

**PIRQEI DERABBI ELIEZER:
STRUCTURE, COHERENCE, INTERTEXTUALITY,
AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

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SCHOOL OF ARTS, LANGUAGES AND CULTURES

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Abbreviations

ARN A, B	‘Avot deRabbi Natan, recension A/א, B/ב
AHES	Archive for the History of Exact Sciences
AJSR	Association for Jewish Studies Review
AS	Aramaic Studies
BerR	Bere’shit Rabbah (Genesis Rabbah)
BJRULM	Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester
CCO	Collectanea Christiana Orientalia
DACL	Dictionnaire D’Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie
DJL	Das Jüdische Literaturblatt
EB	Estudios Bíblicos
EDSS	Encyclopaedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls
EHLL	Encyclopaedia of Hebrew Language and Linguistics
EI	Encyclopaedia of Islam
EJ	Encyclopaedia Judaica
EJAW	Encyclopaedia of the Jews in the Arab World
FJB	Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JJTP	Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy
JPA	Jewish Palestinian Aramaic
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSJF	Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore
JSQ	Jewish Studies Quarterly
Jub.	Jubilees

IA	Israelitische Annalen
LAB	Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum
LB	Linguistica Biblica
LLJA	Late Literary Jewish Aramaic
MY	Madda'ei ha-Yahadut
NRSVA	New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised
OJ	Onqelos-Jonathan dialect of Aramaic
PA	Pirquei 'Avot
PAAJR	Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research
PIBA	Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association
PNWCJS	Proceedings of the Ninth World Congress of Jewish Studies
PRE	Pirquei deRabbi Eliezer
PTWCJS	Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies
REJ	Revue des Études Juives
SER	Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah
SEZ	Seder Eliyyahu Zuta
SH	Scripta Hierosolymitana
SR	Studies in Religion / Sciences Religieuses
TAPJLA	Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature in Antiquity, c. 200 BCE to c. 700 CE, Project
TdBE	Tanna deBei Eliyyahu
Tg. Neof.	Targum Neofiti
Tg. Onq.	Targum Onqelos
Tg. Ps.-J.	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

Abstract

The present dissertation offers a literary profile of the enigmatic Gaonic era work known as *Pirquei de Rabbi Eliezer* (PRE). This profile is based on an approach informed by the methodology theorized in the Manchester-Durham Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature, c.200 BCE to c.700 CE, Project (TAPJLA). It is offered as a necessary prolegomenon to further research on contextualising PRE in relation to earlier Jewish tradition (both rabbinic and non-rabbinic), in relation to Jewish literature of the Gaonic period, and in relation to the historical development of Judaism in the early centuries of Islam.

Chapter 1 sets out the research question, surveys, and critiques existing work on PRE, and outlines the methodology.

Chapter 2 provides necessary background to the study of PRE, setting out the evidence with regard to its manuscripts and editions, its recensional and redactional history, its reception, and its language, content, dating, and provenance.

Chapters 3 and 4 are the core of the dissertation and contain the literary profile of PRE. Chapter 3 offers an essentially synchronic text-linguistic description of the work under the following headings: Perspective; PRE as Narrative; PRE as Commentary; PRE as Thematic Discourse; and Coherence. Chapter 4 offers an essentially diachronic discussion of PRE's intertexts, that is to say, other texts with which it has, or is alleged to have, a relationship. The texts selected for discussion are: the Hebrew Bible, Rabbinic Literature (both the classic rabbinic "canon" and "late midrash"), the Targum, the Pseudepigrapha, Piyyut, and certain Christian and Islamic traditions.

Chapter 5 offers conclusions in the form of a discussion of the implications of the literary profile presented in chapters 3-4 for the methodology of the TAPJLA Project, for the problem of the genre of PRE, and for the question of PRE's literary and historical context.

The substantial Appendix is integral to the argument. It sets out much of the raw data on which the argument is based. I have removed this data to an appendix so as not to impede the flow of the discussion in the main text. The Appendix also contains my entry for the TAPJLA database, to help illuminate the discussion of my methodology, and a copy of my published article on the cosmology of PRE, to provide further support for my analysis of this theme in PRE.

Declaration

I declare that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to the memory of my late grandparents,

Mathilde and Johannes Keim

and to the rest of my family,
who have always supported and encouraged me:

Jonathan Turner and Christa, Rhiannon, and Johanna Keim,

Esther and Peter Schäfer,

Erika and Wilhelm Lehr,

and my late Great Aunt, Lisa Gloser.

The Author

It was during my schooling in Hong Kong, where I was born and raised, that I first developed an interest in Judaism. I continued this interest during my BA in Religious and Theological Studies at the University of Cardiff (2005-2008), and acquired a competence in Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, and Biblical Greek. In 2008 I moved to Manchester to do the MA in Jewish Studies, supported by a Black Bursary from the Centre for Jewish Studies, taking courses on Dead Sea Scrolls, Jewish Law, Palestinian Jewish Aramaic Texts, as well as general method in the academic study of Judaism. In the course of my Master's programme I became interested specifically in Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer, and did my dissertation on "Pirke deRabbi Eliezer and the Second Temple Pseudepigrapha: Some Case Studies," which laid the groundwork for the present dissertation. After graduating from the MA programme with distinction in 2010, I began the present doctorate under the supervision of Professor Philip Alexander and Dr Renate Smithuis, supported by a Studentship from the School of Arts, Histories and Cultures, University of Manchester, and in the course of my study received a Doctoral Fellowship Award from a research funding body. During my doctoral programme I acted as Research Assistant on the AHRC Rylands Genizah Project, which gave me first-hand experience of Genizah manuscripts, and was involved in the AHRC project 'The Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature c.200 BCE to c. 700 CE' (TAPJLA), contributing the entry on PRE to its database. I also acted as Graduate Teaching Assistant for classes on Biblical Hebrew Language, Biblical Hebrew Texts, and Introduction to Judaism, as well as serving as an administrator for the Centre for Jewish Studies.

I presented the following papers on PRE to professional societies, and benefited from audience feedback on each occasion:

(1) "Cosmology as Science or Cosmology as Theology in Pirke deRabbi Eliezer." Presented at the annual meeting of the British Association of Jewish Studies. London, United Kingdom. 29 June 2012. Published with revisions as "Cosmology as Science or Cosmology as Theology? Reflections on the Astronomical Chapters of Pirke deRabbi Eliezer," in *Time, Astronomy and Calendars in the Jewish Tradition* (ed. Sacha Stern and Charles Burnett; Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2014), 41-64.

(2) "The Function of rabbinic attribution in Pirke deRabbi Eliezer." Presented at the annual international meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature. Amsterdam, Netherlands. 25 July 2012.

(3) "Pirke deRabbi Eliezer as a turning point in the development of Rabbinic

Midrash." Presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature. Chicago, IL, USA. 19 November 2012.

(4) "Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer and Bere'shit Rabbah: Intertextual Relations?" Presented with Prof. Philip Alexander (FBA) at the European Association for Jewish Studies Xth Congress. Paris, France. 24 July 2014.

(5) "The Role of Small Forms within the Thematic Discourse of Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer." Presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Biblical Literature. San Diego, CA, USA. 22-25 November 2014.

I presented the following papers to university seminars:

(6) "Pirke deRabbi Eliezer as a turning point in the development of Rabbinic Midrash." Presented to the Centre for Jewish Studies Research Seminar, University of Manchester. 8 November 2012.

(7) "Pirke deRabbi Eliezer and the Bible." Presented to the Ehrhardt Seminar, University of Manchester. 8 March 2013.

Chapter One:

Introduction

1.1 Research Question

Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer (hereafter PRE) has long been regarded as a curious work, an odd appendix to classical Midrash, not easy to parallel in form and content from the earlier Midrashim. It charts events from the creation of the world to the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness, with substantial and frequent digressions into other themes. It seems to show signs of being incomplete; it contains for example only eight of a projected ten descents of God; but how much further it may originally have continued into the biblical story no one has been able to say. Scholarly consensus assigns its composition to eighth or ninth century Palestine, but pseudepigraphically it is attributed to the late first to early second century Rabbi, Eliezer ben Hyrkanos.

PRE was considered an authentic rabbinic work in medieval times. It is quoted as a significant authority both on halakhah and aggadah by, among others, Rashi, Yehudah Halevi, and Maimonides (see 2.3 below), but while PRE extensively names Palestinian Rabbis and was transmitted in a rabbinic milieu, it is remarkable for incorporating an unusually broad range of traditions, not all of them rabbinic. The question of the sources of PRE has been hotly debated by scholars, and several studies have attempted to prove or disprove claims that it has drawn not only on classic rabbinic Midrash, but also on early Christian texts (including the Syriac *Cave*

of Treasures), the Piyyutim, the Heikhalot literature, Islamic tradition, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, and the Second Temple Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.

Though much valuable work has been done on PRE, particularly in recent years, any analysis of it from whatever angle (historical, literary, theological, and even textual and linguistic), has to be predicated on a clear understanding of its fundamental character as a literary work – its structure and literary integrity, its coherence or incoherence, its sources and relationship to cognate texts, its genre, and its overall argument or message, if it has one. These topics have not been tackled as thoroughly as they should have been (save, perhaps, for the question of its relationship to Second Temple pseudepigrapha, which has figured largely in recent debate), and because they have not, much research on PRE rests on rather shaky foundations. The fundamental problem is methodology. Even where literary problems have been considered at length, problems of methodology have not been adequately addressed. Discussions of genre have muddled up literary form and supposed authorial intention, and there has been a general failure to distinguish between synchronic and diachronic perspectives. It is precisely in the area of the literary character of PRE that the present dissertation seeks to make a contribution. It will attempt to apply a rigorous, descriptive approach. It is generally inspired by the Manchester-Durham Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature Project (see 1.3 below), specifically with regard to questions of structure, coherence, and intertextuality. Having profiled PRE, I will on the basis of this analysis offer some suggestions as to its genre and historical context.

After a survey and critique of the more important scholarship on PRE (1.2), I set out the methodology of the present thesis (1.3). This will involve a somewhat lengthy exposition of the Manchester-Durham Typology Project, and a definition of

my own approach, which, though indebted to it, does not follow it slavishly. Then follows chapter 2, in which I round up and set out the evidence that has been accumulated so far on PRE's text (2.1), its recension history (2.2), its reception (2.3), its language (2.4), its content (2.5), its dating (2.6), and its provenance (2.7). Though numerous fresh details are presented here, this work fundamentally presents a digest of the best current scholarship on these topics. Chapter 3 and chapter 4 are the heart of the thesis. Chapter 3 applies the methodological insights argued in 1.3 to a text-linguistic description of PRE, with particular attention to the perspective of the text (3.2), its text-type (narrative, commentary or thematic discourse (3.3 - 3.5)), and its coherence (3.6). Chapter 4 deals with intertextuality, that is to say it explores the nature of PRE's relationship to other texts, with which it manifests either verbal, thematic, or narrative overlaps. The intertexts investigated, indicative rather than exhaustive are: the Bible (4.2); rabbinic literature, both antecedent and contemporary (e.g. 'Avot deRabbi Natan, Bere'shit Rabbah, and Seder Eliyyahu Zuta) (4.3); Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (4.4); the Pseudepigrapha (4.5); Piyyut (4.6); and certain Christian and Islamic traditions (4.7). Finally, the detailed literary profiling performed in chapters 3 and 4 forms the basis for the concluding discussion of the genre and historical context of PRE (chapter 5), particularly on its place on the map of rabbinic literature of late antiquity and the early middle ages. A substantial appendix rounds out the dissertation. This is integral to the argument, and provides much of the hard evidence on which various assertions in the main text are based.

1.2 Survey and Critique of Existing Work¹

As will become clear from 2.1 - 2.3 below, PRE was a much copied, printed, and widely quoted text, but, as with so many rabbinic works, the historical analysis of it really only begins with the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholars of the nineteenth century. The “scientific” study of Rabbinic literature, of course, did not spring into being in the early nineteenth century fully armed, like Athena from the head of Zeus: there were antecedents in the writings of Azariah de Rossi and others,² but the first truly critical, modern treatment of PRE was offered by Leopold Zunz in his seminal *Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt* (1st ed, 1832; 2d ed, Frankfurt am Main, 1892; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1996), 283-90.³ This set the parameters within which other scholars worked: nearly seventy-five years later it remained the basic source for the long entry on PRE in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* of 1906. Zunz argued that PRE was not compiled by the second century Tanna Rabbi Eliezer but was a late and rather curious example of a rabbinic Midrash, produced (though he was not dogmatic about this) probably in Palestine in the early Islamic period. Most of what was written about PRE in the nineteenth century took the form of very short notices or articles, or passing references. Typical was the suggestion by Moritz Steinschneider in his *Mathematik bei den Juden* (Berlin/Leipzig, 1893; repr. Hildesheim: Georg Olms 1964), 44-48, that the astronomical chapters 6-8 were taken

¹ The present literature review is comprehensive, but not exhaustive. For other works see the Bibliography below.

² Though note how such an acutely critical mind as Azariah de Rossi's still accepted that Rabbi Eliezer was the author of PRE. De Rossi quotes frequently from PRE in his *Me'or 'Einayim*, especially the cosmological chapters. See Joanna Weinberg, *Azariah de' Rossi The Light of the Eyes, translated from the Hebrew with introductions and annotations* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001), 206, 225, 226, 228, 294, 373, 400, 491.

³ Chanoch Albeck offers some additions in his Hebrew translation of Zunz, *Ha-Derashot be-Yisra'el* (2nd ed; Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1947), 134-140.

over more or less intact from other sources – a comment of some interest for our discussion of these chapters below (3.6 - 4.2).⁴ The one extensive treatment was the Hebrew commentary, with introduction and notes, by Rabbi David Ben Judah Luria (the Radal), published in 1852, and reprinted several times since in Yeshivah editions. The Radal (1798-1855) was one of the great Torah scholars of his age, and his commentary on PRE is a mine of parallels and learned glosses which show some openness to critical scholarship, very much in the spirit of his mentor the Vilna Gaon. It was used by Gerald Friedlander in his ground-breaking 1916 English edition of PRE more than his explicit acknowledgements would suggest, and it remains worth consulting even today, but because of its conservative, traditional style, its influence on the academic literature has been limited.

It was Friedlander's *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer* of 1916 that marked the real turning-point in the study of PRE. This offered the first complete English translation of the work – indeed, the first complete rendering into any modern European language.⁵ Generally carefully and accurately done,⁶ the translation is accompanied by

⁴ See also, e.g., M. Greizenach, "Über die Kalenderregeln in den Pirke R. Elieser," *IA* 2 (1840): 140-41; S. Friedmann, "Zeit und Ort der Abfassung der Pirke Rabbi Elieser," *DJL* 8 (1879): 30-31; S.J. Fünin, "Quntres bein ha-peraqim: he'arot uve'urim le-Pirkei Rabbi Eli'ezer," *KJ* 1 (1886): 321-44; Israel Lévi, "Éléments chrétiens dans le Pirké Rabbi Eliézer," *REJ* 18 (1889): 86-89. For other pre-Friedlander references to PRE see Gerald Friedlander, *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer (The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great) according to the text of the manuscript belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna: Translated and annotated with Introduction and Indices* (London, 1916; repr. Sepher-Hermon Press: New York, 1981), xix, and the bibliography to the article "Pirḳe de Rabbi Eli'ezer" in the *Jewish Encyclopaedia* (1906).

⁵ There were Latin translations of PRE by the Swiss Protestant theologian and humanist Konrad Pellikan (*R. Eliezer filius Hircani: Liber Sententiarum Judaicarum*, Zürich 1546), and by Willem Henricus Vorstius, the son of the influential Arminian theologian Conrad Vorstius (*Chronologia sacra-profana a mundi conditu ad annum M. 5352 vel Christi 1592, dicta צמח דוד, Gemen Davidis, auctore R. David Ganz. Cui addita sunt Pirke vel Capitula R. Elieser; utraque ex Hebraeo in Latinum versa, & observationibus illustrata*, Lugduni Batavorum, 1644). Friedlander used Vorstius's translation. See further 2.3 below.

⁶ See the review by B. Halper: "Rezension: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, translated and annotated by Gerald

numerous footnotes, and a substantial introduction, which summarized scholarship on PRE up to that point in time. The footnotes contained glosses on textual difficulties, variant readings, and parallels, mainly drawn from rabbinic literature, but with a few references to the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha thrown in. Parallels to the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha were listed at length in the introduction (pp. xxi-li) – to Jubilees, 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, Testaments of the XII Patriarchs, 2 and 3 Baruch, Wisdom, the Book of Adam and Eve, and similar works – works that had become readily available through the efforts of R.H. Charles and others.⁷

The influence of Friedlander in raising the profile of PRE and making it readily accessible can hardly be overestimated. As far as many later scholars were concerned, Friedlander's translation *was* PRE, and few bothered to go behind it to the original Hebrew⁸. More recent translations into Spanish (M. Pérez Fernández, *Los Capítulos de Rabbi Eliezer: Pirke Rabbi Eliezer* (Valencia: Institución S. Jerónimo para la Investigación Bíblica, 1984), French (M.A. Ouaknin, A. Smilevitch, and P.-H. Salfati, *Pirké de Rabbi Eliezer: Leçons de Rabbi Eliezer (Traduction annotée)* (Paris: Verdier, 1991), and German (D. Börner-Klein, *Pirke de-Rabbi Elieser* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004)) are clearly indebted to it. Friedlander set out a comprehensive agenda for the study of

Friedlander, London, 1916." *JQR* 8 (1817-18): 477-95.

⁷ R.H. Charles published his great collection of apocrypha and pseudepigrapha three years before Friedlander's work appeared: R.H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (2 vols; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913).

⁸ Note how Michael Maher in his English translation of Pseudo-Jonathan to Genesis references PRE by the Friedlander page (*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis: Translated with Introduction and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible 1B; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992). A scholar of the calibre of Roger Le Déaut does the same (see *Targum du Pentateuque: I, Genèse*, (Source chrétiennes, Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1978).

PRE, on many points of which considerable progress has been made since his day, on others less so, though the issues raised remain important.

(1) Friedlander discusses the manuscripts and printed editions of PRE (pp. xiii-xv). I shall cover this subject in more detail in 2.1 below. Suffice to say here that there have been major advances since Friedlander, at least in the collection and identification of manuscripts of the work, though we still lack a critical edition. The most thorough discussion of the text-witnesses of PRE, and their relationship, is the recent Hebrew University doctorate by Eliezer Treitl (*Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer: Text, Redaction and a Sample Synopsis* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Department of Talmud and Halakhah/The Institute for Research of Eretz Israel, 2012)). He states that he has made a synopsis of the whole of PRE, but he presents in his dissertation only two sample portions of it, a complete synopsis of Chapter 26 (pp. 317-78) and a partial synopsis of Chapter 14 (pp. 379-402). As noted in 1.3.3 below the present study is based on the handy edition of Dagmar Börner-Klein, *Pirke de-Rabbi Elieser*.⁹

(2) Friedlander also deals with the structure of PRE (pp. xv-xviii). Recent extensive studies of PRE will all, to greater or lesser degree, touch on this topic. Again the fullest discussion is by Treitl, who adopts a thoroughgoing diachronic approach which solves the problems of the text largely in terms of its redactional history (see especially *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*, 43-171). He is much less concerned with trying to understand synchronically the coherence of its “final form”. See further 2.5 and 3.6.2 below. Interestingly, discussion of the structure and contents of PRE does not lead Friedlander to raise the question of the genre of the work. He seems to take it for granted that it is Midrash, and for him and for much subsequent scholarship

⁹ For a critical review of this see Rivka Kern Ulmer in *JAOS* 126, no. 3 (2006): 442-45.

that is regarded as an adequate genre-definition. Nowadays, however, Midrash has become a deeply problematic genre-category. There have been a number of studies of individual midrashim in PRE,¹⁰ and a more extensive monograph by Ute Bohmeier analyses the exegetical techniques of PRE chapters 1-24 and argues for their innovative character.¹¹ Steven Daniel Sacks, in *Midrash and Multiplicity: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Renewal of Rabbinic Interpretive Culture* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2009), also raises the question of the biblical hermeneutics of PRE and he too stresses their originality, seeing them as part of a process of renewal and innovation in rabbinic Bible-interpretation in the Gaonic era.

Others, recognizing that to classify PRE straightforwardly as Midrash is not unproblematic, have raised the possibility of reading it as some kind of narrative, e.g., as a type of Rewritten Bible. This approach is fundamental to the work of Rachel Adelman, who analyses PRE from a narratological and literary-analytical perspective, applying to it Bakhtin's concept of a "chronotope" to demonstrate its structural and narrative coherence.¹² Narrative aspects of PRE had already been touched upon in Joseph Heinemann's *Aggadot ve-Toledoteihen* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 181-99 and 242-47, in Joseph Dan's *The Hebrew Story in the Middle Ages* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974. (Hebrew)), *passim*, and in Jacob Elbaum's influential essay,

¹⁰ See, e.g., Lewis M. Barth, "Abraham's Eighth Trial: A Comparison of Two Versions," *PTWCJS* 1 (Jerusalem: World Congress of Jewish Studies, 1990): 125-32 (Hebrew).

¹¹ Ute Bohmeier, *Exegetische Methodik in Pirke de-Rabbi Elieser, Kapitel 1-24 nach der Edition Venedig 1544, unter berucksichtigung der Edition Warschau 1852* (Frankfurt aM.: Peter Lang, 2008). See further 4.2 below.

¹² Rachel Adelman, *The Poetics of Time and Space in the Midrashic Narrative – The Case of Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer*, Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2008; Adelman, "Midrash, Myth, and Bakhtin's chronotope: the itinerant well and the foundation stone in 'Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer'," *JJTP* 17:2 (2009): 143-76; Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009).

“Rhetoric, Motif and Subject-Matter – Towards an analysis of narrative technique in Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer,” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 13-14 (1991-92): 99-126 (Hebrew). Links with folklore are posited by Dina Stein in her doctoral dissertation, *Folklore Elements in Late Midrash: A Folkloristic Perspective on Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1998), reworked in her monograph *Maxims, Magic, Myth: A Folkloristic Perspective on Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* (Magnes Press: Jerusalem, 2004 (Hebrew)).

(3) Friedlander discusses the relationship of PRE to various corpora of rabbinic literature – notably Talmud, Targum, and Midrash (pp xix-xx, and *passim* in the footnotes to his translation). The relationship of PRE to classic rabbinic literature has become a hotly debated topic, which has been treated by, among others, Joseph Heinemann (“‘Ibbudei aggadot qedumot be-ruaḥ ha-zeman be-Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer”, in *Simon Halkin Jubilee Volume* (ed. Boaz Shakhevitch and Menahem Peri; Rubin Mass: Jerusalem, 1975), 321-43 (Hebrew)), Jeffrey Lawrence Rubenstein (“From Mythic Motifs to Sustained Myth: The Revision of Rabbinic Traditions in Medieval Midrashim,” *HTR* 89:2 (1996): 131-59), and by Sacks, *Midrash and Multiplicity* (see further 4.3 below). The problem is compounded by the fact that there seems to be so much tradition in PRE that is *not* paralleled in Rabbinic literature, at least as we now have it, but is found in Second Temple texts (see 4.5 below). PRE’s relationship to Targum, and particularly the late Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, which also seems to pick up Second Temple traditions, is the subject of extensive discussion by M. Ohana, Miguel Pérez Fernández, Robert Hayward, and Avigdor Shinan¹³ (see further 4.4 below). Friedlander also raises briefly the question

¹³ M. Ohana, “La polémique judéo-islamique et l’image d’Ishmaël dans le Targum Pseudo-Jonathan et dans Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer,” *Augustinianum* 15 (1975): 367-87; Miguel Pérez Fernández, “Targum y Midrás sobre Gn 1:26-27, 2:7, 3:7,21: la creación de Adam en el Targum de Pseudo-Jonatán y en Pirqué

of the relationship between PRE and piyyut (p. xx). He is inclined to follow Zunz's view that PRE or, more cautiously, the rabbinic traditions it follows, are the source of the parallels to PRE in the piyyutim, rather than the other way round. Treitl adds to the list of parallels, and argues that in two cases PRE clearly depends on Yannai, thus suggesting that the dependency goes the other way.¹⁴ The study of piyyut in general has advanced strongly since Friedlander's time,¹⁵ but discussions of the "sources" of the piyyutim still tend to assume that, where parallels with rabbinic literature exist, the rabbinic tradition is original, and the paytanim have borrowed it.¹⁶ In the light of recent work on the complexity of Judaism in late antiquity (even within the borders of Palestine) this assumption has to be challenged and the question of the relationship of PRE to Piyyut rethought (see further 4.6 below).

(4) These corpora are, generally-speaking, antecedent to or contemporary with PRE, and so represent texts that potentially might have been known to the

de Rabbi Eliezer," in *Salvación en la palabra: Targum – Derash – Berith: En memoria del Professor Alejandro Díez Macho* (ed. D. Muñoz León; Madrid: Ediciones cristiandad, 1986), 471-88; Pérez Fernández, "Sobre los textos mesiánicos del Targum Pseudo-Jonathan y del Midrás Pirqé de Rabbi Eliezer," *EB* 45:1-2 (1987): 471-88; see also the introduction to his *Los Capítulos de Rabbi Eliezer*, *passim*; Robert Hayward, "Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan," *JJS* 42:2 (1991): 215-46; repr., in *Targum and the Transmission of Scripture into Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Avigdor Shinan, *The Embroidered Targum: The Aggadah in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), 176-85 (Hebrew); Shinan, "The Relationship between Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Midrash Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer," *Teuda* 11 (1996): 231-43 (Hebrew).

¹⁴ Treitl, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 256-66. See further Joseph Yahalom, *Poetry and Society in Jewish Galilee of Late Antiquity* (Tel Aviv: Hakkibutz Hameuchad, 1999), 129-36 (Hebrew).

¹⁵ See Leon J. Weinberger, *Jewish Hymnography: A Literary History* (Oxford: Littman Library, 1998); Wout van Bekkum, "The Future of Ancient Piyyut," in *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late Roman Palestine* (ed. Martin Goodman and Philip Alexander; Oxford: British Academy / Oxford University Press, 2011), 217-234. Further bibliography in: Eyal Ben-Eliyahu, Yehudah Cohn, and Fergus Millar, *Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity* (Oxford: The British Academy / Oxford University Press, 2012), 129-38.

¹⁶ Typical of this approach is Z.M. Rabinowitz, *Halakha and Aggada in the Liturgical Poetry of Yannai: The Sources, Language and Period of the Payyetan* (Kohut Foundation: New York, 1965) (Hebrew).

author and drawn on by him. Friedlander also mentions texts that are later than PRE which either explicitly refer to it or possibly quote from it. We would now tend to consider this material under reception-history – an approach to the Bible and other ancient texts which has received increasing attention in recent years. Friedlander notes some medieval writers who quote PRE as an authority, and devotes an important few paragraphs to the possible influence of PRE on the synagogue liturgy (pp. xviii, xx-xxi). There is little progress to report specifically on the reception-history of PRE since the time of Friedlander, though there has been some work on its commentaries,¹⁷ and on individual cases of its influence, including its possible use by John Milton¹⁸ (see further 2.3 below).

(5) As noted above, Friedlander devotes a long section of his introduction to listing the parallels between PRE, on the one hand, and the Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha, on the other. This has been a major topic in more recent research. It is discussed at length by, among others, Anna Urowitz-Freudenstein,¹⁹ and by Rachel Adelman (*The Return of the Repressed*). There has been a marked tendency in recent work on this topic to query the strength of many of the parallels alleged by Friedlander and others. Adelman, for example, while she acknowledges that there are similarities between the Pseudepigrapha and PRE, suggests that the author of PRE drew on “repressed” readings of the Torah, in order to re-appropriate them for

¹⁷ E.g. D. Blumenthal, “The Rationalistic Commentary of Ḥoṭer Ben Shelomo to Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer,” *Tarbiz* 48 (1978-79): 99-106 (Hebrew).

¹⁸ See Golda Werman, *Milton and Midrash* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1995). Further, Jeffrey S. Shoulson, *Milton and the Rabbis: Hebraism, Hellenism, and Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

¹⁹ In “Pseudepigraphic Support of Pseudepigraphical Sources: The case of ‘Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer’,” in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (ed. John C. Reeves; Scholars Press: Atlanata, 1994), 35-53.

his text, and that these readings though similar to, are nevertheless essentially independent of, the parallels found in the Pseudepigrapha. Friedlander's long lists of parallels, typical of the scholarship of his time,²⁰ are not a little vitiated by parallelomania, and need to be evaluated with great care (see further 4.5 below).

(6) Friedlander raised the question of the relationship of PRE to both Islamic and Christian tradition, and to possible polemical elements, at least against Islam, in the work (pp. lii-liv, *passim*). Here considerable strides have been made towards clarifying this problem. The Islamic references in PRE are clear, so clear that there can be little doubt that the work was composed in an Islamic milieu. Bernard Heller published a pioneering essay in 1925 on "Muhammedanisches und Antimuhammadanisches in den Pirke R. Eliezer," *MGWJ* 69 (1925): 47-54, and this has been followed more recently by a study by John Reeves in his *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Society of Biblical Literature: Atlanta, 2005), 67-76, which sets the apocalypse in PRE 30 in the context of the apocalyptic revival in Judaism in the early Islamic period. The most wide-ranging and important contribution to the subject is Carol Bakchos's *Ishmael on the Border: Rabbinic Portrayals of the First Arab* (SUNY Press: Albany, NY, 2006).²¹ The relationship of PRE to Christian tradition is more problematic, because, as Friedlander observes (p. lv), there are no direct references to it in PRE. Nevertheless

²⁰ Cf., e.g., the long lists of parallels to 1 Enoch in Charles, *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, 177-84.

²¹ See also Carol Bakchos, "Abraham visits Ishmael: A revisit," *JSJ* 38 2007: 553-80. Further, A Schussman, "Abraham's Visits to Ishmael -- The Jewish Origin and Orientation," *Tarbiz* 49 (1979-80): 325-45 (Hebrew) Note G.D. Newby, "Text and Territory: Jewish-Muslim Relations 632-750 CE," in *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interactions. Essays in Honour of William M. Brinner* (ed. Benjamin H. Hary, John L. Hayes, and Fred Astern; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 83-96. Also relevant are: M. Ohana, "La polémique,"; Robert Hayward, "Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Anti-Islamic Polemic," *JSS* 34 (1989): 77-93.

he lists some aggadic parallels between PRE and Christian literature (p. liii), without attempting to make anything of them. Already in 1889 Israel Lévi had raised the question of Christian influence on PRE (“Éléments chrétiens dans le Pirké Rabbi Eliézer”), and more recent research has served only to strengthen this possibility. Note, in particular, Helen Spurling and Emmanouela Grypeou, “Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and Eastern Christian Exegesis,” *CCO* 4 (2008): 217-43. Syriac Christian sources are potentially a “happy hunting ground” here (Friedlander himself had already noted, without listing them, that there are interesting parallels between PRE and the Syriac Cave of Treasures: p. lii).²² It has long been suggested that the reference to the death and resurrection of Isaac in PRE’s version of the ‘Aqedah, has an anti-Christian thrust.²³ (On PRE’s relationship to both Christianity and Islam see further 4.7 and 5 below).²⁴

(7) Friedlander (pp. liii-lv) offers a careful discussion of the date and provenance of PRE. He places its final redaction in Palestine “probably either in the

²² For orientation see: Günter Stemberger, “Exegetical Contacts between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire,” in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of its Interpretation*, vol. 1/1 (ed. Magne Sæbø; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 569-86. The lion’s share of the research has concentrated on the exegetical encounter between Christianity and Judaism *before* the rise of Islam. There has been much less work on the ongoing encounter in the early Islamic period, and on how the rise of Islam may have changed “the terms of trade”. See further 4.7 below.

²³ See S. Spiegel, *The Last Trial: On the Legends and Lore of the Command to Abraham to Offer Isaac as a Sacrifice: The Akedah* (New York: Schocken, 1967), 44; Edward Kessler, *Bound by the Bible: Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 128-29. Further, Lewis M. Barth, “Introducing the Aqedah: A Comparison of Two Midrashic Presentations,” in *A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History* (ed. Philip R. Davies and Richard T. White; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 125-38; Barth, “Textual Transformations: Rabbinic Exegesis of Gen. 22:14,” in *Bits of Honey: Essays for Samson H. Levey* (ed. Stanley F. Chyet and David H. Ellenson; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 3-24.

²⁴ Friedlander remarks that “the Koran and its famous commentaries, contain much material common with our ‘Chapters’” (p. lii), but gives no examples. He may be thinking of Abraham Geiger’s *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen* (1st ed 1833; 2d ed, Leipzig: M.W. Kaufmann, 1902), where he argues that the Koran borrowed a number of traditions from PRE.

second or third decade of the ninth century”, though he allows that its compiler drew on traditions which originated much earlier. In this conclusion he has not moved much beyond Zunz, though he provides additional arguments. More recent dates have not strayed far from this, though some push PRE back into the first Islamic century, and others to the second (see further 2.6 below).²⁵

(8) Friedlander devotes a few paragraphs to the “Theology of *P.R.E.*” (pp. lvi). He lists some of the key themes of the work, but says nothing much about them. Little progress has been made in the detailed study of the thematic repertory of PRE, at least in the context of understanding its *overall* message and thematic coherence. Two themes, however, have received some detailed treatment. The first is its messianism. Reeves’s study of the messianic section in chapter 30 has already been mentioned (*Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*: 67-76). Adelman (*The Return of the Repressed*) regards eschatology as the key to the work. She argues that the author of PRE deliberately crafted a work of fiction in response to his fear of the imminence of the *eschaton*, plotting the *Heilsgeschichte* from the creation to the *eschaton* along the narrative line of “Urzeit” equals “Endzeit”. Note also: Miguel Pérez Fernández, “Sobre los textos mesiánicos del Targum Pseudo-Jonathan y el Midrás Pirqé de Rabbi Eliezer”; and Jacob Elbaum, “Messianism in Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer: Apocalypse and Midrash,” *Teudah* 11 (1996): 245-66 (Hebrew). See further 3.6 - 4.4 below.

²⁵ See the discussion in Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch* (C.H. Beck: München, 2011): 365-66). Moshe David Herr, in the entry on PRE in *EJ* 13: 558-60 dates it to the first half of the eighth century.

