the Targum itself, but that he may have been refuting the exalted conception of Moses and the Law that was commonplace among the Jews of his day, a conception that we see evidenced in the Targum.

<sup>44</sup> See L. Helyer, “The Necessity, Problems, and Promise of Second Temple Judaism for Discussions of New Testament Eschatology,” *JETS* 47 (2004) 597-601.

<sup>45</sup> E.g. L. Kuyper, *The Scripture Unbroken* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 2-23.

<sup>46</sup> Pickup, *JETS*, 378

midrashic reading.<sup>47</sup> But midrashic hermeneutics readily explains what the other proposals on their own cannot – viz. how the NT can derive non-grammatical-historical meanings from the OT while at the same time explicitly presenting them as actual exegesis. Evangelicals need not fear that acknowledging the presence of midrashic exegesis in the NT will undermine a high view of Scripture, for the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of the OT are foundational principles of midrashic hermeneutics. Though a midrashic reading treats the OT text atomistically and does not focus on a passage’s grammatical-historical meaning, neither does it reject the grammatical-historical meaning or affirm something contradictory to it.

The data we have examined indicate that the NT writers – like virtually all ancient Jewish interpreters – understood that, in a sense, there could be multiple meanings in the words of the OT, for a statement made in one context might convey another relevant truth when considered within another context that God had revealed. All of this was due to the intention of the omniscient God who gave the OT Scriptures to Israel as a partial unveiling, in the temporal realm, of his eternal plan. The rabbis liked to express the matter like this: “The words of Torah are poor in their own context and rich in another context” (y. *Rosh HaSh.* 3-5). This meant that the fuller aspects of God’s plan could be perceived only by examining an OT utterance in the light of God’s further revelation, so that the connections between those words and other utterances of God might be grasped. Only then could one discern the vast riches of God’s word – indeed, the vast riches of God’s mind. Furthermore, the “other context” in which an OT statement might be read was often an eschatological context. This was because the Scriptures God gave to Israel were inherently teleological; they adumbrated his eternal purpose and so were always forward-looking. A careful reader of the OT understood that a statement of God in one verse, or a record of his actions or the actions of his people in another verse, was not relevant solely for that one point in time since all of those things pertained to the furtherance of God’s plan for the last days. (cf. Acts 3:24; Rom 15:4; I Cor 10:11; I Pet 1:10-12).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Also fitting within a midrashic framework is the recent proposal of Craig Blomberg regarding “double fulfillment” (“Interpreting OT Prophetic Language” 17-22). Blomberg’s contention is that, in many cases, the documentary context of an OT prophecy may imply both a contemporary and an eschatological fulfillment. This may well be true, and in such cases a midrashic reader might situate the words of the prophecy within the eschatological context and read them accordingly. But midrashic hermeneutics does not demand that the eschatological setting for such a reading be indicated in the passage’s own documentary context. In none of the cases that I have analyzed in this article do we find the NT’s eschatological-messianic reading of an OT passage suggested by the grammatical-historical context of the passage itself.

<sup>48</sup> Pickup, *JETS*, 379-380

## **PARDES: THE FOUR RABBINIC WAYS OF QUOTING THE OLD TESTAMENT**

In Hebrew, the word *pardes* comprises four Hebrew letters: *pe*, *resh*, *daleth*, and *samech*. The four letters are an acronym of the four ways rabbis quoted the Hebrew Bible. The *pe* stands for *pshat*, which refers to the simple literal meaning of a text. The *resh* stands for *remez* which means “hint”. The *daleth* stands for *drash* which refers to exposition or application. The *samech* stands for *sod* which means “secret”.

The gospel writers were Jewish writers who would have used this familiar way of quoting the Hebrew Bible and in fact, Matthew chapter two has one example of each of these four categories.

Dr. David L. Cooper, the late founder of The Biblical Research Society and well versed in Jewish usage has provided English equivalents to these four categories: literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment; literal plus typical; literal plus application; and summation.

### ***Pshat*: Literal Prophecy Plus Literal Fulfillment**

The first category is known as “literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment,” reflecting the rabbinic *pshat*, which refers to the simple meaning of the text. The example of this first category is found in Matthew 2:5-6: <sup>5</sup>*And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written through the prophet, <sup>6</sup>And you Bethlehem, land of Judah, Are in no wise least among the princes of Judah: For out of you shall come forth a governor, Who shall be shepherd of my people Israel.* This passage in the New Testament quotes Micah 5:2, the context of which is dealing with the birth of the Messiah. The literal meaning of Micah 5:2 is that when the Messiah is born, He will be born in the town of Bethlehem in the region of Judah and nowhere else; not the Bethlehem of Galilee or any other town in Judah. In the New Testament, there is a literal fulfillment of that literal prophecy. When *Yeshua* (Jesus) was born as the Messiah, He was born in the town of Bethlehem, and no other town in the tribal region of Judah. Furthermore, He was born in Bethlehem of Judah, not Bethlehem of Galilee. This was a literal fulfillment of Micah 5:2. Hence, literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment (*pshat*). The prophecy makes only one point. When it is fulfilled in the New Testament in a perfect way, the New Testament quotes the Old Testament.

Another example of this first category is Matthew 1:22-23: <sup>22</sup>*Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, <sup>23</sup>Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us.* This is a quotation of Isaiah 7:14. The context of Isaiah 7:14 is predicting that when the Messiah is born, He will be born of *the virgin*. That is the literal meaning of Isaiah 7:14. In the New Testament, there is a literal fulfillment of the literal prophecy, and so the passage is quoted by the New Testament.

Other examples of the first category are found in Matthew 3:3, which quotes Isaiah 40:3, and Mark 1:2, which quotes Malachi 3:1. Both the Isaiah and Malachi passages predicted that before the Messiah was made known, He would be preceded by a forerunner, who will announce the soon coming of the King. John the Baptist literally fulfilled this prophecy. For that reason, the verses in Isaiah and Malachi were quoted by Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Example: Luke 4:18-19 quotes Isaiah 61:1-2a, which is speaking of the nature and style of the Messiah's ministry at His First Coming. In the Book of Luke, *Yeshua* was literally fulfilling that prophecy, so it is quoted.

Example: Matthew 4:13-16 quotes Isaiah 8:23-9:2, a prophecy of the ministry of the Messiah, whose major area of ministry will be within the tribal territories of Zebulun and Naphtali. In the New Testament, Jesus ministered primarily in these two tribal territories. Nazareth, where He grew up, was within the tribal territory of Zebulun. Capernaum, where He headquartered, was within the tribal territory of Naphtali. In this way, the prophecy was literally fulfilled.

Example: Matthew 21:5 quotes Zechariah 9:9, the context of which speaks about the Messiah riding into Jerusalem upon an ass or donkey. When *Yeshua* rode into Jerusalem on that type of an animal during His triumphal entry, that prophecy was literally fulfilled.

Example: John 12:38-40 quotes Isaiah 53:1, which clearly prophesies that the Messiah will be rejected by His own people when He comes. The rejection of *Yeshua* by Israel was a literal fulfillment of that particular prophecy. It is quoted as a literal prophecy plus a literal fulfillment.

An example of this first category of prophecy is found within the context of the death of the Messiah. In the context of the crucifixion, John 19:24 states: *They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which says, They parted my garments among them, And upon my vesture did they cast lots.* John quoted Psalm 22:18, and the context of that verse speaks of the death of the Messiah. Part of the death scene is that His clothing will be taken away from Him and the tormentors will gamble for His clothes. That is the literal meaning of the prophecy of Psalm 22:18. In the New Testament, there is a literal fulfillment of this particular prophecy when the Roman soldiers gambled for the clothing of Jesus. For that reason, John quoted that prophecy in this particular passage.

Closely related is another quotation found in Matthew 27:46: *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Here, Matthew quoted Psalm 22:1, the context of which is speaking about the sufferings and death of the Messiah. During His sufferings, He was to cry, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* When Jesus cried this, it was a direct fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy. For that reason, it was quoted in this New Testament passage.

This is the first category of New Testament quotations of the Old Testament: literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment. In these cases, the Old Testament literally speaks of a specific event in the future. When that specific event is fulfilled in the context of the New Testament, the New Testament quotes that particular prophecy as a point-by-point fulfillment. Many of the Old Testament quotations fall into this category in the New Testament.

### ***Remez: Literal Plus Typical***

The second category of quotations can be labeled “literal plus typical.” In rabbinic theology it was known as *remez* or “hint.” An example of this category is found in Matthew 2:15: . . . *and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call my son.* If we go back to the context Hosea 11:1, which is what this passage is quoting, we discover that it is not even a prophecy; it is speaking of a literal historical event, which was the Exodus. The background to Hosea 11:1 is Exodus 4:22-23. Israel as a nation is the *son* of God: *Israel is my son, my first-born.* When God brought Israel *out of Egypt*, it is pictured by Hosea 11:1 as God bringing His son out of the land of Egypt. That is the literal meaning of Hosea 11:1; it is an historical verse dealing with an historical event, the Exodus. However, the literal Old Testament event becomes a type of a New Testament event. Now there is the ideal Son of God, the individual Son of God, the Messianic Son of God, the Messiah Himself. When *Yeshua* was brought out of the land of Egypt as a babe, God was again bringing His Son out of Egypt. This is a type and anti-type. The type was Israel, the national son coming out of Egypt. The anti-type is the Messianic Son of God also coming out of Egypt. This is an example of the second category, *remez*: literal plus typical.

