

MATERIALS FOR MIDRASH: A CASE STUDY

Paper presented to the Rabbinic and Patristic Exegesis Group

Annual Meeting, Society for Biblical Literature

New Orleans, Louisiana

November, 1996

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Revised, with added appendix and notes

December 15, 1996

In the paper which follows, I am using the term midrash in its strict sense of a literary operation that is particular to Rabbinic Judaism, known to us primarily from the great midrashic collections of the amoraic period (300 to 600 c.e.). These collections, speaking in a very general sense, represent a Palestinian, rather than Babylonian, approach to understanding Judaism.

The question I address in this paper is the use of non-biblical, or "foreign" materials in midrash by those same Palestinian rabbinic writers of midrash. Such materials, unlike the legends of Ginzberg's great collection, are not recognized as containing internal referents to Jewish Scriptures in Hebrew and Aramaic.

These Palestinian rabbinic makers of midrash dealt with an authoritative text of Scriptures. In doing so, they used many devices that permitted them to expand upon the authoritative text, to explore its multiple meanings, to discover and solve problems in the text in imaginative ways. One such device is atomization. In one formal use of this device, by the form known as *petirah*, a small section of authoritative text is broken apart, and the portent of each such part, as it contributes to a context different from its original context, is given. Each statement of the portent, that is, the *patar* or interpreted meaning of the atomized element of authoritative Biblical text, is accompanied by a proof text, another verse of the Bible that witnesses to the correctness of this meaningful interpretive portent

In the *petirah*, the maker of midrash uses three elements, first, the verse being atomized because of its deeper significance or portent; second, the statement of that extraordinary meaning, and third, the proof text. The effect of the combination and concatenation of these elements is to produce a shimmering new revelatory text.

The Biblical text is basic to midrash, and basic to every form of midrash. The statement

of the extraordinary meaning, or portent, the second element above, also occurs in other forms of midrash, such as the Ma'aseh (Stern, 1991; 240-246). The third element, the proof-text, is also used in many ways in other forms of midrash. That which is significant about the use of these elements in the *petirah* is, first, the atomization of the Biblical text base for the midrash, and, second, the rhythmic, repetitive pattern or concatenation that is established for each *petirah*.

One example of the use of the *petirah* occurs early in Genesis/Bereshit Rabbah, one of the great classical midrashic collections. In a masterful use of the *petirah* form, Rabbi Judah the son of Rabbi Simon (ben Pazzi, a fourth generation `Amora, late 3d c. CE) expounds on the idea of generations, based on the second verse of Genesis.

In an earlier form related to the *petirah*, that of *peshet*, known to us from the Sectarian materials found at Qumran, the interpretation that follows the verse being atomized, its *peshet*, puts forth the way in which current reality represents the deeper meaning, or development, or realization, or fulfillment of that which is present in the text, its portent, which contains an heretofore unrecognized prophecy. As David Stern puts it, "peshet interpretation views Scripture as an enigma to be solved and decoded, the key to the solution and its underlying code being the apocalyptic history of the sectarian Dead Sea community itself." (1988, 142)

The crucial difference between Qumran *peshet* and the *petirah* of rabbinic midrash is that midrash recognizes in its methods that there are many interpretations of the same verse, while at Qumran there is only the eschatological realization of the single portentous meaning of the verse, according to the analysis of the polysemy of midrash given by Stern (1988) and the exposition of *peshet/pittaron* at Qumran provided by I. Rabinowitz (1973).

Here we begin to see how complex the interplay between the literary elements of midrash and the historical elements of midrash can become. In the above examples, the literary use of a form employing the device of atomization supported by the concatenation of prooftexts, reveals an interpretation of history residing in the text. Such interpretation of history may be the narrowly sectarian interpretation we know from the Qumran *pesharim*, or the broader conceptualization of the generations, that is known to us from the extra-Biblical literature, the apocryphal Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch (apud Urbach, 1975/1979, p. 677) and that appears in Genesis\Breishit Rabbah 1.2.3, in the *petirot* of R. Judah b. Simon (ben Pazzi) mentioned above, which may refer to the Messianic age as the age of Jacob, and of Simon b. Lakish.

This complex interplay between literary and historical elements doesn't produce history in the modern sense, not even "history according to the rabbis." The only rabbinic work that presents a relatively recognizable history is the Seder Olam Rabbah, according to Chaim Milikowsky (1995). However, that there is some sense of history present in the midrash is sometimes very much the case.

This presence of history manifests itself not only in the *petirah*, but also in the midrashic form known as the Ma`aseh. This word is used in midrash to introduce a story and signals that the listener, or reader, is expected to believe that such an event once happened. It is not the accuracy of the historical reference that is important, however, but the location of the story in the real historic past. The Ma`aseh is a "once-upon-a-time" story, which has recognizable historical referents, yet is not confined to them. The word itself means "deed, action" or "fact, event" according to Jastrow's Dictionary, and might be translated by the title "As a Matter of Fact," as the single word Ma`aseh is used at the beginning of each such story.