The second theme in PRE is cosmology, and within that particularly PRE's treatment of the calendar in chapters 6-8.²⁶ PRE's calendar had already the subject of short notes by M. Greizenach, "Über die Kalenderregeln in den Pirke R. Elieser," in *Israelitische Annalen* 2 (1840): 140-41, and by S. Sachs, "Bemerkungen über das gegenseitige Verhältnis der Baraita des Samuel und der Pirke deR, Elieser," in *the MGWJ* 1 (1852): 277-82. Steinschneider's brief discussion of it in his *Mathematik bei den Juden* of 1893 has already been mentioned. It can now be much more securely contextualized in the history of the Jewish calendar as the result of Sacha Stern's calendrical researches, though he only briefly alludes to PRE in his *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendars Second Century BCE – Tenth Century CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 203-04. The thematic and theological significance of the scientific turn in PRE can be seen when it is considered in the light of the ongoing debate on the origins of Jewish interest in science sparked by Philip Alexander's essay "Enoch and the Beginnings of Jewish Interest in Natural Science," in *The Wisdom Texts from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought* (ed. C. Hempel. A. Lange, and H. Lichtenberger; Peters: Leuven, 2002), 223-43).²⁷ See my article, "Cosmology as Science or Cosmology as Theology? Reflections on the Astronomical Chapters of Pirke DeRabbi Eliezer," in *Time, Astronomy, and Calendars*

²⁶ This is not actually isolated as a theme of PRE by Friedlander, but his notes on the calendrical chapters are especially copious and valuable.

²⁷ Reprinted in Jonathan Ben-Dov and Seth Sanders, eds., *Ancient Jewish Sciences and the History of Knowledge in Second Temple Literature* (New York: NYU Press, 2014), 27-52, which contains a series of papers to greater or lesser degree responding to Alexander's essay. See further: Annette Yoshiko Reed, "Was there Science in Ancient Judaism? Historical and Cross-cultural reflections on 'religion' and 'science'," *SR* 36 (2007): 461-95; Reed, "From 'Pre-emptive Exegesis' to 'Pre-Emptive Speculation'? Ma'aseh Bere'shit in Genesis Rabbah and Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer," in *With Letters of Light—Otiyot Shel Or: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic and Mysticism* (ed. Daphna V. Arbel, Andrei Orlov, and Rachel Elijor; Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 115-32; Reed, "'Who can recount the Mighty Acts of the Lord?' Cosmology and Authority in Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer 1-3," *HUCA* 80 (2009): 115-41.

in the Jewish Tradition (ed. Sacha Stern and Charles Burnett; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 41-64. See further 3.6.4.2, 4.3.1, and 4.6 below.

(9) Finally we should note that there is one topic which does not receive any discussion in Friedlander but which should be on the agenda of any comprehensive study of PRE, and that is its language. For Friedlander, the language of PRE did not seem to be worth discussing because to him it is unproblematic. It is in a form of Rabbinic Hebrew, which is by and large elegant and clear. While this is true, there is more to be said about PRE's Hebrew. Although there have been very significant advances in our understanding of postbiblical Hebrew, both rabbinic and medieval,²⁸ there is little advance to be reported specifically on the study of the Hebrew of PRE, apart from chapters 10 and 14 of Eliezer Treitl's dissertation (*Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer: Text, Redaction and a Sample Synopsis*, pp. 171-201 and 267-78), the former devoted to identifying certain unique phrases which are characteristic of the composition, and which suggest a single authorship, the latter more generally to the language and vocabulary of PRE. See further 2.4 below.

Using, then, as a baseline the agenda set by Friedlander in his groundbreaking 1916 study of PRE, we can measure the progress that has been made since. It has been patchy and much remains to be done. In some cases great strides have been made: e.g., in the areas of PRE and rabbinic literature, PRE and Targum, PRE and the Pseudepigrapha, PRE and Islam. In others, though the field has advanced, the new knowledge and insights have not yet been fully applied to the understanding of PRE: text, language, genre, and reception-history are cases in

²⁸ For an overview see Angel Sáenz-Badillos, *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 161-201 (on Rabbinic Hebrew), and 202-206 (on Medieval Hebrew); Geoffrey Khan, ed., *Encyclopaedia of the Hebrew Language and Linguistics* (Leiden: Brill, 2012).

point. There are signs that the recent upsurge of interest in PRE, signalled by the substantial and important monographs of Adelman, Sacks, Stein, Bakhos, and Treitl is being sustained. At the EAJIS conference in Paris in July 2014 no less than six papers referenced the work.²⁹ However, further progress will depend on two things. First, the creation of a throughgoing critical edition of PRE which not only lays out the text-witnesses but also establishes their relationship and recension history, and so allows us to evaluate the textual basis for any claims we make.³⁰ And second, the development of a rigorous methodology which clarifies the structure, coherence and genre of the work, and so allows us to locate it securely on the map of Jewish literature in the late ancient and early medieval periods. It is in this latter area in particular that the present dissertation seeks to make a contribution.

²⁹ The following relevant papers were presented to the Xth Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies in Paris, 20-24 July 2014: Lennart Lehmhaus (Freie Universität Berlin), "Late Midrashic Texts as Terra Incognita? A Second Look on Literary Strategies and Developments in Jewish Traditions in the Gaonic Period" (Tuesday 22 July); Carol Bakhos (UCLA), "Transmitting Early Jewish Literature: The Case of Jubilees in Medieval Jewish and Islamic Sources" (Thursday 24 July); Sacha Stern (University College London), "Pirquei deRabbi Eliezer and the 19-year Cycle" (Thursday 24 July). There was also a panel on Thursday 24 July dedicated to the subject of 'Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer at the Crossroads of Cultures', organized by Gavin McDowell including the following presentations: Rachel Adelman (Hebrew College, Boston), "The Fate of the First Clothing"; Philip Alexander and Katharina Keim, "Pirquei de Rabbi Eliezer and Bere'shit Rabbah: Intertextual Relations?"; Gavin McDowell (École Pratique des Hautes Etudes), "Christian Legend and Anti-Christian Polemic in Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer". Furthermore, PRE came up in the questions following a number of other papers, indicating a growing and significant interest in the text by scholars of rabbinic literature and so-called 'late midrash'.

³⁰ Such a critical edition would almost certainly be best suited to presentation in an electronic format. There are a number of current digitisation projects which could model such work. See further fn. 12 (p. 62) in section 2.1.4 below.

1.3 Methodology of Present Thesis

1.3.1 Introduction

My research on PRE coincided with the Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature in Antiquity, c. 200 BCE to c. 700 CE, Project (hereafter TAPJLA) – a collaboration between the universities of Manchester and Durham, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council between 2007 and 2011. The principal investigator was Alexander Samely (Manchester), and the co-investigators Philip Alexander (Manchester) and Robert Hayward (Durham). The post-doctoral research assistant was Rocco Bernasconi. Other scholars who provided valuable input as the project developed were George Brooke, Günter Stemberger and Shamma Friedman. The main outcomes were a volume, *Profiling Jewish Literature: An Inventory, from Second Temple Texts to the Talmuds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), authored by Samely in collaboration with Alexander, Hayward and Bernasconi, in which the philosophy of the project is explained at length (and argued), and a website comprising a database of Jewish texts profiled according to the project's Inventory (see the Project's website: www.manchester.ac.uk/ancientjewishliterature; see also the website for the Database: <http://literarydatabase.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/>). Three doctorates were completed in the shadow, so to speak, of the project, by Hedva Abel, Aron Sterk, and myself. I contributed a profile of PRE for the database, which is reproduced in the **Appendix A** below.

I was continually involved in the theoretical discussions which accompanied the development of the TAPJLA project, and they deeply informed my approach to PRE. Much of the theoretical underpinning of the analysis offered below can be

found in the project, which helped me to articulate the dissatisfaction I felt with much of the existing scholarly discussion of the genre of PRE, e.g. the application to it of labels such as “Midrash” or “Rewritten Bible”, two widespread categorisations found in the literature. I have certainly embraced the fundamental principle on which the project is based, viz., that one cannot accept ancient genre-labels as an accurate statement of the genre of a text, since those labels, assuming they convey much meaning at all, are very imprecise and often confound prescription with description (see further 5.1 below). The correct approach must be to take the text as it lies before us and describe in as precise and neutral a way as possible its surface literary characteristics, trying not to contaminate the strictly synchronic description with diachronic perspectives. Only when we have successfully achieved such a description (a literary profile) can we move on to questions of the genre, meaning, and even the historical context of any given work. However, in applying the TAPJLA methodology, in its present form, to PRE I encountered a number of problems which forced me to modify the approach, in general, away from purism to pragmatism, and this is why I would say that TAPJLA has *informed* my analysis rather than controlled it. To explain this I will offer first an exposition of the TAPJLA method and then present a short critique of it, in the light of my attempt to apply it to PRE.

1.3.2 Basic Principles

The TAPJLA project arose out of a profound dissatisfaction with the way ancient Jewish texts are analysed, and in particular with how they are classified. Widespread classifications, whether traditional or scholarly, are determined by the application of mixed criteria. Some are based fundamentally on content: e.g., apocalypse, biography, wisdom. Others are based on form: e.g., hymn, diatribe, letter. Still others

are based on function / *Sitz im Leben*: e.g. apology, polemic, petition. These three criteria do not always sit easily together. The same subject matter can be presented in a variety of literary forms. If we prioritise subject-matter in our classification, does this mean we are downgrading form? Conversely, if we prioritise form, does this mean we are downgrading subject-matter? And if we are, how can we objectively justify our preferences? To compare texts classified according to different criteria with one another is to compare chalk and cheese. The answer to this problem is to use a consistent set of criteria to classify all texts. The process should begin with the literary surface, and with what is encoded there. It should be synchronic, that is to say, it should not, at least initially, look *behind* the text to find historical explanations for its present form; it should focus on the final-form lying before the reader. Nor should it look *beyond* the text to its putative historical *Sitz im Leben* or social function to explain its literary features, if the text itself does not make this reference. It should be concerned with describing in as neutral but precise language as possible exactly what lies on the face of the text.

1.3.3 The Corpus

The project is corpus based, and the corpus somewhat arbitrarily defined. It includes all the surviving Jewish texts written between c. 200 BCE and 700 CE that are anonymous or pseudepigraphic – the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, the apocalypses, Hellenistic Jewish literature where the author is not known, Dead Sea Scrolls, and classic rabbinic texts. It excludes the extensive writings of Josephus and Philo. There appears to be no deep philosophical reason for this; it is practical, and aimed fundamentally at keeping the corpus within manageable proportions, though it may express an intuition that texts with identifiable historical authors such as Philo and Josephus, pose qualitatively

different literary problems from those that are anonymous or pseudepigraphic. The limitation is practical. There is no reason why the approach should not be applied to authored texts, or to other corpora, and, if it were, it would unquestionably be refined in the light of that analysis.

The pragmatic nature of the corpus comes out in other ways. The compilers did not agonize much about the Jewishness of a text. This is a matter of intense debate in the case of some of the pseudepigrapha, which certainly in their present form are Christian rather than Jewish (e.g. *Ascension of Isaiah*).³¹ The dates are also interpreted somewhat flexibly. Thus *Pesiqta Rabbati* and *PRE* almost certainly were written after 700 CE, but are included. At the other end of the spectrum the Book of Daniel is excluded, despite the fact that it was almost certainly composed after 200 BCE, and is younger than 1 Enoch (or major parts of it) which *is* included. The decision was made to exclude any biblical text, even when there were scholarly grounds for thinking that its composition fell within the time-frame of the corpus. To gain entry a work has to be literary in character, and so documentary texts (such as inscriptions and papyrus letters) are ignored, and the work has to be more or less complete, since it is almost impossible to talk sensibly about the structure and coherence of a very fragmentary text (though some incomplete texts are listed where they illustrated important points). The problem of translation is effectively ignored. A significant proportion of texts in the corpus exist only in translation. They are still deemed worth profiling, because the literary features on which the profile is based are, by and large, characteristics that would survive translation. The corpus, then, is practical; it is aimed at creating an inventory of sufficient complexity to illustrate a

³¹ See James R. Davila, *The Provenance of the Pseudepigrapha: Jewish, Christian, or Other?* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2005).

wide range of text-linguistic features found in early Jewish literature, and to generate a significant number of different literary profiles.

1.3.4 The Inventory

Having established a corpus, the texts were closely read and their literary features (some 560 in total) identified, defined, and grouped hierarchically together under the following eight major thematic heads in an “Inventory of Structurally Important Literary Features in the Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity”:

A. Self-presentation:

- (1) the self-presentation of the text as a verbal entity.

B. Perspective:

- (2) the perspective and knowledge-horizon of the governing voice.

C. Form of the Main Body of the Text:

- (3) the formation of the text’s body by poetic or rhetorical-communicative forms.

D. Subject matter types and treatments:

- (4) narrative coherence and narrative aggregation;
- (5) thematic coherence and aggregation in discussion or description;
- (6) meta-linguistic structuring of a text according to another text.

E. Relationships between texts:

(7) correspondences and wording-overlap between texts.

F. Small forms and small-scale coherence relations:

(8) characteristic small forms on the level of the governing voice;

(9) characteristic small-scale coherence and aggregation between adjacent text-parts, or thematic parts of narrative texts.

G. Higher-level aggregates:

(10) compounds of juxtaposed part-texts.

H. Labels for classifying the contents and general character:

(11) dominant contents of a text;

(12) sampling of scholarly genre labels.

I will expand a little on these for the sake of greater clarity.

“A. Self-presentation” relates to how a text presents itself on the surface to the reader, whether it announces boundaries or limits, whether it refers to itself as a literary or verbal entity. It may, for example, announce itself as a “book”, or a “song”, or state its subject-matter, or outline what it is going to say. These projections by the text of self-awareness and boundedness are significant for the perception of its completeness and coherence.³² They send out signals to the projected addressee, raising expectations regarding the contents and limits of the work. If a text announces in summary form the topics it intends to cover, it sows in the reader’s mind the expectation that these will be touched upon before the work concludes, and if they are not, then the reader will have a sense that the text is in

³² Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature*, 90.

some way incomplete. Thus the reader is invited to participate in the construction of the text: if the text itself raises expectations which it then fulfils, the reader will be encouraged to see it as complete and coherent; if it raises expectations that it does not fulfil then the reader may well decide that it is incomplete and to a certain degree incoherent.³³

“B. Perspective” is concerned with what the text reveals about the perspective and knowledge horizon of the governing voice. Does the governing voice indicate how it came to know the information it presents in the text, and what the limits of its knowledge might be? Does the text presuppose a knowledge horizon, and if it does, does it expect (implicitly or explicitly) that that horizon will be shared by its projected addressee? Thus does it expect the reader without glossing or explanation to decode code-names such as Edom = Christianity, to know who biblical characters are, to understand calendar dates, special linguistic usages, technical religious terms and expressions, etc.? Does the text explicitly identify its projected addressee (e.g. “O Men of Israel”)? The inclusion or exclusion of such text-linguistic information relating to the perspective of the text is vital for constructing its governing voice and projected readership.

“C. Form of the main body of the text” is concerned with whether or not the text has a recognisable poetic or rhetorical-communicative form. These forms, on the whole, will be pre-set, that is to say, they will be rhetorical / poetic structures which are known to the reader from literature he or she already knows, e.g. a psalm, or a sermon (such as a *petihah*), but one has to be careful here not to suppose that such rhetorical structures were rigidly defined in early Jewish literary culture. They were

³³ Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature*, 89-91.

not even well defined in Greek literary culture, where there were rhetorical schools, which supposedly taught prescriptively how certain literary forms (e.g. speeches and their constituent parts) should be constructed. This is a problem with much rhetorical criticism of the Bible, whether it be classic form-critical analysis of the Psalms, or rhetorical criticism of the Pauline letters in the New Testament. The passing on of rhetorical forms in Jewish literary culture, and probably also to a large extent in Greek literary culture, was by mimesis – by the later writer copying and adapting literary forms he knew from antecedent examples (see 5.2 below). The Inventory is noticeably careful not to assume that the pre-set literary forms are rigid, and this explains the rather tortured obliqueness of its language at this point. Poetry, for example, will be recognised mainly by the existence of metre and parallelism, rather than by overall literary structure and form. The reader will recognise that a given piece is “psalm-like”, because it resembles in certain ways the biblical psalms, not because it follows a rigid poetic form (like, e.g., a sonnet).

“D. Subject-matter types and treatments” is the central section of the Inventory and the one I found most useful in my analysis of PRE. The vast majority of the texts in the database (if not, indeed, *all*) will profile under this or the following category (E). It envisages three major types of text which we may call (not precisely the terminology of the Inventory) narrative, thematic discourse, and commentary.

Narrative (section 4) embraces those cases where the text is dominated by strongly emplotted episodes. Is there one central narrative or are several narrative strands woven together? Does the narrative build towards a climax, and is there clear closure? How is time handled in the narrative? How is character handled, e.g. how many characters are involved and how are their relationships described? Are they noted for moral or religious traits? Is there extensive description of locations,

buildings (e.g. the heavenly temple) or objects (e.g. the heavenly chariot)? Important also is the role of the narrator, whose voice may, confusingly, from a modern perspective, mutate at various points from the first to the third person, or vice versa. In other words this section of the Inventory deals with what can be seen as the bread-and-butter of narrative criticism, though one has to be careful not to project modern readerly expectations of narrative back onto ancient texts, a point to which I will return in a moment.

Thematic discourse (section 5) embraces those texts which are predominantly non-narrative, but deal with a topic or series of topics in a more or less orderly way. What are the themes dealt with in the text, and how are they ordered? The order may be analytical and logical and involve superordinate and subordinate propositions hierarchically arranged, but this does not have to be the case. Other ordering principles may be adopted. "The text's sequence of sub-topics ... mirrors a temporal or spatial order ... or it mirrors the sequence of units of meaning in another text, from single words to whole books, while not reproducing the relationship between those units, nor using quotations from it as lemmatic progression", which would come under section 6, "nor creating narrative emplotment".³⁴ This last case is of particular relevance to PRE since it describes well the overarching order of its topics, which are broadly dictated by the biblical text of Genesis and Exodus, while at the same time it does not reproduce the biblical narrative and for this reason cannot easily be classified as "rewritten Bible". More on this below.

Commentary (section 6) embraces those texts which are extensively or systematically structured by another text in such a way that they provide a

³⁴ Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature*, 49.

commentary of some sort on that base text. There are only two texts in early Judaism which receive this treatment, viz., Tanakh (and especially, within Tanakh, Torah), and Mishnah, but the class of texts which fall under this category is very large because Jewish literary output, like so much literary output in the late-ancient Mediterranean world, was concerned with the elucidation of canonic texts. The Inventory recognises two main subtypes under this category: lemmatic commentary (6.1) and translation (6.13). An obvious example of the former would be a classic rabbinic midrash such Bere'shit Rabbah (BerR), and of the latter, Targum Onqelos to Genesis. Though the role of Genesis in structuring the Midrash and the Targum in both these examples seems obvious, they actually represent, from a text-linguistic perspective, two sharply different cases. In the case of the Midrash, the biblical text is integral to the form of the text. In the case of the Targum it is not. Now it is true that Targum manuscripts do represent the biblical text, either fully or in abbreviated lemmatic form, but the Targum itself remains capable of standing on its own and would make perfectly good sense even if the Hebrew text were removed, whereas if we remove the biblical lemmata from midrash, it collapses into a meaningless jumble of statements. An obvious question arises here as to where one puts so-called rewritten Bible texts, such as Jubilees, or the Genesis Apocryphon. Surely they should come in here somewhere under section 6: they are a "weaker" version of "translation", in that, though typically they follow, over extensive stretches, the underlying biblical text as to order, and in some passages come very close to translation, they represent the biblical text only selectively, and skip sections of it from time to time. The Inventory, however, treats rewritten Bible only under E (7). This strikes me as somewhat anomalous – a point to which I will return in my critique below (1.3.6).

“E. correspondences and wording overlaps between texts” embraces those cases where “narrative or thematic correspondences, or overlap of specific wording occur” between the text that is being profiled and another text.³⁵ Two distinct scenarios are envisaged here: the first is where the correspondences are with the Bible (7.1), and the second where they are with a non-biblical text (7.2). Examples of the former would be rewritten Bible texts such as Jubilees, Genesis Apocryphon, and the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (LAB). An example of the latter would be the correspondences between Mishnah and Tosefta. It is important to note that the correspondences are not just verbal but can be narrative (e.g. the same characters appear in both texts, or the same basic story is told, though not necessarily in the same words), or thematic (the same idea is expressed though not necessarily in the same words). The Inventory is non-committal on the chronological relationship between the two texts and this is in keeping with its synchronic perspective. The point to remember here is that the text being profiled does not highlight the overlap with the partner text as a quotation. If we did not know independently the partner text we would simply be unaware that there is an overlap. Contrast lemmatic commentary where the quotation is highlighted in the lemma and the indebtedness acknowledged, or a rubricated quotation introduced by a citation formula such as *she-ne’emar* (שנאמר). This caution about the historical relationship between the partner texts is, theoretically speaking, correct. It certainly makes sense in the case of a relationship between Mishnah and Tosefta where priority is contested, and has been argued in both directions, but it makes little sense to insist upon it in the case of rewritten Bible as against Bible. We surely know that the biblical Genesis preceded the LAB and that the latter presupposes the reader will know the former and will

³⁵ Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature*, 64.

read LAB as some sort of explanatory retelling of it: it has to be read as parabiblical literature (to use a non-Inventory term). The inclusion of this category in the Inventory is rather anomalous, because, as already indicated, there are no textual signals within the profiled text that these overlaps with other texts occur. We would be unaware of their existence if we did not have the other texts. The Inventory has presumably included this category because correspondences and overlaps are such a feature of our corpus seen as a whole and to leave them out would seriously weaken its analytical and taxonomic usefulness. Pragmatically speaking this is sensible but this should not blind us to the fact that this pragmatism sits awkwardly with the fundamental principle of text-linguistic analysis, namely that one should record only what lies on the surface of the text and not anything that lies behind it or beyond it. One could not offer a theoretical defence of this approach on the grounds that the Inventory records the text-linguistic features of the corpus *as a whole* and so should allow the fact to be noted that there are overlaps between texts within it because many of the overlaps are with a text – the Tanakh – which has been deliberately excluded. As will become clear later in the thesis E (7) in the Inventory offered valuable help in my attempt to analyse the relationship of PRE to Bible and to rabbinic literature.

“F. Small forms and small-scale coherence relations” deals with how a text creates a sense of coherence. It covers two ways in which this is achieved in the corpus. The first is by the “pervasive” use of a limited repertory of small forms (8). It is very obvious that many of the texts in the corpus are built up out of smaller structural units which have more or less pre-set forms: a *mashal*, a *petihah*, a *ma’aseh*, a list. A sense of coherence can be achieved if one of these forms is regularly repeated (in the language of the Inventory, if it is “pervasive”), or if only a limited repertory

of such small forms is used. This would appear to work only at a formal, stylistic level, and so the sense of coherence it creates might appear to be weak, but this category seems to apply effectively only to thematic texts, so there is a presumption that all such units will contribute in some way to the treatment of the overall theme or themes. Another way in which coherence can be created is by taking a topic and dividing it by some principle of differentiation into sub-topics and presenting these in a particular order, with or without connecting particles which indicate the relationship between them (9). It is important to note that the whole of E seems to apply basically to thematic or lemmatic texts. This is explicitly stated under 9, but seems to apply to 8 as well, though narrative features do occasionally creep in. I found this a useful, if problematic, category to apply to PRE, the coherence of which is a major problem.

“G. Higher-level aggregates” relates to those large-scale compositions which are clearly made up of already large-scale part-texts. In contrast to F, which deals with how micro-forms are built together to generate macro-forms, G is concerned with how macro-forms can be aggregated together into still larger compositions. There are several obvious examples of this in the corpus. *Pesiqta Rabbati* is a case in point. Each *pisqa* of this is already a macro-form built at least in part out of small-scale units, but a number of these *pisqas* are assembled together to form the work that tradition has handed down to us as *Pesiqta Rabbati*. We cannot disaggregate this work into its separate *pisqas* and simply profile these. We have to profile also the composition as a whole because it has clearly been assembled on a liturgical-calendrical principle. It is not just a collection, but a *composition*.

“H. Labels for classifying the contents and general character” is a rather pragmatic category. It offers the possibility of giving a summary overview of the

dominant content of the text. This is done under two separate headings. In the first of these (11) the text is classified as either (a) non-narrative (by which, presumably, is meant that it is thematic/lemmatic) (11.1); (b) narrative (11.2); or (c) prayer/psalm addressed to God (11.3). Non-narrative texts are characterized in a very abstract way as concerned with either: description of a reality, including a physical reality; moral values or value judgements; law, commandments, or norms of behaviour; the meaning of another text; future events or future reward or punishment. It is striking here, and totally consistent with the philosophy of the Inventory, that common genre labels, whether traditional and/or scholarly (apocalypse, midrash, rewritten Bible, and the like) are pointedly avoided as carrying too much “baggage”. Under the second heading of H (section 11), however, the opportunity is given to record some of these.

1.3.5 Profiling

Having extracted from the corpus the key literary features of the texts, and organized these in a topical and hierarchical way, thus inductively creating the Inventory, it is possible then to go back to an individual text and profile it against the Inventory in order to see which “boxes” on the Inventory it ticks and which it does not. Those which it fails to tick are as important for the profile as those which it ticks. It is important to remember this when using any specific database entry, because, for the sake of space, the unused profile-points are omitted. This can be seen as an exercise in mapping. The map is the Inventory as a whole, the profile the co-ordinates of the text on that map. This mapping allows us to see which texts occupy the same or almost the same co-ordinates on the map. It also allows us to compare and contrast texts from a consistent text-linguistic perspective.

1.3.6 Critique

The Inventory has proved a valuable tool in my analysis of PRE, but, as I have already hinted, I encountered difficulties in applying it just as it stands to this particular text. While it caught many aspects of the text well, there were other aspects which it did not, and where I found it necessary to supplement or modify it. Indeed, the summary of the Inventory given above already incorporates certain simplifications and adaptations in the light of my own research. The approach of the Inventory is new and it is only just beginning to attract comment and criticism from the scholarly community, notably in the work (mostly in the form of as yet unpublished papers) of Susan Docherty (of Birmingham), William A. Tooman (of St Andrews) and Andrew Teeter (of Harvard). I shall attempt to summarise here some of the key points where I have encountered difficulties and to explain why I have used the Inventory in the way that I have.

(1) I have found that the Inventory ‘fudged’ the question of genre in a somewhat unhelpful way. Ancient genre labels are notoriously imprecise. Even when they are defined, as sometimes happens in the Greek and Latin rhetorical handbooks, actual texts do not always correspond to the definitions, because these are often ideal or prescriptive, they represent what the theoretician thinks ought to be the case, rather than what actually is the case. Nevertheless genres are important for how readers read. They will understand their meaning in different ways that depend on the kind of text they take the text in front of them to be. The Inventory does not deal explicitly with the question of genre and seems deliberately to avoid the word. However, it is involved implicitly with the question in two ways. First the Inventory seems on the face of it to offer a new way of classifying the texts in the corpus, and identifying genres. One could take the profiles of all the texts in the

corpus and group together those that are similar. There would be a tricky problem regarding where to draw the line between the groups. Not every Inventory point could be treated as of equal weight in creating the taxonomy. There would be problems here, but they could, with some theorising, be overcome. What would we be left with? It could certainly be argued that these were genres generated by the texts themselves, but if they did not correspond to genres as perceived by ancient readers, then it is hard to see how they could help us understand how they would have read the texts. However, profiling by the Inventory may, and indeed does, throw up important differences between texts that traditionally have been lumped together, and this could be important for the literary history of those texts. There is a second way in which genre is implicit in the Inventory. It in fact recognises five main types of text: narratives; discourses; commentaries; retellings; and poems. These are rather awkwardly scattered among the various sections of the Inventory. I have found it necessary to tackle the question of the genre of PRE head-on, because in my view it is impossible properly to understand the work as a literary entity without doing so (see Chapter 5 below).

(2) Of these “genres” I found that the Inventory handled narrative least well. It is fairly obvious that the Inventory grew out of the work of Samely (its main theoretician) on the Mishnah, which in turn grew out of the formalist approach to rabbinic literature of his teacher Arnold Goldberg.³⁶ The Mishnah, however, is a very

³⁶ Samely’s early work was on Targum (*The Interpretation of Speech in the Pentateuch Targums: A Study of Method and Presentation in Targumic Exegesis* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1992)), but he rapidly developed an interest in the formal problems of Mishnaic discourse (e.g., *Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture in the Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002)), and, as I understand it, he did most of the profiling of the Mishnah, Tosefta and Talmud tractates in the Inventory, though Bernasconi was responsible for some. For Goldberg’s work see various essays in Margarete Schlüter and Peter Schäfer, eds., *Rabbinische Texte als Gegenstand der Auslegung. Gesammelte Studien II* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), esp., “Die funktionale Form des Midrasch” (199-229), “Hermeneutische

unusual kind of text. It is relentlessly thematic and is manifestly built up out of small, easily isolatable text-units. This had been largely demonstrated in the analytical translations of Jacob Neusner.³⁷ A comparably fine-grained, formal analysis of *narrative* is much less easy to achieve. The text is less easy to split up. It flows more, and depends more on the development of plot, of character, and of narrative time. There are also certain types of thematic discourse which don't break up meaningfully in the way that the Mishnah, or the Tosefta, or a tractate of the Gemara does. The discourse flows more seamlessly as it moves from thought to thought to develop its argument. This can be classically illustrated by homiletic texts such as *pisqa* 34 of *Pesiqta Rabbati*.³⁸ The structure of the bulk of this sermon can really only be adequately described in terms of a close account of the flow of its thought, rather than in terms of small literary structures. Arguably, as we shall see, PRE is closer to *Pesiqta Rabbati* 34 than to Mishnah, and to try to shoe-horn it into Inventory F serves no useful purpose. See further 3.6 below.

(3) I also found its handling of the synchronic/ diachronic dichotomy problematic. While there is merit in insisting on keeping the two approaches apart, I

Präsupposition und Struktur des *Petiḥa*" (303-46), and "*Petiḥa* und *Ḥariza*. Zur Korrektur eines Missverständnisses" (297-302). The other Goldberg pupil who has developed his formalist approach is Rivka Ulmer. See, e.g.: "*Paraphrasendeutung in Midrasch: die Paraphrase des Petiḥaverses*," *FJB* 9 (1981): 115-61; "*Die Verwendung von Schriftversen in rabbinische Texten: einige Vorbemerkungen zur Textkonstitution*," *FJB* 12 (1984): 129-45; "*Gattungstheorie und rabbinische Literatur*," *LB* 60 (1987): 106-22; "*Fragen in der Homilie: eine Mittel der Text- oder Formkonstitution*," *LB* 61 (1988): 57-86.

³⁷ See, e.g., his analytical translation of *Sifre Deuteronomy* (*Sifre to Deuteronomy: An Analytical Translation* (2 vols; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1987)).

³⁸ See Philip Alexander, "*The Mourners for Zion and the Suffering Messiah: Pesiqta rabati 34 – Structure, Theology, and Context*," in *Midrash Unbound: Transformations and Innovations* (ed. Michael Fishbane and Joanna Weinberg; Oxford; Portland, Oreg.: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013), 137-58. More generally, Rivka Ulmer, "*Pesiqta Rabbati: a text-linguistic and form-analytical analysis of the rabbinic homily*," *JJS* 64 (2013): 64-97.

found it necessary from time to time to see the synchronic data in a diachronic perspective. The Inventory itself tacitly breaches the principle of strict synchronicity at various points. As I noted above the Inventory has a theoretical problem with intertextuality where the intertext is not formally acknowledged and does not belong to the corpus. Where that intertext is the Bible it seems to me pointless not to recognise that the Bible is the prior text, and that the text being profiled is in some sense a commentary on it, and that one will not begin adequately to analyse and understand that text unless one builds this diachronic fact into one's literary analysis right from the start. This is a salutary reminder of the fact that every literary product is historically and culturally conditioned, as is every reader's response to every literary product. If one is too purist about the principle of synchronicity then it could create the impression that texts can be created and read from a standpoint that is somehow outside history. The problem of coherence is an instructive case in point. Is PRE a coherent text? The Inventory appears to offer us a number of criteria by which we can answer this question. It allows us to determine certain literary facts, but what it does not help us to determine is how those facts would have been perceived at the time the text was written. We expect texts (thematic texts above all) to be complete and coherent in certain ways, but this expectation may not have been shared by Jewish readers in the Gaonic period. Deciding that the text is incoherent from our standpoint doesn't seem to be saying much – unless we go on to reflect on why our expectations of coherence may differ from those of our forebears; in other words unless we introduce a historical perspective. Though my analysis of PRE is principally synchronic I have not hesitated to bring in a diachronic perspective where it was necessary to contextualise and moderate the purely synchronic reading.

(4) Finally, despite my best endeavours, I still do not fully understand the Inventory's concept of a "governing voice", and I detect a certain difference of opinion over the concept within the TAPJLA research team (between Alexander Samely and Philip Alexander).³⁹ Let me pose this question very concretely. What is the governing voice of PRE? PRE, in the text-form which I have analysed, opens with the well-known story of Rabbi Eliezer's discourse in the school of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai. This seems to imply that what follows is the contents of the discourse delivered on that occasion by Eliezer. In other words the vast bulk of the text is said in the voice of Rabbi Eliezer. However, is his voice the "governing voice"? Arguably not, because the opening story which contextualizes the discourse is in the third person, so it is being narrated by another, totally anonymous voice. In other words the text does not open: "I, Eliezer, was in the school of my teacher Rabbi Yoḥanan, and he asked me to deliver the discourse, and this is what I said ..." Eliezer's voice may be projected as the majority voice in the text but it is surely being controlled by a more ultimate voice, which functions like the Stam in the tractates of the Babylonian Talmud, and like the Stam it strongly moulds the text. It is surely this voice that grows stronger and stronger as the memory of the opening setting in the school of Yoḥanan fades in the text.

Despite these caveats I would stress again that the Inventory was very important for my work on PRE. It provided me with an initial check-list of surface literary features to look for in the text; it defined those literary features in precise,

³⁹ See Alexander's discussion of the "governing voice" in his article, "'Translation and Midrash Completely Fused Together'? The Form of the Targums to Canticles, Lamentations and Qohelet," *AS* 9.1 (2011): 83-99, esp. 90-93.

neutral language, and it allowed me to make comparisons with other texts from a consistent perspective.