Another example is Matthew 15:7-9: *Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, <sup>8</sup>This people honors me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. <sup>9</sup>But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men.* Matthew 15:7-9 contains a quotation of Isaiah 29:13, which is speaking of an historical event when the people rejected the prophetic word of Isaiah. Israel’s rejection of the prophetic word of the prophet became a type of Israel’s rejection of the prophetic word of the Messiah, and so the Old Testament is quoted in a typical sense.

Example: John 12:39-40: <sup>39</sup>*For this cause they could not believe, for that Isaiah said again, <sup>40</sup>He had blinded their eyes, and he hardened their heart; Lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, And should turn, And I should heal them.* Here, John quoted Isaiah 6:10, which in context states that the prophetic message of Isaiah the Prophet will be rejected by his own people. Again, Israel’s rejection of the prophetic word of Isaiah the Prophet now becomes a type of the rejection of the prophetic word of the Messiah. For that reason, the Old Testament verse is quoted in this particular situation.

Example: Matthew 21:42: *Jesus said unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, The same was made the head of the corner; This was from the Lord, And it is marvelous in our eyes?* This passage quotes Psalm 118:22-23, which makes the point that *the builders* rejected or set aside a *stone* because they did not know what to do with it. Later, when they finished the building, they realized that it was the top stone, the chief stone, *the head of the corner*. That is the literal meaning of Psalm 118:22-23. The rejection of the stone and the acceptance of the stone becomes a type of Israel’s rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus and later their acceptance of His Messiahship.

One more example is John 19:36: *For these things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.* Here, John quoted Exodus 12:46. In the context of Exodus 12:46, Moses was dealing with an historical event that had to do with the Passover lamb

that would save the Jews from the last plague. The instruction was that not a bone was to be broken in the process of slaughtering, roasting, and eating of the Passover lamb. The Passover lamb is a type of the Messiah, who is *Christ our Passover* (I Cor. 5:7). During the process of His death by means of crucifixion, while the bones of the others were broken, the bones of this One were not broken. This was a fulfillment in a typical sense, not in a literal, prophetic sense.

The most frequent use of this method is found in the Book of Hebrews where the typology includes Moses, Aaron, Melchizedek, Kadesh Barnea, the Tabernacle, the Levitical Priesthood, the sacrificial system among others. The author not even once denies the *pshat* or literal meaning or reality of these things. But they all serve as typologies of New Testament truth.

This is the second category, *remez*: literal plus typical. The literal meaning deals with an historical event, not a prophetic event. There is no denial *pshat*, the simple literal meaning, however, that historical event becomes a type of a New Testament event and, therefore, it is quoted in that way.

### ***Drash*: Literal Plus Application**

The third category is “literal plus application,” correlating with the rabbinic *drash*. The example of this category is Matthew 2:17-18: <sup>17</sup>*Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, <sup>18</sup>A voice was heard in Ramah, Weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children; And she would not be comforted, because they are not.* This time, Matthew quoted Jeremiah 31:15. The context of Jeremiah 31:15 speaks about the Babylonian Captivity, which was neither historical nor prophetic, but a current event of Jeremiah’s own time. As the captivity was starting, the picture is that the Babylonians gathered all the young Jewish men together at a meeting point where they would then begin marching these young sons away to Babylon. On the way, they went by the town of Ramah near where Rachel was buried. In the Old Testament, Rachel became the symbol of Jewish motherhood. As the young Jewish men were being taken away into captivity, Jewish mothers began weeping for sons they would never see again. Jeremiah pictured this as *Rachel weeping for her children; And she would not be comforted, because they are not.* Rachel weeping symbolized Jewish mothers weeping because their sons were being taken away from them. They were weeping for sons they would never see again. That is the literal meaning of Jeremiah 31:15: Jewish mothers weeping for sons they would never see again. Because of one simple point of similarity, that verse is quoted in the New Testament. It is not a literal fulfillment nor a full-scale typology, but simply an application because of one point of similarity. In this case, the one point of similarity was Jewish mothers weeping for sons they would never see again because Herod had slaughtered all the males of Bethlehem from the age of two years old and under. Otherwise, the situations are very different. Jeremiah speaks of an event in Ramah, north of Jerusalem. Matthew speaks of an event in Bethlehem, south of Jerusalem. Jeremiah speaks of young men of military age; Matthew speaks of small children and infants. In Jeremiah the sons are alive and going into captivity; in Matthew, the sons are dead. But there is one point of similarity and because of this one point of similarity, the New Testament quotes the Old Testament as an application only.

Another example of this same category of quotation, literal plus application, is found in Acts 2:16-21: . . . <sup>16</sup>*but this is that which has been spoken through the prophet Joel: <sup>17</sup>And it shall*

*be in the last days, says God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh: And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, And your young men shall see visions, And your old men shall dream dreams: <sup>18</sup>Yea and on my servants and on my handmaidens in those days Will I pour forth of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy. <sup>19</sup>And I will show wonders in the heaven above, And signs on the earth beneath; Blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: <sup>20</sup>The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the day of the Lord come, That great and notable day: <sup>21</sup>And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.* In this passage, Peter quoted Joel 2:28-32. The context of Joel 2:28-32 is speaking of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole nation of Israel, causing the whole nation of Israel to be saved in preparation for the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom, spoken of in the next chapter, Joel 3. The literal meaning of the Joel passage is in reference to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the whole nation of Israel, resulting in Israel's national salvation in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom. Nothing predicted by Joel 2 happened in Acts 2. What did happen in Acts 2 is not even mentioned in Joel 2. For example, in verse 17 Joel spoke about the pouring out of the Spirit upon *all* Jewish flesh, which did not happen in the Book of Acts. Joel spoke about the sons and daughters of Israel prophesying, the young men seeing visions, and the old men dreaming dreams. None of that happened in Acts 2. No one did any prophesying, the young men did not see visions, and old men did not dream dreams. None of this is mentioned in the context of Acts 2. Furthermore, in verse 18, the servants of the Jewish people were to experience these same things, but there were no servants involved in the context of Acts 2 to experience these things. Joel spoke of climactic events in the heaven and on earth: blood, fire, pillars of smoke, with the sun turning into darkness, and the moon into blood. Yet, none of these things happened in the context of Acts 2. What did happen in the context of Acts 2 was a manifestation of the Spirit, resulting in the speaking of tongues. Yet Joel did not mention the gift of tongues whatsoever. Again, nothing that Joel 2 prophesied happened in Acts 2, and what did happen in Acts 2 was not mentioned in the prophecy of Joel 2.

What we have here is the third category: literal plus application. The literal meaning of the Joel passage speaks of Israel's national salvation when the Holy Spirit will be poured out on all Israel, resulting in Israel's national salvation in preparation for the Messianic Kingdom. Of course, that did not happen in the Book of Acts, but there was one point of similarity. Because of that one point of similarity, the passage was quoted, as an application, not as a point of fulfillment. That one point of similarity was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, resulting in a unique manifestation. In Joel, the Holy Spirit will someday be poured out upon the whole nation of Israel, resulting in some unique manifestations. In Acts 2, the Spirit was poured out upon twelve or one hundred twenty at the most, resulting in a unique manifestation, which in that case was speaking in tongues. The one point of similarity was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Because of that one point of similarity, the New Testament quoted the Old Testament passage as an application.

### ***Sod*: Summation**

The fourth category is "summation" or "summary." The meaning of *sod* is "secret" or "mystery" or "something unknown." The example of the fourth category is found in Matthew 2:23: . . . *and being warned of God in a dream, he withdrew into the parts of Galilee, and came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene.* The specific quotation is: *he should*

*be called a Nazarene.* Try as one may, one will never find a single prophecy that states: *he should be called a Nazarene.* Some have tried to connect this somehow with Isaiah 11:1, but that connection is tenuous. Yet Matthew 2:23 uses the plural term *prophets*, but there is not even a single prophecy.

The fourth category is a summary of Old Testament teaching, not a direct quotation from the Old Testament. The clue in most cases is when the word “prophet” is used in the plural, as it is used here. In the first three categories, the word “prophet” is used, in most cases, in the singular. In the fourth category, it is used in the plural: *spoken through the prophets*. Rather than quoting a single prophet, the author is summarizing what the *prophets* said. In this case, the *prophets* said that *he should be called a Nazarene*. What was a Nazarene? A Nazarene was someone who was despised and rejected. This attitude is reflected in John 1:45-46: <sup>45</sup>*Philip finds Nathanael, and said unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.* <sup>46</sup>*And Nathanael said unto him, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see.* Nathanael’s question, *Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?* is reflecting the negative viewpoint people had of Nazarenes. The prophets predicted that the Messiah would be a despised and rejected individual, and this is encapsulated by the term *Nazarene*. In those days, calling someone a *Nazarene* meant he was despised and rejected. The Messiah would be a despised and rejected individual. That is a summation, not a quotation.