These dimensions of midrash that I have discussed, those of literary art and historical referentiality, are imported from the broader theoretical concerns of the twentieth century. In literary art, the dimension of textual relationships between midrash and other texts has been observed as an example of intertextuality. Intertextuality itself, however, is variously defined, often in reference to the effect on the reader of interacting texts of unknown provenance woven together. It is thus used by Boyarin (1990).

However, I will be using the term "prior text" in reference to the midrashic use of textual materials we know to be earlier. Prior text is construed as a constraint on the development of text. According to A. I. Becker (1979) another such constraint is the world of external reference, its referentiality. Since many readers may be unfamiliar with Becker's extensive work in this area, Appendix II contains a quick overview, with supporting quotations from his 1979 work.

The concept of prior text as a constraint encourages examination of midrashim in terms of their connectedness to texts that already exist. That is, a midrash is not free to be anything it wants; it is bound or constrained by the known texts of its past, primarily the Biblical text. Similarly, it is bound in some way by the referential worlds known to the makers of midrash, both the current historical horizon and the received accounts of past events. In this view, each of the texts involved, the midrash as well as the distinct elements of the midrash, has a history, using the term history in a modern sense. Also, each of the referential worlds involved is known to us through its texts. They are not independent, but together they act to constrain or form the midrashic text at hand.

I have presented those concepts and definitions which have a bearing on the analysis of a particular midrash which uses "foreign," non-Biblical material. This midrash is fairly well represented in modern discussion, as well as in the history of Jewish texts. It is the

midrash on the mother of seven sons who became martyrs, a story first told in the Second Book of Maccabees, and more elaborately presented in the Fourth Book of Maccabees, both of which are original Greek works. The story also appears in a number of forms in Syriac. One such form, a rhymed Syriac poem, matches the central narrative of torture in Fourth Macc detail for detail, while eschewing the Stoic Greek philosophy (Bensly, 1895; Peterson, 1995a).

Modern discussions of the story include those of Gerson Cohen, Dvorah Dimant, Robert Doran, and Jacob Neusner. Cohen (1991) develops a clear picture of the referential world of the rabbinic text as concurrent history, and a comprehensive view of the forms the story takes as it becomes the well-known story of Hannah and her seven sons.

Dvorah Dimant (1986), in an obscure reference in a Congress volume of papers of the IOSCS, discusses the prior Biblical text of the testament of the mother found in the last chapter of Fourth Maccabees, as well as the prayer ascribed to her in Second Maccabees Chapter 7. Her paper is titled "The Problem of Non-Translated Biblical Greek," and deals specifically with the use of prior Biblical texts in the LXX/OG books that are not translations of Hebrew texts. Robert Doran (1980) also looks at the story, in a synoptic comparison of four versions, those found in Pesikta Rabbati, in 2nd Maccabees, in Lamentations Rabbah, and in TB Gittin 59b. One of his more startling observations is that the story as told in Pesikta Rabbati, usually dated as the latest of the four, is typologically the earliest form of the story, that from which all of the others can be understood to derive. Jacob Neusner (1989a, 1989b) treats the story incidentally to his translation and analysis of Lamentations Rabbah.

Both Gerson Cohen and Jacob Neusner comment about the story as it is known in Lamentations Rabbah to the effect that its inclusion in the large collection of individual

midrashim on Lamentations 1.16 makes no sense. In Neusner's vivid phrase, it has "parachuted down" from nowhere (1989a, 181) to be included. After concluding his exposition of the way in which concurrent historical circumstances are reflected in the midrash, Cohen states:

In any event it should be pointed out that in the midrash on Lamentations the story about the mother was connected with Lamentations 1.16 ("for these do I weep") not because of any connection between the story and the verse, but because of the apparent connection of the verse with the stories cited in connection with it: It happened with Miriam the daughter of Boethus. . . . It happened with Miriam the daughter of Nakdimon. . . . It happened with Miriam the daughter of Boethus Nahtom (sic!). . . .It happened in the case of Miriam the daughter of Tanhum. In the midrash on Lamentations it is the name of the mother that was important, not the Scriptural verse. (1991: 50)

To both Cohen and Neusner, this midrash does not make sense as Biblical exegesis. The inclusion of the story seems to these authors to be unmotivated, other than by connection with a string of stories about different women named Miriam.

Although he is speaking specifically of midrashic polysemy, the multiple meanings midrash can give for one verse, and not speaking about a midrash consisting of multiple anecdotes, David Stern's (1988) comment to the effect that "while midrash may be unsystematic, its exegeses are not unmotivated," (1988, 147) <sup>\*1</sup> This comment leads to

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<sup>1</sup>In full, Stern's comment is as follows: "Furthermore, while midrash may be unsystematic, its exegeses are not unmotivated: even at its most apparently farfetched or flamboyant moments, midrashic interpretations tend to be situated on genuine textual cruxes or irregularities, "bumps" in the plain surface of Scripture, a fact that militates against the worst excesses of unbridled polysemy." (1988, 147)

the central question of the paper: Is there a motivation, a connection, discernible between the story of the mother and her seven sons and the text of Lamentations Rabbah 1.16?