1.3.7 The Base Text

There is one final element of my approach which needs to be clarified, and that is the text of PRE which I have used as the basis for my analysis. As will become very clear from 2.1 below, there is an unusually large number of manuscripts and editions of PRE which differ considerably from each other and there is no critical edition of the text. I have chosen to work with the edition of Dagmar Börner-Klein. This has a number of advantages. It offers a highly readable text which presents few linguistic or philological problems. It is basically the text of the Venice 1544 print, corrected here and there in the light of the Warsaw edition. It comes very close to a *textus receptus*. It is well printed and it lays out the text generously on the page, dividing it up into sense-units. And it offers on the facing pages a useful German translation of the text. It is not in any sense a critical edition. It represents only one form of the text, and it remains a moot point whether or not my analysis would have changed significantly had I chosen another form of the text. There would certainly have been some significant changes if I had chosen a form of the text that lacked the opening story (chapters 1-2). One of the major problems in citing PRE is its lack of a precise referencing system. The text was divided into chapters (*peraqim*) at an early stage, but these are sometimes very long and of little use for identifying words, or phrases, or small units. I addressed this by referencing to the Börner-Klein edition by page and line. So a reference PRE 3, 15/1 translates as: *Pirqei deRabbi Eliezer* chapter 3, Börner-Klein edition p. 15, line 1.

Chapter Two: Background to PRE

2.1 Manuscripts and Editions

2.1.1 Non-Genizah Manuscripts

Various attempts have been made to list the numerous manuscripts of PRE. Friedlander's translation of 1916 was based on a manuscript in the possession of Abraham Epstein of Vienna, a manuscript which gives a good, full text of the PRE, but which cannot now be traced. It is described by Friedlander as "probably the work of a Spanish scribe of the twelfth or thirteenth century."¹ He gives variants from a handful of other manuscripts known to him and from printed editions. The first attempt to create a comprehensive list of manuscripts was by H. M. Haag in his Cologne Masters' dissertation of 1978,² and this served as the basis for the information reproduced in the introduction to Börner-Klein.³ Lewis M. Barth compiled another list, which contains items not in Haag, in the manuscript database of his online *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer Electronic Text Editing Project*.⁴ He utilised the card-catalogue of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the Jewish National

¹ Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, xiv.

² H. M. Haag, *Pirke De Rabbi Eli'ezer Kap. 43. Aufbau und traditions-geschichtliche Analyse* (Magisterarbeit für das Fach Judaistik, Universität Köln, 1978).

³ Dagmar Börner-Klein, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, xvii-xix.

⁴ See table 1 "Pirke Rabbi Eliezer Manuscripts and Fragments: Sorted by Type and Date," in L. M. Barth, "Is Every Medieval Hebrew Manuscript a New Composition? The Case of Pirke Rabbi Eliezer," Online: *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer: Electronic Text Editing Project*, <http://www.usc.edu/projects/pre-project/>. The article also appeared in print under the same title, in *Agenda for the Study of Midrash in the 21st Century* (ed. M. L. Raphael; Williamsburg, VA.: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 43-62.

Library in Jerusalem. Yet other lists have been produced by Eliezer Treitl, first in his Master's dissertation at the Hebrew University,⁵ and then in his doctorate.⁶ No one seems to have managed to catch everything, so in **Appendix B.1** below I have attempted, by careful comparison and, wherever possible, verification, to consolidate the existing lists into a single list.

This list contains 78 non-Genizah items, representing “complete” or “partial” forms of the text. The manuscripts range in date from the 13th to the 20th centuries, and are in a variety of hands. A large number are of Yemenite, Mizrahi, and Moroccan provenance, but German, Greek, Italian and Spanish hands are also well represented. There are around 18 manuscripts that are complete or nearly complete, that is to say they cover all or almost all the text of PRE in its longest forms. Many more (around 30) are partial, but contain a substantial part of the text, while a considerable number (to which we should add all the Genizah fragments: see **2.1.2** below) are very fragmentary, or contain only small portions of the text. Some of the shorter, partial manuscripts were undoubtedly excerpts from longer versions of the work, and were composed *ab initio* as compilations. Barth calls these Liqqut manuscripts, and he lists nine of them dating from the 13th to the 19th centuries in a variety of Ashkenazi and Sephardi hands.

⁵ Eliezer Treitl, *‘Edat ha-nusah shel Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer miyun muqdam* (MA diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001).

⁶ Eliezer Treitl, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, 278-312.

2.1.2 Genizah Manuscripts

Appendix B.2 provides a comprehensive list of Genizah manuscripts of PRE by location. This has been compiled from data available in the Friedberg Genizah Project database, on the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts website, the ALEPH500 online catalogue of manuscripts at the National Library of Israel, and Merhav, the integrated online search portal of the collections of the National Library of Israel.⁷ The data was checked against the lists of Genizah fragments provided by Börner-Klein, Barth,⁸ and Treitl. Manuscript numbers underlined in the table are found as Genizah in Barth's list but were not thrown up by the search of the Friedberg Genizah Project database. Conversely, some of the manuscript numbers returned in the search of the Friedberg database were listed under categories other than "Genizah Fragment" in Barth. I have included these under Genizah. There is a well known problem here. Not all manuscripts listed as Genizah in the various Genizah collections around the world necessarily originated in the storeroom of the Ben Ezra synagogue. This is certainly true of the Gaster Genizah in the John Rylands Library Manchester. The provenance of fragments sold on the antiquities market was often unclear, and dealers sometimes passed them off as Cairo Genizah when they were not. For our present purposes it doesn't matter much where we list them.

There are around 44 Genizah manuscripts of PRE (39 of which are listed in the Friedberg Genizah Project's database), and they are in remarkably good condition. Of the PRE manuscripts in the Taylor-Schechter collection, C1.27 (PRE

⁷ Friedberg Genizah Project, <http://www.genizah.org/onlineFGP.htm?type=FGP&lang=eng>; Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts, <http://jnul.huji.ac.il/imhm/>; ALEPH500, <http://aleph.nli.org.il/>; Merhav, http://primo.nli.org.il/primo_library/libweb/action/search.do

⁸ Barth, "Is Every Medieval Hebrew Manuscript a New Composition?," 43-62. Online: <http://www.usc.edu/dept/huc-la/pre-project/agendas.html>).

2-3) is the best preserved of the manuscripts that contain complete pages. Misc. 15.101 (PRE 49) is also a complete page, while NS 217.32 (PRE 12-13, divided into numbered paragraphs) and 252.62 (PRE 50- 51) are mostly complete pages. C1.28 (a Liqqut of selected sections from multiple chapters, on creation, with numbered paragraphs) is missing some of the bottom of its double page. AS 74.70 and AS 88.197 (PRE 4) are missing half of the page, 12.185 (PRE 45-46) is missing a third of a page, and NS 211.51 (PRE 26-29) is missing a quarter of the page. NS 331.15b (PRE 29-30) and C1.76 (PRE 48-49) are missing parts of whole pages (leaving vacats), and the remaining manuscripts, NS 258.157 (a variant recension of PRE 32), NS 258.171 (PRE 32, damaged, belongs with NS 258.157), NS 259.57 (PRE 4-5), AS 83.246 (PRE 9), AS 90.111 (PRE 10), AS 93.115 (PRE 49?), AS 93.263 (PRE 49?), and AS 199.242 (PRE 19)) are all small fragments.

The British Library holds two different PRE manuscripts from the Gaster Genizah collection: OR 10429.9-12, and OR 12317.1-2. OR 10429.9-12 contains four bifolia (recto and verso) and is in good condition. Folio 9(r) corresponds to PRE 1, 5-7, and folio 9(v) corresponds to c. PRE 1, 7/5 – the middle of chapter 2. Folio 10(v) corresponds to the end of chapter 2 onwards, and is very paraphrastic. OR 12317.1-2 preserves almost full pages (with some edges missing), covering most of chapters 6 and 7 (folio 1(r) corresponds to PRE 6, 47/1 - 51/8; folio 1(v) corresponds to PRE 6, 51 - 7, 57/4; folio 2(r) corresponds to PRE 7, 59/6 - 7, 63/14; folio 2(v) corresponds to PRE 7, 65/1 - 67/20).

The Jewish Theological Seminary holds nine manuscripts from the Genizah. 1495.1-2 is made up of complete pages in good condition and with some annotations. Folio 1(v) contains the end of PRE 4 to the beginning of chapter 5 (PRE 4, 37/1 - PRE 5, 39/2), and folio 1(r) follows on with chapter 5 (PRE 5, 39/3 - 41/9). Folio 2(r)

contains the middle of PRE 1 (PRE 1, 3/15 - 1, 7/6), and the verso of the same continues with the rest of chapter 1 to the middle of PRE 2 (PRE 1, 7/6 - 2, 9/6). Folio 3 is a fragment of PRE 31 (folio 3(r) covers PRE 31, 357/14 - PRE 31, 359/19; 3(v) covers PRE 31, 361/10 - 363/16). 2577.3-4 is also in good condition, covering PRE 31 and 32 (3(r) corresponds to PRE 32, 371/6 - 32, 375/1; 3(v) corresponds to PRE 32, 373 - 377; 4(r) corresponds to PRE 31, 365/1-367/4; and 4(v) corresponds to PRE 32, 367/5 - 371/2). 2625.23 contains part of PRE 23, 2943.28 contains part of PRE 42, and 3045.3-4 contains parts of chapters 32 and 33. 3479.4-5 (PRE 39-40), 3496.4 (PRE 50) and NS 11.7 (PRE 51/52) are fragmentary. 3629.2 preserves only two thirds of the original page (PRE 42).

The Friedberg Genizah Project's online database entries for the PRE Genizah manuscripts in the Firkowitz Collection (Petersburg) and in the Bodleian Library have limited information, and no images. Of the PRE Genizah manuscripts in the Firkowitz Collection, only three have catalogue entries in Friedberg that provide further information: Yevr. II A 374 (PRE 9 - middle of chapter 45, Spanish script, 14th century); Yevr. II A 582 (PRE 17-19, Oriental script, 14th century); Yevr. II A 815 (PRE 29-30, 8 folios). The Bodleian Library has three Genizah manuscripts of PRE in its collections: Heb. c.27/71-72 (PRE 5-8); Heb. d.35/35-48 (PRE 4-15, Yemenite semi-cursive); Heb. e.76/3-6 (PRE 20-21).

The number and quality of Genizah manuscripts and fragments of PRE is striking. They provide valuable insight into the text-shape(s) of PRE in the 11th to 14th centuries. The manuscripts, though fragmentary, are generally in good condition and are frequently preserved in complete (or almost complete) folios. Almost all of the text of PRE is represented in some form or other (with the exception of chapters 47, 53 and 54). Most Genizah manuscripts preserve the chapter

divisions of the printed editions, and exhibit a fairly stable textual tradition. Some manuscript witnesses are of significant length, and preserve larger parts of the text, in particular Leningrad manuscript Yevr. II A 374 (PRE 9-45) and Bodleian manuscript Heb. d.35 (PRE 4-16). Chapters 1 and 2 are represented in three Genizah manuscripts: T-S C1.27; JTS 1495.2; BL OR 10429 (the latter being paraphrastic in comparison to the text of the printed editions). The Liqqut text T-S C1.28 is distinctive, and can be linked to the Liqqutim represented in the wider manuscript tradition of PRE.

A number of these Genizah fragments have been published in preliminary editions.⁹ These are of varying quality and should be treated with some caution. They should always be checked against the digital images.

2.1.3 Printed Editions

Haag provides a comprehensive list of 44 traditional prints of PRE down to 1973,¹⁰ and the list of Yeshivah editions since then would add several more (see **Appendix B.3**). Haag's list should be used with some caution. I have been unable to corroborate all its entries from other sources. Some of these prints must be very rare indeed, and I wonder if Haag actually saw them: A. E. Cowley's *Catalogue of Hebrew Printed Books in the Bodleian Library* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929) has only a few of them. The list does not conform to what would now be seen as bibliographical best practice.

⁹ Börner-Klein, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, xix. See further N. Alloni, *Geniza Fragments of Rabbinic Literature, Mishnah, Talmud and Midrash, with Palestinian Vocalisation*, Jerusalem: Makor Publishing, 1973, 76 (Hebrew) (for a palimpsest leaf of PRE 45f. in the Cambridge Taylor-Schechter collection), and Z. M. Rabinowitz, "Genizah Fragments of Pirke R. Eliezer," *Bar-Ilan* 16-17 (1979), 100-111 (Hebrew) (for 11th century Genizah manuscripts of PRE 26 to the beginning of 29.)

¹⁰ Reproduced in Börner-Klein, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, xix-xxi.

From a text-critical point of view the only prints of any significance are the *editio princeps*, Constantinople 1514, the Venice 1544, and possibly the Sabbioneta of 1567. As is usual with early prints, the *editio princeps* does not disclose its textual basis, but it seems to have been a full, legible, and comprehensible manuscript. Copies of this print are very rare, though the Bodleian has two (both in the Oppenheimer collection: see Cowley, *Catalogue*, p. 175). Digital images of it have been helpfully supplied by Barth on his website. Constantinople 1514 formed the basis of Venice 1544, which was seen through the press by Cornelius Adelkind. Adelkind introduced a number of corrections, and seems to have had access to another manuscript from which he supplied some deficiencies in the earlier print. The Sabbionetta edition was in turn based on the Venice. In the few places where it differs, the changes are probably due either to misprint or to attempts by the editor conjecturally to improve the text. It should always be borne in mind that conjectural emendation of ancient texts was widely practiced by Humanist scholars of the 16th and 17th centuries. They had little concept of producing a critical edition of the sort that became standard from the 19th century onwards. The best reading was always the reading that made the best sense to them. If they could not find a good reading among their manuscripts, then they had no qualms about resorting to conjectural emendation. The result is that early prints often read rather well and seem to display a good text, but it should be remembered how this may have come about.

Venice 1544 constitutes the *textus receptus*, since it is followed closely by subsequent prints, though they, too, often silently made “improvements”. The Epstein manuscript which Friedlander followed was of broadly the same type, and so Friedlander serves as a reasonably close rendering of it. Venice 1544 is also the base-text for Börner-Klein’s edition, though she has occasionally corrected it from

the rather fine Warsaw 1852 print, which became the basis for subsequent Yeshivah prints. It should be noted that some of the late manuscripts are actually copies of printed texts. This was a common phenomenon in some parts of the Jewish world in early modern times, particularly in regions such as the Yemen and Persia where Hebrew printing was not available, or where it was too primitive to cope with a text of the size and complexity of PRE.

2.1.4 Critical editions

PRE is a text-editor's nightmare because of the number of its manuscripts and the complexity of its recensions. The first attempt to produce a critical edition appears to have been undertaken by Chaim Meir Horowitz (c.1855-1905). It was never completed but Horowitz's work to this end, in the form of a heavily annotated copy of the Venice 1544 edition (sometimes known as Codex Horowitz), has survived and was published in 1972 under the title *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer: A Complete Critical Edition as prepared by C.M. Horowitz but never published. Facsimile Edition of the Editor's Original MS* (Makor: Jerusalem, 1972). The title is misleading. This is in no way a critical edition, though it contains much useful information and many valuable glosses. Several leaves are missing and some sheets are in the wrong order. Horowitz collated only 15 manuscripts and nowhere seems to justify his selection, or explain the philosophy of his edition. Michael Higger had already published a Casanatense manuscript with variants from two other manuscripts in the same library (see **Appendix B.1**), based on transcriptions made by Horowitz.¹¹

¹¹ Michael Higger, "Pirqé Rabbi Eliezer," *Horev* 7 (1943): 82-119; 9 (1944): 94-116; 10 (1947): 185-294.

Lewis M. Barth also laboured for many years to produce a critical edition of PRE, but has now (according to a personal communication) given up. What survives is the website *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer: Electronic Text Editing Project*, which offers lists of manuscripts and discusses helpfully the problems of editing such a large and complex work as PRE. It is to Barth's credit that he saw that the only practical way to produce a full edition of PRE was online. He was something of a pioneer in this, but electronic text-editing has moved on and there is now a lot of accumulated expertise in the burgeoning field of digital humanities relating to the editing of texts and corpora far larger than PRE on which to draw.¹²

As noted earlier, Eliezer Treitl has created a complete synopsis of PRE manuscripts amounting to more than 1,000 pages, but he has published only a sample in his Hebrew University doctorate (PRE 14 and 26) (*Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, 313-402). It would certainly be worth-while putting up the full text in a searchable format online, but even then it is debatable that we would have a critical edition of PRE, because some would argue that synoptic editions, though they offer the raw materials out of which a critical edition may be constructed, are not themselves critical editions.¹³

¹² See, for example, the work of the Digital Mishnah project (run by Professor Hayim Lapin at the University of Maryland; <http://blog.umd.edu/digitalmishnah/>) and the CTMishna project (run by Professor Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra at the École Pratique des Hautes Études).

¹³ One should also note the editions of parts on PRE in Reeves (*Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 67-75) and Adelman (*Return of the Repressed*, appendices B-I, 269-302).

2.2 Recensional and Redactional History

To construct a truly critical edition of PRE it is necessary to understand the kind of text it is, as revealed by the manuscript tradition, in order to create a model of its textual transmission that will adequately represent the complexity of the textual evidence. Without such careful methodological reflection, and a clear and rational editorial philosophy, much effort can be wasted to little purpose. The problem of how to edit Rabbinic texts has become a matter of intense debate in recent decades. The great *Wissenschaft des Judentums* editions of Rabbinic literature applied to rabbinic texts the long-established principles of classical text criticism: they printed a text, which could be critical (i.e. constructed by the editor from the various manuscripts with occasional conjectural emendation) or diplomatic (i.e. essentially giving the text of the best manuscript), accompanied by an *apparatus criticus* of variant readings. This approach created obvious problems, because the variation between manuscripts was often large, and even at a practical level could lead to an unwieldy apparatus. It was strongly criticised by Peter Schäfer, who began to produce synoptic editions of Rabbinic texts which laid out side-by-side exact transcriptions of the principal manuscripts.¹⁴ Schäfer set out the theory behind this editorial approach in a seminal article, "Research Into Rabbinic Literature: An Attempt to Define the Status Quaestionis."¹⁵ Central to Schäfer's argument was a claim that the redactional identity of many Rabbinic texts is very weak: there is simply no clearly defined text. There was never an *Urtext*, and to create a kind of edition that is predicated on this assumption does not make much sense. Chaim Milikowsky, like Schäfer, a noted editor of rabbinic texts, replied, arguing for a more

¹⁴ The first of these was his *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981).

¹⁵ *JJS* 37:2 (1986): 139-52.

traditional approach.¹⁶ The debate was reprised in a face-to-face confrontation between Schäfer and Milikowsky at a conference on rabbinic literature held at the British Academy in 2008,¹⁷ and published in the conference proceedings.¹⁸ Others have also contributed to the discussion. Important in this regard is the volume *Artefact and Text*, and especially relevant to the present discussion is the article in that volume by Philip Alexander who argued that the correct way to present an edition of a Rabbinic text should be decided pragmatically text by text, because the textual transmission of the texts differs so greatly. He attempted to show that the shape of the textual transmission of Targum Song of Songs suggests that the best kind of edition for that particular work would be to present in parallel columns a diplomatic (best manuscript) text for its two recensions (the Western and the Yemenite), each with its apparatus of variants from other Western and Yemenite manuscripts, but then in a third column to present a critically reconstructed text with an apparatus justifying the editorial decisions.¹⁹

The remarks that follow are an attempt to bring specifically PRE within the orbit of this debate. Lewis Barth has already attempted to do this in his essay ('Is

¹⁶ Chaim Milikowsky, "The Status Quaestionis of Research in Rabbinic Literature," *JJS* 39:2 (1988): 201-11. See also Schäfer's reply, "Once Again the Status Quaestionis of Research in Rabbinic Literature: An Answer to Chaim Milikowsky," *JJS* 40:1 (1989): 89-94.

¹⁷ "The Editing of Rabbinic Texts - A Public Debate," at the Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine conference at the British Academy, London, 10 March 2008.

¹⁸ Martin Goodman and Philip Alexander, eds., *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine* (Oxford: British Academy/Oxford University Press, 2010).

¹⁹ "Textual Criticism and Rabbinic Literature: The Case of the Targum of the Song of Songs," in *Artefact and Text* (ed. P.S. Alexander and A. Samely; *BJRULM* 75, 1993), 159-174.

Every Medieval Hebrew Manuscript a New Composition?'), but my analysis of the question differs from his at certain crucial points.

Classical textual criticism was originally constructed to sort out textual problems in the study of the Greek and Latin classics. However, these were a particular kind of literary entity: they were authored texts, in bounded genres, and so one could readily postulate that there was an *Urtext* to be recovered which had been completed at some point. In many cases, the paradigmatic texts on which textual-critical theory and practice was based were relatively speaking uncomplicated, with few textual witnesses. Thus Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* was widely used to teach the basic principles of Latin textual criticism. But, this is a very structured text, which is in a fixed metre, and it has very few text witnesses. Classical textual criticism assumed that in the course of transmission two types of changes were introduced into the *Urtext*. The first were transcriptional errors – unintended mistakes that crept in as the text was copied and recopied by hand. The causes of these mistakes were closely studied and well known. It was noted, for example, that a common source of error is *parablepsis*: this happens where the eye jumps from one occurrence of a word to another occurrence of the same word, omitting the text in between. The second type of change is deliberate: this is the case where a copyist deliberately alters what is before him, because he thinks there is a mistake in the text, or he doesn't understand it, or he doesn't agree with it, or he feels it could be better put. These deliberate changes are commonly called recensional. So long as these are small, so long as the transcriptional variants are reasonably few in number, and so long as there is a sufficient number of independent text-witnesses, it is usually possible to recover the *Urtext* with a high degree of certainty. Although intrinsic probability always has a role to play in

textual criticism, the choice between readings can be greatly helped by the application of the principles of stemmatics. A *stemma codicum* allows manuscripts to be weighed, rather than simply counted, and helps the editor to determine which manuscripts are more important, and to decide which readings are more likely to go back to the *Urtext*.

However, the more numerous and larger the *deliberate*²⁰ changes are that have been introduced into the text the less easy it becomes for classical text-criticism to cope. These large-scale variations between versions of what is basically the same work, are characteristic of a numerous class of texts from the ancient world. They are often texts which are fundamentally anthological in character, not closely argued single-authored texts, in the sense that the *De Rerum Natura* is a closely-argued, single authored text. They are texts that were not, apparently, regarded as sacrosanct and so copyists (who, in the world of the Rabbis, would often have been scholars copying for their own use, rather than professional scribes copying for a client) felt free to change them to serve better their own purposes, taking bits out, adding bits in, rewriting sections. Israel Ta Shma coined for this type of text the term “open book”.²¹ This captures well the fact that these texts go on evolving and never reach definitive closure.

Under the umbrella of “open book” we can envisage at least three different scenarios:

²⁰ By deliberate here I mean changes that cannot be explained on grounds of transcriptional error.

²¹ Israel M. Ta-Shma, “The ‘open’ book in Medieval Hebrew literature: the problem of authorized editions,” *BJRULM* 75:3, 1993: 17-24.

(1) Ta Shma himself applied the term to the case of Rashi's commentary to the Torah. It is well known that there are considerable variations between the various manuscripts of this text. An argument can be made that these variations or many of them go back to Rashi himself. The commentary arose from his teaching of Bible within his small circle of disciples, who probably noted down what he said. Over the years of teaching the same text again and again, he didn't always say the same thing, and so different versions of his commentary began to circulate. If this is correct then all the different versions may be Rashi. His commentary has no *Urtext*, nor, indeed, *Endtext*, because he, as author, never bothered to issue one.

(2) This is a most unusual case. Open books more regularly arise in a "school" situation, where the teaching of the school, as it is passed down, undergoes regular reworking and updating. It is refined, revised and recomposed as circumstances change. Schools can, indeed often do, have canonic texts which are textually inviolable, and the teaching of the school is largely presented as commentary on these unchanging texts. The "commentary", taken here in the widest sense, and not just as denoting lemmatic commentary, changes over time. These re-editions of the teaching are in some sense authoritative. In the Rabbinic schools an example of this would be the Tosefta as a re-edition of the Mishnah (assuming that was the direction in which things went, and not vice versa), or the various versions of BerR on Genesis. If some of these earlier versions in the evolution of a given work still survive, and are found in the manuscript tradition, then we have crossed the line between recension and redaction. Redaction-criticism can be applied to a work even if it exists in only one manuscript. We can still read it and analyse it and decide that earlier stages in its evolution towards its present form can be identified. For example, we can observe that a certain passage interrupts the flow of thought and so

may be an interpolation, and from this we can reasonably postulate that an earlier form of the text once existed in which the interpolated passage was not to be found, though we must be careful not to impose our modern sense of textual coherence on the past. Where we have a multiplicity of manuscripts of a work which differ substantially from each other, then the possibility arises that these different *recensions* represent different stages in the *redactional history* of the work in question. Thus recension-history and redaction-history come close to collapsing into each other – close but not totally, since it may still be possible to take one of the recensions and conduct a redaction-historical analysis of it, in the process disclosing redactional stages which are not represented by any extant manuscript.

(3) We have already touched on the third “open-book” scenario. This occurs where a copyist copies a text for his own private ends, and changes, omits or adds passages to suit some private interest. The most obvious example of this is where he compiles only excerpts from the work – he anthologises it. The creation of such anthologies of texts was an integral part of the working-practice of scholars in antiquity and the middle ages (and, indeed, in modern times). It is a direct reflex of the paucity of texts before the invention of printing. Many books only became available to scholars for short periods of time, and their reaction was to copy out the bits of them which caught their attention into notebooks (*pinakes*). Numerous copies of these notebooks survive, often not recognised for what they are. It is private and personal interest that dictates what is extracted and what is not.

Where does PRE fit into this picture? From the substantial variations between the extant manuscripts it is clearly some form of “open book”, conforming best, perhaps, to the “school-text” model. There are, indeed, several manuscripts which appear to be Liqqutim. These are best left out of the recensional and redactional

history of the work, because the principle on which they may have been compiled are too personal and inaccessible. It only creates confusion to treat a Liqqut of a work as one of its recensions. Lewis Barth, taking very much the line of Peter Schäfer, boldly summarised the textual evidence for PRE thus:

“PRE is a name applied to similar but not identical works that developed through the ages ... The manuscripts and fragments represent these separate works. An examination of manuscripts and fragments will demonstrate that there never was a unified work. What we have represents PRE type material as reformed and reshaped by scribes in the course of transmission. The texts that we have reflect final redactions of these works. Through the use of either stemmatic or genealogic analysis, we can describe the relationships of the manuscripts and fragments, and demonstrate the transformations of the text from generation to generation.”²²

This captures well the diversity of the tradition, but it hardly does justice to its unity. And it ‘fudges’ a number of crucial issues. I could accept it with the following provisos:

(1) The diversity of the manuscripts should not be used to deny the existence of an *Urtext*. The total absence of an *Urtext* makes no sense, and is not a necessary conclusion from the diversity of the manuscripts. PRE must have begun somewhere, and its origin must have been a substantial text which essentially survives in *all* the recensions. That *Urtext* may not be recoverable, but it is a theoretical postulate that is necessary for understanding the tradition.

²² Quoted from “Is every Medieval Hebrew Manuscript a New Composition?” on Barth’s website: *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer: Electronic Text-Editing Project*. Accessed online 21 July 2014.

(2) The diversity of the manuscripts should not be used to deny the existence of an *Endtext*. The *Endtext* is the latest redaction of the work. It may not be possible to say which of our extant recensions constitutes the *Endtext*. Indeed there may have been further redactions which we no longer have. But again the idea of an *Endtext* is a logical postulate of such a tradition. It marks the point where scribes stop (if they ever did stop) significantly reworking the text and content themselves with simply copying it.

(3) Between the *Urtext* and the *Endtext* lies a series of reworkings which constitute redactional stages towards the *Endtext*. Some of these individual redactions may still be extant in our manuscripts, others may not, and may have to be inferred by literary analysis. The relationship between the *Urtext* and its later redactions is well modelled as a genealogy, but it would be wrong to assume that they are strung out in a single line of descent. We may have a branching family-tree.

(4) It is important to recognise that it may not be easy to work out the sequence of redactions. The best attempt to date to do this in the case of PRE is by Treitl, who shows that the numerous manuscripts fall into three main groups, and who has made some detailed, cogent and persuasive observations on how the text evolved. Overconfidence that we can recover with certainty the redaction-history of the text – overconfidence of the sort Barth displays – is not in order. The trouble is that redaction-historical arguments can often be reversed. The argument that text A is prior to text B can often be turned round to argue that actually B is prior to A. We may have reason to think that A and B share a recensional/redactional relationship, but the direction of the dependency is often hard to prove.

(5) Barth's assertion that each form of the text we have represents a "final redaction of the work", though somewhat paradoxically put, is correct, but it sits awkwardly with his preceding claim that "an examination of manuscripts and fragments will demonstrate that there never was a unified work". This is a *non-sequitur*. Cannot one or all of the redactions individually be unified and coherent? The fact that they differ from each other does not show that internally each cannot be coherent. That can only be established by internal, synchronic analysis of each text-form. It is precisely on these grounds that I would justify analysing the one form of the text which I analyse (which is, actually, only one of its three major text-forms, and not numerically the best attested at that), and ignore the variant forms of the text. If this synchronic analysis discloses that the text lacks coherence, then that may suggest that it is time to seek diachronic explanations from the history of the text, but the synchronic analysis is logically prior, and needs to be completed first.

To take a concrete example, one of the major differences between the recensions/redactions of PRE is whether or not they have the opening two chapters containing the story of Rabbi Eliezer's *derashah* in the school of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai. The recensions which contain this story project a stronger sense of coherence than those which do not, in that they give a strong setting, a substantial narrative framework, for chapters 3-54. The implication is that the body of the work contains the famous discourse which Rabbi Eliezer pronounced on that occasion, a discourse, the contents of which are not disclosed elsewhere in Rabbinic literature. Without this opening story the contents of PRE seem to hang in the air. However, each recension has to be considered synchronically on its own terms and the fact that another recension leaves out these chapters is irrelevant for this kind of analysis. It is worth noting in passing that this example illustrates how difficult it is to decide whether

the presence of these two chapters is earlier or later. Arguments can be advanced on both sides. Chapter 3 suggestively opens with Rabbi Eliezer *patah*. Might not someone later in the tradition have used this as a peg on which to hang the Eliezer story, and thus create a context for the work? Conversely one could argue that a copyist coming across the well-known story in his exemplar and recognizing it from elsewhere, simply didn't bother to copy it. It was telling him nothing that he didn't already know. Both expansion and abbreviation are well documented features of the redactional process.

The question remains as to how to present an edition of such a complex text as PRE. It is well-nigh impossible to shoe-horn it into a classical edition with a text (whether critical or diplomatic) and an *apparatus criticus*. The answer would appear to be a synoptic edition in which the major text witnesses are set out side by side. This would certainly be useful and would represent accurately the diversity of the manuscript tradition. Synoptic editions are not *critical* editions because they fail to deal with transcriptional errors or minor recensional changes.²³ The fact remains that at the level of the individual pericopes within the text it is usually possible, by the application of standard textual-critical procedures to recover an earlier, more original text-form, perhaps even an *Urtext*, and an edition which fails to attempt this is not a critical edition.

²³ See Rivka Ulmer, "Creating Rabbinic Texts: Moving from a Synoptic to a Critical Edition of Pesiqta Rabbati," in *Recent Developments in Midrash: Proceedings of the 2002 and 2003 SBL Consultation on Midrash* (ed. Lieve Teugels and Rivka Ulmer; Piscataway N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2005), 117-36.

2.3 Reception

2.3.1 Reception within Judaism

Judging by the number of manuscripts and printed editions of PRE, it must count as one of the most widely read and influential of Jewish texts to survive from the past. The manuscripts come from all over the Jewish world and their dates show that interest never really flagged but was sustained from the 11th century down to the 20th. After the invention of printing, print after print appeared in various venues ranging from Constantinople to Amsterdam. Indeed since the *editio princeps* it is probably no exaggeration to say that it was seldom out of print. Since the 19th century Yeshivah editions abound and it is clearly still widely studied in traditional circles.

There are probably two main reasons for this interest. (1) The attribution to Rabbi Eliezer was widely accepted. Given Rabbi Eliezer's standing as a major Tanna this gave the work potentially huge importance. It is quoted in Massekhet Soferim and heavily anthologised in the medieval Yemenite midrashic encyclopedia, Midrash ha-Gadol. Medieval authorities of the standing of Rashi, Maimonides, and Judah Halevi know it and quote it.²⁴ Though predominantly *aggadic* in content, it contains also numerous references to *minhagim* which are not otherwise attested, and this gave it particular interest for religious practice, and for the study of *halakhah* (see further 2.7 below). But, (2) we have to add to this the intrinsic quality of the work. It is a substantial, intriguing and highly rewarding text which repays study, and which offers ideas which were not readily available elsewhere in the Rabbinic tradition. It was particularly important for fostering and justifying an interest in science in

²⁴ See Friedlander, *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*, xviii, for a few of the references.

Rabbinic circles. As I will attempt to show below (3.6.4.2 and 4.3.1) it provided a counterbalance to the strongly negative attitude to the study of the natural world projected by great classical sources such as the Mishnah, Talmud, and BeR, which effectively banned the study of cosmology (Ma'aseh Bere'shit). Its cosmology and its astronomy may have been primitive, but the fact that "Rabbi Eliezer" was prepared openly to discuss such matters was as important (or, one might say, even more important) than the actual content of his teaching.

The widespread reception of PRE is reflected in the number of traditional commentaries it has engendered. Among these are the following:²⁵

(1) Jedaiah ben Abraham Bedersi (c.1270-1340, France: *EJ* 9:1308-10): Hebrew philosophical/scientific commentary on selected chapters of PRE, preserved in manuscripts in JTSA, New York, the Bodleian and the Biblioteca Palatina, Parma.

(2) Judah ben Nissim ibn Malka (mid 14th cent., Morocco: *EJ* 11:827-28): Judaeo-Arabic philosophical/scientific commentary on PRE to supplement a treatise on the *Sefer Yeşirah*, preserved in manuscripts in Jerusalem (Sassoon), Moscow (Russian State Library), Bodleian, and Paris (Bibliothèque Nationale).

(3) Isaac ben Samuel of Akko (late 13th – mid 14th cent., mainly Spain: *EJ* 9:29-30): Hebrew translation of PRE 1-7 in the Judaeo-Arabic commentary of Judah ben Nissim, with additional comments, preserved in a manuscript in JTSA, New York.

²⁵ See further Börner-Klein, *Pirke de-Rabbi Elieser*, xxii-xxiv, based on Haag, *Pirke DeRabbi Eli'ezer*, 32-35. As with the printed editions of PRE the bibliography of the traditional commentaries on PRE is at a very preliminary stage.

(4) Maṣṣūr Sulaymān Dhamāri (Ḥoter ben Shelomoh) (c.1400-1480, Yemen: *EJ* 5:1603-4²⁶). Judeo-Arabic commentary on PRE: see David Blumenthal, "The Rationalistic Commentary of R. Ḥoter ben Shelomo to Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer," *Tarbiz* 48 (1978-79): 96-106 (Hebrew).