Another example of summation is Luke 18:31-33: <sup>31</sup>*And he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man.* <sup>32</sup>*For he shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully treated, and spit upon:* <sup>33</sup>*and they shall scourge and kill him: and the third day he shall rise again.* Again, note the use of the plural *prophets*. What the prophets said about the Messiah included nine things: the Messiah will go to Jerusalem; He will fall into the hands of priests and scribes; the Jewish people will condemn Him to death; the Jewish people will turn Him over to the Gentiles; the Gentiles will mock Him; the Gentiles will spit on Him; the Gentiles will scourge Him; the Gentiles will kill Him; and He will be resurrected on the third day. Yet, not one prophet said all this; no such quotation exists anywhere in the Prophets. However, the prophets taken together did say all that, so this is not a quotation; it is a summary.

One more example of this fourth category is Matthew 26:54-56: <sup>54</sup>*How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?* <sup>55</sup>*In that hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a robber with swords and staves to seize me? I sat daily in the temple teaching, and ye took me not.* <sup>56</sup>*But all this is come to pass, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left him, and fled.* Although *Yeshua* taught them in clear language, taught them within the Temple Compound, they have rejected Him. This rejection is now obvious in that they are in the Garden of Gethsemane, ready to arrest Him. He said that all this had happened *that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled*. No single prophet prophesied what was happening there in the words that Jesus used. However, the prophets together did say that the Messiah would be rejected. He would be arrested, and undergo an illegal trial. Just one passage alone, Isaiah 53, is a good example of this. *Yeshua* is summarizing what

the prophets did say, not quoting a specific prophecy. Again, this is the fourth category: summation.

An example here from rabbinic writings is Midrash Rabbah 63:11, “Hence it is written as in the verse, And I will no more make you a reproach of famine among the nations.” The footnote states that there is no verse that reads exactly like this. This is a combination of Joel 1:19 and Ezekiel 36:30. Hence, it is a summation, not a quotation.

### **Conclusion**

Every New Testament quotation of the Old Testament will fit into one of these four categories. The procedure is not simply “to interpret the Old by the New” as Covenant Theology insists. The procedure is first to see what the original quotation means in its own context. Once the context is determined, then it can also be determined in which of the four categories the quotation belongs. There is no need to conclude that the New Testament changes or reinterprets the Old Testament. Even preachers today make applications of biblical historical or prophetic texts to the modern situation without implying that that was the intent of the original author.

In the New Testament, if it is a point-for-point literal fulfillment, then it is literal prophecy plus literal fulfillment (*pshat*). If it is using an Old Testament historical account as a type, then it is literal plus typical (*remez*). If there is only one point of similarity between what is happening in the Old Testament context and what is happening in the New Testament context, then it is literal plus application (*drash*) there is no such quote in the Old Testament, then it is merely a summary (*sod*). Every quotation of the Old Testament in the New Testament will always fit into one of these four categories. The New Testament is very consistent in the way it quotes the Old Testament.

### **PAUL’S MIDRASH/PESHER IN GALATIANS 4:21-31**

Paul rarely uses the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic, but one place he obviously does so is in Galatians 4:21-31. The reason he chooses to do so is because the Gentile Galatians have become enamored with the rabbinic style of exegesis by false teachers. These were people who were able to deceive the Galatians using a false application of the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic. So Paul tells them if they are enamored with that kind of an exegesis it can work both ways.

Thus he uses Abraham, Isaac, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, Mount Sinai, the Law as typologies for law and grace and bondage and freedom. Contrary to some misunderstandings about the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic, it should be noted that Paul does not deny that there was a literal Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Hagar, Ishmael and Mount Sinai. He accepts those as literal truth as those spelled out in the Book of Genesis. What he provides here is strictly for the Galatians is to show that this kind of hermeneutic can lead to different conclusions, and the exact opposite of the ones the Judaizers were concluding.

## CONCLUSIONS

New Testament writers when quoting the Old Testament do use all four categories of the rabbinic *pardes* system but never do they deny the actual intended and literal meaning of the original context in which they quote.

The *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic, while rarely used in the New Testament, it is also never used to the extremism of the rabbinic usage of the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic. Rabbinic usage led to quite a bit of fanciful interpretations such as Rebecca being only eight-years old when she accepted the marriage proposal of Isaac. But the New Testament writers simply did not engage in that kind of imaginary exegesis. They limit the application to certain clear and concrete terms, phrases, or concepts without ever denying the *pshat* , the normal literal historical-grammatical meaning in its original context.

## APPENDIX

The following are examples of different styles and categories of rabbinic applications of the *midrash/pesher* hermeneutic so the reader can see how differently the rabbis used it from the New Testament writers. There may be points of similarity, but never any similarity of extremism found in rabbinic exegesis.

- R. Hisda said: Whence do we learn from Scripture that it is necessary to examine the slaughtering knife? From the verse (in I Sam. 14:34): “And slaughter with this and eat” (“with this” means the knife examined and checked). But is it not obviously necessary to do so since the gullet is perforated the animal is *terefa*, unkosher? [will not a knife with a notch most certainly perforate and tear the gullet, asks the *stam*, the anonymous author, and answers:] We mean, whence do we learn from Scripture that it is essential that the knife be examined by a sage? [And that is from the verse: “And slaughter with this (the knife examined by the sage) and eat.”] But surely does not R. Yochanan say that the ruling that one must present the knife to a sage for examination was laid down only out of respect to the sages? The rule is actually rabbinic, and the verse adduced is an *asmakhta*, merely support.<sup>49</sup>

### YERUSHALMI ABODAH ZARAH 2:7

- III. A. Associates in the name of R. Yohanan: “The words of scribes are beloved than the words of Torah and more cherished than words of Torah: *Your palate is like the best wine* (Song 7:9).”
  - B. Simeon bar Ba in the name of R. Yohanan: “The words of scribes are more beloved than the words of Torah and more cherished than words of Torah: *For your love is better than wine* (Song 1:2).”<sup>50</sup>
- 3. A. “*As he looked, he saw a well in the field:* refers to Zion
  - B. “*And lo, three flocks of sheep lying beside it:* refers to the three festivals.
  - C. “*For out of that well the flocks were watered:* from there they drank of the Holy Spirit.
  - D. “*The stone on the well’s mouth was large:* this refers to the rejoicing of the house of the water drawing.”
  - E. Said R. Hoshaiyah, “Why is it called ‘the house of the water drawing’? Because from there they drank of the Holy Spirit.”
  - F. [Resuming Hama b. Hanina’s discourse:] “*And when all the flocks were gathered there:* coming from *the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt* (I Kgs. 8:66).
  - G. “*The Shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep:* for from there they would drink of the Holy Spirit.

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<sup>49</sup> Halivni, David Weiss, *Pehat and Derash, Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1991) 16.

<sup>50</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 48.

- H. *“And put the stone back in its place upon the mouth of the well: leaving it in place until the coming festival.”*<sup>51</sup>
- 4.
    - A. *“As he looked, he saw a well in the field* this refers to Zion.
    - B. *“And lo, three flocks of sheep lying beside it:* this refers to the three courts, concerning which we have learned in the Midrash: **There were three courts there one at the gateway of the Temple mount, one at the gateway of the courtyard, and one in the chamber of the hewn stones [M. San. 11:2].**
    - C. *“For out of that well the flocks were watered:* for from there they would hear the ruling.
    - D. *“The stone on the well’s mouth was large:* this refers to the high court that was in the chamber of the hewn stones
    - E. *“And when all the flocks were gathered there:* this refers to the courts in session in the Land of Israel.
    - F. *“The shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep:* for from there they would hear the ruling.
    - G. *“And put the stone back in its place upon the mouth of the well:* for they would give and take until they produced the ruling in all required clarity.”<sup>52</sup>
  - 5.
    - A. *“As he looked, he saw a well in the field:* this refers to Zion.
    - B. *“And lo, three flocks of sheep lying beside it:* this refers to the first three kingdoms [Babylonia, Media, Greece].
    - C. *“For out of that well the flocks were watered:* for they enriched the treasures that were laid up in the chambers of the Temple.
    - D. *“The stone on the well’s mouth was large:* this refers to the merit attained by the patriarchs.
    - E. *“And when all the flocks were gathered there:* this refers to the wicked kingdom, which collects troops through levies over all the nations of the world.
    - F. *“The shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep:* for they enriched the treasures that were laid up in the chambers of the Temple.
    - G. *“And put the stone back in its place upon the mouth of the well:* in the age to come the merit attained by the patriarchs will stand [in defense of Israel].”<sup>53</sup>
  - 6.
    - A. *“As he looked, he saw a well in the field:* this refers to the Sanhedrin.
    - B. *“And lo, three flocks of sheep lying beside it:* this alludes to the three rows of disciples of sages that would go into session in their presence.
    - C. *“For out of that well the flocks were watered:* for from there they would listen to the ruling of the law.

<sup>51</sup> Neusner, Jacob, *Invitation to Midrash*, 113.