The remainder of this paper will consist in an analysis of this particular midrash found in Lamentations/Eikha Rabbah (ER) to Eikha/Lamentations 1.16, in a version assembled from early texts. This is the Hebrew text found in your handout, and is an incomplete presentation of the text, as the manuscript witnesses I used break off at a certain point. Both manuscripts are known from the Cairo Geniza; one of them, from the collection of Geniza material at St. Petersburg, is published in Z. M. Rabinowitz's *Ginzé Midrash: The Oldest Forms of Rabbinic Midrashim According to Geniza Manuscripts* (Hebrew) (1976, 143), It is this published manuscript that is here designated as Geniza 12 (Leningrad 492) in both the text I have developed and its translation. When Geniza 12 breaks off, I have continued the text with a ms known as Geniza 15, located in the collection at Cambridge University Library, and designated Taylor-Schechter C2.173.

I have had the privilege of assembling this text from the collation of eight mss made by Paul Mandel, who is now at JTS. This collation is part of his work to produce a critical text of ER, forthcoming in the fairly near future.

The Hebrew text is found in Appendix I, while the translation will be found below: No restorations have been made in the Hebrew text; it is, barring typographical errors, the same as that found in Mandel's collation. In the translation which appears below, I have made restorations of missing text, enclosed within brackets, where the repetitiousness of the passages provided a clear indication of the text. There are no restorations based on the other six texts of Mandel's collation. Open spaces indicate areas where other

mss have additional text, as do the blank lines.

The reason for using the earliest available physical representation of the text is to provide a view of the midrash that is relatively independent from its transmission history. That transmission history indicates that the manuscript families divide into Sephardic and Ashkenazic recensions.

I have kept the line numbers as they are presented in Mandel's collation, resulting in long and short lines which are not related to the content, but to the shared material among ms recensions. Where an ms has <h>אלהים </> or a similar word, my translation represents it as "God." Where an ms has <h>אלדי </>, my translation represents it as "G-d," at this point. Since the way in which these variations are distributed appears random, I would suggest an inspection of the mss, as the dalet (d) may be a reading for a he (h) that has lost a leg.

## TRANSLATION

Translation of passage on the mother of seven sons, in <i>Eikha Rabba</i> 1.16, by Sigrid Peterson, using two mss from the collation of eight mss by Paul (Pinchas) Mandel.

### From Geniza 12:

1. Ma`aseh. About Martha bat Tanxum, who had been taken captive with seven sons.
2. Caesar carried them off, and put them behind seven screens.

[Jastrow, p. 1394a, indicates this idiom is either a place of honor for a judge, or a place of idolatry. I would add that the word is from the same Latin root as "Chancel (screen)," the lattice work which separates the

altar from the rest of a Christian church. Cohen follows Lieberman and another text, which has

<h>קרקשן</h> `cells' (57n21)]

3. He had the first brought out. He (Caesar; henceforth C) said to him (Son ; henceforth S) "You prostrate yourself in my foreign worship (<h>זרה עבודה</h>), the same as your brothers prostrated themselves, 4. so I won't have you killed."

5. He (S) said to him (C), "Forbearance and peace! My brothers did not prostrate themselves, and I, too, will not prostrate myself.

6. He (C) said to him (S) "Why?" He (S) said to him (C), "For thus it has been written in our Torah, "I am the LORD your God." (Exodus/Shemot 20.2)

7. At once, he (C) issued a decree about him (S), and they killed (him).

8a. He (C) had the second (son) brought. He (C) said to him (S), "You prostrate yourself"

<e>**From Geniza 15**</e>:

8b. to my foreign worship, the same as your brothers were prostrated,

9. so I won't kill you."

10. He (S) said to him (C), "Forbearance and peace! My brothers did not prostrate themselves, and I will not prostrate myself ."

11. He (C) said to him, "Why?" "Because it has been written in Torah `You shall have no other g-ds before me.' " 12. So he (C) issued a decree for him (S) and they killed (him).

13. He (C) brought up the third (son) and he (C) said to him (S), "You prostrate yourself to my foreign worship, the same as your brothers were prostrated, 14. and I



26. He brought up the sixth (son) and he (C) said to him (S), "You prostrate yourself to my [for]eign worship, the same as your brothers were prostrated."

27. He (S) said, " Forbearance and peace! My [br]others did not prostrate themselves, and I am not prostrating myself (either)."

28. He (C) said to him (S), "Why?" He (S) said to him (C), "Because it has been written in the Torah "Whoever sacrifices to any god other [than the Lord alone, shall be devoted to destruction.]" (Exodus 22.19 (BHS); 22.20 (NRSV))

29. So he (C) issued a decree about him, and they killed (him).

30. He brought up the seventh, who was the youngest among them. He (C) said to him (S), "You prostrate yourself to my foreign [wor]ship.

31. the same as your brothers were prostrated."