(5) Jacob Emden (1696-1776, Germany: *EJ* 6:721-24): Hebrew glosses in Emden's own hand in a copy of PRE in the British Library.

(6) Elijah ben Solomon Zalman, the Vilna Gaon (1720-1797, Lithuania: *EJ* 6:651-58): Hebrew glosses to PRE preserved in the commentary on PRE by David Luria (see below), a pupil of the Vilna Gaon.

(7) Abraham Aaron Broda (19th century), *Bayit ha-Gadol* (or *Be'ur Maspiq*): text-critical notes and comments on PRE. Reprinted in some Yeshivah editions.

(8) Ze'ev Wolf Einhorn (d. 1862, Grodno, Belarus, author of major commentaries on Midrash Rabbah and Pesiqta Rabbati): Hebrew commentary on PRE printed in Vilna ed. of 1838.

(9) Benjamin Diskin (1797/98-1844: Grodno, Belarus): Hebrew commentary on PRE 6-7, the astronomical chapters.

(10) David ben Judah Luria (1798-1855, Lithuania: *EJ* 11:571): Hebrew Commentary on PRE printed in the Warsaw 1852 edition – the most important of the traditional commentaries on PRE (see above). Luria made some additions to the

²⁶ Further David Blumenthal's article "Maṣṣūr Sulaymān Dhamāri (Ḥoter ben Solomon)," in *EJAW* (ed. Norman Stillman; Brill Online, 2014 (accessed 12 July 2014)).

printed text which have been published by J.S. Spiegel, "Additions of the RaDal to his Commentary on Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer," *Sinai* 77 (1975): 146-56 (Hebrew).

(11) Zalman Jakob Habermann, *She'erit Ya'akov*, Vilna 1884, 53-80, Hebrew commentary on PRE 6-7 and part of 8, the astronomical chapters.

The fact that PRE attracted comments from some of the greatest scholars of Jewish tradition (e.g. Jacob Emden and the Vilna Gaon) is noteworthy, as is the number and wide geographical distribution of the commentaries. Their generally scientific/philosophical slant underscores the point I made earlier about the importance of PRE for the Jewish scientific tradition. The way PRE is linked with the *Sefer Yeşirah* in the commentary of Judah ben Nissim ibn Malka is suggestive. The *Sefer Yeşirah* came to be seen fundamentally as a work of mysticism, but in origin it was a scientific treatise, and was commented upon as such by Saadya. It continued, however, to be important for the Jewish scientific tradition. But *Sefer Yeşirah* is anonymous (though it hints at Abrahamic authorship), so it is less useful for making science kosher than PRE, where broadly scientific concerns are associated with the name of the great Tanna Rabbi Eliezer. It is noteworthy how many commentaries emerged in the late 18th and 19th centuries in the wake of the Haskalah, composed by writers who were themselves maskilim or to some extent sympathetic to Haskalah. The Radal is a case in point. PRE was apparently seen as providing some justification for engagement in broadly maskilic concerns.

2.3.2 Reception within Christianity

I shall argue below (4.7.1) that an awareness of Christianity can be found in PRE, and anti-Christian polemic. It is worth noting that PRE in turn came to be known to Christian scholars and to exert a certain amount of influence within Christianity. Louis Ginzberg argued that Hrabanus Maurus, through his Jewish teachers, had access to PRE, but this would be extraordinary given his date and provenance (c.780 – 856, Rhineland).²⁷ The evidence needs to be re-evaluated, but my impression is that the parallels are weak and the aggadic traditions in question could have come from elsewhere. Hrabanus Maurus's sources were drawing on the traditions on which PRE drew. Christian knowledge of PRE is documented only in the wake of the rise of Christian Hebraism at the time of the Renaissance and Reformation. As a result of a widespread turn *ad fontes*, and above all to the *Hebraica veritas*, many Christian scholars mastered Hebrew, not just in its biblical, but also in its rabbinic form, and developed an appetite for rabbinic texts. It should be remembered that many of the early prints of Rabbinic texts were bought up by *Christian* scholars. Bomberg of Venice, the most prolific printer of Hebraica in the 16th century, was a Christian, though he used good Jewish scholars to see his books through the press the majority of his clients were Christian as well. There were Christian scholars well able to read the Venice 1544 print of PRE, which seems to have been widely disseminated. Christian access to PRE was undoubtedly enhanced by Latin translations of the work. As already noted (1.2 above) a Latin version by Konrad Pellican had already appeared by 1546, only two years after the Venice edition. And another version by William Vorstius was published at Leiden in 1644. The Vorstius

²⁷ L. Ginzberg, *Die Haggadah bei den Kirchenvätern. Erster Theil: Die Haggadah in den pseudohieronymianischen "Quaetiones"* (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1900), v, note 1. Further Börner-Klein, *Pirke de-Rabbi Elieser*, xxxix.

translation, which was appended to a translation of Ganz's chronological work, the *Tzemaḥ David*, was accompanied by some 100 pages of learned annotations.

G.S. Werman has argued that John Milton knew this translation and that traces of PRE's influence can be found in his *Paradise Lost*.²⁸ The aggadic/midrashic elements in *Paradise Lost* have long been the subject of comment by specialists in English literature: parts of the great epic read like Rewritten Bible, but the exact Jewish sources that Milton may have used are not easy to identify. The basic myth of the fall of Satan, which, thanks to *Paradise Lost*, now seems so familiar, is actually not easily paralleled in Christian sources,²⁹ and there are some intriguing parallels in PRE. Werman claimed to have identified one of Milton's sources – PRE in the translation of Vorstius. Werman is probably right in assuming that Milton would not have consulted the original Hebrew. He seems to have known some Hebrew, like many English scholars of his day, but it is a moot point whether he could have comfortably read the Hebrew text of PRE. Less obvious is why she should postulate that he used the Vorstius translation and not the much earlier Pellican translation. However, copies of the Pellican translation would have been rare, whereas the Vorstius came out in Milton's lifetime when he was working on *Paradise Lost*, so it is not impossible he could have owned a copy, or at least have had access to one, though it remains an interesting question what libraries in England in his day would have possessed the work. Despite Werman's claim to have found the "smoking gun" that confirms Milton's use of PRE, Milton experts remain divided.³⁰

²⁸ G.S. Werman, *Milton and Midrash* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1995).

²⁹ Hector Patmore, "Adam, Satan, and the King of Tyre: The Reception of Ezekiel 28:11-19 in Judaism and Christianity in Late Antiquity" (Ph.D. diss., Durham University, 2008).

³⁰ See Jeffrey S. Shoulson, *Milton and the Rabbis*.

In principle the suggestion is not far fetched but fits in with a widespread and well-documented Hebraic factor in English literary and theological culture. This comes out in the tradition of English Bible commentary in which quotations from PRE are to be found. The most notable example of this is in the massive Bible commentary of the Baptist scholar John Gill (1697-1771) published in 1763. In his comments Gill regularly quotes from “Pirke Eliezer”. Vorstius, like many other Christian Hebraists of his day had a love-hate relationship with rabbinic literature. He tends to present PRE as an example of the “Jewish fables” which the Apostle Paul exhorted Titus to ignore (Titus 1:14). He was clearly fascinated by the work, and spent a lot of time and effort making such “worthless” fables available to a Christian audience. By the time we come to Gill this censorious attitude is more muted. PRE is simply quoted as providing understandings of the biblical text which Dr. Gill takes for granted it is useful for the Christian reader to know. The Methodist commentator Adam Clarke (1760-1832), recycles a number of Gill’s references to PRE, and adds few of his own.³¹

³¹ John Gill, *Exposition of the Old Testament and New Testament* (9 vols; London: G. Keith, 1763) to Gen 2:1,2,15; 8:16; 12:16; 17:24,26; 21:15,29; 29:10,27,29,33; 31:18; Exod. 2:13; 32:5; Num 16:30; Josh 5:3; Ezra 4:9; Jonah 1:4 etc., etc. I searched the text in the online version of Gill’s *Exposition* at BibleStudyTools.com. Adam Clarke, *The Holy Bible, containing the Old and New Testaments ... with a commentary and critical notes ...* (6 vols; London: T. Tegg and Son, 1836). With Clarke, however, the contemptuous attitude toward Jewish tradition is back: “The Jewish philosophy, such as is found the Cabala, Midrashim, and other works, deserves the character of vain deceit, in the fullest sense and meaning of the words. The inspired writers excepted, the Jews have ever been the most puerile, absurd, and ridiculous reasoners in the world. Even Rabbi Maimon or Maimonides, the most intelligent of them all, is often, in his master-piece, the *Moreh Nebochim*, the teacher of the perplexed, most deplorably empty and vain” (vol. 6, p. 486).

2.4 Language

Under 1.2 above I raised the question of the language of PRE and noted that, apart from some observations on it in Treitl, little has been written on the subject. The fact is that little can usefully be written about it without a grammar and lexicon of the work, of the sort that David Stec has supplied in his recent edition of the far shorter Genizah Psalms.³² Without this it is possible only to make impressionistic comments. Also lacking is a detailed history of late literary Hebrew against which to set the Hebrew of PRE: the account in Saenz-Badillos's *History of Hebrew*, though generally helpful, does not go far enough for our purposes. Some general remarks can, however, be made.

Given the time when PRE was probably written there were three languages in which its author(s) could, in principle, have chosen to write: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic. Arabic took some time to establish itself as a vernacular for Jews after the Arabic conquest of the middle east, and longer still as a literary language, but by the mid-9th century, the time of Saadya, its use for both purposes had become established. So if we opt for a 9th century date for PRE this option would surely have been available. Aramaic was also an option; it was still, probably, the language of the Rabbinic Batei Midrash, and was used for the late Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, which contains much material parallel to PRE (see 4.4 below). Hebrew was always available, and it was Hebrew that the author(s) chose.

³² David M. Stec, *The Genizah Psalms: A Study of MS 798 of the Antonin Collection* (CGSS 5; Leiden: Brill, 2013). A similar study of the language of 3 Enoch was produced by Hugo Odeberg in his edition of the work; see H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch, or, The Hebrew Book of Enoch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928).

There were broadly two types of Hebrew to hand (1) Biblical Hebrew, and (2) what might be called Postbiblical Hebrew. Writing in Biblical Hebrew seems to have experienced something of a revival in the early Middle Ages, which was probably stimulated by the rise of Qaraism with its strong emphasis on Bible, and its interest in the grammar of Biblical Hebrew. The Genizah Psalms mentioned earlier are an example of a late text written in Biblical Hebrew, but there were others. Though it is not impossible to write in Biblical Hebrew without having formally studied its grammar (the Dead Sea Sect seems to have managed it rather well), it certainly helps, and it is reasonable to see the revival of Biblical Hebrew as going hand-in-hand with an upsurge of the study of Biblical Hebrew grammar.

The classic exemplar of Postbiblical Hebrew is the Mishnah. This differs fundamentally from Biblical Hebrew in its morphology, tense-system, syntax, and lexicon. Its word-stock is much larger than Biblical Hebrew and contains a sizeable number of Greek loanwords. This Rabbinic form of Postbiblical Hebrew is found also in the classic midrashim. It is not entirely uniform. Mishnaic Hebrew underwent a standardisation in the medieval manuscripts, which regularly change, e.g., the masc. plur. ending *-in* to *-im*. And there are certain dialectal differences noticeable between Rabbinic Hebrew as written in Babylonia and as written in Palestine.³³ The precise form of the language will differ from text to text: e.g. the Hebrew of the Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael differs in certain ways from the Hebrew of Sifrei, though some of these differences may be a matter of style rather than, strictly

³³ See E.Y. Kutscher, "Mishnaic [Hebrew]," *EJ* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1972), 16:1590-1607, and Yochanan Breuer, "Amoraic Hebrew," in *EHLL* (ed. Geoffrey Khan; online ed.) It should be remembered that it was not until the 9th century that the formal study of Hebrew grammar really began, and until that happened standardisation was difficult. Language was not learned through studying grammar but through translation; see Philip Alexander, "How did the Rabbis learn Hebrew?," in *Hebrew Study from Ezra to Ben Yehuda* (ed. William Horbury; T.& T. Clark: Edinburgh 1999), 71-89.

speaking, dialect. The reason for this may be quite simple and it is that, although Mishnaic Hebrew grew out of late Biblical Hebrew vernacular, from the Mishnah onwards Hebrew became exclusively a literary language, and so the way anyone wrote it depended on the texts he had read and the texts he used as linguistic models. There are other Postbiblical Hebrew texts which did not emanate from a Rabbinic milieu. Rabbis were not the only Hebrew scholars in late antiquity: there were learned priests, whose Hebrew may have differed somewhat from Rabbinic Hebrew. Texts from this period which are in Postbiblical Hebrew would be: the *Sefer Yetzirah*, the *Sefer Asaf Ha-Rofe*, the *Heikhalot Literature* and the *Piyyutim*. In only one of these, *Piyyut*, has the grammar and lexicon been extensively studied: see the massive grammar of Michael Rand.³⁴ A distinctive linguistic feature of piyyutic Hebrew is its lexicon, particularly its penchant for neologisms.

Where does PRE fit into this picture? The short answer is that, though Treitl points to some piyyutic features in its Hebrew, it is overwhelmingly in Rabbinic Hebrew. More precisely it seems to conform to the Hebrew that we find in the classic Midrashim. This is presumably because it is consciously modelling itself on classic Midrash. The author thinks he is writing Midrash, so he uses the language of Midrash. But one can detect nuances in his language which may be characteristic of learned Rabbinic Hebrew in Palestine in the early Islamic period – a type of Hebrew which may perhaps be found also in certain *pisqas* of *Pesiqta Rabbati* or in the *Tanna debe Eliyahu*, but this must remain an impression till we have proper grammars and lexica for all these works.

³⁴ *Introduction to the Grammar of Hebrew Poetry in Byzantine Palestine* (GSL 22; Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2006).

2.5 Content

The structure and content of PRE will be analysed in detail under 3.6.2 and 3.6.4 below. What follows offers an overview of the text, as found in the *textus receptus*, that emerges from a surface reading, a list of topics that provides a point of departure for the later in-depth discussion.

1, 3/1 – 2, 13/1	Prologue: Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus's <i>derashah</i> in the school of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai
3, 13/5 – 20, 221/8	I Creation and the Garden of Eden
3, 13/5 – 19/16	Before creation: the premundane Torah
3, 19/17 – 27/15	First Day: Eight things created on the first day; description of the cosmos
4, 29/2 – 37/14	Second Day: Heaven, the angels, Ma'aseh Merkavah
5, 37/16 – 43/11	Third Day: The gathering of the waters, and the creation of the habitable earth; the depths beneath the earth; the origin of clouds and rain
6, 43/13 – 55/19	Fourth Day: Sun, stars, planets, zodiac, calendar
7, 57/2 – 71/15	The moon
8, 71/17 – 83/14	Intercalation: the transmission of the secret from Adam to Moses and Aaron; intercalation can be done only in the Land of Israel; the principle of intercalation itself.
9, 83/16 – 91/2	Fifth Day: Creation from the waters of birds, fish, insects; Leviathan
10, 93/4 – 105/8	Midrash Jonah
11, 105/10 – 109/3	Sixth Day: Creation from the earth of clean and unclean animals; abominations; Behemoth
11, 109/4 – 115/9	Creation of Adam

11, 115/10 – 121/19	Midrash of the Ten Kings
12, 123/2 – 133/3	Adam in the Garden of Eden; the creation of Eve; the ministering angels
13, 133/5 – 141/6	The temptation and fall: Sammael and the serpent
14, 141/6 – 147/13	The ten descents of God, the first to the Garden of Eden; Adam judged, Sammael and the serpent punished
15, 147/15 – 153/10	The two ways – the way of good and the way of evil (Deut 30:15)
16, 153/12 – 165/19	The service of loving kindness: loving kindness to bridegrooms; examples from Scripture
17, 167/2 – 183/14	Loving-kindness to mourners: examples from Scripture
18, 185/2 – 187/18	Which was created first, the heavens or the earth?
18, 189/2 – 195/15	Seventh Day: Shabbat and the completion of creation
19, 197/2 – 199/8	Ten things created on the eve of Shabbat
19, 199/9 – 211/5	Adam celebrates the Sabbath and recites Psalm 92. Midrash on Psalm 92
20, 211/7 – 221/8	Adam expelled from the Garden; his penitence; Havdalah

21, 221/10 – 24,
267/18

II From Abel to Noah

21, 221/10 – 235/5	Cain and Abel
22, 235/7 – 243/11	Seth; the fall of the angels (Gen 6:2)
23, 243/13 – 257/10	Noah and the Flood
24, 257/12 – 267/18	Nimrod and the Tower of Babel; the second descent of God

25, 269/2 – 39, 525/17 III The Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph

25, 269/2 – 32, 381/18	Abraham
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25, 269/2 – 283/7	The third descent of God; the sin of Sodom; Abraham
26, 283/9 – 39, 525/17	The ten trials of Abraham
26, 283/9 – 285/7	The first trial: the attempt on his life at birth
26, 285/8 – 14	The second trial: imprisonment and the fiery furnace (Gen 15:7)
26, 285/15 – 287/3	The third trial: the migration to Haran (Gen 12:1)
26, 287/4 – 8	The fourth trial: the famine in Canaan and the descent to Egypt (Gen 12:10)
26, 287/9 – 291/16	The fifth trial: Pharaoh takes Sarah as his wife
27, 293/2 – 299/10	The sixth trial: the kings attack him (Gen 14:12-16)
28, 299/12 – 311/14	The seventh trial: the vision between the pieces (Gen 15:1)
29, 313/2 – 335/3	The eighth trial: the covenant of circumcision (Gen 17:1)
30, 335/5 – 351/24	The ninth trial: the casting out of Ishmael (Gen 21:11)
31, 353/2 – 367/5	The tenth trial: the binding of Isaac (Gen 22:1)
32, 367/7 – 381/18	Six were called by their names before they were created
32, 383/2 – 371/20	The death of Sarah
32, 373/2 – 35, 439/11	Isaac
32, 373/2 – 381/18	Isaac mourns Sarah; Isaac and Rebecca; Isaac blesses Jacob
33, 383/2 – 10	Isaac's charity
33, 383/11 – 407/5	Elisha and the Shunnamite woman; the power of charity leads to the resurrection of the dead
34, 407/7 – 425/10	The resurrection of the dead
35, 425/12 – 37, 439/11	Jacob
35, 425/12 – 439/11	Jacob and Esau; the itinerant well; the vision at Bethel
36, 439/13 – 465/7	Jacob and Laban
37, 465/9 – 477/6	Jacob wrestles with the angel

38, 477/8 – 487/4 The rape of Dinah; Esau and Jacob divide Isaac's inheritance

38, 487/5 – 39, 525/17 Joseph

38, 487/5 – 493/17 Joseph sold into Egypt by his brethren

38, 493/18 – 511/3 The power of the ban; examples; the Samaritans

39, 511/5 – 525/17 The fourth descent of God. Joseph in Egypt; death of Jacob and burial at Machpelah

40, 527/2 – 54, 751/20 **IV Moses and the giving of the Torah at Sinai**

40, 527/2 – 537/17 The fifth descent of God: Moses at the burning bush

41, 539/2 – 559/5 The sixth descent of God: the revelation at Sinai

42, 559/7 – 575/15 The Exodus from Egypt

43, 577/2 – 591/20 The power of repentance; examples: Ahab, David, Shim'on ben Laqish, Pharaoh; Israel

44, 595/2 – 605/2 The fight with Amalek

45, 605/4 – 619/6 The Golden Calf

46, 619/8 – 633/10 Moses on the Mount; [the seventh descent of God]

47, 633/12 – 645/12 The zeal of Phineas

48, 645/14 – 671/1 The Egyptian bondage: its duration and the oppression of the Egyptians

49, 671/3 – 683/17 The seed of Amalek: Agag and Haman

50, 683/19 – 709/2 Haman and Mordechai: the story of Esther

51, 709/4 – 723/20 The new heavens and the new earth; [the tenth descent of God?]

52, 725/2 – 735/7 Seven wonders since the creation of the world

53, 735/9 – 54, 751/20 The sin of slander

53, 735/9 – 745/8 Examples: Israel slandered God, Miriam slandered Moses

54, 745/10 – 751/12 The eighth [and ninth] descents of God; Miriam becomes leprous for slandering Moses; leprosy and purification

54, 751/13 – 20 Coda: the lazy workman

2.6 Dating

The references in PRE to Islam (e.g., to a wife and to the daughter of Muḥammad (see 4.7.2 below)), its use of classic rabbinic sources (see 4.3 below), its literary style, and its Hebrew all suggest that the text (in the form in which we now have the *textus receptus*) was composed in the first few centuries of the Islamic period. Can we be more precise? Two alleged references to PRE come into play here.

(1) The first is in a fragment of Pirqoi ben Baboi found in the Cairo Genizah. This is regularly cited as the earliest extant mention of PRE.³⁵ The precise dates of Pirqoi ben Baboi are not known, but he lived in the 8th/9th century. It is unclear where he was born. J.N. Epstein believed he was Babylonian,³⁶ and this would be supported if, as he argued, his unusual name Pirqoi is Persian: many Jews in

³⁵ For the fragment see Louis Ginzberg, *Ginzei Schechter* (3 vols; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1928-29), 2:544. As Sacks, *Midrash and Multiplicity*, 2, fn. 3, rightly points out, the reference is not as secure as is often supposed. It consists of a quotation in the name of Rabbi Eliezer in the wording of PRE 3 which is, strictly speaking, not evidence that Pirqoi knew the whole book as we now have it. However, for the reasons suggested above, a knowledge of PRE fits in well with Pirqoi's anti-Palestinian polemic. In general on Pirqoi ben Baboi see: Shalom Spiegel, "Le-Parashat ha-Pulmus shel Pirqoi ben Baboi," in *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume* (3 vols; ed. Saul Lieberman; Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), 3:243-74 (Hebrew); Robert Brody, *Pirqoy ben Baboy and the History of Internal Polemics in Judaism* (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 2003) (Hebrew); Neil Danzig, "Between Eretz Israel and Bavel: New Leaves from Pirqoi ben Baboi," *Shalem* 8 (2008): 1-32 (Hebrew); Talya Fishman, *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2011), 46-49, 252.

³⁶ J.N. Epstein, *REJ* 75 (1922): 179-86; Epstein, *MY* 2 (1927): 149-61; Epstein, *Tarbiz* 2 (1931): 411f, cited in the article "Pirqoi ben Baboi" in *EJ* (2d ed).

Babylonia, right back to Sassanian times, as the Aramaic Incantation Bowls show,³⁷ carried Iranian names. Ginzberg claimed he was a native of Palestine, but went to study in Babylonia.³⁸ He certainly spent the latter part of his life in Babylonia, and became a doughty supporter of the authority of the Babylonian rabbinate. In around 812 he sent his famous *Iggeret* to the Jews of North Africa criticising them for following the customs of Eretz Israel and urging them in the strongest possible terms to allow only customs sanctioned by the Babylonian schools. He would clearly have been irked by the divergent *minhagim* in PRE (see 2.7 and 3.6.4.8 below). He provides some grounds for supposing that PRE was known in North Africa, and may have been seen as providing justification for some Palestinian customs. How did he know the work? If he was born in Babylonia, and never left there, then this would suggest that a copy of PRE (which is almost certainly Palestinian: see 2.7 below) had already reached Babylonia by his day. This strikes me as rather problematic. But if Ginzberg is correct that he was, in fact, Palestinian, then he could have encountered a copy of PRE in Palestine before his migration to the east. This would explain how he seems to have known the divergent customs so well: his fervour in condemning them and praising Babylonian practice could be read as the typical fervour of a “convert”.

(2) The second reference to PRE is in a responsum of the Babylonian Gaon Natronai, in which he mentions with disapproval its advocacy of the Palestinian practice of looking at the fingernails during Havdalah (see 3.6.4.8 below). This is claimed by Robert Brody to be the earliest reference to PRE.³⁹ The tradition is cited in

³⁷ See, e.g., Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Magnes/Brill: Jerusalem/Leiden, 1985), and Dan Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls: Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity* (London: Kegan Paul, 2003), *passim*.

³⁸ Ginzberg, *Ginzei Schechter*, 2:504–73.

³⁹ See Robert Brody, *Teshuvot Rav Natronai bar Hilai Gaon* (2 vols; Jerusalem: Mekhon Ofek, 1994), vol.

Natronai's name in the Seder of Rav Amram (ed. Coronel, Warsaw, 32a; ed. Frumkin, Jerusalem 1912, 2:59a). The dates of Natronai are not certain, but he is 9th century and pre-Saadya. Once again, if this is correct, it is evidence of how quickly PRE seems to have become known in Babylonia.

Many of the attempts to date PRE more precisely have turned on decoding the list of "the fifteen things which the Ishmaelites will do in the Land at the end of days" in the mini-apocalypse that concludes PRE 30. Much debate has focused on the statement in this that "two brothers will arise over them as leaders". Abba Hillel Silver argued that the two brothers are Mu'āwiyah (661-80) and Ziyād b. Abī Sufyan (665-73).⁴⁰ Hoyland, however, proposed Abd al-Malik (685-705) and 'Abd al-'Aziz, the latter of whom was governor of Egypt while the former, his brother, was caliph.⁴¹ Yet a third identification was put forward by Newby, viz., "the Umayyad caliphs Yazīd III who died in 744 CE, and his brother Ibrāhīm, who succeeded him and only ruled for four months."⁴² Reeves has yet a fourth proposal – the early Abbasid caliphs Saffāh and Manṣūr (754-775).⁴³ As with so much apocalyptic the precise historical reference is hard to pin down. A little earlier in the same apocalypse it is said that the Ishmaelites "will build a structure in the sanctuary" (ויבנו בנין בהיכל),

1, section 90, 204-206. Further, Sol B. Finesinger, "The Custom of Looking at the Fingernails at the Outgoing of the Sabbath," *HUCA* 12-13 (1938), 347-65, esp. 348, fn. 5, and 350.

⁴⁰ Abba Hillel Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculation in Israel* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927; repr., Boston: Beacon, 1959), 40-41.

⁴¹ Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton N.J.: Darwin Press, 1997), 316.

⁴² Gordon D. Newby, "Text and Territory: Jewish-Muslim Relations 632-750 CE," in *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication and Interaction: Essays in Honour of William M. Brinner* (ed. Benjamin H. Hary, John L. Hayes, and Fred Astren; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 83-96, esp. 89.

⁴³ John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Resources for Biblical Study 45; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 72, fn. 32.

which is surely a pretty transparent reference to the building of the Dome of the Rock by ʿAbd al-Malik in 691-92,⁴⁴ so this might favour Hoyland’s proposal.

Another passage which has been taken as an indicator of date is the statement of Rabbi Elʿazar ben Azariah that “these four kingdoms [i.e. the kingdoms that will rule over the world prior to the coming of the Messianic kingdom, identified earlier as Persia, Greece, Edom (Rome) and Ishmael (Arabia)] will only last one day according to the day of the Holy One, blessed be he” (PRE 28, 307/10-12).

Friedlander notes that one day of God is equivalent to a thousand years, so this is the total duration of the four kingdoms.⁴⁵ Where do we count this from? Friedlander suggested that the calculation should begin from the persecutions of Antiochus in 168 BCE, and so “the end of these hostile kingdoms was to be expected about 1000 years later, i.e. about 832 C.E.”⁴⁶ Silver, however, reasonably objects:

It is difficult, however, to understand why the first kingdom should begin with Antiochus Epiphanes. Greek dominion over Palestine did not begin with Antiochus. And what of Persia, which is included in both of the lists of kingdoms enumerated in this chapter? We suggest that the *terminus a quo* is the rebuilding of the Temple, which, according to old Jewish chronology, took place in the year 325 B.C.E. The four kingdoms, Persia, Greece, Rome and Arab, would last a thousand years; the end of the last kingdom would, therefore, be c.648 C.E. (Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculations*, 39-40.)

He goes on to point out that PRE gives, immediately after this, a slightly different calculation attributed to Rabbi Elʿazar ben Arakh, according to which the four

⁴⁴ See Josef van Ess, “ʿAbd al-Malik and the Dome of the Rock: An Analysis of some Texts,” in *Bayt al-Maqdis: ʿAbd al-Malik’s Jerusalem* (ed. Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns; 2 vols; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 1:97.

⁴⁵ Friedlander, *Pirḳê deRabbi Eliezer*, 200, fn. 6.

⁴⁶ Friedlander, *Pirḳê deRabbi Eliezer*, 200, fn. 6.

kingdoms would last for 1,000 years minus “two-thirds of an hour (sc. of God)” (PRE 28, 307/13-16), i.e. 28 years earlier = 620 CE, almost the precise date of the Hijra.⁴⁷ Surely this makes no sense, because Ishmael only becomes a kingdom *after* the Hijra.

The fact is that none of these calculations is worth much, and in the case of the mini-apocalypse of PRE 30, there is the added complication that PRE is here almost certainly incorporating a pre-existent text which was drawn on also by the author of the *Secrets of Simeon bar Yohai*. Nevertheless the presence of such traditions in any recension of PRE that contains them is generally indicative of the broad date of the work. It certainly confirms the conclusion reached on other grounds that PRE was composed in the early Islamic period.

2.7 Provenance

Since Zunz, the prominent references to Islam in PRE have been widely, and reasonably, taken as evidence that the work must have been composed under Islamic rule (4.7.2). The later the date the wider, in principle, the choice of provenance becomes. If we take, e.g., Friedlander’s date of first half of ninth century then Islamic rule by then extended from Persia to Spain and, scattered across the Islamic world, there were Jewish communities where the author might have lived. However, in terms of probabilities the choice is not so wide. PRE is a very learned work, written in Hebrew, and its author had access to a wide range of Rabbinic and non-Rabbinic Jewish traditions. He presumably lived in a Jewish centre which could sustain such a cultural artefact, a centre where he could have received the education

⁴⁷ Silver, *A History of Messianic Speculations*, 40.

which enabled him to write the work, given him access to the traditions on which he relied (which probably included some written texts), and had a scholarly audience which could read and appreciate his efforts. From this perspective only two regions at this period really come into play – Palestine and Babylonia,⁴⁸ and within those two regions more precisely the Galilee, particularly Tiberias, and central Iraq, particularly Baghdad and its environs. Both these areas had the requisite rabbinic culture to sustain such a work.

Of these two the Palestinian is far more likely because of the explicit orientation of PRE itself. It attributes itself to the Palestinian Tanna Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, and almost all the other Rabbis it quotes are Palestinian (see below 4.3). Palestinian rabbinic authorities were, of course, well known in Babylonia, and are often quoted in the Gemara of the Bavli, but it would be a little odd if hardly a single Babylonian authority had been quoted in a supposedly Babylonian work, though it is still possible that a Babylonian author may have carefully maintained the pseudepigraphic fiction that the work is Palestinian in origin.

The Palestinian provenance is supported by three further considerations.

(1) The sources on which PRE seems most heavily to rely are Palestinian. For example, it seems to have known BerR (see 4.3.1 below), and the Yerushalmi but not, probably, the Bavli.⁴⁹ Though there is evidence that some of the Palestinian

⁴⁸ There was one other centre which could possibly have sustained the scholarship of PRE, and that was southern Italy. It was there that Aggadat Bere'shit was composed and the Tanhuma compiled, and there was nearby in Sicily an Islamic state with interests in southern Italy, which might account for PRE's knowledge of Islam. However, evidence for southern Italy is nowhere near as strong as for Palestine.

⁴⁹ Parallels to the Bavli are occasionally cited by Friedlander, but they need to be weighed carefully. They are not always exclusive to the Bavli, and even when they are, one needs to consider whether

Midrashim were transmitted to Babylonia (this seems to have been the case with Eikhah Rabbah, a recension of which was produced in the east),⁵⁰ it seems unlikely that the *mass* of Palestinian traditions that lie behind PRE would have been known there, though one can always think of scenarios that might explain how this could have happened, e.g. the author was a Palestinian scholar who migrated to Babylonia (like Saadya) and composed the work there, or a Babylonian scholar who studied in the west and then returned. But one would still like more explicit evidence of a Babylonian link to go against the balance of the probabilities. It has long been observed that even a westerner like Saadya, who made his home in the east, seems not to know much about Palestinian aggadic traditions.

(2) Even down to the 9th century Midrash was a scholarly activity more strongly associated with Palestinian rabbinic scholarship than with Babylonian. All the great classic Midrashim were products of Palestine. This was recognised by the Babylonian scholars themselves. The Babylonian Talmud notes the paucity of midrashic skills among the Babylonian scholars in the Amoraic period, as compared to their Palestinian counterparts, and puts it down to the need of western Rabbis to counter Christian exegetical appropriation of Tanakh.⁵¹ Even in the early Gaonic period there is scant evidence of sustained midrashic activity in Babylonia. The exception that more or less proves the rule is the *Pitron Torah*,⁵² which appears to

they contain Palestinian tradition which the author of PRE could have known independently. It should also be remembered that by the time PRE was being written, the Bavli was beginning to be known in Palestine.

⁵⁰ See Paul D. Mandel, *Midrash Lamentations Rabbati: Prolegomenon, and a Critical Edition to the Third Parashah* (2 vols.; Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997).

⁵¹ See *b. Yoma* 8a.

⁵² See E.E. Urbach, *Pitron Torah: A Collection of Midrashim and Interpretations* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978 (Hebrew)). For the 9th century date, see Herman L. Strack, and Günter Stemberger, eds., *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 359. It covers only Leviticus,

have been compiled in Babylonia probably in the 9th century, but that is a very different kind of work from PRE, and its Babylonian origin is obvious.

(3) PRE contains a substantial number of *minhagim*. Examples are: (i) Contemplation of the fingernails while reciting the blessing *Bore' me'orei ha-'esh* at Havdalah (PRE 20, 215/9-10; see further 3.6.4.8); (ii) Women observe New Moons more stringently than men (PRE 45, 609/4-8); (iii) Reciting the blessing for dew (*tefillat tal*) on the first day of the Passover (PRE 32, 377/8-14); (iv) The sounding of the shofar after the morning services in all the synagogues on the New Moon of the month of Elul (PRE 46, 625/16-20); (v) The addition of Deut 11:20 to the daily reciting of the *Shema'* (PRE 23, 257/9-10); (vi) Covering the foreskin and the blood after circumcision with "dust of the earth" (PRE 29, 329/19 – 331/6); (vii) The performance of the marriage ceremony under a canopy (PRE 12, 129/9-15); (viii) The standing of the Hazzan beside the bridal couple (PRE 41); (ix) The pronouncing of the blessing upon the bride by the Hazzan (PRE 12, 133/1-3); (x) Saying "I trust in your help, O Lord," when you sneeze, while any one hearing a sneeze should say, "Your health!" (PRE 52, 727/15 - 729/9); (xi) The use of the prayer (e.g. in the evening *Shema'*), "In the name of the Lord, God of Israel, may Michael be at my right, Gabriel to my left..." (PRE 4, 31/3-8). As noted earlier, it was precisely this halakhic content that piqued the interest in PRE of some medieval authorities and made it a text worth studying.