<sup>52</sup> Neusner, Jacob, *Invitation to Midrash*, 114

<sup>53</sup> Neusner, Jacob, *Invitation to Midrash*, 115

- D. *“The stone on the well’s mouth was large:* this refers to the most distinguished member of the court, who determines the law decision.
  - E. *“And when all the flocks were gathered there:* this refers to disciples of the sages in the Land of Israel.
  - F. *“The shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep:* for from there they would listen to the ruling of the law.
  - G. *“And put the stone back in its place upon the mouth of the well:* for they would give and take until they had produced the ruling in all the required clarity.”<sup>54</sup>
- 7.
    - A. *“As he looked, he saw a well in the field:* this refers to the synagogue.
    - B. *“And lo, three flocks of sheep lying beside it:* this refers to the three who are called to the reading of the Torah on weekdays.
    - C. *“For out of that well the flocks were watered:* for from there they hear the reading of the Torah.
    - D. *“The stone on the well’s mouth was large:* this refers to the impulse to do evil.
    - E. *“And when all the flocks were gathered there:* this refers to the congregation.
    - F. *“The shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep:* for from there they hear the reading of the Torah.
    - G. *“And put the stone back in its place upon the mouth of the well:* for once they go forth [from the hearing of the reading of the Torah] the impulse to do evil reverts to its place.”<sup>55</sup>
- LXX:IX.
    - A. R. Yohanan interpreted the statement in terms of Sinai:
    - B. *“As he looked, he saw a well in the field:* this refers to Sinai.
    - C. *“And lo, three flocks of sheep lying beside it:* these stand for the priests, Levites, and Israelites.
    - D. *“For out of that well the flocks were watered:* for from there they heard the Ten Commandments.
    - E. *“The stone on the well’s mouth was large:* this refers to the Presence of God.”
    - F. *“And when all the flocks were gathered there:*
    - G. R. Simeon b. Judah of Kefar Akum in the name of R. Simeon: “All of the flocks of Israel had to be present, for if any one of them had been lacking, they would not have been worthy of receiving the Torah.”
    - H. [Returning to Yohanan’s exposition:] *“The shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well and water the sheep:* for from there they heard the Ten Commandments.

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<sup>54</sup> Neusner, Jacob, *Invitation to Midrash*, 115

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

- I. “*And put the stone back in its place upon the mouth of the well: You yourselves have seen that I have talked with you from heaven (Ex. 20:19).*”<sup>56</sup>
- 2. A. Said R. Samuel b. R. Nahman, “On three occasions the Holy One, blessed be he, came to engage in argument with Israel, and the nations of the world rejoiced, saying, ‘Can these ever [dare] engage in an argument with their creator? Now he will wipe them out of the world.’”
    - B. “One was when he said to them, ‘*Come, and let us reason together, says the Lord (Is. 1:18).*’ When the Holy One, blessed be he, saw that the nations of the world were rejoicing he turned the matter to [Israel’s] advantage: ‘*If your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow*’ (Is. 1:18).
    - C. “Then the nations of the world were astonished, and said, ‘This is repentance, and this is rebuke? He has planned only to amuse himself with his children.’”
    - D. [A second time was] when he said to them, ‘*Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord*’ (Mic. 6:2), the nations of the world rejoiced saying, ‘How can these ever [dare] engage in an argument with their creator? Now he will wipe them out of the world.’”
    - E. “When the Holy One, blessed be he, saw that the nations of the world were rejoicing, he turned the matter to [Israel’s] advantage: ‘*Óo my people, what have I don’t to you? In what have I wearied you? Testify against me*’ (Mic. 6:3). *Remember what Balak king of Moab devised (Mic. 6:5).*”
    - F. “Then the nations of the world were astonished, saying, ‘This is repentance, and this is rebuke, one following the other? He has planned only to amuse himself with his children.’”
    - G. “[A third time was] when he said to them, ‘*The Lord has an indictment against Judah, and will punish Jacob according to his ways*’ (Hos. 12:2), the nations of the world rejoiced saying, ‘How can these ever [dare] engage in an argument with their creator? Now he will wipe them out of the world.’”
    - H. “When the Holy One, blessed be he, saw that the nations of the world were rejoicing, he turned the matter to [Israel’s] advantage. That is in line with the following verse of Scripture; *In the womb he [Jacob = Israel] took his brother [Esau = other nations] by the heel [and in his manhood he strove with God. He strove with the angel and prevailed, he wept and sought his favor] (Hos. 12:34).*”
  - 3. A. Said R. Yudan b. R. Simeon, “The matter may be compared to a widow who was complaining to a judge about her son. When se saw that the judge was in session and handing out sentences of punishment by fire, pitch, and lashes, she said, ‘If I report the bad conduct of my son to that judge, he will kill him now.’ She waited until he was

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<sup>56</sup> Neusner, *Jacob Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 4116-117

- finished. When he had finished, he said to her, ‘Madam, this son of yours, how has he behaved badly toward you?’
- B. “She said to him, ‘My lord, when he was in my womb, he kicked me.’
- C. “He said to her, ‘Now has he done anything wrong to you?’
- D. “She said to him, ‘No.’
- E. “He said to her, ‘God your way, there is nothing wrong in the matter [that you report].’”
- F. “So, when the Holy One, blessed be he, saw that the nations of the world were rejoicing, he turned the matter to [Israel’s] advantage:
- G. “*In the womb he took his brother by the heel* (Mic. 12:3).
- H. “Then the nations of the world were astonished, saying, ‘This is repentance and this is rebuke, one following the other? He has planned only to amuse himself with his children.’”
4. A. *And how have I wearied you?* (Mic. 6:3).
- B. Said R. Berekhiah, “The matter may be compared to the case of a king, who sent three messengers to a certain city, and the inhabitants of the city stoop up before them and paid them service in awe, trembling, fear, and trepidation.
- C. “So the Holy One, blessed be he, said to Israel, ‘I sent you three messengers, Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
- D. “Now did they eat any of your food? Did they drink any of your drink? Did they impose upon you in any way? It is not through their *merit* that you are maintained?
- E. “The manna was through the merit of Moses, the well through the merit of Miriam, and the clouds of glory through the merit of Aaron.’
5. A. Said R. Isaac, “The matter may be compared to the case of a king who sent his proclamation to a city. What did the inhabitants of the city do? They stoop up and bared their heads and read the proclamation in awe, trembling, fear, and trepidation.
- B. “So the Holy One, blessed be he, said to Israel, ‘As to the proclamation of the *Shema* and the proclamation of mine [the Torah] [that I sent you], I did not impose on you by telling you to read [the *Shema*] either standing on your feet or having bared your heads, but only [at your convenience:] *When you sit in your house and when you walk by the way*’ (Deut. 6:7).”
6. A. Said R. Judah b. R. Simon, “Said the Holy One, blessed be he, ‘I handed ten beasts to you, three in your domain, and seven not in your domain.
- B. ‘The three in your domain: *the ox, sheep, and the goat* (Deut. 14:4).
- C. ‘The seven not in your domain: *the hart, gazelle, roebuck, wild goat, pygarg, antelope, and mountain sheep* (Deut. 14:5).
- D. ‘I did not trouble you, and I did not tell you to go up into the mountains and to tire yourselves in the fields to bring me an offering of those beasts that are not within your domain.

E. "I asked only for those that are in your domain, the ones that grow at your crib: *Ox, sheep, or goat*' (Lev. 22:27)."<sup>57</sup>

• **I:XIII.**

A. R. Simeon b. Yohai says, "I shall draw a parable for you. To what may the First Man be compared? He was like a man who had a wife at home. What did the man do? He went and brought a jug and put in it a certain number of dates and nuts. He caught a scorpion and put it at the mouth of the jug and sealed it tightly. He left it in the corner of his house.

B. "He said to her, 'My daughter, whatever I have in the house is entrusted to you, except for this jar, which under no circumstances should you touch.' What did the woman do? When her husband went off to market, she went and opened the jug and put her hand in it, and the scorpion bit her, and she went and fell into bed. When her husband came home from the market, he said to her, 'What's going on?'

C. "She said to him, 'I put my hand into the jug, and a scorpion bit me, and now I'm dying.'

D. "He said to her, 'Didn't I tell you to begin with, "Whatever I have in the house is entrusted to you, except for this jar, which under no circumstances should you touch"?' He got mad at her and divorced her.

E. "So it was with the First Man.

F. "When the Holy One, blessed be he, said to him, *Of all the trees of the garden you certainly may eat, but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil you may eat, for on the day on which you eat of it, you will surely die* (Gen. 2:17).

G. "On that day he was driven out, thereby illustrating the verse, *Man does not lodge overnight in honor* (Ps. 49:24).<sup>58</sup>

• **II:I.**

2. A. There is the precedent of a man who studied much Scripture, repeated much Mishnah, extensively served as a disciple of sages, but died when his years were only half done, and his wife took his *tefillin* and made the circuit of synagogues and schoolhouses, crying and weeping, saying to them, "My lords, it is written in the Torah, *For it is your life and the length of your days* (Deut. 30:20).
- B. "On what account did my husband, who studied much Scripture, repeated much Mishnah, extensively served as a disciple of sages, die when his years were only half done?"
- C. No one knew what to answer her. But one time Elijah, of blessed memory, was appointed to deal with her, saying to her, "My daughter, on what account are you crying and weeping?"