32. He (S) said, "Forbearance and peace! My brothers did not prostrate themselves, and I will not prostrate myself."

33. He (C) said to him (S), "Why?" He (S) said to him (C), "Because it has been written in the Torah "Know therefore this day and keep in mind [that the Lord alone is God in heaven above and on earth below; there is no other.]" (Deuteronomy/Devarim 4.39) [l.

34 is blank]

35. And no others except Him, as we swore to Him, that we would not exchange Him for a different God 36. It is written "You are ' '." It is said "This Day."

37. Thus he promised us that we would not be exchanged for a different people.

38. As it is said "And G-d has affirmed to you this day that you are His [treasured people, who shall observe all His commandments, and that He will set you, in fame and

renown and glory, high above all the nations that He has made; and that you shall be, as He promised, a holy people to the Lord your God.] (Deut. 26.18)

Lines 39-45. Two other mss of the Sephardic recension, not as old as these two, at this point have an extended dialogue between Caesar and the youngest son

46. He (C) said to him

47. "Behold, thus, if I were to cast down my (signet) ring in front of the image, and you were to pick it up, they (who are watching) would know the outcome of the discussion (went).

48. according to the words of Caesar.

49. He (YS) said to him (C), "Woe to you, Caesar, woe to you, Caesar. Whatever the outcome here, you will still be flesh and blood."

50. You are confounded (as much) by flesh and blood as by your death.

51. I am not myself in fear of the King of Kings of Kin[gs]. Blessed is He, ruler of the universe, God of the universe.

52. He (C) said to him (YS) "And is there (really) a god of the universe?"

53. He (YS) said to him (C) " It is (only) possible to bow [emendation: <h> שׁוּבָה </> "bow" for ms reading <h> שׁוּבָה </> "praise"] in a state of freedom." [

54. He (C) said to him (YS) "Does your god have a mouth?" He (YS) said to him (C) "About your god it is written, 'A mouth for them, and (yet) they do not speak.'" (Ps 115.5)

55. but [from] our [G]od it is written "By a word of ' ' heaven was created." (Ps 33.6).

56. He (C) said to him (YS), " [And does your god have e]yes? ' ' " He (YS) said to him (C), "From our G-d it is written "....<<available text ends here, though the Sephardic recension continues, as two other mss of Paul Mandel's collation show>>.

## DISCUSSION

To outline the features of the text, it first announces the genre--Ma`aseh, it proclaims.

The mother of seven sons is introduced, and given a name, perhaps, for Martha bat Tanxum can be construed as a symbolic namelike representation, Lady, daughter of Consolation. (Gerson Cohen has a similar point about Miriam bat Tanxum, 1991; 50.) \*

She and her sons are taken by (a) Caesar, a ruler, and the sons are confined. This text, by using <h>QNQLYM</>, suggests that the place of confinement and bringing forth is a place of (foreign) worship. Similarly, to use the verb <i>hishtaxaveh</i> is a strong constraint on the text that confines its vocabulary to a word with Biblical associations almost entirely connected with worship. Its meaning is 'to bow down' or 'to prostrate oneself.' The reason for using the less euphonious English 'to prostrate oneself,' is that it lends itself to use in reflexive and passive forms. A key bit of wordplay in this text is that <i>hishtaxaveh</i> is used in a Semitic verb form known as nitpa'el, basically similar to hitpa'el in all ways. This is generally understood in a reflexive or middle voice, a self-causing. However, changing the prefix from heh to nun brings in a strong association with passive verbs of the niph'al class (Segal, 1927:64-67).

In short, it is apparent from inspecting the collation of mss that at the time this text was

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composed, and for one or two hundred years after, the verb *nishtaxaveh* could be understood in two ways, as a reflexive, and as a passive. Thus, the Caesar commands the sons to prostrate themselves, the sons refuse to do so, and the Caesar orders the execution. The next son to be brought to the test is told that his brother has prostrated himself, or **been** prostrated, put into the position of worship and killed. Yet in the repetitive dialogue, each son in turn understands that his brother has not caused himself to be prostrate, but that he has been placed in that position by others.

In short, the same word has different meanings depending on the perspective of the speaker, as well as the listener.

Each episode is the occasion for another proof-text from the Torah; the first three are the beginning of the decalogue as given in Shemot/Exodus. Others are directly related to foreign worship. The dialogue with the youngest son is the longest, and is prolonged by the suggestion of a ruse--the son need not prostrate himself to the idol, but could bend to pick up the Caesar's ring. Then everyone watching -- behind the fourth wall of the open stage -- would know that Caesar had prevailed.

In the process of the first dialogue, apparently, Caesar has begun to wonder--is there a God? This leads to the second sequence of proof-texts, all the productions of the Youngest Son, on the abstract body of God. This is where our text breaks off.

The question for this paper is not so much what the text itself says, but how it got to the place where it says it. That is, how did it get included in this midrash? Has it wandered in from nowhere? Or was there a specific way that the rabbis understood the relationship of the midrashic text they were making to the prior text of Lamentations, as well as a specific way they understood the material, the story of the mother and her seven sons, that they used at this place in the midrash?