Some of these *minhagim* are not attested in antecedent rabbinic tradition (though some are found later being observed outside Palestine), and a number of

Numbers and Deuteronomy, in other words only halakhic portions of Torah, suggesting, perhaps, that Babylonian scholars were not much interested in *aggadah*.

them seem to run counter to rabbinic norms.⁵³ Treitl has argued that some of the divergent halakhot in PRE find their closest parallels in Qaraite sources, but one should be careful how one interprets this fact. There is surely no way that PRE could be seen as a Qaraite work. It could have drawn on Qaraite sources, but one should not assume that every practice attested in a Qaraite source is distinctively and exclusively Qaraite in origin. Rather the fact that the custom is shared by both the Rabbinic PRE and the Qaraite source may simply indicate that it was a widespread custom at the time. All in all the most satisfactory explanation of the *minhagim* of PRE is that they represent *Palestinian* custom in the early Islamic period. Some of them can be proved to be Palestinian as opposed to Babylonian. One should recall here Pirqoi ben Baboi's attack on PRE from a Babylonian perspective, which shows that its distinctive halakhah is Palestinian. That there was a distinctive *minhag* in Palestine in the late Byzantine and early Islamic periods is revealed by manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah, such as the *Sefer ha-Ma'asim li-Benei Eretz Israel*, and the *Pereq Zera'im*. The evidence is conveniently assembled in M. Margaliot, I. M. Ta-Shma, and Y. Feliks, *Hilkhot Eretz Israel min ha-Genizah* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1973). It is highly likely that this is the setting in which we should contextualize the halakhah of PRE.

⁵³ See Treitl, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, 238-255.

Chapter Three:

Text-Linguistic Description of PRE

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to begin the literary profiling of PRE by applying to it some of the analytic and descriptive categories defined in 1.3, specifically perspective (3.2), narrative (3.3), commentary (3.4), thematic discourse (3.5), and coherence (3.6), with a view to laying foundations for the discussion of genre and historical context in chapter 5.

3.2 Perspective

3.2.1 The Idea of Perspective

In keeping with my predominantly synchronic approach I am concerned here not with historic questions of authorship, but with the perspective projected by the text itself. These should not be confused. An historic author may choose to write as himself, in *propria persona*, but he may also choose imaginatively to adopt another *persona*, and write from its standpoint. As I noted earlier in 2.6-2.7, there is a consensus among scholars that PRE, in the form in which we are now considering it, was composed in the early Islamic period; but that, on the face of it, is not how the text projects itself. Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus plays a prominent part in the way in which PRE projects its authorship, along with many other Rabbis who belong to a much earlier period. It has been widely recognised that there are substantial elements of rabbinic pseudepigraphy in PRE (see 4.3.1 below), but if that is the case,

then by definition the historic author is engaged in some sort of exercise of passing himself off as someone else. It is only because he has failed to do this with total success that modern critical scholarship is able to penetrate his disguise and fix him in real time and place. It should be noted that many of the criteria on which critical scholarship relies in this process of unmasking are external to the text itself. They involve rational assumptions such as the impossibility of predictive prophecy. So, a text which seems to know of the rise of Islam cannot have been written before the Islamic period. It was precisely because earlier generations of readers did not share these assumptions that they by and large failed to reach the critical conclusions of modern scholarship. There is a disjuncture between the historic authorship of PRE and the authorship projected by the text, and it is the latter which concerns us here.¹ For present purposes I will tease out perspective by addressing three interlocking questions: (1) What is the governing voice of the text, that is to say, who says it? (2) What knowledge does the governing voice claim to possess and how does it know what it claims to know, in other words, what *self*-identity does it project? (3) What elements of that knowledge does it expect the reader to know, what kind of knowledge does it presuppose the reader will possess; in other words, how does it construct its readership?

¹ I use the term "author" as a convenient shorthand for the person or persons responsible for all or for the final shape of all, or the vast bulk of the text which I have analysed. That might, or might not be the final editor. It would not be the final editor if he only tinkered with the text at the margins, so to speak, and did nothing to materially affect its unity and coherence.

3.2.2 Governing Voice

There are many voices in PRE – many Rabbis quoted by name as saying many things (see **Appendix E**) – but what is the highest order of voice? Who says the text as a whole? This is what I mean by the governing voice. At first sight PRE seems to have an author, Rabbi Eliezer, and on a cursory reading he seems to say the majority of the text, even if he doesn't say all of it. This certainly was how the text was received, with little dissent, in the middle ages, and it led to the work being given the title, "The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer". The opening two chapters tell the famous story of how Rabbi Eliezer gave a discourse in the Beit Midrash of Rabban Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, and the substance of PRE is apparently presented as the substance of that discourse. Note how chapter three begins with "Rabbi Eliezer *pataḥ*," where *pataḥ* is used in a late sense of opened a discourse, rather than in the earlier technical sense of "delivered a *petiḥah*" (see 3.6.3.8 below). This firmly links the body of the work to the framing story.

As I shall argue in 4.3.1 below, the use of this story is, diachronically speaking, a rather obvious fiction – a way in which the author of PRE sought to anchor his text in Rabbinic history and to give it legitimacy. Perhaps the reader was expected to see through it but, even if this was the case, it remains important to ask to what extent the fiction is sustained at a literary level. The short answer is that some effort *is* made to sustain the fiction, but the further the reader reads the fainter Rabbi Eliezer's voice becomes. As the reader reads sequentially he or she will come across rather frequent quotations from Rabbi Eliezer: he is the most quoted authority,² and these reference might be taken as reminders that he is saying the text.

² Rabbi Eliezer is 'quoted' around 27 times, often at strategic points such as at the beginning of discourses.

Admittedly all the quotations are in the third person (“Rabbi Eliezer said”), and the question naturally arises in the reader’s mind as to why Rabbi Eliezer should refer to himself in this oblique way. The reader might not deem this totally incompatible with Eliezer’s authorship, but then other problems would arise. There are numerous other Rabbis quoted. This, in principle, is not incompatible with Rabbi Eliezer as the speaker. After all what is to prevent him quoting other authorities? Indeed, the majority of the authorities quoted in PRE either lived earlier than his time or were his contemporaries, so it is possible in principle that he could have known what they said. Rabbi Eliezer himself was a second generation Tanna. He could then, in principle, have known the opinions of his contemporaries and those of the first generation. For the sake of argument, let us also allow that he could have known some of the opinions of his younger contemporaries of the third generation. It is rather striking that the vast majority of the attributed statements in PRE from classic authorities (whose generation is known) belong to Tannaim of the first to third generations. There are comparatively few later Tannaim or Amoraim cited (see **Appendix E.2**). It appears that some trouble has been taken to create the impression that PRE, if not composed by Eliezer, is nevertheless an early Tannaitic work. It undoubtedly creates confusion that the other authorities are quoted in exactly the same way as Rabbi Eliezer. From a text-linguistic point of view their dicta have exactly the same form and status as those of Rabbi Eliezer. The confusion is compounded by the fact that the text occasionally quotes authorities who are known to have lived after the death of Eliezer, although it might take a learned reader to notice this. For a reader who is reading the text closely and sequentially, the “voice” of Rabbi Eliezer fades the further that this reader gets from the opening of the text. It does not take long for the idea that Rabbi Eliezer is the voice of the text to be forgotten, and another voice comes to dominate the work. The fiction that the bulk of

the text is Eliezer's discourse is at best half-heartedly sustained. Even if the reader had not assumed so at the outset, they might conclude following close reading of the text that another voice was speaking, and would be inclined to go back and conclude that the opening framing story is said in the same voice. After all, the opening story of chapters 1 and 2 are told in the third person and, even if the bulk of the text is said by Rabbi Eliezer, it is hard to hear the opening narrative as said by him. The most economic hypothesis from the standpoint of a reader who has completed PRE would be to assume that the opening voice which tells in the third person the frame-narrative at the beginning of the work adopts for a time the literary persona of Rabbi Eliezer, but then increasingly drops the pretence and speaks in its own voice. This voice is what I call the governing voice. It is anonymous: at no point does it give itself a name, nor reveal directly when or where it wrote. It is clearly *a* voice of the historical author of our text, seen as the final framer of the text in the form in which we have chosen to analyse it, but it would be wrong to see it as his real, historical voice. There is still masking going on. It *plays* at being Rabbi Eliezer, and its horizon of knowledge assumes an omniscience that no historical author could actually have possessed (see 3.2.3 below). Thus, we should continue to distinguish between the perspective of the text and the perspective of the historical author.

Such an omniscient, anonymous governing voice is a common feature of Rabbinic literature, but only in the case of the Babylonian Talmud, where it is known as the Stam, has its function been adequately noticed and analysed in depth.³ The

³. See most recently, David Weiss Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). Further: L. Jacobs, "Are there Fictitious Baraitot in the Babylonian Talmud?," *HUCA* 42 (1971), 185-96; Jacobs, "How Much of the Babylonian Talmud is Pseudepigraphic?," *JJS* 28 (1977), 47-59; Jacobs, *Structure and Form in the Babylonian Talmud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); W. S. Green, "What's in a Name? The Problematic of Rabbinic 'Biography'," in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice* (ed. W.S. Green; Missoula,

“Stam” of PRE raises similar questions to those raised by the Stam of the Bavli. Is there one Stam or several? The answer the reader gives to this question will depend on his or her perception of the coherence and unity projected by the text (see 3.6 below). If the text displays high levels of coherence and unity, the reader may be inclined to think of one governing voice which has strongly shaped the text as we have it. That voice may have incorporated other diverse voices, but it has handled them firmly and moulded them into a well-argued text – a view that is proving increasingly attractive in the case of the Stam of the Bavli, and has led some to argue that there are large elements of pseudepigraphy in the Talmud. If, however, the coherence and unity of the text comes across as weak, and it reads more like a compilation of pre-existing traditions, loosely assembled, the reader may be inclined to assume that it was put together by several voices that were never fully reconciled, though one would still have to postulate a final editor who was responsible for the text that now lies before us. The attributes of the governing voice, therefore, have to be determined by other literary features of the text.

3.2.3 Knowledge Horizon

PRE projects a rich and varied knowledge horizon. It includes the following:

(1) Biblical figures. These appear both in shorter narratives in the course of the exposition of a topic (e.g., PRE 16, where short biblical narratives are employed to

Minn.: Scholars Press, 1978), 77-96; David Weiss Halivni, “Doubtful Attributions in the Talmud,” *PAAJR* (1979-80): 67-83 (Hebrew); Jacob Neusner, *In Search of Talmudic Biography: The Problem of the Attributed Saying* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars Press, 1984); David Kraemer, “On the Reliability of Attributions in the Babylonian Talmud,” *HUCA* 50 (1989), 175-90; Richard Kalmin, “Talmudic Portrayals of Relations between Rabbis: Amoraic or Pseudepigraphic?,” *AJSR* 17 (1992): 165-97; Sacha Stern, “Attribution and Authorship in the Babylonian Talmud,” *JJR* 45 (1994): 28-51; Stern, “The Concept of Authorship in the Babylonian Talmud,” *JJS* 46 (1995): 183-95.

exemplify the theme of loving kindness), and in longer narratives (e.g., the story of Jonah and the Big Fish in PRE 10). Biblical characters are also employed directly in discourse outside of narrative: e.g., the Midrash of the Ten Kings (PRE 11, 115/9-121) includes a list of biblical and non-biblical kings (God; Nimrod; Joseph; Solomon; Ahab; Nebuchadnezzar; Cyrus, King of Persia; Alexander of Macedon; the King Messiah; and, finally, God again as the final king). The seamless integration here of a non-biblical figure (Alexander of Macedon) into a sequence of biblical names is noteworthy. It is found again in a series of stories used to illustrate the theme of repentance in PRE 43, in which the exemplary characters are: Ahab; Jehoshaphat, king of Judah; David, king of Israel; Manasseh, son of Hezekiah; Shim'on ben Laqish; Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

(2) Rabbinic authorities. Around fifty-seven rabbinic names are mentioned in the text of PRE, some of them numerous times. The majority of these names figure in classic rabbinic literature, however there are a few obscure exceptions along with a handful of names that may be unattested in the rabbinic corpus as we now have it (see **Appendix E**).

(3) God and supernatural agencies. God is invoked under a variety of names, many of which are liturgical in origin: the Holy One, blessed be He (הַקְדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא); Elohim (אֱלֹהִים); Lord of Hosts (יְיָ צְבָאוֹת); the Almighty (הַגְּבוּרָה) (PRE 5, 37/16); Lord of all words (רִבּוֹן כּוֹל הָעוֹלָמִים) (PRE 6, 53/4). There are frequent references to the Shekhinah (e.g., PRE 31, 357/4, and 36, 451/18; see 3.6.2.3 below). The Bat Qol is mentioned where Rabbi Eliezer claims that it should speak on the occasion of the intercalation of the calendar. If ten men are assembled (if fewer than ten, a Torah scroll can make up the number), and the chief of the assembly proclaims the name of God, then a Bat Qol should be heard to say Exod 12:1-2. If the assembly hears

nothing, then their sin is to blame (PRE 8, 81/1-14). In another instance, Rabbi Eliezer is privileged to hear a prophetic voice as God speaks to him regarding the two ways of good and evil (PRE 15, 147/13 – 149/3). The precise wording is: “Rabbi Eliezer says: I heard with my ears the Lord of Hosts speaking, and what did he say?” The term Bat Qol is not used here, but this probably spells out what the writer understands the Bat Qol to be – “the Lord of hosts speaking”. The figure of Rabbi Eliezer is forever linked with the Bat Qol through the account of the dispute over Akhnai oven, in which a Bat Qol comes to vindicate him (*b.Bava Metzia*^c 59a-b).

(4) Angels. PRE opens chapter 4 with the creation of angels on the second day (PRE 4, 29/1-2; 4, 29/20ff). There are four classes of ministering angels, led by Michael, Gabriel, Uriel and Raphael. These four groups are located spatially around the Shekhinah, which sits in the centre on the throne. Cherubim and Seraphim are part of the Holy Throne and surround it. The angel of death appears in the text, e.g., to Eve in the Garden of Eden (PRE 13, 139/15). Angels also appear as active characters throughout PRE, interwoven into narrative units. Some of the appearances of angels in the text are related to the way PRE interprets the biblical text (such as the appearance of the three men and Mamre (Gen 18:1-2), identified in PRE 25, 269/7-8 as the third descent of God in the form of three angels).⁴ Other appearances of angels in narratives in PRE are the consequence of more expansive exegetical activity, e.g., the reference to angels pleading with God at the binding of Isaac (PRE 31, 361/11-14). Some angelic characters appear more frequently: e.g., the

⁴ Note the interpretations of Tg. Neof. 18:1 (three angels sent to Abraham); GenR 50,2 (on Gen 19:11; three men are angels), etc – see further fn. 1, pg 103 in Martin McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, The Aramaic Bible 1A, Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1992, 103, fn. 1.

(PRE 6, 45/7-8); and the twelve constellations: (המזלות): Aries (טלה), Taurus (שור), Gemini (תאומים), Cancer (סרטן), Leo (אריה), Virgo (בתולה), Libra (מאזנים), Scorpio (עקרב), Sagittarius (קשת), Capricorn (גדי), Aquarius (דלי), and Pisces (דגים) (PRE 6, 45/17-19). The text discusses the four turning-points (תקופות), the two solstices and the two equinoxes, that delimit the four seasons of the year, one in Nissan (ניסן), one in Tammuz (תמוז), one in Tishri (תשרי), and one in Tevet (טבת) (PRE 6, 49/2-5). It also offers calculations to determine the Molad (מולד), the new moon (PRE 7, 59/1 ff).

(8) Festivals. PRE makes frequent references to Shabbat, and the festivals of Yom Kippur and Pesah, all three of which seem to be of particular significance, because they are associated in the mind of the author with a number of his key themes, e.g. repentance and redemption. Significant events of the *Heilsgeschichte* are also said to have happened on those days. Abraham's circumcision (PRE 29, 313/19) and Moses' descent from the mountain with the Torah after 40 days (PRE 46, 625/11-15) are both said to have occurred on the Day of Atonement.⁷ Similarly, Cain and Abel's sacrifice (PRE 21, 227/9) and the abduction of Sarah by Pharaoh (Abraham's fifth trial) occurred on Passover (PRE 26, 287/14-15), and God calls Abraham out of his house on Passover to show him the covenant between the pieces (PRE 28, 301/8). In PRE 18, 191/13 ff the observance of Shabbat is linked with repentance and redemption.⁸

(9) Books. There are very few references to books as such in PRE, even to the Torah, the most explicitly and pervasively cited source in the whole work. It is,

⁷ Also, Sammael is given power over the sinful of Israel on the Day of Atonement (PRE 46, 629/1-13).

⁸ See further section 3.6.4 below on the thematic coherence of PRE, and in particular section 3.6.4.4 on the theme of redemption.

however, acknowledged as a book, e.g., PRE 8, 81/5, and is personified, e.g., PRE 3, 17/19-19/1, and the term *Miqra* = Written Torah occurs at PRE 46, 621/1-4 (see 4.2 below). There are unacknowledged quotations of some of the Eighteen Benedictions (e.g., the end of the first benediction of the *Amidah* at PRE 27, 299/9-10: see 3.6.2.2 below), but the *Amidah* (under the name *Tefillah*) and the Grace after Meals (*Birkat ha-Mazon*), as well as the *Shema*^c, in its liturgical form, are recognised as discrete texts in PRE 1, 5/6-8. Dicta attributed to named Rabbis are unlikely to find parallels in known antecedent rabbinic sources, and may be pseudepigraphic (see 4.3.1 below).⁹ This may indicate that the author does not expect his readers to know a defined, written corpus of rabbinic literature, but at least to recognise some if not all of the names of the Rabbis as authorities. The only antecedent rabbinic text mentioned by name is the *Mishnah* (PRE 46, 621/1-4, as opposed to *Miqra*; see 3.6.4.5 and 4.3.1 below).¹⁰

(10) Language. The text is written in a form of late Rabbinic Hebrew (see 2.4 above), and takes for granted a knowledge of this by its readers. Knowledge of Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Aramaic is also presupposed in the extensive use of quotations from the Hebrew Bible. The text refers directly to the Aramaic language in its exegesis of the Covenant of the Halves (PRE 28, 303/14-17),¹¹ and it contains a

⁹ It may be a quibble, but it is worth observing how often PRE introduces a rabbinic quotation in the present tense: “Rabbi X says (*omer*)” rather than “Rabbi X said (*amar*)”. The language is consonant with quoting a written text, though other explanations are possible.

¹⁰ See Rivka Ulmer, “The *Mishnah* in the Later Midrashim,” in *The Mishnah in Contemporary Perspective* (ed. A.J. Avery-Peck and J. Neusner; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 1:193-233.

¹¹ There seem to have been more references to or phrases in Aramaic in the Epstein ms. See Friedlander, *Pirkê deRabbi Eliezer*, 222-223, in an interpretation of 1 Chr 22:9: “Why was his name called Solomon? Because his name was called Solomon in the Aramaic language.” On page 223, fn. 2, Friedlander notes this is omitted in the printed texts. Friedlander’s text also has some sentence fragments in Aramaic (e.g. Friedlander, *Pirkê deRabbi Eliezer*, 242, fn. 6 (PRE 33): “The phrase, “this restrained them until he came,” is in Aramaic and occurs only in our MS. Its meaning is doubtful. Is it

few sentences in Aramaic (e.g. PRE 40, 531/6). It also routinely employs technical terms of rabbinic discourse, such as *she-ne'emar* to introduce quotations from Tanakh.

There is much more that could be said about the knowledge horizon of PRE but this survey of selected items will suffice to illustrate my claim that the knowledge horizon of the text is rich. The elements quoted above reveal (i) the knowledge of the governing voice, and (ii) the kind of audience it is constructing for its work. Almost none of the elements identified above is explained or glossed in any significant way. The text assumes the audience shares its knowledge. To explain: I am thinking of a case where information is appended to a name or technical term to tell the reader who or what it is, or what it means. For example, suppose Yom Kippur is mentioned, and then immediately glossed “a day on which the Jewish people confess their sins and pray to God for forgiveness”. The implication would be that the text does not envisage an audience that knows what Yom Kippur is. However, if the text uses the term Yom Kippur without qualification, then it assumes the audience shares this knowledge with it. Occasionally we do find qualifications (*Cyrus, king of Persia, Alexander, king of Macedon*), but they are very weak, and do not really distance the text from its putative audience (note, “David, king of Israel”). It takes for granted that its horizon of knowledge and that of its assumed audience and believes them to more or less totally coincide. We should also note that for the most part the text does not state how it comes to know what it knows. The only source of information which it explicitly acknowledges are Scripture and rabbinic tradition, but it is obvious that these cannot be the sole source

an old Targum?”). A further footnote to Friedlander’s text of chapter 50 (*Pirḳê deRabbi Eliezer*, 405, fn. 1) suggests the Venice edition contains a number of Aramaic words.

of its knowledge (see 4.1-3 below). The range of its knowledge is wide, and includes elements lying beyond normal human cognisance and experience, such as events in the future, or the organization of the heavenly world. In the light of such esoteric knowledge, one might be inclined to pay closer attention to the apparent claim, quoted above, that Eliezer possessed, in some form or other, the gift of prophecy, but that reference is so casually made, so little foregrounded, that it is hard to see it as having major significance. Be this as it may, the fact remains that the governing voice of PRE poses as an omniscient narrator of the text. All this might seem rather obvious, but it makes an important point, which I will draw out more fully in chapter 6. Suffice to say here that it locates the governing voice of PRE as speaking from within a very narrow tradition of Judaism, to a very narrow and highly specialised audience.

3.3 PRE as Narrative

In 1.3 above, following the lead of the Typology Project, I distinguished three main types of text in postbiblical Jewish literature which I called narrative, commentary, and discourse. Elements of all three of these text-types can be found in PRE. There are extended narratives – e.g., in Chapters 1-2, which tell the story of Rabbi Eliezer's discourse in the Beit Midrash of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, and in Chapter 10, the story of Jonah and the Big Fish. In addition there are short narrative episodes – mini-narratives – scattered throughout the text involving biblical and rabbinic figures. I will analyse four narratives to illustrate the literary character and function of narrative in PRE.

3.3.1 Rabbi Eliezer in the Beit Midrash of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai

PRE chapters 1-2 present a *Bildungsroman* describing the fulfilment of Rabbi Eliezer's wish to learn the Torah. Eliezer is working for his father on the family farm ploughing first stony and then arable ground, but whichever he ploughs he bursts into tears. His father asks what is wrong and Eliezer tells him he wants to study Torah. His father replies that at twenty-eight he is too old for this. Instead he should marry and have sons and take *them* to the Beit Midrash. Eliezer fasts for two weeks and Elijah appears to him and tells him to go and learn with Yoḥanan ben Zakkai in Jerusalem. Eliezer goes and, sitting tearfully before Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, confesses his desire to study. Yoḥanan asks him who his father is, but he refuses to say. Having discovered that Eliezer does not know the basic prayers (the Shema^c, the ^cAmidah, and Grace after Meals), he teaches them to him. Eliezer is still not satisfied and insists tearfully he wants to learn *Torah*. Yoḥanan teaches him halakhot. Eliezer undertakes an eight-day fast, and his bad breath forces Yoḥanan to expel him from his class. Eliezer bursts into tears, and complains that Yoḥanan has expelled him as if he had leprosy – thus incidentally showing that he has learned some halakhah. Yoḥanan soothes him by saying that one day the savour of Torah from his mouth will ascend to heaven, just as his bad breath has. Yoḥanan finally discovers that Eliezer's father is Hyrcanus, a wealthy man, and insists that Eliezer must dine with him, but Eliezer, unwilling to break his fast, says he has already dined, a claim that is later shown to be false.

Meanwhile back at the farm, Eliezer's brothers persuade Hyrcanus to go up to Jerusalem and publicly disinherit Eliezer. Eliezer arrives as Yoḥanan is celebrating a festival with some leading Jerusalemites. When Yoḥanan is told that Hyrcanus has arrived he gives instructions that he should be seated at the top table. When they are

seated, Yoḥanan asks Eliezer to say some words of Torah. Eliezer elegantly demurs with a clever parable which suggests he is not worthy, but Yoḥanan counters with another parable which indicates that he believes he is, but to put his student at ease he offers to withdraw, so that Eliezer does not have to teach in the presence of his master. As soon as Yoḥanan leaves Eliezer sits and expounds, his face shining like a second Moses. Yoḥanan is fetched to hear the discourse. He kisses Eliezer on the head exclaiming, "Happy are you, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that such a one has come forth from your loins." Hyrcanus, realizing that his son is being praised, jumps to his feet bursting with pride. Eliezer, embarrassed, asks him to sit down, but Hyrcanus publicly announces that, having come to disinherit Eliezer he was now going to give him the whole inheritance and disinherit his brothers. Eliezer graciously declines the offer, claiming that all he wants is knowledge of Torah, and that that will be a sufficient reward for him.

The story is well constructed and is, possibly, the only true narrative in PRE. There is a plot-line which is skilfully unwound to its denouement. There is a shift of scene – from the family farm, to the Beit Midrash in Jersualem, back to the family farm, and finally to Jerusalem. The three main actors are subtly characterised by their actions. Eliezer, hyper-sensitive and constantly bursting into tears, with a tendency to overdo things, like indulging in eight-day fasts, but consumed with zeal to know Torah, and able to enter into discourse with the greatest scholar of the age. Eliezer is also modest, declining to parade his knowledge in public in the presence of master and teacher, and generous in refusing to take his brothers' share of the inheritance. Yoḥanan, shrewd and diplomatic, who seems to guess that Hyrcanus has come to make trouble for Eliezer, and cleverly stage-manages the whole situation to ensure that he changes his mind. Yoḥanan is not above currying favour

with the rich and powerful, immediately inviting Eliezer to dine at his table when he finds out who his father is without thinking that he would thus be asking Eliezer to break his fast – an invitation which Eliezer neatly sidesteps by saying (falsely) that he has already eaten. Eliezer's father Hyrcanus is not uncaring towards his son. He shifts his ploughing from the stony to the arable ground when he thinks that is the problem. He also offers a soft answer to Eliezer's request to study Torah, saying that he is a bit too old for that, and can surely take his sons to the Beit Midrash and vicariously fulfil his wishes through them. Hyrcanus is impetuous and easily swayed. It is Eliezer's brothers who goad him into taking punitive action against a son who has run off and abandoned his duties at home, but once in Jerusalem Hyrcanus is easily swayed to the other extreme and is only saved from his ill-judged decision by Eliezer's wise and generous attitude.

3.3.2 Jonah and the Big Fish

The *Bildungsroman* of chapters 1 and 2 is a significant example of narrative in PRE, and there are further examples to be found across the text. The most extended examples of such narratives involve the expanded retelling and dramatisation of pre-existent narratives in the Bible. On the face of it these differ from the story of Eliezer in the Beit Midrash, in that there is no biblical story behind the latter which the reader is expected to have in mind and which is constantly cross-referenced. The story of Eliezer in the Beit Midrash may, however, have also been taken from a pre-existent text: 'Avot deRabbi Natan. The *Bildungsroman* functions within PRE to validate it and contextualize it within rabbinic tradition, and its effect would certainly be enhanced if the reader already knew this tale and perceived PRE as filling a narrative lacuna in it, by providing for the first time the contents of the discourse which Eliezer delivered on that famous occasion. Whereas the biblical

stories that PRE includes in its text are massively rewritten and considerably expanded, the story of Eliezer in the Beit Midrash has been more or less quoted verbatim from its source (see 4.3.1 below). This reinforces the observation made above that the story performs a limited, formal function in PRE: to locate its discourse within rabbinic tradition. This also suggests that none of the themes implicit in the story are of much interest to the author of PRE beyond the fulfilment of this purpose.

There are several extensive retellings of biblical stories in PRE, e.g., the ^עAqedah, the Golden Calf, and Jonah and the Big Fish. They all show similar narrative characteristics, which I will illustrate from the story of Jonah and the Big Fish. The other two will be analysed from a thematic perspective below (the ^עAqedah in 3.6.4.4 and the Golden Calf in 3.6.4.6). For possible Christian elements in Jonah and the Big Fish see 4.7.1, and for other Jonah Midrashim see 4.3.2.1.

The story of Jonah and the Big Fish is found in PRE 10. The narrative begins with a brief description of two previous missions on which Jonah was sent by God: once to restore the borders of Israel, and once to the people of Jerusalem to prophesy the destruction of the city. Because God in his mercy relented on the latter occasion, and did not carry out his threat, the people concluded Jonah was a false prophet. On the occasion of Jonah's third mission, to Nineveh, he decides to flee, lest God relent in this case too, and the nations of the world join Israel in impugning Jonah's integrity. He heads in the opposite direction to Nineveh, travelling to Joppa to meet a ship sailing to Tarshish. So eager is he to get away that he pays his fare in advance of the journey. After a day's travel the ship is engulfed by a storm, while neighbouring ships sail serenely past totally unaffected. The sailors on board are from the seventy nations of the world, and each prays to their gods with their idols

in their hands. Jonah, roused from slumber in the ship's hold, is asked by the captain to explain who he is. Jonah declares that he is a Hebrew, and that it is on his account that the tempest has befallen the ship. He tells them to throw him overboard, but the sailors are reluctant to do so. They try lightening the ship, and rowing hard for land, but finally draw lots as to who should do the deed. The tale descends into burlesque as the sailors, still reluctant to throw Jonah into the sea, successively "dunk" him in it, further and further, to test whether or not he is the cause of the trouble. The sea momentarily abates as soon as Jonah enters the water, but rages again when he is pulled out. Finally they have no option but to drop him in and the sea becomes calm.

Jonah is swallowed by a Big Fish, prepared by God during the six days of creation for this very purpose. The fish tells Jonah that this is not a good day to have been swallowed by him because that very day he was himself destined to be swallowed by Leviathan. Jonah tells Leviathan off, and scares him by flashing at him the sign of the covenant. Glad to have been saved by Jonah from Leviathan's maw, the fish obligingly takes Jonah on a tour of the deep, showing him the paths of the Reed Sea, the pillars of the earth, the lowest Sheol, Gehinnom, the seven mountains under the Temple in Jerusalem, and the Foundation Stone of the World (the *'Even Shetiyyah*) with the sons of Korah praying over it. The fish pauses under the Temple, to give Jonah the chance to pray, and he prays to be returned to life, vowing to slay Leviathan on the day of the salvation of Israel. Jonah's descent into the deepest depths is rapidly reversed, as God orders the fish to vomit him up onto dry land. The sailors throw away their idols and go up to Jerusalem to circumcise themselves as a sacrifice, undertaking to bring their families and descendants into the worship of the God of Jonah.

Here the story ends, ignoring the whole biblical account of Jonah's resumed mission to Nineveh. The conversion of the sailors, who represent the seventy nations of the world, functions here as a surrogate for the biblical ending about the conversion of the Ninevites. Both are about the acknowledgement by gentiles of the God of Israel: in the Bible only one nation – the Ninevites – repents. In PRE this is universalized into all the nations, through their representatives; the universal recognition of the one true God at the *eschaton*. PRE, of course, knows the ending of the Book of Jonah, and its theme of repentance was very pertinent to its overall message. In fact, it tells the story in PRE 43, 585/8-591/4, in its main discourse on repentance (see 3.6.4.4 below). It is hard to avoid the feeling that this is deliberate, and may point towards a unitary authorship. In PRE 10 the text's focus in its retelling of the Jonah story is not so much on repentance as on *deliverance*, so it saves up the ending of Jonah for the place where *repentance* will become its dominant theme.

The story of Jonah and the Big Fish is told with great vigour in PRE. Two aspects of its style should be noted: (1) The first is its use of fantasy and magical realism¹² which recalls Arabic wonder-tales of the period, a style which was to reach its apotheosis in the *Thousand and One Nights*, and the cycle of *Sinbad the Sailor*.¹³ It is hard to know how this style could have become known to the author of PRE, but it

¹² A translation of it is included in David Stern and Mark J. Mirsky, eds., *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1990), 59-66. The translation is by Stern.

¹³ See David Pinault, *Story-Telling Techniques in the Arabian Nights* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Dwight F. Reynolds, "A Thousand and One Nights: A History of the Text and its Reception," (ed. Roger Allen and D.S. Richards; vol. 6 of *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature*; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 270-91. See the article "Sindbād" by U. Marzolph in *EL*, Brill Online, accessed 14 June 2014.

was most likely through oral tradition; there are numerous elements of PRE's narrative style that strike one as folkloristic. PRE belongs to a great period of story-telling, of which the tales of the prophets (*Qisas al-Anbiya*) formed a significant part, tales which seem to have been shared among Jews, Christians and Muslims.¹⁴ (2) The second striking stylistic feature of PRE's retelling of the story of Jonah is its use of burlesque and "over-the-top" humour. We should avoid reading it in too "po-faced" a way. It is hilarious, and meant to be. The biblical story is already funny, but PRE pushes it to extremes, as in the "dunking" of Jonah, or in Jonah frightening off Leviathan by exposing himself to him to show him the sign of the covenant. This is very rabbinic. The tendency towards burlesque is characteristic of classic rabbinic narrative, and forms one of the deepest roots of modern Yiddish humour. The risqué elements may also reflect the social setting in which these tales were traded – the Beit Midrash, made up exclusively of men, many of them adolescent boys. One might compare the series of stories in *b. Berakhot* 62a in which more and more hilarious examples are given to illustrate the theme that the behaviour of a rabbi is as important as his explicit teaching. The climactic exempla begin with Rabbi 'Aqiva remarking that he followed his teacher Rabbi Joshua into the privy, and observing that he sat east-west (not north-south), *sat* and did not *stand*, and wiped with his left hand and not his right. Ben 'Azzai is appalled that he took such liberties, but 'Aqiva replies that it was Torah and he needed to know. Ben 'Azzai then followed 'Aqiva into the privy, and observed that he behaved as Rabbi Joshua had done (he had learned well). Rabbi Judah is appalled but Ben 'Azzai replies: "It is Torah and I need to know". Rav Kahana trumps everyone by hiding under Rav's bed, to observe how

¹⁴ It should be noted, however, that Surat Yūnus (Q10) contains almost nothing of the Jonah story, but it comes out elsewhere in the Qur'an (e.g. Q37:139-48). See the article "Yūnus" by B. Heller-[A. Rippin], in *EI*, Brill Online, accessed 14 June 2014.

he performs the marital act. The master goes at it with such gusto that Rav Kahana cannot help exclaiming from under the bed: "It is as if the Master had never before supped at the cup!" Rav replies: "Kahana, are you there? Get out, because it's rude!". Kahana replies: "Master, it is Torah, and I need to know." One can easily imagine the mirth such a story would provoke, or the story of Jonah "flashing" at Leviathan.¹⁵ Yet in both cases the underlying message is serious. In the case of the former, the idea is that the rabbi should embody and live out the Torah which he teaches. In the case of the latter it is that, ultimately, God's covenant with Israel is the guarantee of Israel's salvation.