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<sup>57</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 148-150

<sup>58</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 192

- D. She said to him, “My lord, my husband studied much Scripture, repeated much Mishnah, extensively served as a disciple of sages, but died when his years were only half done.”
- E. He said to her, “When you were in your period, on the first three days of your period, what was your practice:”
- G. “As to the last days of you period, what was your practice?”
- H. She said to him, “My lord, I ate with him, drank with him, and in my clothing slept with him in the same bed, and, while his flesh touched mine, he never had the intention of any inappropriate action [such as sexual relations before the period had fully ended].”
- I. He said to her, “Blessed be the Omnipresent, who killed him. For so it is written in the Torah: *To women during the unclean time of her menstrual period you shall not draw near* Lev. 18:17).”<sup>59</sup>

### VIII:VI.

- 1.
  - A. Just as the righteous men in ancient times were pious, so their cattle were pious.
  - B. They say that the cattle of Abraham, our father, never went into a house that contained an idol.
  - C. as it is said, *For I have cleared the house and made room for camels* (Gen. 24:31), meaning, *I have cleared the house of teraphim*.
  - D. And on what account does Scripture say, *And made room for the camels?*
  - E. This teaches that they would not enter Laban the Armaean’s house until they had cleared away all the idols from before them.

### VIII:VI.

- 2.
  - A. There was the case of the ass of R. Hanina b. Dosa, which bandits stole and tied up in the courtyard. They set before it straw, barley, and water, but it would not eat or drink.
  - B. They said, “Why should we leave it here to die and make a stink for us in the courtyard?” They went and opened the gate and sent it out, and it went along, braying, until it came to the house of R. Hanina b. Dosa.
  - C. When it got near the house, [Hanina’s] son heard its braying.
  - D. He said to him, “Father, it appears to me that the braying is like the braying of our beast.”
  - E. He said to him, “My son, open the gate for it, for it must be nearly dying of starvation.”
  - F. He went and opened the gate for it, and put before it straw, barley, and water, and it ate and drank.
  - G. Therefore they say: Just as the righteous men in ancient times were pious, so their cattle were pious.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 196

<sup>60</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 216-217

#### IV:VI.

1.
  - A. Now when Vespasian came to destroy Jerusalem, he said to [the inhabitants of the city,] “Idiots! Why do you want to destroy this city and burn the house of the sanctuary? For what do I want of you, except that you send me a bow or an arrow [as marks of submission to my rule], and I shall go on my way?”
  - B. They said to him, “Just as we sallied out against the first two who came before you and killed them, so shall we sally out and kill you.”
  - C. When Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai heard, he proclaimed to the men of Jerusalem, saying to them, “My sons, why do you want to destroy this city and burn the house of the sanctuary? For what does he want of you, except that you send him a bow or an arrow, and he will go on his way?”
  - D. They said to him, “Just as we sallied out against the first two who came before him and killed them, so shall we sally out and kill him.”
  - E. Vespasian had stationed men near the wall of the city, and whatever they heard, they would write on an arrow and shoot out over the wall. [They reported] that Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai was a loyalist of Caesar’s.
  - F. After Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai had spoken to them one day, a second and a third, and the people did not accept his counsel, he send and called his disciples, R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, saying to them, “My sons, go and get me out of here. Make an ark and I shall go to sleep in it.”
  - G. R. Eliezer took the head and R. Joshua the feet, and toward sunset they carried him until they came to the gates of Jerusalem.
  - H. The gate keepers said to them, “Who is this?”
  - I. They said to him, “It is a corpse. Do you not know that a corpse is not kept overnight in Jerusalem?”
  - J. They said to them, “If it is a corpse, take him out,” so they took him out and brought him out at sunset, until they came to Vespasian.
  - K. They opened the ark and he stood before him.
  - L. He said to him, “Are you Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai? Indicate what I should give you.”
  - M. He said to him, “I ask from you only Yavneh, to which I shall go, and where I shall teach my disciples, establish prayer {Goldin: a prayer house}, and carry out all of the religious duties.”
  - N. He said to him, “God and do whatever you want.”
  - O. He said to him, “Would you mind if I said something to you?”
  - P. He said to him, “Go ahead.”
  - Q. He said to him, “Lo, you are going to be made sovereign.”
  - R. He said to him, “How do you know?”
  - S. He said to him, “It is a tradition of ours that the house of the sanctuary will be given over not into the power of a commoner but of a king, for it is said, *And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon* [which refers to the Temple] *shall fall by a mighty one:* (Is. 10:34).

- T. People say that not a day, two, or three passed before a delegation came to him from his city indicating that the [former] Caesar had died and they had voted for him to ascend the throne.
- U. They brought him a [Goldin:] catapult and drew it up against the wall of Jerusalem.
- V. They brought him cedar beams and put them into the catapult, and he struck them against the wall until a breach had been made in it. They brought the head of a pig and put it into the catapult and tossed it toward the limbs that were on the Temple altar.
- W. At that moment Jerusalem was captured.
- X. Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai was in session and with trembling was looking outward, in the way that Eli had sat and waited: *Lo, Eli sat upon his seat by the wayside watching, for his heart trembled for the ark of God* (I Sam. 4:13).
- Y. When Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai heard that Jerusalem had been destroyed and the house of the sanctuary burned in flames, he tore his garments, and his disciples tore their garments, and they wept and cried and mourned.

#### IV:VI.

- 2.
  - A. Scripture says, *Open your doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour your cedars* (Zech. 11:1).
  - B. That verse refers to the high priests who were in the sanctuary [on the day it was burned].
  - C. They took their keys in their hands and threw them upward, saying before the Holy One, blessed be he, “Lord of the world, here are your keys which you entrusted to us, for we have not been faithful custodians to carry out the work of the king and to receive support from the table of the king.”<sup>61</sup>

#### *Genesis Rabbah* LXI:VII

- 2.
  - A. “*But to the sons of his concubines, Abraham gave gifts, and while he was still living,] he sent them away from his son Isaac, eastward to the east country*” (Gen. 25:6):
  - B. He said to them, “Go as far to the east as you can, so as not to be burned by flaming coal of Isaac.”
  - C. But because Esau came to make war with Jacob, he took his appropriate share on his account: *Is this your joyous city, whose feet in antiquity, in ancient days, carried her afar off to sojourn? Who has devised this against Tyre, the crowning city?*” (Isa. 23:7).
  - D. Said R. Eleazar, “Whenever the name of Tyre is written in Scripture, if it is written out [with all of the letters], then it refers to the province of Tyre. Where it is written without all of its letters [and so appears identical to the word of enemy], the reference of Scripture is to Rome.

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<sup>61</sup> Neusner, *Jacob Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 225-227

[So the sense of the verse is that Rome will receive its appropriate reward.]”<sup>62</sup>

**Genesis Rabbah LV:VIII**

1.
  - A. “*And Abraham rose early in the morning, [saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac, and he cut the wood for the burnt offering and arose and went to the place which God had told him]*” (Gen. 22:3):
  - B. Said R. Simeon b. Yohai, “Love disrupts the natural order of things, and hatred disrupts the natural order of things.
  - C. “Love disrupts the natural order of things we learn from the case of Abraham: ‘...*he saddled his ass.*’ But did he not have any number of servants? But that proves love, disrupts the natural order of things.
  - D. “Hatred disrupts the natural order of things we learn from the case of Balaam: ‘*And Balaam rose up early in the morning and saddled his ass*’ (Num.22:21). But he did not have any number of servants? But that proves hatred disrupts the natural order of things.
  - E. “Love disrupts the natural order of things we learn from the case of Joseph: ‘*And Joseph made his chariot ready*’ (Gen. 46:29). But did he not have any number of servants? But that proves love disrupts the natural order of things.
  - F. “Hatred disrupts the natural order of things we learn from the case of Pharaoh: ‘*And he made his chariot ready*’ (Exod. 14:6). But did he not have any number of servants? But that proves hatred disrupts the natural order of things.”
  
2.
  - A. Said R. Simeon b. Yoahik, “Let one act of saddling an ass come and counteract another act of saddling the ass. May the act of saddling the ass done by our father Abraham, so as to go and carry out the will of him who spoke and brought the world into being, counteract the act of saddling that was carried out by Balaam when he went to curse Israel.
  - B. “Let one act of preparing counteract another act of preparing. Let Joseph’s act of preparing his chariot so as to meet his father serve to counteract Pharaoh’s act of preparing to go and pursue Israel.”
  - C. R. Ishamel taught on Tannaite authority, “Let the sword held in the hand and serve to counteract the sword held in the hand.
  - D. “Let the sword held in the hand of Abraham, as it is said, ‘*Then Abraham put forth his hand and took the knife to slay his son*’ (Gen. 22:10), serve to counteract the sword taken by Pharaoh in hand: ‘*I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them*’ (Exod. 15:9).”