Lamentations 1.16 is a Hebrew form in a mournful rhythm known as a Qinah. This rhythm has already recurred in the preceding verses. You will recall that Eikha/Lamentations begins with "Lo, how the city sits solitary, like a widow." (The mother of seven sons is most likely a widow, as she has never been identified by her husband's name.) The extended imagery of Lamentations 1 is that of the City of Jerusalem weeping for her losses; there is a glancing reference to children before 1.16, and at the end of 1.16 there is a reference to children who are desolate, but that is not enough to suggest bringing in pathetic stories of children being killed when we reach Chapter 1, verse 16. The verse reads, in Hebrew, *<h>`al eleh, a'ni bokhia `eini</i>, "For these things I weep," more literally "cry my eyes out." The phrase "these things" is a triggering phrase for the exercise in inclusiveness of the midrash, which brings many many stories that evoke pity in the hearer.*

One group of these stories, about individual women named Miriam or Martha, immediately precedes the story of Martha bat Tanxum. Each begins with the announcement that it is a Ma`aseh. Thus we are to understand that its referential world is historical. The discussions that I've seen of this arc of midrashim connected to Eikha 1.16 is that the referential world, the historic period of the midrash, is the time of the Hadrianic persecutions, about sixty years after the Destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the time known as the *<i>shmad</i>. Yet one of the Miriam-Marthas is the wife of the High Priest, who goes to observe him on the Day of Atonement, the single day of the year that the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies. Similarly, the first Ma`aseh of the series is about two children of Zadok the Priest (High Priest in later versions), not a name contemporary with the Hadrianic persecutions (130-135 CE), rather a reference to a student of Antigonus of Sokho, paired with Boethus (Boetos), perhaps, or to one who*

lived in Jerusalem before the destruction of the Temple, and followed Gamaliel II afterwards. In short, I would suggest that further study would indicate that the collection of stories represents many referential worlds, many times of persecutions. Also, whether the Hebrew transliteration of Caesar should be understood as an immutable reference to Roman Rulers who were designated Caesar is debatable; it may have simply been intended to indicate "the foreign ruler." Thus, this story may have entered the midrash on ER 1.16 as a story from the time of the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes.

In addition, as Dvorah Dimant (1986) has shown, the Testament of the mother of seven sons, and her prayer, found in the Greek Jewish Scriptures in Fourth and Second Macc respectively, contain quotations and allusions to prior Biblical texts. Thus the story of the mother and her seven sons comes to the rabbis with Biblical connections of its own. It would, however, be an enormous stretch to suggest that this story had the value similar to that of a verse of the Writings that usually opened a *petixta*.

Returning to the Biblical text and looking further in the Book of Lamentations/Eikha, one can discover at Chapter 5, verse 17, another instance of the phrase *'al eileh. . .* 'On these things'. Here in Chapter 5 of Eikha/Lamentations, it is in summary position, close to the end, following passages which refer explicitly to the young men of the city. In one sense, the verses beginning *'al eileh. . .* may be seen as an *inclusio* for Lamentations--one of them occurring at the beginning of the Book and one occurring at the end, and by extension including all the matters of mourning that are mentioned in Eikha between them.

In these ways, the foreign material of Martha bat Tanhum, mother of seven sons, became sufficiently domesticated to be used in a midrash.

It is of course not sufficiently domesticated (or canonical) that it could serve as the base verse for a petirah. That role is reserved for canonical scripture. However, as we see in Martha's midrash, the structured use of concatenations of prooftexts is a Rabbinic literary and interpretive device that can be used in a number of ways, extending far beyond the petirah form.\*

The primary work of this paper has been to show the elements of Martha's midrash from ER which connect it with Lamentations/Eikha 1.16. This includes the figure of a solitary woman--a widow in Eikha/Lamentations, a bereft and perhaps widowed mother in ER. Also, the use of early manuscripts reveals that, in keeping with the allegorical mother of Lamentations/Eikha, the mother in this midrash has a symbolic name, Martha, daughter who will be consoled (Martha bat Tanxum). The connection to Lamentations/Eikha has been shown to be motivated by the phrase 'For these things I weep.' For *what* things? For the terrible consequences of persecution(s) on women and children and priests (or, perhaps, the women and children of priests), as these stories tell us. To demonstrate that the inclusion of foreign materials is motivated in this instance aids in

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\*When I wrote this, I had no idea that Daniel Boyarin had discussed such use of concatenations in his *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*. His discussion can be found on pp. 26-33. I also might have used, but did not, his discussion of the deictic 'this' on pp. 121f. or the comments about textuality and history which are found throughout Chapt. 8, "Between Intertextuality and History: The Martyrdom of Rabbi Akiva," pp. 117-129. It is more the case that having worked with this midrash from ER, I was more able to see the application of theoretical terms from literary theory whether I understood them or not, to recognize a few which overlap with discourse analysis, and to appreciate where his approach made contact with mine. I am, however, indebted to Maxine Grossman, whose presentation on the interaction of historical and literary concerns in the Damascus Document, at the Annual Meetings of AAR/SBL, suggested the structure of this paper, and the relationship to and distance from literary theory found here. I have previously treated similar concerns in my paper "Evolved Literature: 4 Maccabees and Related Works" (Peterson, 1995b). I am also indebted to David Stern, who was kind enough to comment extensively on an earlier version of this paper, and who has taught me a great deal about what need not be said.

the approach to other midrashic puzzles.