The narrative in PRE's account of the story of Jonah is strong. Plot and characterization are competently handled. The author of PRE knows how to spin a good yarn. The same goes for his telling of the stories of the 'Aqedah and the Golden Calf, but there is one feature in all his biblical narratives that arguably breaks narrative conventions, and that is the occasional reference to the underlying biblical story through direct quotation introduced by the *she-ne'emar* formula. The following passage is typical:

[The fish] showed him the great river of the waters of the ocean, as it is said, *The deep was round about me* (Jonah 2:5). And it showed him the Reed Sea, through which Israel passed, as it is said: *The reeds were wrapped about my head* (Jonah 2:5). And it showed him the place of the breakers of the sea

¹⁵ Humour is notoriously culturally conditioned, nevertheless the recognition of it in ancient literature is important. There seems to be little study specifically of rabbinic humour, but see Carol Bakhos, "Reading against the Grain: Humour and Subversion in Midrashic Literature," in *Narratology, Hermeneutics and Midrash: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Narratives from Late Antiquity through to Modern Times* (ed. Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 71-80. Also relevant is Holger Michael Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 16-21 and *passim*. There have been some studies of humour in Tanakh: see, e.g., Yehuda T. Radday and Athalya Brenner, eds., *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible* (Sheffield: Almond Press, 1990).

and its waves flowing out from it, as it is said, *All your breakers and your waves passed over me* (Jonah 2:3). And it showed him the pillars of the earth and its foundations, as it is said, *The earth with its bars for the world were by me* (Jonah 2:6). And it showed him Gehinnom, as it is said, *Yet you have brought up my life from destruction, O Lord my God* (Jonah 2:6). And it showed him the lowest Sheol, as it is said, *Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice* (Jonah 2:2).¹⁶ And it showed him the Temple of God, as it is said, *I went down to the bottom of the mountains* (Jonah 2:6). (PRE 10, 101/4-14)

The author is clearly keen to show that his fantastic “riff” on Jonah’s under-water adventures actually has some biblical justification, in Jonah 2:2-6. However, in citing the original story in this way he is, surely, breaking with the conventions of true narrative. The narrative should be formally independent and stand on its own. This proof-text style approach is more appropriate to discourse or to the commentary part of lemmatic commentary. It is not even characteristic of so-called Rewritten Bible, a point to which I will return below (3.4). The presence of these proof-texts gives the game away. These narratives are actually discourse in narrative form. Discourse can express itself as narrative, but narrative should not express itself formally as discourse.

¹⁶ It is unclear what the relationship is of Sheol to Gehinnom. It is possible that Gehinnom is one of the circles of hell (Sheol). The text is somewhat disturbed. The Epstein manuscript, as translated by Friedlander, is a little different. The author almost certainly knew some of the Tours of Hell traditions, on which see Martha Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: An Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983). This sort of literature was also popular in Islam: see Miguel Asín Palacios, *Islam and the Divine Comedy*, trans. H. Sutherland (London: Frank Cass, 1968).

3.3.3 Mini-Narratives

The following are two typical mini-narratives in PRE, the first involving a biblical and the second a rabbinic protagonist.

(1) PRE 17, 181/14-183/11:

Solomon saw that the attribute of loving kindness was great before the Holy One, blessed be he. When he built the Temple he built two gates, one for the bridegrooms, and the other for the mourners and those under the ban. On Sabbaths the Israelites were going and sitting between those two gates; and they knew that anyone who entered through the gate of bridegrooms was a bridegroom, and they said to him: "May he who dwells in this house make you joyful with sons and daughters." If one entered through the gate of mourners with his upper lip covered, then they knew that he was a mourner, and they would say to him, "May he who dwells in this house comfort you." If one entered through the gate of the mourners and his upper lip was not covered, then they knew that he was under the ban, and they would say to him, "May he who dwells in this house comfort you and put into your heart the desire to listen to your companions, and [may he put into the hearts of your companions the desire] to pardon you and to draw you near, so that all Israel may discharge their duty in the matter of the service of loving kindness."

(2) PRE 43, 583/8-585/2:

Ben Azzai says: Come and see the power of repentance from the case of Rabbi Shim'on ben Laqish, who with his two friends was robbing with violence anyone who passed them on the way. What did he do? He left his two companions plundering in the mountains, and he returned to the God of his fathers with all his heart, with fasting and prayer. He rose early and retired late, before the Holy One, blessed be he, and he was studying the Torah all (the rest of) his days, and (giving) gifts to the poor. He did not return to his evil deeds and his repentance was accepted. On the day when he died, his two companions who were (still) plundering in the mountains also died. And they gave a portion in the treasury of the living to Rabbi Shim'on, but his two companions were put in the lowest Sheol.

3.3.4 The Role of Narrative in PRE

The narratives which I have noted in 3.3.3 above play very different roles in PRE. Eliezer in the Beit Midrash provides a narrative setting for the discourse that follows. The story is well told and memorable, and it reinforces certain values, notably that dedication to the study of Torah should take precedence over all other activities. It trumps loyalty to family and contributing to its well-being, including even obedience to a father. It encourages fathers to indulge a son who wants to study Torah and to support him, dangling before them the possibility that he may become a great scholar, and so bring glory on the family. This is an obvious, rather self-serving rabbinic value. The withdrawal of able-bodied young men from productive labour to study in the Beit Midrash would have been a severe economic blow to most families and to the economy at large, and must often have been resisted. Unless some made the move the rabbinic movement would die out. The story is framed as a piece of propaganda, as a public relations exercise on behalf of the schools. Now while the author of PRE would not have denied the importance of Torah study, that it not a theme which is notably taken up in the remainder of the book. The author of PRE uses the story for one purpose, and for one purpose only – to suggest a connection between the teaching of PRE and the discourse delivered by Rabbi Eliezer in Yoḥanan's Beit Midrash. All the other elements of the story are essentially aesthetic, though not ineffective at a rhetorical level as a *captatio benevolentiae*. There is, then, a certain disjuncture between the content of the opening tale and the body of the work; a disjuncture which is, of course, easily explained diachronically by arguing the story was formed elsewhere and imported into PRE (see 4.3.1 below).

The other three stories are integrated more closely into the argument of PRE. The Two Gates of Solomon's Temple explicitly illustrates the theme of the

importance of “loving kindness”. *Gemilut hasadim* is a major theme of PRE (see 3.6.4.7 below). The story is an *exemplum* – it shows both Solomon and the Israelites engaged in the exercise of this virtue, and thus validates it and illustrates concretely how it is to be performed. The story of Resh Laqish is equally exemplary, and explicitly illustrates the power of repentance, another important theme in PRE (see 3.6.4.4 below). The link between Jonah and the Big Fish and its context seems on the face of it rather more flimsy. It is attached to the account of the work of the fifth day of creation on the grounds that it was on the fifth day that Jonah fled from God, but also significant is the fact that Leviathan, who plays a leading role in the PRE’s Jonah story was created on the fifth day, and this fact is mentioned at the end of the previous chapter of PRE (PRE 9). It is hard to avoid the impression on a first reading of PRE that the Jonah story is a massive digression. However, I shall argue below that it touches on themes which are integral to the argument of PRE and serve its agenda well. It is, therefore, more closely bound to the text than it might appear at first sight.

Narrative, then, unquestionably figures in PRE, but from a literary point of view it does not dominate. There is no way it would make literary sense to classify PRE as a whole as “narrative”. Jonah and the Big Fish, as I have argued, can hardly be classified as pure narrative, because it has elements of discourse in it. Solomon and the Temple Gates and the Repentance of Resh Laqish the Robber are more obviously narrative pure and simple, but they are so short that they lack space to develop two of the most important elements of true narrative – plot and characterization. They are rather flat anecdotes, clearly functioning as exempla of virtues, little more than extended similes. Eliezer in the Beit Midrash is a more rounded narrative, and clearly serves an important function in setting the scene for

what follows, but at the beginning of PRE 3 there is a clear transition from narrative to discourse or exposition. In short, narrative throughout PRE is only an element functioning within a non-narrative literary structure. It is not the primary literary medium through which the message of the work is conveyed.

3.4 PRE as Commentary

PRE also contains commentary on Scripture, and this is a more serious contender than narrative for the overall classification of the work. PRE's most common traditional description is Midrash. In the methodological discussion under 1.3, I suggested that the most fundamental feature of Bible commentary as a macro-literary form is that it mirrors the text of Bible. The Bible structures the commentary. This can happen in a number of ways. In lemmatic commentary the biblical text is lemmatized and commented upon following the sequence of the biblical text. Its form is lemma + comment, lemma + comment, lemma + comment, where the lemmata are taken from the same biblical book and cited in the order in which they appear in the original. A classic example of such a lemmatic commentary would be BerR. The lemma is integral to the form of the lemmatic commentary, as can be seen by the fact that if it is removed the text collapses into a disjointed jumble of statements. Not every verse or statement of the biblical text has to be lemmatized; a lemmatic commentary can be selective, and skip over portions of the text, but the lemmata should be in biblical order, and leaving large gaps would look distinctly odd. It is also possible to conceive of a lemmatic commentary on an anthology of biblical texts illustrating a single theme (e.g. messianism), or on a lectionary of biblical readings for special liturgical occasions (as in the so-called Homiletic Midrashim – *Pesiqta deRav Kahana* or *Pesiqta Rabbati*).

Under commentary I also suggested that for our present purposes we could include Targum. The difference between lemmatic commentary and Targum is not just a matter of language, in the sense that Targum involves translation, whereas lemmatic commentary does not. More importantly it is a matter of literary form. Targum differs formally from lemmatic commentary in two important ways: (1) it is free-standing, in that its structure does not rely on lemmatizing the Bible and can be read on its own;¹⁷ and (2) it mirrors *precisely* the Bible and represents the *totality* of the biblical text in its proper sequence, even when it is adding explanatory material to the base text. A Targum which does not fully represent the original in its entirety, but offers some sort of selective or abbreviated translation is in principle conceivable (and may, indeed, be attested in the Qumran Targum of Job), but it does not fit with the classic Targumim handed down in a rabbinic milieu.

The third type of commentary, I suggested, is what is commonly known a “Rewritten Bible”. Despite much theoretical discussion of this type, there is no consensus as to its fundamental literary form.¹⁸ For my present purposes I would

¹⁷ This is not to deny that the medieval Targum manuscripts all provide the biblical text, either in full, or as abbreviated lemmata. However, the fact remains that from a formal point of view the Targum can stand on its own feet without the biblical text.

¹⁸ The bibliography on Rewritten Bible is now very extensive, and some have come to criticize the term. See Philip Alexander, “Retelling the Old Testament,” in *It is Written – Scripture Citing Scripture: Essays in Honour of Barnabas Lindars* (eds. D.A. Carson and H.G.M. Williamson; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 99-121; Moshe Bernstein, “‘Rewritten Bible’: A Generic Category which has outlived its Usefulness?,” *Textus* 22 (2005), 169-96; Sidnie White Crawford, *Rewriting Scripture in Second Temple Times* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008); George J. Brooke, “Rewritten Bible,” in *EDSS* (eds. L.H. Schiffman and J.C. VanderKam; 2 vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 2:777-81; Brooke, “The Rewritten Law, Prophets and Psalms: Issues for Understanding the Text of the Bible,” in *The Bible as Book: The Hebrew Bible and the Judaean Desert Discoveries* (ed. D. Herbert and Emanuel Tov; London: British Library, 2002), 31-40; Brooke, “Memory, Cultural Memory and Rewriting Scripture,” in *Rewritten Bible after Fifty Years: Texts, Terms, or Techniques? A Last Dialogue with Geza Vermes* (ed. Jozsef Zsengeller; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 119-36. Rachel Adelman has used Alexander’s criteria to define PRE as a kind of “Rewritten Bible” – more specifically as “Narrative

stress the following features: (1) It is best applied to retellings of narrative sections of Scripture, though some have tried to apply it also to reformulations or restatements of biblical *law*. The two cases are, from a literary point of view, quite different, and it only creates confusion to embrace them by the same term. Restatements of law should be classified as recodification to distinguish them from retold narrative. (2) Rewritten Bible is always selective, and does not include everything in the biblical text. It is hard to see any fundamental reason why it should not, but that it *actually* does not, and in this respect differs from Targum, seems to be universally the case. The simple fact is that once a narrator chooses to retell a story in his or her own words, there will be subtle changes of emphasis, omissions, additions, possible misunderstandings, quite apart from the fact that the narrator may be consciously or unconsciously shaping the tale to suit their own agenda. In general, however, the sequence of the original is followed. (3) As well as omissions, Rewritten Bible also contains explanatory additions. These in practice can be extensive, but if they become too extensive the connection with the original can become problematic. (4) Finally, Rewritten Bible mirrors the form of the original biblical story, and should be free-standing. That is to say it should be intelligible in and of itself, without reference to the original, however much discerning the *full* meaning of the text may depend on perceiving intertextualities with the original.

Some elements of commentary apply to PRE, but it does not fit comfortably into any of the three main types. It is broadly speaking structured by the biblical narrative from the creation of the world to the giving of the Torah on Sinai. The way this happens will be analyzed in depth in 3.6.2.2 and 4.2; for present purposes we

Midrash" (*Return of the Repressed*, 3-22).

should note that there are large sections of the biblical text left out, and that it does not always follow the biblical order but jumps backwards and forwards in time. This, as I have noted, would not be incompatible with Rewritten Bible, although the degree of skipping and jumping around is problematic. Moreover, other structures beside the Bible play a part in ordering content of PRE. The most important of these are the lists of the Ten descents of the Shekhinah and the Ten Trials of Abraham (see **3.6.2.3**, and **Appendix C.1.** and **C.2**, respectively). Both of these are, of course, derived from Bible but they select widely scattered episodes (albeit in chronological order), and serve their own agendas, and, insofar as PRE follows and expands on them, it can hardly be said to be structured directly by the Bible. The one section of PRE, the retelling of Jonah and the Big Fish, which on the face of it comes closest to Rewritten Bible, contains features which sit awkwardly with this classification. The most notable of these, as I have pointed out above, is the citation of the original, introduced by the proof-text formula (“as it is written”). This is characteristic of discourse rather than commentary, though it is found as a secondary feature within the commentary component of lemmatic commentary. Very occasionally lemmata from the base text are quoted, but they are scattered among lemmata from other parts of Scripture. Lemmatic commentary only occurs as a microform in PRE, not as a macroform (see **3.6.3.2** below). PRE is not structured lemmatically, and so cannot be classified as a whole as lemmatic commentary.

3.5 PRE as Thematic Discourse

If PRE is not, overall, narrative or commentary, then how is it to be characterised? A process of elimination would suggest that it must be discourse. Does this fit the literary facts? I would argue that it does, and that thematic discourse captures adequately the dominant literary characteristics of the work. By thematic discourse I

mean a more or less orderly exposition of a particular topic or theme, in which propositions about the theme are stated, explained, justified, and illustrated. PRE is not one discourse about a single theme but a series of discourses about a series of themes (see 3.6.4 below). Discourse, from a literary point of view, can be very varied. It can embrace narrative and various forms of commentary as microforms, when they advance the exposition, but it is the theme which dominates and decides what material is presented and how.

Listing the major themes of PRE is not easy, though some of the more obvious and important are discussed below (3.6.4). Nor is it easy to delimit the discourses; they do not follow a standard pattern, though some do have a sense of an ending. The end of the discourse, however, in most cases is marked by the end of the discussion of a particular theme, and the passing to a new subject. The discourses seem to correspond rather well with the chapter divisions, which are old, and found in the earliest manuscripts (see 3.6.2.4 below). Some discourses pursue one theme, but others seem to embrace a number of themes. Several discourses may be on the same or a closely related theme, and some themes are pervasive and come up time and again. Some of the themes relate well to the underlying text of Genesis and Exodus, and can be easily illustrated from it, and this fact may have encouraged the author to allow the biblical text to some degree to dictate the order in which he dealt with them. The theme, however, had priority and was only linked secondarily to the biblical text. The author did not begin with expounding the biblical text and then discover the theme. This can be seen by the fact that the links in some cases between the theme and the underlying biblical text are attenuated, and any pretence that it is found in Genesis or Exodus is more or less abandoned.

It should be noted that the text itself confirms our classification of it as discourse. PRE presents itself as the discourse of Rabbi Eliezer in the Beit Midrash of Yoḥanan. Yoḥanan ben Zakkai asks Eliezer to say “words of Torah”. The phrase would naturally be understood as calling for the delivery of a halakhic *discourse*, not an exposition of a passage of Scripture. Rabbi Eliezer sits “and expounds”; that is to say, he delivers a *derashah*, where *derashah* means a discourse, not a commentary on Scripture, a midrash. Scripture may, of course, be quoted at the beginning of a *derashah*, but it serves only as a jumping-off point for the discourse, sometimes serving as little more than a motto or emblem. As we noted earlier “Rabbi Eliezer *patah*”, the opening words of the body of PRE, means “opened his discourse” – not “presented a *petihah*”. The text clearly points to the *Sitz im Leben* and the audience for such discourses – namely the Beit Midrash. The other possible setting for such discourse was the synagogue, where the sermon became a well-established institution. Though originally the sermon may have been a short discourse to introduce the reading from the Torah (the origins of the *petihah*), there is evidence to suggest that later sermons could be longer, more elaborate compositions, less tied to the Scripture reading. However, the sort of discourse we have in PRE would surely have been very learned for a general audience, and is likely to have gone over their heads, and so a Beit Midrash setting for this kind of learned lecture is more likely. However, if we can press the evidence of the opening story, it is noteworthy that members of the public *were* present. In this case they were men of wealth, actual or potential patrons of the school, who had the means and leisure to play the dilettante and attend the lectures in the Beit Midrash, without being enrolled as actual students. The existence of this kind of public lecture seems to be attested rather late. Great scholars were expected to perform in public from time to time. Some of them seemed to have assigned the task to a favoured student, who was sometimes known

as the sage's *meturgeman* (interpreter) or (later) *amora* (spokeman). The relationship envisaged here is probably that between Moses and Aaron in the Bible. The sage seems to have given to the student the topic on which to deliver the discourse.¹⁹ In one text this may be described as giving him *rashei pera'iqim*. The use of *pereq* here is suggestive: the sense may be that each discourse (*pereq*) had a *ro'sh* – a principal theme. This may recall the use of *pirqa* in the sense of a public discourse,²⁰ which may indeed be the sense of the title of the work, “The *Discourses* of Rabbi Eliezer”, rather than “the *Chapters* of Rabbi Eliezer”. I am not suggesting that the discourses in PRE are transcripts of publicly delivered lectures, but literary forms in the rabbinic textual culture were heavily shaped by orality, and it is important to identify an oral *Sitz im Leben* in which the form could have arisen. See further 5.2 below.

3.6 The Coherence of PRE

3.6.1 The Problem of Coherence

To what extent does PRE display coherence? Textual coherence is a theoretically and culturally problematic concept, in that coherence is to a degree in the eye of the beholder, and different textual cultures may perceive it in different ways. A text

¹⁹ This institution deserves more study than it seems to have received. The student who spoke for the Sage was called a “Meturgeman” or an “Amora”: see *Tosefta Megillah* (ed. Lieberman) 3.41; *y.Megillah* 4, 75c; *b.Berakhot* 27b; *b.Mo'ed Qatan* 21a; *b.Ketubbot* 8b; *b.Gittin* 43a and 60b; *b.Temurah* 14b. There may be some subtle points being made in the Eliezer in the School of Yoḥanan story. Yoḥanan in effect appoints Eliezer as his Meturgeman, but he doesn't give him *rashei pera'iqim*, and he leaves the room, whereas the Sage normally stayed and the student “expounded before him” (*darash lefanayw*).

²⁰ See the important discussion of the term *pirqa* in David Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction in Sasanian Babylonia* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 171-196. Goodblatt argues that *pirqa* means some sort of academic assembly. I would suggest that in some cases it clearly means a discourse given at such an assembly. The term was used in Babylonia, but, given the date of our text, it could have by then been introduced to Palestine.

which to a reader from one textual culture may appear troublingly lacking in order and completeness, may not bother a reader from another culture from that point of view. In general rabbinic textual culture seems less concerned about coherence according to modern expectations and canons. One can, however, over-stress cultural differences, and it remains legitimate to pose to an ancient text like PRE questions about its unity, orderliness, and boundedness. I shall investigate this topic under three headings. (1) Does PRE display a clear, coherent, bounded structure? (2) How is PRE constructed at the micro-level? Like many rabbinic texts, PRE is built up out of small structural units – structurally standard elements. A limited repertory of these, or their distribution in certain patterns, might create a sense of unity and coherence. Is this the case with PRE? (3) Does PRE display thematic coherence? In the absence of formal, structural coherence a text may still create a sense of coherence and unity at a thematic level, by treating a limited repertory of themes, or one overarching theme, in an orderly and systematic way. Is this the case with PRE?

3.6.2 Macro-structural Coherence

In 2.5 I offer a basic listing of the contents of PRE and in **Appendix C.1** I attempt to clarify its formal structure. These tables form the basis of the analysis which follows.

3.6.2.1 Beginning and Ending

As will be clear by now, PRE projects a strong sense of a beginning, in the story of Rabbi Eliezer in the Beit Midrash of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, the bulk of PRE being presented as related in some way to the substance of the discourse he delivered. Moreover the discourse itself, beginning in PRE 3, has a clear beginning:

Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus opened: *Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord, or declare all his praise* (Ps 106:2). Is there anyone in the world who can utter the mighty acts of the Holy One, blessed be, or who can declare his praise? Not even the ministering angels are able to recount more than a part of his mighty deeds. What we can do is to investigate what he has done in the past and what he will do in the future, so that his name may be exalted among his creatures, whom he has created, from one end of the world to the other, as it is said, *One generation to another shall praise your works* (Ps 145:4). (PRE 3, 13/4-10)

This reads like the opening of more than just the first discourse. It gives a hint of what is to follow – an inquiry into what God has done in the past, which could, in retrospect, cover PRE's treatment of work of creation and its retelling of the *Heilsgeschichte*, and its treatment of the future, the messianic age. It indicates a motive for the work: that God's name may be exalted among his creatures. It even excuses itself in advance for its incompleteness: it is impossible to recount all God's mighty works and deeds. That lies beyond even the powers of the angels. This apology for the shortcomings of the work may, curiously, be echoed at the end (see below). This opening, though clearly an opening, does not offer a table of contents for the work that follows, and it would be impossible to predict them in any detail on the basis of what it says. It is only in retrospect that we can see that it has a certain aptness. If the opening of the work (of the whole book and of the discourse) is strong, the ending is weak (PRE 54, 751/18-20): "Solomon said thus before the Holy One, blessed be he: Lord of all the worlds, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were [zealous] workmen. [You gave them wages in full. Of their own you gave them. But we are] lazy workmen. When you give to us our wages in full and heal us, assuredly everyone will praise and bless you".²¹ This is surely no way to bring to an end a

²¹ The *textus receptus* has lost a bit of text by parablepsis: the copyists or printer's eye jumped from *po'alim* to *po'alim*. The *tam ve-nishlam* formula is purely scribal.

large and impressive composition – unless, perhaps, it is meant ironically. The author compares himself to a lazy workman, and thus slyly acknowledges that he has not satisfactorily completed his task. Perhaps there is an echo here of the apology for incompleteness at the opening of the discourses in chapter 3. However, if this was the idea it is obscurely expressed, and the ending still remains weak.

3.6.2.2 Structuring by other texts

Between the beginning of the discourse in PRE 3 and its end in PRE 54, the author imposes order on his material in a variety of ways. One of these is to shadow a known text. Two prior texts come into the reckoning here – Scripture and the ^cAmidah.

(1) Scripture

As I have already noted, PRE broadly speaking follows the order of the biblical text of Genesis and Exodus, though it jumps around disconcertingly (see **Appendix C**). The segment of Bible which it shadows does not coincide precisely with an internal division in the Bible itself, that is to say, it does not map onto a biblical book. The last major biblical episode to be treated at any length is the giving of the Torah on Sinai, which does mark an obvious climax in biblical history. From Creation to Sinai embraces a meaningful segment of the *Heilsgeschichte*, which opens all sorts of theological possibilities. One might see the overarching theme as Torah – from the role of Torah in the creation of the world, to the giving of the Torah on Sinai for the guidance of Israel. Or, to link the beginning and end of the work, one might develop the idea, found widely in rabbinic literature, that creation was not really complete, or its future assured till the tabernacle was erected in the wilderness, and the means

of atonement secured, which prevented the world reverting to chaos (see, e.g., BerR 3.9). However, this is not how the author of PRE chooses to argue. The text peters out, without exploiting any of a number of possible ways of tying its two ends together being exploited.

(2) The ʿAmidah

PRE quotes *Berakhot* 1-5 of the ʿAmidah in order, though at widely-spaced intervals and sometimes to round off chapters. Some have argued that this suggests that this well known prayer is being used for structural purposes.

(1) PRE 27, 299/9-10	"The celestials answered and said: 'Blessed are you, O Lord, the shield of Abraham'" (cf. ʿAmidah 1).
(2) PRE 31, 363/7-8	"[Abraham] opened his mouth and said: 'Blessed are you, O Lord, who quickens the dead'" (cf. ʿAmidah 2).
(3) PRE 35, 439/10-11	"The celestials answered and said: 'Blessed are you, O Lord, the Holy God'" (cf. ʿAmidah 3).
(4) PRE 40, 537/15-16	"And the celestials saw that the Holy One, blessed be he, had transmitted the secret of the Ineffable name to Moses, and they answered: 'Blessed are you, O Lord, who graciously bestows knowledge'" (cf. ʿAmidah 4).
(5) PRE 43, 591/19	"Blessed are you, O Lord, who delights in repentance" (cf. ʿAmidah 5).

I would suggest that it is a mistake to read into this pattern any strong intention on the part of the author to structure his text on the ʿAmidah in the way in which he structures it on Genesis and Exodus, still less to conclude that because this supposed intention is not fully carried out the text of PRE is incomplete. Note how *Berakhah* 13 of the ʿAmidah (in the Palestinian version) is alluded to *out of sequence* at the end of

PRE 13 (105/7-8): “and concerning them [the sailors who converted] it says, ‘Upon the proselytes, the proselytes of righteousness’” (cf. ^עAmidah 13). It is noteworthy that Abraham already quotes the ^עAmidah (no. 2 above). This would chime in with the author’s belief in the great antiquity of religious custom (see 3.6.4.8 below). Some of the *berakhot* are even said by “the celestials” (the ^ע*elyonim*) (nos 1, 3-4 above), which perhaps alludes to the idea of the heavenly liturgy – potentially a powerful validating of their authority and sanctity. This may be reading too much into the text. The *Berakhot* of the ^עAmidah may be quoted expressively and opportunistically simply to round off sections of the text (nos. 1, 3-5 in the table and PRE 13, 105/7-8). Their function is basically aesthetic.

3.6.2.3 Structuring by lists

The author superimposes on the biblical order a number of other schemas, some of which disrupt it to a degree. The opening sequence of the six days of creation is found in the Bible, but under the sixth day a new sequence appears to be introduced – the Ten Descents of the Holy One, blessed be he. The Ten Descents are itemised at the beginning of PRE 14 as a summary list (see **Appendix C**). The first is expounded, and the remainder “ticked off” as they occur later in the text, but only eight or possibly nine have been explicitly referenced before the text ends. The degree to which this list is intended to structure the text is open to debate. There is no way readers can predict when they first meet the summary list that it is going to be macro-structural: this only emerges in retrospect. It is only one of a number of lists in the text (see 3.6.3.6 below), only one of which (to be considered in a moment) also proves to be structural, and then only for a limited segment of the text. The Ten Descents is similar to the list of the Ten World Rulers (see **Appendix F.1**), which does not function structurally. It is important to note how weakly structural the Ten

Descents is, because it is commonly argued that the fact that only eight of the ten descents is referenced is evidence that there is something missing from the end of PRE. Arguably the sequence is more or less played out. The first descent is in the Garden of Eden, and the eighth and ninth descents are at the Tent of Meeting. They span, therefore, from creation to Sinai, which, as I have already noted, is the span of the *Heilsgeschichte* which PRE recounts. It is only the descent “in the future” that is not *explicitly* referenced, but the messianic age is anticipated regularly (it is one of its major themes of PRE; see 3.6.4.4 below), so it can surely be seen as *implicitly* referenced. PRE, in fact, raises few expectations about the programmatic, structural role of the Ten Descents, so the fact that this list does so only weakly should not be seen as much of a problem. We should not read too much into it.

The other schema that is clearly structural is the list of the Ten Trials of Abraham. This occurs nested *within* the schema of the Ten Descents (between the third and fourth descents), and it structures chapters 26-31. Significantly, unlike the Ten Descents, but like the Six Days of Creation, there is no summary list at the beginning, and this lack has the effect of *raising* the reader’s structural expectations. The Ten Trials schema over-rides and disrupts somewhat the biblical sequence (see **Appendix C**).

3.6.2.4 Structuring by chapters

See **Appendix D**, which gives the beginning and the end of each chapter of PRE in the Venice edition. The manuscript tradition records very few variants in the chapter divisions of PRE. For example, chapters 18 and 19 are switched around in some editions, and chapter 54 combined with chapter 53. Given the wide variety of manuscripts of the work from all over the Jewish world this consistency is

impressive. The divisions are clearly old, but could they be original? This possibility should not be ruled out. Authors can divide a work up into sections as they like, even according to some external arbitrary principle such as length. If the divisions demarcate genuine internal structures, then the acid test would be that attentive readers faced with a continuous text could, with a reasonably high level of success, discover them for themselves. Is this possible in the case of PRE? The answer would appear to be a rather cautious yes. The chapters on the Six Days of Creation and the Ten Trials of Abraham would present no problem. But what of the rest? This depends on the internal coherence of each chapter. This is stronger in some cases than in others. Many of them begin with a lemma which may be from the Bible or an apophthegm from somewhere else (e.g., *Pirquei Avot* (PA)). More often than not this serves as a motto to set the topic for the chapter, which concludes with some appropriate statement that gives at least a moderate sense of an ending.

Chapter 43 is typical. It has the following structure:

A. <i>Opening motto setting the topic: repentance.</i>	A. Repentance and good deeds are a shield against punishment (cf. <i>m.Pirquei Avot</i> 4.11)
B. <i>Opening proposition</i>	B. Rabbi Ishmael said: If repentance had not been created, the world would not stand ...

C. <i>A series of exempla</i>	<p>C1. Know the power of repentance. Come and see from Ahab, king of Israel ...</p> <p>C2. Rabbi Abbahu said: Know the power of repentance. Come and see from David king of Israel ...</p> <p>C3. Rabbi Joshua said: Know the power of repentance. Come and see from Manasseh, son of Hezekiah ...</p> <p>C4. Ben Azzai said: Know the power of repentance. Come and see from Rabbi Shimcon ben Laqish ...</p> <p>C5. Rabbi Nehunyah ben Haqqanah said: Know the power of repentance. Come and see from Pharaoh king of Egypt ...</p>
D1. <i>Call to Israel to repent</i>	D1. The Holy One, blessed be he, sent by the hand of his servants, the prophets, to Israel, saying, <i>O Israel, return to the Lord your God</i> (Hos 14:1) ...
D2. <i>Messianic peroration</i>	D2. Rabbi Judah said: If Israel will not repent they will not be redeemed ...
E. <i>Closing motto in the form of a Berakhah</i>	E. Blessed are you, O Lord, who delights in repentance (cf. ^c Amidah 5)

Not all chapters are quite as orderly as PRE 43, but chapters like this set within the mass of the text can help delimit those on either side of them that may be less defined. The fundamental criterion for a chapter is that it deals by and large with a single theme, whether that be a virtue, or the life and actions of a biblical figure seen as exemplifying (or, failing to exemplify) certain virtues. When I say that the chapter divisions may be “original” I am not making a claim about an *Urtext*. I am talking synchronically about the Venice edition. It is possible that historically speaking some of these chapters may have been added later, but if they have, they have been added *in the same form*. The chapters are not arbitrary scribal creations, but represent real structural and thematic components of the text as it stands. Even if the author did

not originally set out his text in chapters, and the work was instead segmented later by a scribe, it is clear that that scribe discovered a structure which was intrinsic to the material that lay before him.

3.6.3 Small and Self-Limiting Text-Units

3.6.3.1 Common Speech v. Rhetorical Structure

Like many other texts emanating from a rabbinic text-cultural milieu, PRE can be broken down into a limited number of small text-units in standard form, and can be seen in a general way as being built “lego-like” from these units. The units are formal literary structures into which can be cast a wide variety of content, and they can be combined in a wide variety of ways to create different texts. Jacob Neusner was among the first to draw attention to this distinctive characteristic of rabbinic literature, which he saw as quintessentially exemplified by the Mishnah. The structure of some of these textual building blocks has been analysed by Arnold Goldberg and others. The Inventory lists the commonly recognised ones but seems inclined to go further and to envisage breaking down *any* rabbinic text, indeed any early Jewish text in its corpus, without remainder into small forms. This is not helpful, and certainly cannot be meaningfully done with PRE. We should probably make a distinction between a *halakhic* discursive text like a Mishnah or Tosefta tractate and an *aggadic* discursive text like PRE. The former can often be analysed as nothing more than aggregates of small forms, juxtaposed, with no or almost no linking-text, to make a statement of law. But the latter cannot. PRE flows more naturally, because it contains more linking material in common speech, and to try and reduce statements in common speech to small forms on a par with the small-forms I have in mind is misguided. The sentences in common speech are structured

according to the syntax of everyday speech, not rhetorical and formal structures. The small forms are embedded in this common speech like cherries in a cake. It is important to distinguish the linguistic and the rhetorical levels of the text. The small forms I have in mind are traditional, in the sense that they have been passed on from one generation to the next as compositional, rhetorical devices, though, as we shall see, they do change in a number of subtle ways. Some of the more noteworthy of these in PRE are discussed in the following sub-sections.