**Genesis Rabbah ILIV:XVII**

4.
  - A. [“*And it came to pass, as the sun was going down,] lo, a deep sleep fell on Abram, and lo, a dread and great darkness fell upon him*” Gen. 15:12):

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<sup>62</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 54-55

- B. "...*lo, a dread*" refers to Babylonia, as it is written, "*Then was Nebuchadnezzar filled with fury*" (Gen. 3:19).
- C. "...*and darkness*" refers to Media, which darkened the eyes of Israel by making it necessary for the Israelites to fast and conduct public mourning.
- D. "...*great...*" refers to Greece.
- G. "...*fell upon him*:" refers to Edom [Rome], as it is written, "*The earth quakes at the noise of their fall*" (Jer. 49:21)

**Genesis Rabbah LIV:XVIII**

1.
  - A. "*Then the Lord said to Abram, 'Know of a surety [that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and they will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation which they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions']*" (Gen. 15:13-14).
  - B. "*Know*" that I shall scatter them.
  - C. "*Of a certainty*" that I shall bring them back together again.
  - D. "*Know*" that I shall put them out as a pledge [in expiation of their sins].
  - E. "*Of a certainty*" that I shall redeem them.
  - F. "*Know*" that I shall make them slaves.
  - G. "*Of a certainty*" that I shall free them.
  
2.
  - A. "...*that your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not their and they will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years*":
  - B. It is four hundred years from the point at which you will produce a descendant. [The Israelites will not serve as slaves for four hundred years, but that figure refers to the passage of time from Isaac's birth.]
  - C. Said R. Yudan, "The condition of being outsiders, the servitude, the oppression in a land that was not theirs all together would last for four hundred years, that was the requisite term."<sup>63</sup>

**Genesis Rabbah LVI:I**

1.
  - A. "*On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off*" (Gen. 22:4):
  - B. "*After two day she will revive us, on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live in his presence*" (Hosea 16:2).
  - C. On the third day of the tribes: "*And Joseph said to them on the third day, 'This do and live'*" (Gen. 42:18).
  - D. On the third day of the giving of the Torah: "*And it came to pass on the third day when it was morning*" (Exod. 19:16).
  - E. On the third day of the spies: "*And hide yourselves there fore three days*" (Josh. 2:16).

<sup>63</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 54-57

- F. On the third day of Jonah: “*And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights*” (Jonah 2:1).
- G. On the third day of the return from exile: “*And we abode there three days*” (Ezra 8:32).
- H. On the third day of the resurrection of the dead: “*After two days he will revive us, on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live in his presence*” (Hosea 16:2).
- I. On the third day of Esther: “*Now it came to pass on the third day that Esther put on her royal apparel*” (Esth. 5:1).
- J. She put on the monarchy of the house of her fathers.
- K. On account of what sort of merit?
- L. Rabbis say, “On account of the third day of the giving of the Torah.”
- M. R. Levi said, “It is on account of the merit of the third day of Abraham: ‘*On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off*’ (Gen. 22:4).”

**Genesis Rabbah LVI:II**

- 4.
  - A. “...and we will worship [through an act of prostration] and come again to you” (Gen. 22:5):
  - B. He thereby told him that he would come back from Mount Moriah whole and in peace [for he said that *we shall come back*].
- 5.
  - A. Said R. Isaac, “And all was on account of the merit attained by the act of prostration.
  - B. “Abraham returned in peace from mount Moriah only on account of the merit owing to the act of prostration: ‘...and we will worship [through an act of prostration] and come [then, on that account] again to you’ (Gen. 22:5).
  - C. “The Israelites were redeemed only on account of the merit owing to the act of prostration: ‘And, the people believed...then they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves’ (Exod. 4:31).
  - D. “The Torah was given only on account of the merit owing to the act of prostration: ‘And worship [prostrate themselves you afar off]’ (Exod. 24:1).
  - E. “Hannah was remembered only on account of the merit owing to the act of prostration: ‘And they worshipped before the Lord’ (I Sam. 1:19).
  - F. “The exiles will be brought back only on account of the merit owing to the act of prostration: ‘And it shall come to pass in that day that a great horn shall be blown and they shall come that were lost ...and that were dispersed ... and they shall worship the Lord in the holy mountain of Jerusalem’ (Isa. 27:13).
  - G. “The Temple was built only on account of the merit owing to the act of prostration: ‘Exalt you the Lord our God and worship at his holy hill’ (Ps. 99:9).

- H. “The dead will live only on account of the merit owing to the act of prostration: ‘*Come let us worship and bend the knee, let us kneel before the Lord our maker*’ (Ps. 95:6).”<sup>64</sup>

***Leviticus Rabbah XIII:V***

- 1
- A. Said R. Ishmael b. R. Nebemiah, “All the prophets foresaw what the pagan kingdoms would do [to Israel].
  - B. “The first man foresaw what the pagan kingdoms would do [to Israel].
  - C. “That is in line with the following verse of Scripture: ‘*A river flowed out of Eden [to water the garden, and there it divided and became four rivers]*’ (Gen. 2:10). [The four rivers stand for the four kingdoms, Babylonia, Media, Greece, and Rome.]”
- How each of the rivers of Eden represents one of the four kingdoms, and why that fact bears meaning for Israel’s future history, is then spelled out.
- 3
- A. “[*There it divided*] and became four rivers” (Gn. 2:10) – this refers to the four kingdoms.
  - B. “*The name of the first is Pishon (PSWN): [it is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; and the gold of that land is good; bdellium and onyx stone are there]*” (Gen. 2:11-12).
  - C. “This refers to Babylonia, on account [of the reference to Babylonia in the following verse:] “*And their [the Babylonians’] horsemen spread themselves (PSW)*” (Hab. 1:8).
  - D. [It is further] on account of [Nebuchadnezzar’s being] a dwarf, shorter than ordinary men by a handbreadth.
  - E. “[*It is the one which flows around the whole land of Havilah*” (Gen. 2:11).
  - F. “Thish [reference to the river’s flowing around the whole land] speaks of Nebuchadnezzar, the wicked man, who came up and surrounded the entire Land of Israel, which places its hope in the Holy One, blessed be he.”
  - G. That is in line with the following verse of Scripture: “*Hope in God, for I shall again praise him*” (Ps. 42:5).
- 4.
- A. “*The name of the second river is Gihon: [it is one which flows around the whole land of Cush]*” 9Gen. 2:13).
  - B. This refers to Media, which produced Haman, the wicked man, who spit out venom like a serpent.
  - C. It is on account of the verse: “*On your belly will you go*” (Gen. 3:14).
  - D. “*It is the one which flows around the whole land of Cush*” (Gen. 2:13).
  - E. [We know that this refers to Media, because it is aid:] “*Who rles from India to Cush*” (Esth.1:1).

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<sup>64</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 58-59

5. A. “*And the name of the third river is Tigris (HDQL). [which flows east of Assyria]*” (Gen. 2:14).  
 B. This refers to Greece [Syria], which was sharp (HD) and speedy (QL) in making its decrees, saying to Israel, “Write on the horn of an ox that you have no portion in the God of Israel.”  
 C. “*Which flows east (QDMT) of Assyria*” (Gen. 2:14).  
 D. Said R. Huna, “In three aspects the kingdom of Greece was in advance (QDMH) of the present evil kingdom [Rome]: in respect to shipbuilding, the arrangement of camp, vigils, and language.”  
 E. Said R. Huna, “Any and every kingdom may be called ‘Assyria’ (ashur), on account of all of their making themselves powerful at Israel’s expense.”  
 F. Said R. Yose b. R. Hanina, “Any and every kingdom may be called Nineveh (NNWH), on account of their adorning (NWY) themselves at Israel’s expense.”  
 G. Said R. Yose b. R. Hanina, “Any and every kingdom may be called Egypt (MSRYM), on account of their oppressing (MSYRYM) Israel.”
6. A. “*And the fourth river is the Euphrates (PRT)*” (Gen. 2:14).  
 B. This refers to Edom [Rome], since it was fruitful (PRT), and multiplied through the prayer of the elder [Isaac at Gen. 27:39].  
 C. Another interpretation: “It was because it was fruitful and multiplied, and so cramped his world.”  
 D. Another explanation: “Because it was fruitful and multiplied and cramped his son.”  
 E. Another explanation: “Because it was fruitful and multiplied and cramped his house.”  
 F. Another explanation: “Parat” – because in the end, “I am going to exact a penalty from it.”  
 G. That is in line with the following verse of Scripture: “*I have trodden (PWRH) the winepress alone*” (Isa. 63:3).
8. A. Daniel foresaw what the evil kingdoms would do [to Israel].  
 B. “*Daniel said, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, th four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, [different from one another. The first was like a lion and had eagles’ wings. Then as I looked, its wings were plucked off...And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear..After this I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard...After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it has great iron teeth]*” (Dan. 7:3-7).  
 C. If you enjoy sufficient merit, it will emerge from the sea, but if not, it will come out of the forest.  
 D. The animal that comes up from the sea is not violent, but the one that comes up out of the forest is violent.