This paper has also raised the possibility that some of the time the use of the Ma`aseh by a maker of midrash is in the service of a collection of historical examples, not from a single period, as previously thought, but from a series of historical events that were similar in nature but occurred at different times.

The use of "foreign" material has been shown, in this example, to employ concatenated prooftexts, such as found in the <i>petirah</i> as a major means of domestication, of appropriation of the Syriac and/or Greek texts of the story of the mother and her seven sons. The symbolic naming of the mother in Hebrew/Aramaic contributes its share as well. It is not that the story was altered substantially to make it into a midrash, but that rather here, with a known prior text constraining the midrash, we can see the extent to which midrash, even at the level of list making, employs considerable conscious artistry to achieve its impact on the readers and hearers of its own time.

\_APPENDIX I

Text of passage from Eikha Rabbah 1.16

Assembled by Sigrid Peterson

Based on Geniza 15, supplemented by Geniza 12

Using a text collation of 8 mss kindly provided by Paul Mandel

1. מעשה במרתה בת תנחום שנישבת היא ושבעה בניה,
2. נטלו קיסר ונתנו לפנים משבעה קנקליו
- את הראשון אמר לו משתחווה אתה לעבודה זרה שלי כשן שהשתחוו אחיך
3. הוציא
- 4 ואיני הורגך
5. אמר לו חס ושלום אחיי לא הישתחוו ואף אני לא אשתחווה
6. אמר לו למה אמר לו שכך כתוב בתורתינו אנכי יי אלוהיך
7. מיד גזר עליו והרגו
- 8a. הוציא את השני אמר לו משתחווה
- את לעבודה זרה שלי כשם שנישתחוו אחיך
- 8b.
9. ואיני הורגך

10. אמר לו חס ושלום אחיי לא נישתחוו ואני איני משתחוה  
מפני שכתוב בתורה לא יהיה לך אלדים אחרים על פניי
11. אמר לו למה
12. וגזר אליו והרגו
- את השלישי ואמר לו משתחוה את לעבודה זרה שלי כשם שנישתחוו אחיך
13. הוצי
14. ואיני הורגך
15. אמר לו חס ושלום אחיי לא ניתשחוו ואני איני משתחוה  
אמר לו למה אמר לו מפני שכתוב בתורה כי לא תשתחוה לאל אחר
- 16.
17. וגזר עליו והרגו
- א את הרביעי אמר לו משתחוה את לעבודה זרה שלי כשם שנישתחוו אחיך
18. הוצי
19. אמר חס ושלום אחי לא נישתחוו ואני איני משתחוה  
אמר לא מפני שכתוב בתורה שמע ישראל יי אלדינו יי אחד
20. אמי לו למה
21. גזר - ליו והרגו
- א את החמישי אמר לו -שתחוה את לעבודה זרה שלי כשם שנישתחוו אחיך
22. הוצי
23. אמר לו חס ושלום אחיי ---- נישתחוו ואני איני משתחוה  
לו -- ה אמר לו מפני שכתוב בתורה כי אל קנא יי אלדיך וגוי

24. אמר

25. וגזר עליו והרגו

א את הששי ואמר לו מִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה אֶת ל־----- זרה שלי כשם שנישתחוּו אחיך

26. ----- הוציא

27. חס ושלום -חיי לא השתחוּו ואני איני משתחוה

28. אמר לו למה אמר לו מפני שכתוב בתורה זוכה לאלדים יחרם

29. גזר עליו והרגו

השביעי והוא היה הקטן שבהן אמר לו משתחוה את לעבודה זרה שלי

30. הוציא את

31. כשם שנישתחוּו אחיך

32. אמר לו חס ושלום אחיי לא נישתחוּו ואני איני משתחוה

אמר לו למה מפני שכתוב בתורה וידעת היום והשבות אל לבבך

33.

34.

35. ולא עוד אלא שנישבענו לו שאין אנו ממירים אותו באל אחר

36. דכת את יי האמרי היום

37. כך נשבע לנו שאינו ממירינו באומה אחרת

38. שני ויי האמירך היום להיות לו וגוי

39.

40.

41.

.42

.43

.44

.45

.46 אמר לו

הרי אני משליך את טבעתי לפני הצלם והגביה- לי שידעו הכל ששמעתה

.47 ואם כן

.48 לדברי קיסר

לו אללי עליך קיסר אללי עליך קיסר מה אם את שאת בשר ודם

.49 אמר

(only this ms.)