3.6.3.2 Biblical Lemma + Comment Units

Midrash in the form of Biblical Lemma + Comment functions at both the macro- and the micro-structural level, that is to say, a whole book can be structured in this way, but small, self-contained midrashic units can also exist within with books that are macro-structurally narratives or discourses. Indeed it is arguable that the macro-form Midrash can be defined as a series of repeated midrashic microforms, the lemmata of which follow the sequence of the biblical text. As I have already noted (in 3.4 above) PRE cannot be classified as a whole as lemmatic midrash, but nevertheless it contains within it small units of midrash which function as blocks out of which the discourse is constructed. Sometimes the lemmata of these units are derived from the underlying text of Genesis and Exodus, but lemmata for comment are regularly drawn also from other parts of Scripture.

Two examples will serve to illustrate this point.

(1) PRE 21, 221/9–223/8:

It is written: *But of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden* (Gen 3:3). Rabbi Ze'era taught [*tena'*]: *Of the fruit of the tree* – tree here only means man, who is compared to a tree, as it is said, *For man is the tree of the*

field (Deut 20:19). *Which is in the midst of the garden* – is merely a euphemism for that which is in the middle of the body. *Which is in the midst of the garden* – which is in the middle of a woman, for there is no garden but woman, who is compared to a garden, as it is said, *A garden shut up is my sister, a bride* (Cant 4:12). Just as with an actual garden whatever is sown in it, it produces and brings forth, so with an actual woman. Whatever is sown in her, she conceives and gives birth from her husband.

The thought here may be theologically strange (is God really forbidding sexual intercourse to Adam and Eve?) but the midrashic unit is nevertheless well constructed and clear. The lemma is systematically re-lemmatized according to its sense-units and explained in order to argue the interpretation. Friedlander takes the verb *tena'* in its technical Talmudic sense of “taught in a *baraita*”, which would be an indication of a post-Mishnaic standpoint, and a small but interesting breach of the perspective of the text. How could PRE be quoting a *baraita* if it belongs to the generation of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus? *Tena'* here has probably lost its technical sense, and is simply being used in the sense of “taught”. This is a late usage, and is characteristic of the decay in post-Talmudic literature of the precision of some of its technical terms. One could compare the use of *patah*, not in the sense of delivered a *petiḥah*, but in the sense simply of “expounded”, i.e., simply as a synonym of *darash*, or even more basically in the sense of “began by saying”, the meaning it has at the opening of PRE 3. The use of the term *tena'* in a non-technical sense is another small indication of the lateness of PRE, but not quite in the way Friedlander implies. The simile at the end is noteworthy in the light of what I will have to say below about the Mashal (3.6.3.7). It is in standard form: the protasis is introduced by *mah*, and the apodosis by *kakh*. It would have been easy to tease this out as a Mashal. This illustrates the point that a Mashal can be seen as an extended, formalized simile. I shall argue below that the classic Mashal in PRE shows a tendency to collapse back

into a straightforward simile. In the Venice 1544 text which is translated above, the lemma is introduced by “as it is written” (*dikhtiv*). This formula is absent in a number of PRE manuscripts, and, indeed, is not found in the case of other biblical lemmata in PRE: see, e.g., PRE 20, 211/6 and PRE 23, 243/12 (but PRE 22, 235/26 also has *dikhtiv*). It is probably secondary, and shows some unease on the part of a scribe over the abruptness with which the lemma is introduced.

(2) PRE 37, 465/8-11:

As if man fled from a lion and a bear met him (Amos 5:19). *The lion* – this is Laban, who pursued Jacob to destroy his life. *The bear* – this is Esau, who stood by the way like a bereaved bear, to slay the mother with the children. The lion is shamefaced, the bear is not shamefaced. Jacob stood and prayed before the holy one, blessed be he, saying, Sovereign of all the worlds, have you not spoken thus to me: *Return to the land of your fathers, and to your kindred, and I will be with you?* (Gen 31:3). And behold, Esau, my brother, has now come to slay me; he does not fear you, but I fear him. Hence they say: Do not be afraid of an official or a ruler but fear a man who has no fear of heaven. Esau stood by the way like a bereaved bear, to slay mother and child. What did the Holy one, blessed be he, do? *He sent an angel* etc.

Here the lemma is not derived from the underlying biblical text, but it is very quickly keyed into it. The striking thing to note here is that it is hard to tell where the midrashic unit ends. It follows seamlessly into the discourse. This reveals the true rhetorical function in PRE of many of these lemmata. They are not really being used for midrashic purposes but as emblematic quotations to open the discourse and get the argument going. In some cases the lemmata do derive from the underlying biblical text, and may serve as a reminder of where we are in that text, but that is not their primary function. Three other features reinforce this analysis. (1) The biblical lemmata are not always expounded. There is sometimes no comment element, so

there is no midrashic micro-form. They are apparently simply quoted to set the tone of the discourse, to turn the reader's mind in a certain direction. (2) The opening quotations are not always from Bible. There are lemmata derived, e.g., from PA, and these are treated in the same way as Bible. (3) Many of these lemmata occur at the beginning of chapters. I have already suggested that the chapter-division of PRE is very old, and pretty accurately reflects the discourse structure of the work. This is rather supported by the fact that so many of the chapters open with emblematic quotations. We have here, then, a pattern which we will see repeated elsewhere in PRE, viz., the use of a classical form in non-classical ways. What we have in PRE are often pseudo-midrashic units. They show the author knows the classic form, but he uses it in new creative ways.

3.6.3.3 Proof-text Units

I will consider the relationship of PRE to Scripture in more detail below (see 4.2). Here, however, we need to consider the use in PRE of the small form of Proof-text. This consists of two elements: (1) a statement; and (2) a text from Scripture quoted to "prove" the statement, introduced by a number of citation formulae, the most common of which is, *she-ne'emar* ("as it is said"), though PRE also uses, *ve-khatuv 'ehad 'omer*, *lekhakh ne'emar*, *kakh ketiv*, *ve-'amar*. The variation here is rather striking, and probably shows a deliberate attempt to avoid monotonous repetition, an attention to style that would not have concerned the authors of the Mishnah. The relationship between the "proof" and the "statement" is highly complex – more complex than is often supposed. Not all proofs offer proof of the statement in any strict sense of the term. The statement is not always one that is capable of proof. In some cases all that is asserted is that there is some sort of relationship between the statement and a verse of Scripture, which somehow validates the statement. It may

be little more than a verbal echo, or similarity of language. The proof-text unit is very ancient, and is attested in Second Temple Jewish literature, and in the New Testament. It is characteristic of both the commentary element of Midrash and of discourse. It is found all over the Mishnah, where it is used to ground halakhah in Scripture, and unite the Oral and the Written Torahs.

The following are some indicative examples of the use of Proof-text in PRE:

(1) PRE 6, 43/11-13:

On the fourth day he mentions together the two great lights, one of which was not greater in size than the other. They were equal with regards to their height, appearance and light, as it is said: *And God made two great lights* (Gen 1:16).

(2) PRE 4, 29/1-8:

On the second day the Holy One, blessed be he, created the firmament, the angels, fire for flesh and blood, and the fire of Gehinnom. Were not heaven and earth created on the first day, as it is said: *In the beginning God created heaven and earth* (Gen 1:1)? Which firmament was created on the second day? Rabbi Eliezer said: It was the firmament which is above the heads of the Hayyot, as it is said: *And above the heads of the Hayyot was a firmament that appeared like smooth crystal* (Ezek 1:22).

(3) PRE 34, 409/6-18:

Rabbi Jonathan said: All the dead shall rise up at the resurrection of the dead, apart from the generation of the Flood, as it is said: *The dead shall not live, [the deceased shall not rise]* (Isa 26:14). The dead shall not live refers to the wicked, who are like the carcasses of cattle: they shall arise for the day of judgment, but they shall not live; but the men of the generation of the Flood shall not even arise for the day of judgment, as it is said: *the deceased shall not rise*. All their souls become spirits and demons (*ruḥot u-mazziqin*) for mankind, and in the future (*le-ʿatid la-boʻ*) the Holy One, blessed be he,

will destroy them out of the world, so that they shall no longer be demons for anyone of the people of Israel, as it is said, *Because you have punished and destroyed them, and wiped out all memory of them* (Isa 26:14).

The final example here shows how different small forms can be bolted together to form bigger units. The statement opens with a statement + proof-text unit, but the proof-text then becomes a lemma to which a comment is added, so we have a lemma + comment unit, but within the comment we have a statement + proof-text unit. It is worth noting in passing the aetiology offered here of demons: they are said to be the “souls” of the generation of the Flood. The idea sounds like a distant echo of the Enochic aetiology of demons as the spirits of the dead giants, the monstrous offspring of the angels and the daughters of men, whose bodies were destroyed in the Flood, but whose spirits lived on to haunt humankind (see further 4.5 below). This case illustrates how closely connected proof-text is to Midrash. The exposition here could easily be recast as a small lemmatic Midrash unit, but in proof-text the statement, which contains the implicit comment, is always prioritised. This indicates that Proof-text belongs quintessentially to discourse. It is true, as already mentioned, that it can be found within lemmatic commentary, but it is always within the comment section which can often, over short stretches of text, replicate the form of discourse.

3.6.3.4 Speech Reports

Speech reports are pervasive in PRE. At first sight speech-report might seem to be a case of what I have called earlier common speech, that is to say, it is surely inherent in everyday speech; there is nothing rhetorically formal about it. However, several

aspects of speech-reports in rabbinic literature elevate the common speech-pattern into a small, and characteristic rhetorical form:

(1) The speech is always in *oratio recta*. Hebrew does not possess the Greek way of indicating *oratio obliqua* through an accusative + infinitive construction, but it can achieve the same result through a subordinating conjunction, in Biblical Hebrew *ki*, and in Mishnaic Hebrew *she-* (cf. the Greek *hoti*). So there was a linguistic choice here, which makes the universal opting for *oratio recta* striking.

(2) The statements contained in *oratio recta* could often be integrated directly into the discourse without the attribution to a named individual. In many of these cases the name functions to lend authority to the statement. This is particularly true in the case of Rabbinic speech reports. So again there was a choice, and it is significant that the author jumps one way rather than the other.

(3) Stylistically the frequent incorporation of speech-reports in *oratio recta*, together with the names associated with them, helps create a varied texture and livens up the text. It creates a pleasing polyphony of voices. Speech reports of the sort I am describing are very common in early Jewish literature. The Inventory database records that they can be found in 170 books, including the Bavli, Yerushalmi, and the classic Midrashim. From a formal point of view there is nothing distinctive about PRE's use of this small form, though if I am right its rabbinic attributions are all pseudepigraphic. If the author did not find them in antecedent tradition, but made them up to serve his argument, then this would underline the significance of the fact that he has not chosen to make the statements in his own voice and name. He wants to claim rabbinic authority for statements that are, in fact, his own. This pseudepigraphy is all of a piece with the fact that he also puts direct

speech into the mouth of biblical figures such as Adam, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, as well as God (e.g., PRE 40, 531/8-10) and the angels (e.g., PRE 37, 467/15) – speech which cannot be derived from Scripture or anywhere else. In this case the motive is fundamentally aesthetic and dramatic; unlike the rabbinic speech reports, the authority of the speaker is not to the fore. The author even dramatically personifies Torah and has her speak (e.g., PRE 3, 19/3-4).

It is important to note that the function of a speech-report can differ according to whether it has a narrative or discursive setting. In the case of the former it would normally constitute nothing more than a lively and aesthetically pleasing way of presenting what could have been reported in *oratio obliqua*. In the case of the latter the speech-report will normally function to cite an *authority*, unless, of course, it occurs in an exemplary mini-narrative embedded in a discourse. The vast majority of the speech-reports in the Mishnah, which is almost totally discourse, are cited to lend authority. The attitude of the Mishnah towards such speech reports is rather more complex than might at first sight appear. Quoting apparently verbatim the words of the authority might seem to show concern for the *ipsissima verba*. In fact, concern for *ipsissima verba* is not universal in the Mishnah. In many cases it is the *substance* of the ruling rather than the precise wording in which it was said that is clearly important. This comes out, as Jacob Neusner noted long ago, e.g., in the Houses Disputes, where the actual ruling of each House is reduced to its essence (*kasher / lo' kasher*), within a highly formalized contrastive structure, which leaves no room to preserve the *ipsissima verba*.²²

²² See the discussion of the Houses Disputes in Jacob Neusner, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* (3 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1971).

Rabbinic speech-reports are particularly common in PRE. In 4.3.1 below I will consider more fully what this means for PRE's relationship to Rabbinic tradition and literature. It will suffice to note here that if we exclude chapters 1-2, Rabbinic speech reports occur in 47 of the remaining 52 chapters. A total of some 57 Rabbis are quoted. The most cited is Rabbi Eliezer (27 times). Then the following:

Name	Number of Speech Reports
Rabbi Judah bar Ilai	18
Rabbi Shim'on bar Yoḥai	16
Rabbi Pinḥas	12
Rabbi Joshua ben Qorḥah	12
Rabbi Yose	11

The remaining 51 Rabbis are quoted fewer than 10 times each. For a full list see **Appendix E.1** and for the distribution of the Rabbis by generation see **Appendix E.2** and **E.3**.

3.6.3.5 Question-and-Answer Units

Questions and answers appear as an integral part of common speech, as when they form an essential element in a story, but that is not what I mean by a Question and Answer unit as a small form. The latter is a structural device used to move forward the action of a narrative or the argument of a discourse or commentary. It is rhetorical in character, and as such it could be omitted altogether or be replaced by other forms of expression with no detriment to the sense. It is important to distinguish between Question and Answer units in discourse/commentary, and

Question and Answer units in narrative, because they function in rather different ways.

In narrative the classic question is “What did he do (*mah ‘asah*)?”: e.g.,

(1) PRE 10, 93/9-11: “And the ship in which Jonah might have embarked was two days distant from Yafo – to test Jonah. **What did God do?** He sent against it a mighty tempest on the sea and brought it back to Yafo. And Jonah saw and rejoiced in his heart, and said: ‘Now I know that my way will prosper before me’.”

(2) PRE 21, 231/5-6: “Cain did not know that secrets are revealed before the Holy One, blessed be he. **What did he do?** He took the corpse of his brother, and dug and hid it in the earth.”

(3) PRE 31, 363/14-18: “*And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in the thicket by its horns* (Gen 22:13). **What did the ram do?** It stretched out its leg and took hold of the coat of our father Abraham, and Abraham saw the ram, and he took it and set it free, and offered it instead of Isaac.”

In all three of these cases the *mah ‘asah* element could be omitted without detracting from the basic sense, and, indeed, it is omitted in some manuscripts. That does not mean that it serves no purpose. It interrupts the narrative, piques the reader’s attention, and thus throws some stress on the action that follows, which in some cases involves the resolution of a crisis in the story. In other words its function is rhetorical; it enhances the communicative-persuasive force of the text. In the third case the action solves a problem in the biblical text. How could Abraham have seen the ram if it was behind him? The answer is that the ram tugged his cloak and drew his attention. The action is surprising; rams do not normally do that sort of thing, especially not if there is a danger they are going to be sacrificed. The ram, however, was a special ram, created for this purpose at twilight on the sixth day of creation. It

was eager to fulfil its purpose (PRE 31, 363/9-13). The *mah 'asah* is the verbal equivalent of the graphic sign of an exclamation mark at the end of the following sentence: "The ram stretched out its leg and took hold of the coat of our father Abraham!" Questions introduced by "why" or "where" or "how" can have a similar rhetorical function in narrative.

The following are some examples of Question and Answer units in discourse and commentary:

(1) PRE 16, 155/16-19:

Rabbi Yose said: *From where do we learn the seven days of banquet?* From our father Jacob. When he married Leah he made a banquet for seven days, as it is said, *Complete the week for this one* (Gen 29:27).

(2) PRE 17, 167/1-4:

From where do learn the service of loving kindness to mourners? From the Holy One, blessed be he, who himself showed loving kindness to Moses his servant, and buried him with his own hand (if the matter had not been written in Scripture it would have been impossible to say it!), as it is said, *And he buried him in the valley* (Deut 34:6).

(3) PRE 32, 367/5-9:

Six people were called by their names before they were born, and these are they: Isaac, Ishmael, Moses, Solomon, Josiah, and the King Messiah. *Isaac, from where?* As it is said, *And you shall call his name Isaac* (Gen 17:19) (etc.)

(4) PRE 45, 605/19–607/15:

They betook themselves to the companions of Moses, Aaron, and Hur, the son of his sister. *From where (do we know) that Hur was the son of Moses' sister?* As it is said, *And Azubah died and Caleb took to himself Ephrath, who*

bore him Hur (1 Chr 2:19). **Why was Miriam's name called Ephrath?** She was a daughter of the palace, a daughter of kings, one of the great ones of the generation, for every prince and great one who arose in Israel his name was called Ephrath, as it is said, *And Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite* (1 Kgs 11:26); *And David was the son of an Ephrathite man* (1 Sam 16:12). **Was he then an Ephrathite? Was he not of the tribe of Judah?** But he was a son of the palace, a son of kings, one of the great ones of the generation. But since Hur was of the tribe of Judah, and one of the great ones of the generation he began reproving Israel with harsh words, and the most despicable ones in Israel rose up against him, and slew him. And Aaron saw that Hur was slain; and he built an altar, as it is said: *And Aaron saw* (Exod 32:5). **What did he see?** That Hur the son of his sister was slain, and he built an altar, as it is said: *And he built an altar* (Exod 32:5).

As in narrative the question is not indispensable, since the thought could easily have been progressed in other ways. The question can seem at times rather pointless, as in the "What did he see?" at the end of example 4, and indeed it is omitted in some manuscripts. As in narrative, however, it serves the rhetorical function of challenging the reader and drawing his attention, though it has less obviously the function of throwing emphasis on the following statement. The main purpose seems to be to vary and enliven the texture of the discourse. This is in keeping with the probable origin of the form in a didactic/catechetical setting, where it was used to challenge the student, and structure the unit of teaching. PRE 45, from which example 4 above is taken, relies on it particularly heavily. The Question and Answer form is found widely in the Mishnah, particularly the *minnayin* ("from where")-question, which is used in a technical sense to ask for a Scriptural basis for a particular piece of halakhah or custom. This is in keeping with one of the main items on the Mishnah's agenda, viz., to justify existing rulings and practices from Torah. This is precisely the force of *minnayin* in examples 1 and 2 above, but in the midrashim and elsewhere in PRE the usage widened to include aggadah. This is

evidently the case in example 3 above where the point at issue is clearly not halakhic. This is an instructive case and shows how the *minnayin*-question can be used to expand a list. We first have the bare list of six people who were named before their birth. Then each item on the list is taken and a Scriptural proof provided to back up the claim. *Minnayin* provides a very neat way of re-lemmatizing the list, and structuring the commentary on it, though it is not the only way this could have been done. The answer is provided by a proof-text introduced by the proof-text formula *she-ne'emar*. Indeed the *minnayin* and the *she-ne'emar* so closely correlate in cases like this that it would be possible to classify them as simply a version of the Proof-text unit, in which *she-ne'emar* has been secondarily strengthened by *minnayin*. It should be noted, however, how spare and formulaic the language is. There is normally no verb with *minnayin*, and there is no attempt to accommodate the syntax of the apodosis to the protasis. One would expect the *min*-element in the latter to be picked up somehow in the former: “From where do we know this? From the verse” Instead what we have is: “From where? That which is written ...”

3.6.3.6 Lists

Lists are frequent in PRE (see **Appendix F.1**). There are two main types (1) a bare list which enumerate items in words or phrases; and (2) an expanded list in which the bare list is augmented in some way, usually by a commentary of some sort, item by item. A search of the Inventory database discloses that 131 “books” contain examples of type 1, and 58 contain examples of type 2. Both types are strongly represented in the classic Midrashim and the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmuds, with type 1 also occurring in more narrative texts such as Jubilees, Judith, 1,2, and 4 Maccabees, and 1 Esdras. In general list-making (*Listenwissenschaft*) was a major feature of scholarship in antiquity in all known literary traditions – Akkadian,

Egyptian, and Greek. It is particularly at home in thematic discourse, though it occurs in other kinds of text as well.²³

An example of a type 1 list in PRE is PRE 3, 19/22 – 21/1: “And eight [things were created] on the second day, and these are they: the Well, the Manna, the Rod, the Rainbow, the [art of] Writing, the Instrument of Writing, the Garments, and the Demons”. Twenty similar lists are found in PRE and they are consistent with the examples occurring in classic Rabbinic literature.

In type 2 the bare list is expanded in some way, e.g., each item may be commented upon in sequence, and proofs given from Scripture for including it in the list, e.g., PRE 29, 317/17-321/10 describes five categories of uncircumcised things (*‘orlah*):

A. [*List*] Rabbi Ze’era said: There are five kinds of uncircumcised things in the world, four (relating to) man, and one (relating to) trees. The four (which relate to) man are: The uncircumcision of the ear, the uncircumcision of the lips, the uncircumcision of the heart, and the uncircumcision of the flesh.

B.1 [*Exposition*] Whence do we know of the uncircumcision of the ear? As it is written, *See their ears are uncircumcised* (Jer 6:10).

B.2 (Whence do we know of) the uncircumcision of the lips? As it is written, *And I am uncircumcised of lips* (Exod 6:12).

B.3 (Whence do we know of) the uncircumcision of the heart? As it is written, *Circumcise the foreskin of your heart* (Deut 10:16).

B.4 (Whence do we know of) the uncircumcision of the flesh? As it is written, *Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his*

²³ See Roy S. Shasha, *Forms and Functions of Lists in the Mishnah* (Ph.D. diss., University of Manchester, 2006).

foreskin [will be cut off from his people, he has broken my covenant] (Gen 17:14).

C.1 And it says, *For all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel is uncircumcised of heart (Jer 9:25).*

D. And the uncircumcised heart keeps Israel from doing the will of their creator. And in the future the Holy One, Blessed be he will take away the uncircumcision of the heart from them, and they will not harden their stubborn (heart) before their Creator, as it is said, *I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh, and give you a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:26).*

C.2 And it says, *Circumcise the foreskin of your heart (Deut 10:16).*

B.5 (There is) one (uncircumcision relating to) trees, as it is said, *And when you come into the land and plant trees for food, you shall regard its fruit as uncircumcised (Lev 19:23).*

This is a typical example of a complex expansion of a basic list. The basic list itself already contains the complication that its five items are grouped into 4 + 1. The commentary consists of establishing the biblical basis for each item in the list, and takes the form of a Question and Answer – itself one of the basic building blocks of rabbinic discourse (see 3.6.3.5 above). Items 3 and 4 attract further glossing which is not found in the case of items 1, 2, and 5. The added glossing is attached to the core commentary by means of the formula *ve-'omer*, “and it (also) says”, which is commonly used to present an additional proof-text. Here it speaks in the same verse both of the nations who are uncircumcised *in the flesh* and of Israel who are uncircumcised *of heart*, thus proving both items 3 and 4. This additional proof-text attracts a further comment to the effect that it is uncircumcision of heart that prevents Israel from doing God’s will but God will one day remove this condition, with proof from Ezek 36:26. A second *ve-'omer* introduces a second additional proof-

text for item 3, but this turns out to be the same as the one already quoted. There is no point trying to explain this synchronically, and probably few, if any, sensible readers would attempt to do so. The text is clearly disturbed, and diachronic explanations offer the most satisfactory solution. Either a scribe carelessly introduced this additional proof-text forgetting that it was already there, or by some quirk of copying Deut 10:16 has displayed a genuinely new proof-text.

This example is interesting in that it illustrates how compositionally active such lists can be, how they can stimulate and generate expansion. We have already noted above how lists in PRE function at the macro-level to structure the whole work or large sections of it. The Ten Descents of God resonates well beyond its initial setting in PRE 14, indeed right to the end of the work, while the Ten Trials of Abraham set the topic and structure for six whole chapters. This is not so easily paralleled in classic rabbinic texts. In classic rabbinic literature lists function at the level of the micro-form, that is to say, they serve as small building-blocks for larger compositions, but do not themselves structure larger compositions. The latter development may be a feature of later texts.

3.6.3.7 Meshalim

A Mashal is a formalized simile. It draws a parallel between the qualities of two objects or the actions of two actors or sets of actors in order to explain a text, or to illustrate a point of wisdom, or to embellish a description. It is one of the oldest of the small literary forms, and is deeply embedded in both discourse and narrative. The form is common in classic rabbinic literature.²⁴ The classic rabbinic Mashal falls

²⁴ See David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

into two parts: “The first part presents a typified account of how some character(s), usually defined by their social role or craft, pass through two (or more) sequential stages, or make a choice between two (or more) alternatives. The second part identifies biblical actions or events which exhibit similar stages or choices. The first part is often referred to – confusingly – by the word *mashal* in the narrow sense, the second by the word *nimshal*, usually introduced by ‘thus’ (*kakh*).”²⁵ The form is clearly bounded and introduced by a standard formula. At its fullest this is: *mashelu mashal le-mah ha-davar domeh le-*, “They told a parable. To what is the matter like? To ...”. This became so formulaic that it was often reduced to *mashal le-* or *le-mah ha-davar domeh*, or even simply *le-*. There may be a nuance to be noted between *mashelu mashal* and simply *mashal*. In the first case the author may be acknowledging that he is quoting from a traditional *Mashal* (see 4.3.1 below). In the second case this possibility is not ruled out, but the possibility is also left open that the parable is the author’s invention.

Leviticus Rabbah 2.4 offers an example of a classic Rabbinic *Mashal*:

[*Lemma / Davar*] *Speak to the Children of Israel* (Lev 1:2).

Rabbi Judan said in the name of Rabbi Samuel bar Nahman:

[*Mashal formula*] A parable.

[*Mashal*] To a king who had a garment, about which he gave strict instructions to his servant, saying: “Fold it, and shake it, and look after it well.” The servant said to him: “My Lord the king, of all the garments you have, you give me instructions concerning none but this alone.” He said to him: “That is because I put this garment close to my body.”

²⁵ Samely, *Forms of Rabbinic Literature*, 189.

[*Nimshal*] Thus (*kakh*) did Moses say before the Holy One, blessed be He: Out of the seventy original nations which you have in your world, you commanded me concerning none but Israel, saying, *Command the children of Israel* (Num 28:2), *Speak to the Children of Israel* (Lev 1:2), *Say to the children of Israel* (Exod 33:5). He said to him, 'That is because they cleave to me.'

[*Concluding verse*] This is that which is written (*hada' hu' dikhetiv*), *For as the girdle cleaves to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel* (Jer 13:11).

This *Mashal* illustrates several key points about the classic rabbinic form. First the vast majority of rabbinic parables involve the comparison of God to a king. The *Mashal* is a king of flesh and blood; the *Nimshal* is God, the Lord of the world. It is not a form in general literary use. This is rather striking, and reminds one of the parables of the kingdom in the teaching of Jesus. Jesus is represented consistently in the Gospels as teaching in parables, and the tradition is so pervasive and so consistent that it is highly likely that it is historically true. However, he did not use parables in a general way, but specifically to reinforce and illustrate his proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of God. The remarkable thing, however, about Jesus' use of parables is that the *Nimshal* was not, apparently, always given – only the *Mashal*, the hearers being challenged to work out the *Nimshal* for themselves. This is not a feature of rabbinic usage, where the *Nimshal* is routinely spelled out.²⁶ However, both Jesus and the Rabbis shared the tendency to restrict the use of parables specifically to teaching about the kingship of God. The parallelism between rabbinic parables and Gospel parables becomes even more obvious when

²⁶ The parable form has been much studied by New Testament scholars in connection with the parables in the Gospels. For a recent study see Louise Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Fortress, 2006).

we note that the rabbinic parables are by and large not about God's kingship in general over the world but specifically about his kingship over Israel.

The second crucial feature about the rabbinic *mashal* which the Leviticus Rabbah example illustrates is that the form is largely used exegetically, in that it is attached to and explains a biblical lemma. The *davar*, that is to say the matter which the parable comes to illustrate, is the bare *lemma*. It could have been spelled out more fully: "*Speak to the Children of Israel* (Lev 1:2). Why to the children of Israel and not to the other nations? A parable. To what is the matter like?", but the *darshan* chooses not to be so explicit, and leaves the reader to infer "the matter" from the *nimshal*.

The third and final feature to note in the Leviticus Rabbah Mashal is the concluding verse, here Jer 13:11, which rounds off the unit. Close inspection of this suggests that it generated the Mashal, and was in the author's mind right from the start. It was the target at which he was aiming. Jer 13:11 compares Israel's cleaving to God to a belt that cleaves to a man's loins. This biblical simile has been teased out and turned into a parable. The boldness of the biblical simile has inspired the boldness, even earthiness, of the parable. Comparing Israel to God's "underwear" (*perqesin*) borders on the incongruous, but it is no more incongruous than comparing them to a belt around God's loins. The use of a concluding verse in this way is reminiscent of the Petiḥah, and it would be an interesting experiment to see how many exegetical Meshalim could be readily and convincingly recast in the form of Petiḥot. There are a number of Petiḥot, such as BerR 1.1, where a Mashal plays an important element in the *Harizah*.

There are eight parables in PRE widely scattered through the work (see **Appendix F.4**). This may not seem much for such a large work, but the fact that PRE

is not a lemmatic commentary perhaps inhibited its use. Though with such a small sample one cannot be dogmatic, a number of PRE's parables show significant deviation from type as defined by our Leviticus Rabbah example, in that they are attached to general theological statements rather than specific biblical lemmata, and illustrate matters other than God's kingship over Israel.

An example which conforms well to type can be found in PRE 41, 555/8-15:

[*Lemma*] *And it came to pass, when you heard the voice from the midst of the darkness* (Deut 5:20)

[*Davar*] Why did the Holy One, blessed be he, cause his voice to be heard out of the midst of fire and the darkness, and not out of the midst of light?

[*Mashal formula*] To what is the matter like?

[*Mashal*] To a king who had an astrologer. The king was marrying his son to a woman, and he hung in the wedding chamber of his son black curtains, and not white. The courtiers said to him: Our Lord the king, 'A man hangs only white curtains in the wedding chamber of his son.' He said to them: 'I know that my son will remain with his wife for only forty days; so that later they should not say that the king was an astrologer, yet he did not know what would happen to his son.'

[*Nimshal*] So with the King, who is the Holy One, blessed be he, and his son is Israel, and the bride the Torah. The Holy One, blessed be he, knew that Israel would remain loyal to the commandments for only forty days, therefore the Holy One, blessed be he, caused them to hear his voice out of the midst of darkness, and not out of the midst of light.

[*Concluding verse*] Therefore (*lefikakh*) the Holy One, blessed be he caused them to hear his voice from the midst of fire and darkness.

Here we have a Mashal that contains all the classic elements. It illustrates a biblical lemma, it is about the kingship of God and his relationship to Israel, each side of the

comparison is complex and has several points of comparison, and it ends with a biblical quote. In this case this consists of restating the lemma in the author's own words, hence the use of *lefikakh* rather than a citation formula such as *she-ne'emar*. The Mashal is rounded off by an *inclusio* rather than the quotation of a new but related verse.

The translation above follows, as elsewhere in this dissertation, Venice 1544, but the text in Friedlander is markedly different. Even the quoted text is not without its problems. It first states that the king has an astrologer, and then that he himself is the astrologer. The latter is probably the original reading. The basic point of the parable is about the omniscience of God: God foresaw that Israel would sin, and so signaled this in advance by speaking to her out of the darkness – the blackness signifying his sorrow at Israel's future rejection of the Torah. There could be no question that God was taken unawares by Israel's sin. The precise sin in view here is the sin of the Calf. This incident was used in Christian polemic to prove the ingrained sinfulness that was ultimately to lead to God casting her off (see 3.6.4.6 below). This explains the defensiveness of the parable: God was not taken unawares. He foresaw the rebellion of Israel, but this did not stop him giving her the Torah. The Nimshal, then, demands in the Mashal a king who can foresee the future. This condition could be fulfilled if the king *employed* an astrologer. The reader is probably expected to think of the practice of casting a horoscope to predict the auspicious moment of a royal wedding. The horoscope reveals impending unfaithfulness, but still the king goes ahead, though he plants in advance a sign that in retrospect he can point to as showing that he knew in advance what was coming. If the unfaithfulness had not been foreseen the fault would lie with the astrologer not with the king himself: it would be the astrologer's powers that would be called into question. The

comparison becomes far simpler and stronger if it is the king *himself* who is the astrologer. However, some in rabbinic circles took a deeply negative view of astrology,²⁷ and anyone who accepted this position, might have seen comparing God to an astrologer as problematic. So the text was neatly changed to make the king *employ* an astrologer, which ameliorates the problem without totally removing it. The Friedlander text is confused, and omits altogether the first reference to the astrologer, but it still has the second.

Other Meshalim in PRE diverge from the classical pattern in a variety of ways. Two examples will serve to illustrate this point:

(1) PRE 3, 13/14–15/3

[*Davar*] Before the world was created, the Holy One, blessed be he, existed with his Name alone, and the thought arose in him to create the world, and he was tracing out the world before him, but it would not stand.

[*Mashal formula*] They told a parable (*mashelu mashal*). To what is the matter like?

[*Mashal*] To a king who wishes to build a palace for himself. If he had not traced it out in the earth its foundations, its exits and entrances, he does not begin to build.

[*Nimshal*] Thus the Holy One, blessed be he, was tracing out the world before himself, but it would not remain standing until he created repentance.

²⁷ See J.H. Charlesworth, "Jewish Astrology in the Talmud, the Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Early Palestinian Synagogues," *HTR* 70 (1977), 183-200. Further: Kocku von Stuckrad, "Jewish and Christian Astrology in Late Antiquity – A New Approach," *Numen* 47/1 (2000), 1-40; Von Stuckrad, *Das Ringen um die Astrologie: jüdische und christliche Beiträge zum antiken Zeitverständnis* (Berlin; De Gruyter, 2000); Reimund Leicht, *Astrologoumena Judaica: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der astrologischen Literatur der Juden* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006).

The parable illustrates a statement and not a biblical lemma, and there is no concluding proof-text. The Mashal-formula is unusual – “they told a parable” – and indicates that the author is here quoting a source. The reference must surely be to the opening pericope of BerR, where God is compared to an architect who before he builds a palace draws out plans. Our author here deploys the parable very ineptly. For example, he spoils the effect by including an architectural metaphor *already* in the *davar*, and the element of frustration in the Nimshal has no parallel in the Mashal. The Mashal in BerR is sharper and clearer, and is used to make a very different point: see 4.3.1 below, where the re-use of BerR 1.1 in PRE is analyzed at length.

(2) PRE 43, 585/8-14

[*Davar*] Repentance is only possible before death.