- E. Along the same lines: *“The boar out of the wood ravages it”* (Ps. 80:14).
- F. If you enjoy sufficient merit, it will come from the river, and if not, from the forest.
- G. The animal that comes up from the river is not violent, but the one that comes out of the forest is violent.
- H. *“Different from one another”* (Dan. 7:3).
- I. Differing from (hating) one another.
- J. This teaches that every nation that rules in the world hates Israel and reduces them to slavery.
- K. *“The first was like a lion [and had eagles’ wings]”* (Dan. 7:4).
- L. This refers to Babylonia.
- M. Jeremiah saw [Babylonia] as a lion. Then he went and saw it as an eagle.
- N. He saw it as a lion: *“A lion has come up from his thicket”* (Jer. 4:7).
- O. And [as an eagle:] *“Behold, he shall come up and swoop down as the eagle”* (Jer. 49:22).
- P. People said to Daniel, “What do you see?”
- Q. He said to the, “I see the ace like that of a lion and wings like those of an eagle: *‘The first was like a lion and had eagle’s wings. Then, as I looked, its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground [and made to stand upon two feet like a man and the heart of a man was given to it]’*” (Dan. 7:4)
- R. R. Eleazar and R. Ishmael b. R. Nehemiah:
- S. R. Eleazar said, “While the entire lion was smitten, its heart was not smitten.
- T. “That is in line with the following statement: *‘And the heart of a man was given to it’* (Dan. 7:4).”
- U. And R. Ishmael b. R. Nehemiah said, “Even its heart was smitten, for it is written, *‘Let his heart be change from a man’s* (Dan. 4:17).
- X. *“And behold, another beast, a second one, like a bear. [It was raised up one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth, and it was told. Arise, devour much flesh]”* (Dan. 7:5).
- Y. This refers to Media.
- Z. Said R. Yohanan, “It is like a bear.”
- AA. It is written, *“similar to a wolf”* (DB); thus, “And a wolf was there.”
- BB. That is in accord with the view of R. Yohanan, for R. Yohanan said, *“Therefore a lion out of the forest [slays them]”* (Jer. 5:6) – this refers to Babylonia.
- CC. *“‘A wolf of the deserts spoils them’* (Jer. 5:6) refers to Media.
- DD. *“‘A leopard watches over their cities’* (Jer. 5:6) refers to Greece.
- EE. *“‘Whosoever goes out from them will be savaged’* (Jer 5:6) refers to Edom.
- FF. “Why so: *‘Because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings still more’* (Jer. 5:6).”

- GG. “After this, I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard [with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads,; and dominion was given to it]” (Dan. 7:6).
- HH. This [leopard] refers to Greece, which persisted impudently in making harsh decrees, saying to Israel, “Write on the horn of an ox that you have no share in the God of Israel.”
- II. “After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong’ [and it had great iron teeth; it devoured and broke in pieces and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns]” (Dan. 7:7).
- JJ. This refers to Edom [Rome].
- KK. Daniel saw the first three visions on one night, and this one he saw on another night. Now why was that the case?
- LL. R. Yohanan and R. Simeon b. Laqish:
- MM. R. Yohanan said, “It is because the fourth beast weighed as much as the first three.”
- NN. And R. Simeon b. Laqish said, ‘It outweighed them.’
- OO. R. Yohanan objected to R. Simeon b. Laqish, “*Prophesy, therefore, son of man, clap your hands [and let the sword come down twice; yea, thrice. The sword for those to be slain; it is the sword for the great slaughter, which encompasses them]*” (Ezek. 21:14-15). [So the single sword of Rome weighs against the three others].
- PP. And R. Simeon b. Laqish, how does he interpret the same passage? E notes that [the threefold sword] is doubled (Ezek. 21:14), [thus outweighs the three swords, equally twice their strength].
9. A. Moses foresaw what the evil kingdoms would do [to Israel].
- B. “*The camel, rock badger, and hare*” (Deut. 14:7). [Compare: “*Nevertheless, among those that chew the cud or part the hoof, you shall not eat these: the camel, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, it is unclean to you. The rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you. And the hare, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you, and the pig, because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed, but does not chew the cud, is unclean to you.*” (Lev. 11:4-8)]...
- C. “*The camel*” (GML) refers to Babylonia, [in line with the following verse of Scripture: “*O daughter of Babylonia, you who are to be devastated!*”] *Happy will be he who requites (GML) you, with what you have done to us:* (ps. 147:8).
- D. “*The rock badger*” (Deut. 14:7) – this refers to Media.
- E. Rabbis and R. Judah b. R. Simon.
- F. Rabbis say, “Just as the rock badger exhibits traits of uncleanness and traits of cleanness, so the kingdom of Media produced both a righteous man and a wicked one.”

- G. Said R. Judah b. R. Simon, “The last Darius was Esther’s son. He was clean on his mother’s side and unclean on his father’s side.”
- H. “*The hare*” (Deut 14:7) – this refers to Greece. The mother of King Ptolemy was named “Hare” [in Greek: *lagos*].
- I. “*The pig*” (Deut. 14:7) – this refers to Edom [Rome].
- J. Moses made mention of the first three in a single verse and the final one in a verse by itself [Deut. 14: 7,8]. Why so?
- K. R. Yohanan and R. Simeon b. Laqish.
- L. R. Yohanan said, “It is because [the pig] is equivalent to the other three.” [That is, Rome outweighs in evil the other three monarchies put together.]
- M. And R. Simeon b. Laqish said, “It is because it outweighs them.”
- N. R. Yohanan objected to R. Simeon b. Laqish, “‘*Prophecy, therefore, son of man, clap you hands [and let the sword come down twice, yea thrice]*’ (Ezek. 21:14).”
- O. And how does R. Simeon b. Laqish interpret the same passage? He notes that [the threefold sword] is doubled (Ezek. 21:14).

What follows is shared with *Genesis Rabbah* and serves as an appendix to the proposition that all the prophets foresaw Israel’s future history. The appendix now dwells on the point that only two of the prophets realized how evil Rome would be.

- 10.
  - A. [*Gen. R.* 65:1:] R. Phineas and R. Hilqiah in the name of R. Simon: “Among all the prophets, only two of them revealed [the true evil of Rome], Assaf and Moses.
  - B. “Asasaf said, ‘*The pig out of the wood ravages it*’ (Ps. 80:14).
  - C. “Moses said, ‘*And the pig, [because it parts the hoof and is cloven-footed but does not chew the cud]*’ (Lev.11:7).
  - D. “Why is [Rome] compared to a pig?
  - E. “It is to teach you the following: Just as, when a pig crouches and produces its hooves, it is as if to say, ‘See how I am clean [since I have a cloven hoof],’ so the evil kingdom takes pride, seizes by violence, and steals, and then gives the appearance of establishing a tribunal for justice.”
  
- 12.
  - A. Another interpretation [of GRH, “cud” now with reference to GR, “stranger”:].
  - B. “*The camel*” (Lev. 11:4) – this refers to Babylonia.
  - C. “*For it chews the cud*” [now: brings up the stranger] – for it exalts righteous men: “*And Daniel was in the gate of the king*” (Dan. 2:49).
  - D. “*The rock badger*” (Lev. 11:5) – this refers to Media.
  - E. “*For it brings up the stranger*” – for it exalts righteous men: “*Mordecai sat at the gate of the king*” (Esth. 2:19).
  - F. “*The hare*” (Lev. 11:6) – this refers to Greece.
  - G. “*For it brings up the stranger*” – for it exalts the righteous.

- H. When Alexander of Macedonia saw Simeon the Righteous, he would rise up on his feet. They said to him, “Can’t you see the Jew, that you stand up before this Jew?”
- I. He said to them, “When I go forth to battle, I see something like this man’s visage, and I conquer.”
- J. “*The pig*” (Lev. 11:7) – this refers to Rome.
- K. “*But it does not bring up the stranger*” – for it does not exalt the righteous.
- L. And it is not enough that it does not exalt them, but it kills them.
- M. That is in line with the following verse of Scripture: “*I was angry with my people, I profaned my heritage; I gave them into your hand, you showed them mercy: on the aged you made your yoke exceedingly heavy*” (Isa. 47:6).
- N. This refers to R. Aqiba and his colleagues [who were martyred by Rome].
13. A. Another interpretation [now treating “bring up the cud” (GR) as “bring along in its train” (GRR)]:  
What is coming as a direct comment on the sequence of empires, leading to the rise of Israel to rule.
- B. “*The camel*” (Lev. 11:4) – this refers to Babylonia.
- C. “*Which brings along in its train*” – for it brought along another kingdom after it.
- D. “*The rock badger*” (Lev. 11:5) – this refers to Media.
- E. “*Which brings along in its train*” – for it brought along another kingdom after it.
- F. “*The hare*” (Lev. 11:6) – this refers to Greece.
- G. “*Which brings along in its train*” – for it brought along another kingdom after it.
- H. “*The pig*” (Lev. 11:7) – this refers to Rome.
- I. “*Which brings along in its train*” – for it brought along another kingdom after it.
- J. And why is it then called “pig” (HZYR)? For it restores (MHZRT) the crown to the one who truly should have it [namely, Israel, whose dominion will begin when the rule of Rome ends].
- K. That is in line with the following verse of Scripture: “*And saviors will come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mountain of Esau [Rome], and the kingdom will then belong to the Lord*” (Obad. 1:21).<sup>65</sup>

***Mishnah-tractate Sanhedrin 11:1***

- A. All Israelites have a share in the world to come,
- B. as it is said, “*Your people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified*” (Isa. 60:21).
- C. And these are the ones who have no portion in the world to come:

<sup>65</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 60-66

- D. He who says, the resurrection of the dead is a teaching which does not derive from the Torah, and the Torah does not come from Heaven; and Epicurean.