ודם כמותך

.50 את מתבייש מבש

לא אתירא ממלך מלכי המלכי ברוך הוא מלכו שלעולם אלוהו שלעולם

.51 אני

.52 אמר לו ויש אלוה לעולם

אמר לו איפשר שיהא עולם של הבקר

.53

לו וכי יש פה לאלהי(ה)יכם א' לו באלהיכם כתוב פה להם ולא ידברו

.54 א'

.55 אבל --להינו כתוב בדבר יי' שמים נעשו

לו -----ינים לאלהיכם אמר לו מאלדיכם כתוב ׀-----

(neither Geniza 12 nor Geniza 15 provides information after this point. Mandel's other two sources for the Sephardic recension do continue, however.)

NOTES: The "chupchik" is represented here by a midlevel dot, as the font does not contain anything else that can be used.

Line 53. The last word in this assembly of mss **does** read הבקֶר not הפֶקֶר as other mss do.

## APPENDIX II

### **Theory of textual constraints, in an early formulation by A. I. Becker (1979)**

Note: The following material is appended primarily to demonstrate that my use of presumably unfamiliar terms has a specific theoretical background. However, I have used the minimum necessary specific terminology, and hope that it is intuitively understandable. An early and brief statement of the theory developed by Becker and used by his students, including Deborah Tannen, follows:

In this essay I would like to describe some of the constraints on text-building in a language quite different from our own. The language is Javanese, the kind of text the Javanese shadow play, *wayang kulit*, as I learned to perform it from an East Javanese puppeteer, or *dalang*, Ki Soedjathi Djathikoesoemo, in daily lessons and in watching performances and discussing them together over a period of two years, 1969-71. . . . I have studied these things and shall describe them within a particular, evolving set of assumptions about what a text is and how it can be said to be meaningful. These assumptions have their roots in traditional philology, modified and expanded by the insights of modern linguistics, ethnography, psychology, and Javanese aesthetic theory itself into what might be called a *modern philology*. These assumptions form a partial epistemography<sup>2</sup>-----a

specification of *what* it is important to write about concerning Javanese shadow theater, and how one achieves coherence and completeness in writing about it.

As an intellectual discipline, *philology* can be defined as the text-centered study of language. Philologists have traditionally set themselves the task of making ancient and foreign texts readable. Only part of this task is simple translation, since any careful philologist knows that few foreign words have translations. Words and phrases must be described, often in great detail, not merely mapped onto a foreign term. This description traditionally takes the form of masses of footnotes which explain the contextual relations of words, phrases, sentences, and larger units of the text. These relations ideally included the following:

1. The relations of textual units to each other within the text, which establishes hierarchy and coherence in the text.
2. The relations of textual units to other texts [later to be called prior text], since part of the context of any text is, more or less, all previous texts in a particular culture, especially texts considered to be in the same genre; readable literature is structurally coherent with its own ancestors
3. The relations of the units in the text to the intention of the creators of the text, with *intention* defined as the relations of the creator to the context of the text, the medium, and to hearers or readers.
4. The relation of textual units to nonliterary events with which units in the text

establish relations of the sort usually called *reference*

The *meaning* of a text, then, is a set of relations, by no means all of which are listed above. The information necessary to describe the kinds of relations just listed must be known, discovered, or reconstructed before one can know the essential meaning of a text, any text. For contemporary English works---except for the most esoteric or specialized literature---contextual relations have been presumed not to require philological explication for English-speaking readers. However, texts whose contexts (or epistemologies) are distant from the best-trained readers require philological notes as an essential foundation for interpretation. In a multi-cultured world, a world of multiple epistemologies, there is need for a new philologist---a specialist in contextual relations---in all areas of knowledge in which text-building (written or oral) is a central activity: literature, history, law, music, politics, psychology, trade, even war and peace.

The specific activity of the philologist is contextualizing conceptually distant texts. For many philologists in the past that was the only goal, an annotated edition of a written or oral text. Some philologists, however, in the course of this activity and based upon it, have sought generalizations about the major constraints on text-building itself, the laws of grammar, poetics, narration, etc. Nowadays philology has been partitioned and distributed among various specialists. In the study of literature, there has developed a gulf between those who study particular texts (especially written texts) and those who study constraints on the activity of creating texts: the former

is usually part of the humanities (literary scholarship), the latter a science (linguistics).

In the study of texts, however, these two activities correct each other, since any meaningful activity is a conjunction of preexisting constraints (or rules, or structures, or laws, or myths) with the present, the unpredictable, particular *now*. In this way a text always----but to varying degrees----contextualizes the present in the past. (211-213).

Becker describes his use of the term constraints, of which prior text is one, in a footnote:

I am using the term *constraint* here in a special way which may puzzle some readers. The basic notion is from information theory. It is given wider relevance in Gregory Bateson's essay, *Cybernetic explanation* (1972:399-410). There Bateson uses the term *restraints*. I use the term *constraints* since it is current in linguistics and appears perfectly compatible with Bateson's term. The linguistic term first appeared to me in the work of John R. Ross and George Lakoff, where linguistic variables were not subject to rules but constraints with differing scope and force. Bateson writes (p. 399): "In cybernetic language, the course of events is said to be subject to *restraints*, and it is assumed that, apart from such restraints, the pathways of change would be governed only by equality of probability. In fact, the 'restraints' upon which cybernetic explanation depends can in all cases be regarded as factors which determine inequality of probability." Later, "Restrains of many different kinds may combine to generate this unique determination. For example, the selection of a piece for a given position in a jigsaw puzzle is

`restrained' by many factors. Its shape must conform to that of its several neighbors and possibly that of the boundary of the puzzle; its color must conform to the color pattern of its region; the orientation of its edges must obey the topological regularities set by the cutting machine in which the puzzle was made; and so on. From the point of view of the man who is trying to solve the puzzle, these are all clues, i.e., sources of information which will guide him in his selection. From the point of view of the cybernetic observer, they are *restraints*" (p. 400). In a text, or any unit of artistic expression, "constraints" are different in different languages, in all cultures, but it can be discovered by finding what the constraints on the text are, which is what this essay endeavors to do for *wayang* (213).

Becker continues his theoretical development, as follows:

Notice that language, in these instances and always, communicates on at least two levels, the actual surface content of the message (the proposition being asserted, requested, questioned, etc.) and the relational statements that are conveyed simultaneously, more often by intonation, posture, facial expression, and the like, than by direct statement. This relational communication has been called *metacommunication* by Gregory Bateson and others---- communication about relationships, about the context of the message. Hence in speaking the past, in prayer or small talk, too, we are communicating our relations to the hearer and the people or things referred to in the lexically expressed message. Ritual language speaks the past on the surface, but

conveys the present at the metalinguistic level.

.....

[[215]] All language activity, including literature, involves, then, variation between spontaneity (present) and repetition (past) and communicates on at least two levels, the lexically expressed message (L) and the relational message (Lm). Of course the lexically expressed message may be about the relationship, in which case a new relational communication is conveyed, leading, if repeated, to the sorts of linguistic involutions exposed by R. D. Laing (1970).

Various forms of indirect speech complicate the act of communication further by at least doubling every variable. Take a statement like the following:

"`You sound nervous,' she said, ironically."

This statement involves at least two speakers ("she" and the writer), two hearers ("you" and the "reader"), <I>*two lexical communications* ("You sound nervous" and "`You sound nervous' she said, ironically") and at least <i>four metacommunications</i> ("she" relating to "you"; "she" relating to the statement "you sound nervous"; the writer relating to the reader, pointing out the irony; and the writer relating to his statement: does the irony refer to "she" or to the whole statement, or, was she ironic or is the writer being ironic?). . . .The ambiguous term <i>ironically</i> may be a comment from the present in which the writer is writing, or a reported fact about "she." If "she" is being intentionally ironic, then "her" statement is probably not a spontaneous remark to "you" but perhaps a repeating of something said to her by "you" ("You" may have told "she" she

sounded nervous a few days before, and "she" is now ironically repeating the remark back to "you"). Fuller context is necessary to resolve *some* of the ambiguities; others are resolvable only in the imagination of the reader. As complex as this seems, all these relations and many more are necessarily part of the understanding of the statement.

To summarize, then, the analysis of a text requires, minimally, that the modern philologist describe several kinds of relations in order to recreate a conceptually distant context.

[[215]]

1. The relations of words, phrases, sentences, and larger units of the text to each other (i. e., the coherence of the text),
2. The relation of this text to other texts; [prior text] the extent that it is repetition or new (speaking the present or the past),
3. The relation of the author to both the text and the hearers/readers of the text--- seen from the point of view of the author or from the points of view of the hearers/readers (i.e., the intent of the text-builder),
4. The relation of units in the text to nonliterary events (i.e., reference).

Context, then, includes coherence, degree of repetition/ spontaneity, intent, and reference. Sorting out the *sources* of constraints on all these relations is a further task for the modern philologist: to what extent are the

constraints on these relations human (i.e., universal to all texts)? Or are they operative only within a single language family or cultural tradition, or within a single language, or only in a specific genre, or only in the works of one author? Any work is constrained at all these levels.

The methodology of this essay will be to describe, in the order just stated, the various sorts of relations a particular kind of text, the Javanese shadow play, has with its context. I have been able to isolate some of the generic constraints on contextual relations, and some of these above the generic, particularly at the level of the Javanese language itself. By implication, too, I reveal something of that area of variation constrained only by the individual performer (the dalang) [sic; no italics in original] in a particular place and time.

There are further comments about the literary nature of the Javanese puppet plays, as following his exposition, Becker comments on such topics as "Intentionality in a Text: The Uses of Texture" (230). The polysemy of Javanese wayang is described:

One of the first things a dalang learns is that not everyone will respond to a wayang in the same way. There is no assumption that everyone will be interested in the same things at the same time; someone will always be dozing. . . . Jokes, philosophy, action, poetic language, each has different appeal to different people, depending on their own mental makeup, . . . One responds according to his makeup. There can be no single, intended correct response to a play, no one complete interpretation. This multiplicity of events and perspectives builds the kind of thick texture that Javanese favor. As an old man responded when asked why he liked wayang, "Asalnya ramai!" ("Above all because it is bustling/complex/busy/beautiful!")(230).