### **Babylonian Talmud Tractate Sanhedrin 90A**

- I.
  - A. Why all this [that is, why deny the world to come to those listed]?
  - B. On Tannaite authority [it was stated], “Such a one denied the resurrection of the dead, therefore he will not have a portion in the resurrection of the dead.
  - C. “For all the measures [meted out by] the Holy One, blessed be he, are in accord with the principle of measure of measure.”
  - D. For R. Samuel bar Nahmani said R. Jonathan said, “How do we know that all the measures [meted out by] the Holy One, blessed be he, accord with the principle of measure of measure?”
  - E. “As it is written, *‘Then Elisha said, Hear you the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord, Tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gates of Samaria (2 Kings 7:1).*
  - F. “And it is written, *‘Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God and said, Behold, if the Lord made windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, you shall see it with your eyes, but shall not eat thereof’ (2 Kings 7:2).*
  - G. **[90B]** “And it is written, *‘And so it fell unto him; for the people trod him in the gate and he died’ (2 Kings 7:20).*
  - H. But perhaps it was Elisha’s curse that made it happen to him, for R. Judah said Rab said, “The curse of a sage, even for nothing will come about.”
  - I. If so, Scripture should have said, “They trod upon him and he died.” Why say, *“They trod upon him in the gate”*?
  - J. It was on account of matters pertaining to [the sale of wheat and barley at] the gate [which he had denied, that he died].

The basic notion of divine justice has now been introduced, and we proceed to the case at hand: Scripture’s numerous proofs that the dead will rise on judgment day.
- II.
  - A. How, on the basis of the Torah, do we know about the resurrection of the dead?
  - B. As it is said, *“And you shall give thereof the Lord’s heave-offering to Aaron the priest” (Num. 18:28).*
  - C. And will Aaron live forever? And is it not the case that he did not even get to enter the Land of Israel, from the produce of which heave-offering is given?
  - D. Rather, this teaches that he is destined once more to live, and the Israelites will give him heave-offering.
  - E. On the basis of this verse, therefore, we see that the resurrection of the dead is a teaching of the Torah.

- IV
- A. It has been taught<sup>5</sup> on Tannaite authority:
  - B. R. Simai says, “How on the basis of the Torah do we know about the resurrection of the dead?”
  - C. “As it is said, ‘*And I also have established my covenant with [the patriarchs] to give them the land of Canaan*’ (Exod. 6:4).
  - D. “ ‘With you’ is not stated, but rather, ‘with them,’ indicating on the basis of Torah that there is the resurrection of the dead.”

We have the same argument for the same syllogism, merely a different case, proved as the premise of argument requires, by scriptural evidence.

- V
- A. *Minim* [Jewish heretics, sometimes thought to be Jewish Christians] asked Rabban Gamaliel, “How do we know that the Holy One, blessed be he, will resurrect the dead?”
  - B. He said to them [directing their attention to Scripture in particular, rather than to arguments based on natural philosophy], “it is proved from the Torah, from the Prophets, and from the Writings.” But they did not accept his proofs.
  - C. “From the Torah: for it is written, ‘*And the Lord said to Moses, Behold, you shall sleep with your fathers and rise up*’ (Deut. 31:16).”
  - D. They said to him, “But perhaps the sense of the passage is, ‘*And the people will rise up*’ (Deut. 31:16)?”
  - E. “From the Prophets: as it is written, ‘*Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you that live in the dust, for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out its dead*’ (Isa. 26:19).”
  - F. “But perhaps that refers to the dead whom Ezekiel raised up.”
  - G. “From the Writings, as it is written, ‘*Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you that live in the dust, for your dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out its dead*’ (Isa. 26:19).”
  - H. “But perhaps this means that the dead will move their lips?”
  - I. That would accord with the view of R. Yohanan.
  - J. For R. Yohanan said in the name of R. Simeon b. Yehosedeq, “Any authority in whose name a law is stated in this world moves his lips in the grave,
  - K. “as it is said, ‘*Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.*”
  - L. [The *minim* would not concur in Gamaliel’s view] until he cited for them the following verse: “‘*Which the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them*’ (Deut 11:21) – to them and not to you, so proving from the Torah that the dead will live.”
  - M. And there are those who say that it was the following verse that he cited to them: “‘*But you who cleaved to the Lord you God are alive, everyone of you this day*’ (Deut4:4). Just as on this day all of you are alive, so in the world to come all of you will live.”

- VI
- A. Romans asked R. Joshua b. Hananiah, “How do we know that the Holy One will bring the dead to life and also that he knows what is going to happen in the future?”
  - B. He said to them, “Both propositions derive from the following verse of Scripture:
  - C. “As it is said, ‘*And the Lord said to Moses, Behold you shall sleep with your fathers and rise up again, and this people shall go awhoring...*’ (Deut. 31:16).”
  - D. “But perhaps the sense is, [the people]] will rise up and go awhoring” knows what is going to happen in the future.”
  - E. He said to them, “Then you have gained half of the matter, that God knows what is going to happen in the future.”
- VII
- A. It has also been stated on Amoraic authority:
  - B. Said R. Yohanan in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai, “How do we know that the Holy One, blessed be he, will bring the dead to life and knows what is going to happen in the future?
  - C. “As it is said, ‘*Behold, you shall sleep with your fathers and...rise again...* (Deut 31:16),”
- VIII
- A. It has been taught on Tannaite authority:
  - B. Said R. Eliezer b. R. Yose, “In this matter I proved false the books of the *minim*.
  - C. “For they would say, ‘The principle of the resurrection of the dead does not derive from the Torah.’
  - D. “I said to them, ‘You have forged your Torah and have gained nothing on that account.’
  - E. “For you say, ‘The principle of the resurrection of the dead does not derive from the Torah.’”
  - F. “Lo, Scripture says, “[*Because he has despised the word of the Lord... ] that soul shall be cut off completely, his iniquity shall be upon him*” (Num. 15:31).
  - G. “ “*...shall utterly cut off...*,” in this world, in which case, at what point will “*...his iniquity be upon him...*”?
  - H. “ “Will it not be in the world to come?””
  - I. Said R. Pappa to Abayye, “And might one not have replied to them that the words ‘utterly...’ ‘...cut off...,’ signify the two worlds {this and the next}?”
  - J. [He said to him,] “They would have answered, ‘The Torah speaks in human language [and the doubling of the verb carries no meaning beyond its normal sense].”

- IX
- A. This accords with the following Tannaite dispute:
  - B. “ ‘ *That soul shall be utterly cut off*’ -*shall be cut off*” – in this world, ‘*utterly*’ – in the world to come,” the words of R. Aqiba.
  - C. Said R. Ishmael to hi, “And has it not been said, ‘*He reproaches the Lord, and that soul shall be cut off*’ (Num. 15:31)? Does this mean that there are three worlds?”
  - D. “Rather: ‘...*it will be cut off*...,’ in this world, ‘...*utterly* ...,’ in the world to come and ‘*utterly cut off* ...,’ indicates that the Torah speaks in ordinary human language.”
  - E. Whether from the view of R. Ishmael or of R. Aqiba, what is the meaning of the phrase, “his iniquity shall be upon him”?
  - F. It accords with that which has been taught on Tannaite authority:
  - G. Is it possible that that is the case even if he repented?
  - H. Scripture states, “*his iniquity shall be upon him.*”
  - I. I have made the statement at hand only for a case in which, “his iniquity is yet upon him” [but not if he repented].

- XII
- A. A Tannaite authority of the house of R. Ishmael [taught], “[Resurrection] is a matter of an argument a fortiori based on the case of a glass utensil.
  - B. “Now if glassware, which is the work of the breath of a mortal man, when broken, can be repaired.
  - C. “A mortal man, who is made by the breath of the Holy One, blessed be he, how much the more so [that he can be repaired, in the resurrection of the dead].”

We conclude with controversy stories, between sages and *minim* – commonly understood to be Jewish heretics – on the question of the resurrection of the dead. We note the familiar themes now recur within a fresh setting.

- XIII
- A. A *min* said to R. Ammi, “You say that the dead will live. But they are dust, and will the dust live?”
  - B. He said to him, “I shall draw a parable for you. To what may the matter be compared?”
  - C. “It may be compared to the case of a mortal king, who said to his staff, ‘Go and build a great palace for me, in a place in which there is no water or dirt for bricks].’
  - D. “They went and built it, but after a while it collapsed.
  - E. “He said to them, ‘Go and rebuild it in a place in which there are dirt and water [for bricks].’
  - F. “They said to him, ‘We cannot do so.’

- G. “He became angry with them and said to them, ‘In a place in which there is neither water nor dirt you were able to build, and now in a place in which there are water and dirt, how much the more so [should you be able to build it]!’
- H. “And if you [the *min*] do not believe it, go to a valley and look at a rat, which today is half-flesh and half-dirt and tomorrow will turn into a creeping thing, made all of flesh. Will you say that it takes much time? Then go up to a mountain and see that today there is only one snail, but tomorrow it will rain and the whole of it will be filled with snails.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Neusner, Jacob *Invitation to Midrash*, (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, San Francisco, 1989) 96-101