[*Mashal formula*] A parable. To what is the matter like?

[*Mashal*] To a man who wished to take a voyage on the sea. If he did not take with him bread and fresh water from an inhabited land, he will not find it at sea.

If he wishes to go to the end of the wilderness, unless he takes from some inhabited place bread and water, he will not find anything to eat or drink in the wilderness.

[*Nimshal*] Thus, if a man did not repent in his lifetime, after his death there is no repentance.

[*Concluding verse*] As it is said, *He will not regard any ransom* (Prov 6:35).

Again, though there is a concluding verse, the *davar* is not a lemma but a theological proposition, and again, the parable is ineptly used. Note, e.g., the imbalance

between the Mashal and the Nimshal. The Mashal has numerous elements and potential points of comparison, none of which is exploited in the Nismhal.

It is fair to say that, in general, PRE's use of the Mashal is not assured; the author has not really grasped the subtleties of the classic form. The parables are contrived and do little to illuminate the matter in hand. They are all problematic in one way or another, and this is reflected in their manuscript transmission which is textually unstable even by the standards of PRE, reflecting numerous attempts to tinker with them and improve them. The decay of the classical Mashal is well illustrated by a parable in PRE 34.²⁸

[*Davar*] Awakening in the morning is like the future world (*le-^catid la-bo'*).

[*Mashal formula*] A parable – to what is the matter like?

[*Mashal*] To a man who awakens out of his sleep.

[*Nimshal*] In like manner will the dead awaken in the future world.

[*Concluding verse*] As it is said, *O satisfy us in the morning with your loving kindness* (Ps 90:14).

Here the matter is the resurrection of the dead, equated with the world to come, which takes the form of a theological statement, not a biblical lemma. We have the two-stage structure of the Mashal and the Nimshal, and the concluding proof-text, but the parable is so compressed as to be formally doing nothing. It has essentially collapsed back into a simile. This decay of the classical form of the Mashal is found

²⁸. This is the text in Friedlander, *Pirkê deRabbi Eliezer*, 254. Venice 1544 has simply "Sleep [Warsaw: awakening] in the morning is like the future world, as it is said, *O satisfy us in the morning with your loving kindness* (Ps 90:14)."

also in the case of the *Petiḥah* (see 3.6.3.8). It is probably typical of later rabbinic compositions, and marks a move towards a more flowing, discursive text.

3.6.3.8 The *Petiḥah*

There is one final small form that I will mention, not because it is common in PRE but because it is conspicuous by its absence. It is the *Petiḥah*. The *Petiḥah* is one of the most distinctive and pervasive of the small forms that go to make up the classic Midrashim (note especially BerR, Leviticus Rabbah, and Lamentations Rabbah), so the fact that there is not a single case of it in PRE is surely a matter of note. The following is an example of a classic *Petiḥah* taken from BerR 55.3:

Another interpretation: *The Lord tests the righteous* (Ps 11:5) alludes to Abraham: [Base Verse] *And it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham* (Gen 22:1).

[*Petiḥah formula*] Rabbi Abin opened (*pataḥ*):

[*Petiḥah verse*] *Forasmuch as the king's word has power, and who may say to him, What are you doing?* (Eccl 8:4)?

[*Harizah*] Rabbi Abin said: (To what is the matter like?) To a teacher who was commanding his student, *You shall not pervert judgment* (Deut 16:19), yet he himself perverted judgment. *You shall not respect persons* (ibid.), yet himself respected persons. *Neither shall you take a bribe* (ibid.), yet himself took bribes. Do not lend money on interest, yet himself lent money on interest. His student said to him: Rabbi, you tell me, Do not lend on interest, yet you yourself lend on interest! To you it is permitted, but to me it is forbidden! He replied: I am telling you not to lend on interest to an Israelite, but you may lend on interest to the heathen, as it is written (*dikhtiv*), *To a foreigner you may lend on interest, but to your brother you shall not lend on interest* (Deut 23:21).

Thus Israel said to the Holy One, blessed be he: Lord of the worlds, you wrote in your Torah, *You shall not take revenge or bear a grudge* (Lev

19:18), but you are taking revenge and bearing a grudge, as it says, *The Lord takes revenge, and full of wrath, he wreaks vengeance on his adversaries, and he bears grudges towards his enemies* (Nah 1:2). God said to them: I wrote in my Torah, *You shall not take revenge or bear a grudge against the sons of your people*, but I am wreaking vengeance and bearing grudges against the heathen – *Avenge the Children of Israel (on the Midianites)* (Num 31:2).

It is written, *You shall not test the Lord your God* (Deut 6:16), (yet) [*Base verse*] *God tested Abraham* (Gen 22:1).

Though there are problems with some of the details of the argument here (as many commentators have observed), the general thrust is clear. It turns on the observation that God behaves towards humans in ways that he does not permit humans to behave towards him. God tests Abraham, but does not allow anyone to test him. He forbids vengeance yet he himself exacts vengeance. Although the contradiction can be exaggerated, in that it can be argued that he forbids Israelite to take revenge on Israelite, but not on non-Jews, there is a real moral dilemma here because the *imitatio dei* is a strong justification in rabbinic ethics. Note, e.g., how showing loving kindness towards mourners is justified by the fact that God exemplifies this virtue (see PRE 17, 167/1-14; cf. 3.6.4.7 below). It is possibly for this reason that the Mashal of the parable uses the analogy of the teacher and not the king, which might have been suggested by Eccl 8:14. God's actions should surely be exemplary, in the way that the teacher's actions should be exemplary. A teacher who behaved in such flagrant contradiction of his own teaching would not be a moral teacher. However, God cannot be judged by the same standards as humans. If the actions of a human king are above question (Eccl 8:14), how much more the actions of the Lord of all the worlds.

The argument is compressed and a bit contorted, by the structure of the Petiḥah is clear enough, its rhetoric well studied and well understood.²⁹ The Petiḥah involves juxtaposing with a base verse (here Gen 22:1) a Petiḥah verse from elsewhere in Tanakh (usually from the Writings), which apparently has no connection with it, and then demonstrating, against the odds so to speak, that actually there is a link, and the other verse throws light on the base verse. The passage in which the link is demonstrated, sometimes called in modern scholarship the *Ḥarizah*,³⁰ is here taken up with an elaborate Mashal. This is not uncommon, and shows yet again how one small form can be nested within another. The Petiḥah concludes by restating the base verse, the sense of which has now been clarified by the exegetical argument.

The origins of this rhetorical form probably lie in synagogue practice associated with the public reading of the Torah. The custom arose to introduce the *parashah* with a short passage the rhetorical function of which was to wake the audience up and focus their minds on the reading. The *darshan* rose and announced a verse which apparently bore no relation to the opening of the *parashah* which was about to be read, the text of which the audience (or the more knowledgeable part of it) would know in advance. The audience's interest would be piqued, and they would begin to try and guess how the quoted verse might bear on the *parashah*. The

²⁹ Bibliography on the Petiḥah is now very extensive. Current discussion usually starts from the seminal article by Joseph Heinemann, "The Proem in the Aggadic Midrashim: A Form-Critical Study," *SH* 22 (1971): 100-22. See further Peter Schäfer, "Die Petichah – ein Proömium?," *Kairos* 12 (1970), 216-19; Richard Sarason, "The Petiḥtot in Leviticus Rabbah: 'Oral Homilies' or Redactional Constructions?," *JJS* 33 (1982): 557-67; Burton L. Visotzky, *Golden Bells and Pomegranates* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2003), 23-30; Arnold Goldberg, "Versuch über die die Präsupposition und Struktur der Petiḥah," in *Rabbinische Texte*, 2: 199-229, and article cited in next fn.

³⁰ I think it may have been introduced by Arnold Goldberg. See "Petiḥa und Ḥariza."

darshan would cleverly demonstrate the connection, concluding with the opening words of the *parashah*, which would then be read. The reason the verb *pataḥ* was used was simply because the Petiḥah opened the reading from the Torah. This would explain why so many of the extant Petiḥot have the opening words of a *parashah* as their base verse, though once the structure was established it could be applied to any verse of Torah. The custom of citing the Petiḥah verse from the Writings made a theological point. The Torah reading was followed by a Haftarah from the Prophets, so the first two divisions of Tanakh were represented. Quoting a verse from the Writings in the Petiḥah meant the third division of the canon also got a look in, and the unity of Scripture was displayed. In a *tour de force* the form was later extended in the Yelammedenu structure, the Petiḥah verse being replaced by a Mishnaic ruling, thus uniting the Oral and the Written Torah.

The synagogue Petiḥot were probably collected and memorized, and many of them may have become traditional. They proved a valuable source of Bible commentary when the rabbinic Batei Midrash in Palestine began to construct Midrashim on the Bible, and this is why we find so many of them in the classic commentaries. It would be unwarranted to suppose every Petiḥah recorded in Midrash was once delivered orally in synagogue. Once incorporated into Midrash the Petiḥah became a literary form, and doubtless commentators composed their own literary Petiḥot, but some of the Petiḥot must surely have been first delivered orally, and this may explain why the argument of so many Petiḥot is problematic. What we have are highly compressed, perhaps slightly misremembered versions of the original oral performance.

All this is somewhat speculative, but one thing is beyond dispute, and it is that although Petiḥot are a highly visible and important element in some classic

Midrashim which must surely have been known to PRE, they are absent from PRE itself. The verb *pataḥ* occurs only twice in PRE in a relevant context: once at PRE 3, 13/4-5: “Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus opened: *Who can utter the mighty works of the Lord, or declare all his praise? (Ps 106:2)*”; and once at PRE 48, 645/13: “Rabbi Yoḥanan ben Zakkai opened: *On the selfsame day God made a covenant with Abraham (Gen 15:18)*.” In both cases the rabbinic authority quotes a biblical verse, but it does not function as a *petiḥah* verse juxtaposed to a *base* verse. There is no base verse. Nor does what follows have the structure of a *Petiḥah*. In the first instance what the Rabbi seems to “open” is the discourse that follows, whether conceived of as the first chapter or the whole book. In the second instance he opens the discourse contained in the chapter.

It is not obvious why, given the presence of so many other classic rabbinic small forms in PRE, the *Petiḥah* should be absent. Perhaps it is because the *Petiḥah* is fundamentally a commentary form, and PRE is fundamentally discourse. There is so much commentary in PRE at the micro-level that there was surely scope to introduce it. Perhaps by the time PRE was composed the synagogue *Petiḥah* had died out, and so the literary form was no longer nourished from living practice, and its dynamics and rationale no longer well understood. The decay of the form in late Midrashim has long been noted, and this would go some way to support this conclusion.³¹

³¹ It may not be that simple. As noted, the *Yelammedenu* form is a late development of the *Petiḥah* which preserves its rhetorical dynamic, and this fact might call in question the claim that that dynamic was not well understood. The *Yelammedenu* form is common in the *Tanḥuma* midrashim which have so many similarities to PRE.

3.6.4 Thematic Coherence

3.6.4.1 The Thematic Inventory of PRE

The thematic inventory of PRE, in the sense of all the themes on which it touches in the course of its 54 chapters, is large, and it is not my intention here to cover it all. To do so would require a massive commentary on the whole book. Rather I have chosen to analyse seven themes which seem to me, from the space given to them, to be of particular importance to our author and more central to his message. Even these cannot be treated exhaustively. I have analysed them only to clarify PRE's distinctive take on the theme, and to explore whether and how it sees the themes as inter-related.

3.6.4.2 Ma'aseh Bere'shit

The account of the creation of the world occupies a large section at the beginning of the PRE. This theme is clearly suggested by the underlying biblical text, and the account follows closely the work of the six days, but, as in the Christian Hexaemera,³² Genesis 1 is used simply as a convenient structure for organising a body of "scientific" knowledge. It functions well in this regard because it itemizes all the major constituents of the cosmos. It provides an agenda for a complete cosmology – astronomy, geography, meteorology, biology, zoology, and anthropology. The importance of cosmology for PRE can be seen in the fact that it devotes eleven out of its fifty-four chapters to it, even though only one out of the seventy-odd chapters of Bible which it shadows is devoted to the subject.

³² For a useful survey see: F.E. Robbins, *The Hexaemeral Literature: A Study of the Greek and Latin Commentaries on Genesis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1912).

For present purposes the following features of its cosmology should be noted:

(1) It is based on two sources – the Bible and “science”. In some cases an aspect of the cosmos is deduced solely from Bible, and the biblical proof-texts are derived from all over Tanakh. Other cosmological statements in Scripture are brought to supplement the sparse Genesis account, on the natural assumption that they must be compatible with it. In many cases, however, the cosmological information provided cannot be found anywhere in Scripture. It is derived from the scientific tradition known to the author (a tradition based ultimately on the direct observation of nature), and is simply presented on its own merits. In some cases a scientific statement is backed up by a Scriptural proof-text, and so the two sources of the author’s knowledge are explicitly presented as if in agreement. The significance of this approach will be argued in detail below (4.3.1). Suffice to say here that its theoretical justification probably lies in the author’s view of the role of Torah in creation – a role that means that Torah and true scientific observation of nature can never be in conflict. God’s works are manifest both in the Book of Nature and in the Torah.

(2) The cosmology is notably realist, that is to say it correlates well with observation of nature. A classic three-decker universe is presented (‘heaven above, earth beneath, and the waters under the earth’). The earth is viewed as a circular landmass surrounded by the waters of Ocean, the sky is a dome which arcs over the landmass and is pegged down on the far side of the waters of Ocean (PRE 3, 23/1-12). Beneath the earth are the watery abysses on which the earth floats like a ship (PRE 5, 39/10-14). Heaven is a further firmament located above the dome (PRE 4, 29/1-8). That firmament is elsewhere divided into seven heavens piled one on top of the other (PRE 18, 193/11-13). This is a very ancient view; it agrees in all its

essentials with the biblical cosmos. The image of the *oikoumene* as an island surrounded by Ocean is the basis of the Jubilees world-map, which is a Jewish adaptation of the old Ionian world-map.³³ This cosmology, already dated by the time of Jubilees (the sphericity of the earth had been discovered and its circumference measured with remarkable accuracy by Eratosthenes (c.276-c.195/194 BCE)), was extraordinarily old-fashioned by the time of PRE. It is something of a puzzle why the author of PRE adopts it. It has a knock-on effect on his account of the phases of the moon, which are explained, not by the shadow cast by the sphere of the earth on the face of the moon, but by the moon emerging and disappearing behind circular clouds, the face of the nearer cloud making the shadow – a primitive conception which PRE manages ingeniously to back up from Scripture (Job 38:9; Ps 81:3) (PRE 7, 69/18-71/15). Perhaps the author of PRE adopted a flat-earth view because it seemed so obviously to accord with the Bible. Was he unaware of the sphericity of the earth? For all his embrace of science, and his confident assumption that there should be no clash between the Bible and science, was he was still inclined to give the Bible the last word? This suggests the possibility that he may have been dimly aware that science *did* pose problems for the traditional worldview. As the history of science shows, the simple fact of the sphericity of the earth raises acute theological issues, problematizing, e.g., the location of heaven and the throne of God.

Another clash between the Bible and science, which he has failed to spot, concerns the origin of rain. He seems aware of the fact that clouds are formed by the evaporation of water from the earth (PRE 5, 41/15-16), though he hasn't quite grasped the principle of condensation, and still postulates that a direct command

³³ See Philip Alexander, "Notes on the 'Imago Mundi' of the Book of Jubilees," in *Essays in Honour of Yigael Yadin* (ed. G. Vermes and J. Neusner; Oxford: Journal of Jewish Studies, 1982), 194-214.

from God is needed to make the clouds discharge their rain. In the same breath he has rain coming from the treasures in heaven which God opens to allow it to fall (PRE 5, 41/17-43/10). Behind this is the biblical idea of the waters above the firmament (PRE 4, 29/16-19), the “windows” of which God opens to let them fall as rain to earth. Our author has muddled together the two theories, without realising that they are not really compatible. Economy of explanation would suggest that one of them is redundant. Nevertheless his world is realist in the sense that it corresponds reasonably well with what is observable to someone standing on the earth. It contrasts with the highly symbolic, highly formalized, cosmoses depicted in the Seder Rabbah diBre’shit literature,³⁴ which may belong to the same period, the reality of which is deeply puzzling. In general the science in PRE is woefully out of date, but its importance in the text lies not so much in the scientific information that it provided, as in the fact that it took science seriously. PRE saw this science as a legitimate subject of study alongside Torah and, indeed, as throwing light on Torah.

(3) Much of PRE’s cosmological account is concerned with movements of the sun and the moon, and with how their movements can be reconciled. It is concerned, therefore, with the measurement of time and with the calendar, specifically the Jewish calendar which is luni-solar, and requires, therefore, that the movements of the sun and the moon are reconciled. This is pinned neatly to the mention in Genesis 1 of the creation of the two great lights, the sun and the moon, on the second day. This is also an excellent example of how science can be the handmaid of religion, allowing the religious calendar to be calculated accurately, and the times of the festivals duly observed. This motif of science as the handmaid of religion comes out

³⁴ See Nicholas Sed, *La mystique cosmologique juive* (Paris: Éditions de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1981).

again in the treatment of living creatures, which is immediately linked to the problem of kashrut (PRE 9, 83/15-85/14). The accounts of the motions of both the sun and the moon are peppered with precise numbers which are not always accurate or make sense. They have been tinkered with in transmission (to “correct” them), and it is not always easy to establish what the original values may have been. The science once again seems out of date, though as Sacha Stern has recently shown the 19-year cycle of intercalation presented by PRE corresponds to that introduced in Byzantium sometime in the 7th century and was used by Palestinian Christians (PRE 8, 83/7-9).³⁵ We find the scientific approach sitting awkwardly side by side with a traditional approach. The precise point of the 19-year cycle is to take observation and hence doubt out of the process. Once everyone has agreed on the start of the cycle, and which years within are to be intercalated, then anyone one can predict for ever after what the calendar will be. Nevertheless PRE still speaks at length of intercalation by *observation* “of trees, grass, and *Tequfot*” (PRE 8, 83/1-6). This was almost certainly related to contemporary debates over who had authority to fix the calendar. PRE clearly states that it belongs to the authorities in the Land of Israel, not in Babylon (PRE 8, 77/1-79/16), and a clinching argument in favour of this would be if intercalation has to be done on the basis of observation of natural phenomena (e.g. how ripe certain plants are). The obvious location from which to make such observations would be the Land of Israel. If intercalation is by formula then anyone, anywhere in the world can calculate which years need to be intercalated. The contradiction here between observation and calculation is so blatant that one might be tempted to argue diachronically that the passage on the 19-year cycle must be a later insertion into the text. The inconsistency is of a piece with other inconsistencies

³⁵ Sacha Stern, “Pirquei deRabbi Eliezer and the 19-year Cycle” (paper presented at the 10th Congress of the European Association for Jewish Studies, Paris, 24 July 2014).

in PRE's cosmology. If Stern is right that the 19-year cycle presented by PRE, which would seem to put authorities outside the land on the same footing as those within and require no central proclamations, is Byzantine in origin, then it must have been inserted (if secondarily) in Palestine.

(4) There is one final point that should be made about the cosmological section in PRE, and that is that it is by no means all cosmology. Our author manages to weave in themes which he will subsequently develop at length. The most obvious of these is his rather frequent references to the future, specifically to the messianic age, which will be picked up later and which, by the end of the work, will emerge as one of its major themes (see 3.6.4.4 below). Anticipations of this theme are found, e.g., at PRE 3, 25/11-27/14, where the same three divine attributes which underpinned the work of creation ("wisdom, understanding, and knowledge": cf. Prov. 3:19-20), are said also to have underpinned the building of the Tabernacle and the Temple, and will be manifested again in the Messiah at the end of history; and at PRE 11, 115/10-121/18, where the end of the account of the creation of Adam on the sixth day runs into the Midrash of the Ten kings who ruled over the world, beginning with God and running through Nimrod, Joseph, Solomon, Ahab, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander, the Messiah, and back to God. The odd thing here is that PRE does not make Adam the first universal king, as we find in some other versions of this midrash, given that that would, surely, have made a more satisfactory connection to the matter in hand, viz., the creation of Adam, but the intention is clear – to look forward from the *Urzeit* to the *Endzeit*, and to see the latter as somehow prefigured in the former. This has good precedent in earlier Jewish tradition. Note, e.g., how BerR cleverly sees Rome and Israel as prefigured respectively by the sun and the moon. So long as the sun shines the moon is barely

visible, if at all. When the sun sets, the light of the moon shines out. So now is the time of the dominance of Rome, but the time is coming when Rome's power will set, and then the light of Israel will shine forth in all its glory (BerR 6.3). The *Urzeit-Endzeit* theme is anticipated early in PRE by its claim that the name of the messiah pre-dated the creation of the world (PRE 3, 15/4-5, 17/12-14).

PRE also does not hesitate, following well-established practice (see, e.g., BerR 5.1), to moralize the account of creation, and this anticipates its later concern with ethics (see 3.6.4.7). The scientific reading does not exclude the moral reading. This comes out, e.g., at PRE 3, 17/19-19/4, where the fact that God took counsel with Torah before creating the world becomes the basis for the claim that "every government which has no counsellors is not a proper government" (PRE 3, 19/5-6). Or, at PRE 6, 43/11-45/5, which presents an implicit moralizing of the rivalry between the sun and the moon, which God resolved by making one greater and the other lesser. The large digression into the story of Jonah in PRE 10 should also be seen in this light. It is keyed into the account of the fifth day initially because it was on the fifth day that Jonah fled from God. It is very tempting to jump to diachronic conclusions here and suppose this is a later intrusion into the text, but it would be an odd place to "park" such an addition, given that Jonah's fleeing on the fifth day is not in Bible. In fact it comes as the last of a series of events which happened on the fifth day, the others being found at the end of the preceding chapter. The reference in the preceding chapter to Leviathan also foreshadows the appearance of Leviathan in the story of Jonah. Above all the "digression" allows our author to anticipate the theme of redemption which he is going to take up in several ways later in his work (see 3.6.4.4 below).

3.6.4.3 Ma'aseh Merkavah

PRE devotes a substantial section to Ma'aseh Merkavah (PRE 4), tagged to the second day of creation. The source for this account is prophetic revelation in the Bible, notably Ezekiel's vision of the Chariot in Ezekiel 1. At first sight this might seem unavoidable, in that, surely, the heavenly world lay beyond human observation, and could only be known by revelation. There were accounts of the heavenly world current in the time of PRE which claimed to contain descriptions of it based on ascents to heaven by notable Rabbis (Rabbi Nehunyah ben Haqqanah, Rabbi Ishmael, Rabbi Aqiva). I refer to the so-called Heikhalot literature, which offers depictions of the topography of heaven involving details not found anywhere in the Bible. PRE possibly knew some of this literature; note, e.g., the mention of the heavenly curtain, the Pargod, in PRE 4, 31/16-33/2 (though this element is found also in the Bavli: see *b.Berakhot* 18b; *b.Hagigah* 15a), and the reference to the angel Gallizur (גליצור) in the Friedlander edition.³⁶ The important point to stress, however, is how *original* PRE's account of the Chariot is, and how *unlike* that in Heikhalot literature. Its realism should be stressed. Heaven is inevitably a weird place from the human point of view, but the description in PRE is much less weird and more imaginable than that offered by the Heikhalot literature, which seems to go out of its way to baffle visualization. And while PRE's heaven is on the same space-time continuum as earth, and part of the same cosmos, there is a powerful tendency in Heikhalot literature to present heaven as discontinuous with earth, as another dimension. This is expressed symbolically by presenting it as a place unimaginably distant from earth (the nearer one approaches, the further away one seems to get), a

³⁶ Friedlander, *Pirḳê deRabbi Eliezer*, 25: "And the wings of Gallizur the angel, who stands next to the Chajjôth, (are spread forth) so that the fire which consumes the fire of the angels should not burn (them)." This sentence is missing from the printed editions. (cf. Schäfer, *Synopse* §§25, 26, 372, 514).

place where the laws of terrestrial physics do not apply (ice in the midst of fire, fire in the midst of ice, larger volumes contained within smaller and so forth).

I mentioned above (3.2.3) the angelology of PRE. Angels play a key role in the heavenly world. Four camps of ministering angels surround the Shekhinah, led by Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael (PRE 4, 31/3-8). In heaven they perform the celestial liturgy, in keeping with Isaiah 6 (PRE 4, 35/16-37/10). The angels also act as God's agents in nature: e.g., they work day and night to lead the sun as it travels in its chariot across the heavens (PRE 6, 55/4-6). The idea here is that the sun is an inanimate object, and since the author of PRE, in keeping with many other ancients, could not envisage an inanimate object moving of its own accord, it had to be trundled through the heavens by an animate being – an angel. Angels also descend to the world and intervene in human affairs. They played on timbrels and danced with pipes in celebration of Adam's wedding to Eve (PRE 12, 131/1-2), and they paced up and down before the wedding canopies in order to guard them (PRE 12, 131/10-11). They accompany God when he descends to interact with creation, e.g., they came down with God to the Garden of Eden to give loving service to Adam and Eve (PRE 12, 131/5-9; 16, 155/9-15). Seventy angels descended with God at the tower of Babel to confuse the seventy nations with seventy languages, after which each angel was appointed guardian and representative of one of the nations (PRE 24, 262-264). The ministering angels descended with God to visit Abraham following his circumcision (PRE 29, 317/6-9), and sixty myriads of them formed God's retinue when he came to Sinai to give the Torah to Israel (PRE 47, 633/10ff.). God also sends the angels to carry out quite menial tasks, such as assisting Noah with the ingathering of the animals and their food onto the ark (PRE 23, 247/3-4).

Angels can take on a variety of forms, and these are not fixed: they become winds when they act as God's messengers, and fire when they minister before him (PRE 4, 29/20-31/2)³⁷. In two cases it is implied that they can appear in human form. PRE identifies the three men who appeared to Abraham at Mamre in Gen 18:1-2 as God and two angels (PRE 25, 269/1ff.), although it is not actually stated that the three assumed human appearance. The fact that the mob who pursued the angels who lodged at Lot's house did not remark on their form suggests they appeared as humans, though this is not stated in so many words (PRE 25, 8-283/7). There is a third case, however, where the text is explicit in describing an angel as appearing in human form: the angel appointed by God to protect Jacob from Esau "appeared to [Jacob] as a man" (PRE 37, 467/6: וַיֵּרָא לוֹ בְּאִישׁ; cf. PRE 37, 465/8-469/21). It is unclear whether what is envisaged here is genuine incarnation (i.e. they actually entered human bodies), or a case of simulacra (i.e. the bodies they displayed only *looked like* human bodies). The latter is more likely. Conversely, humans can look like angels. This is true of Israel on Yom Kippur; then, as their great angelic adversary Sammael ruefully confesses, they resemble the ministering angels:

Just as the ministering angels have bare feet, so the Israelites have bare feet on the Day of Atonement. Just as the ministering angels have neither food nor drink, so the Israelites have neither food nor drink on the Day of Atonement. Just as the ministering angels have no knee-joints [and so cannot sit], so the Israelites stand upon their feet. Just as the ministering angels have peace among themselves, so the Israelites have peace on the Day of Atonement. Just as the angels are innocent of all sin, so the Israelites are innocent of all sin on the Day of Atonement." (PRE 46, 629/1-10)

³⁷. The 'fallen angels' became "earth" after their fall, and as a result could have sexual intercourse with the daughters of Cain, who were made of flesh and blood (PRE 22, 239, 6-12). See further 4.5 below.

There is an echo here of the idea of the parallelism between the celestial and terrestrial liturgies – an old idea found, e.g., in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice from Qumran, but enshrined also in synagogue liturgy in the *Qedushah deYotzer* and other Qedushot. It is alluded to again at PRE 37:

Michael, the angel, descended and took Levi, and brought him up before the Throne of Glory, and said before the Holy One, blessed be he: Lord of all the world, this is your lot, and the portion of your works. And he put forth his right hand and blessed him, that the sons of Levi should minister on earth before him like the ministering angels in heaven. (PRE 37, 471/9-12)

Angels in PRE also exhibit human characteristics³⁸, including emotion. They are jealous when humans are able to have a close relationship with God. They were so angry that God had revealed himself directly to Moses that they tried to murder him (PRE 46, 631/7-9). In PRE 13 they doubt the worthiness of Adam, and God offers them the opportunity to name the created creatures in order to test them. When they fail to do so, Adam stands up and names them, causing the ministering angels to conspire to cause him to sin, and so maintain their higher status before God (PRE 13, 133/4-15). The text then introduces Sammael, the great prince of heaven, who, with his band of angels, descends and enters the serpent in the Garden of Eden to engineer the Fall (PRE 13, 135/1-141/6).³⁹ This is the beginning of the recurring trope of the duel between Sammael and Michael; Sammael descends from heaven to cause enmity and draw humanity into sin, while Michael descends to

³⁸ The text sometimes compares the actions or likeness of humans to angels; Adam's wandering through the Garden of Eden is described as 'like one of the ministering angels' (והיה אדם מטייל בגן עדן); באחד ממלאכי השרת; PRE 12, 125/3); and the form of Moses as a baby 'was like the form of an angel of God' (תארו של משה כמלאך אלוהים); PRE 48, 653/15-18).

³⁹ See 4.4 and 4.5 below.

defend humankind.⁴⁰ The angels are capable of sexual desire: the “fallen angels” of PRE 22 wished to have sexual intercourse with the daughters of Cain and took wives from amongst them (PRE 22, 239, 1-12; cf. Gen 6:4) – a distant echo of the Enochic tradition of the fall of the Watchers (see 4.5 below). God, exasperated, casts Sammael and his followers out of heaven for causing Adam to sin (PRE 14, 145/9), and when they attempt to ascend to heaven again to eavesdrop on what is being said there, they are driven off by a rod of fire (PRE 7, 65/4-7).

Angels also act as agents in God’s moral governance of the world. They have the power to destroy individuals and the nation of Israel as a whole. Once the people of Israel had created the Golden Calf and began to revere it, God sent five angels to destroy them (PRE 45, 615/12-619/6). David was left trembling for the rest of his life following an encounter with a destroying angel, when he repented of his sin and pleaded for his life (PRE 43, 579/1-581/8). The angel of death is a particularly frightening agent of punishment, cf. Eve’s encounter with him in PRE 13, and the threat that he would be unleashed on Israel in punishment for making the Golden Calf in PRE 47. However, angels are also able to intervene *on behalf of* humanity. While no angel can save the sinner from punishment in Gehinnom (PRE 34, 409/4-5), the ministering angels were able, for example, to plead for Isaac’s life at the °Aqedah (PRE 31, 361/8-14). PRE suggests that angels have a part to play in the redemption of the soul, since peace for the soul, when it leaves the body, is not achieved until the angels approach it with the greeting “Shalom” (PRE 34,

⁴⁰ See **Appendix G** on the dualism of Michael and Sammael. The angel Gabriel also descends three times: to rescue Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah out of the fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar (PRE 33, 399/13-401/4); to intercept Joseph after he had lost his way and to bring him to his brothers (PRE 38, 489/4-12); (with Michael) to bring Moses against his will into the thick darkness (PRE 42, 553/14-555/2).

413/18-20). The idea here probably is that they pronounce a favourable outcome of the Din ha-Qever, and do not lash the soul in punishment for its sins.⁴¹

The angelology of PRE is very rich, and this should be seen in the light of the fact that there was a deep suspicion of angels in some traditions of rabbinic Judaism, because there was a danger that they could compromise strict monotheism and become second gods.⁴² PRE's angelology is moderate. The angels are created beings, created on the second day of creation, and so they could not have assisted God in the work of creation. There is a conspicuous absence in PRE of mighty archangels such as Metatron, who plays a role in certain Heikhalot texts (in 3 Enoch he is called "the Lesser YHWH"), and who was not unknown even in Rabbinic circles (cf. *b.Sanhedrin* 38b).

3.6.4.4 Redemption

I use redemption here in the sense of *ge'ullah*, the condition in which Israel and the world will find themselves when the Kingdom of Heaven is fully realized.⁴³ The verbal root *g'l* is rare in the Venice edition of PRE, but the idea which it encapsulates most certainly is not: it is a major theme of the work. The theme is not treated in a systematic way in a single place, but our author's understanding of the redemption of Israel emerges piecemeal. This suggests that he expects his readers to be familiar with the position he espouses, and to know how the various elements of it, disclosed

⁴¹ See *Massekhet Hibur ha-Qever* and *Keitzad Din ha-Qever*, Eisenstein, *Otzar Midrashim*, 93-95.

⁴² See Alan Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

⁴³ This is the sense it has in, e.g., Saadya's, *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, Treatise VIII, though interestingly that treatise circulated as an independent tract in Hebrew under the title *'Inyan Yeshu'ah*, "The Matter of Salvation," and in the *Amidah*, Benediction 1: "You remember the pious deeds of the Patriarchs, and in love will bring a redeemer (*go'el*) to their children's children."

en passant, fit together into a coherent scenario. This expectation is reasonable because PRE was composed during the apocalyptic revival, a period of intense speculation about the future among Jews (and indeed Christians and Muslims as well) in the early Islamic period.⁴⁴ The position he espouses is very much the norm for Jewish apocalyptic literature of that time.

The agent of redemption will be the King Messiah, the son of David. The scene of redemption will be the plane of history, and will involve the liberation of Israel from the oppressive rule of her enemies and her re-establishment in sovereignty in her own land. The process is political, and will involve military campaigns. It is intensely mundane and realistic, and involves no element whatsoever of supernaturalism or utopianism. The Messiah is a flesh-and-blood king, and his major business seems to be to fight and win the war of liberation: he will be marked in a general way by “wisdom” (PRE 3, 27 / 13-14), but *war* is his *métier*.

A comparison with the messianic scenario at the end of Targum Song of Songs, a work composed in Palestine around the same time as PRE, is instructive. It too envisages a mundane, historical messianic process, but the climax of the

⁴⁴ The standard collection of texts is Yehudah Even Shemu’el, *Midreshei Ge’ullah: Pirqei ha-Apokalipsah ha-Yehudit* (2d ed; Tel Aviv: Mossad Bialik, 1954) (Hebrew), but these texts have to be used with caution because they have been heavily “corrected” by the editor. The best survey is John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postbiblical Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005). On Byzantine apocalyptic see Paul J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985). On Islamic apocalyptic see: Said Amir Arjomand, “Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classical Period,” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism* (ed. Bernard J. McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen J. Stein; New York/London, Continuum, 2003), 380-413.

messianic activity is to hold a great Talmudic *Shi'ur* in the restored Temple in Jerusalem:

At that time the King Messiah will be revealed to the Assembly of Israel, and the Children of Israel shall say to him, "Come, be a brother to us, and let us go up to Jerusalem and suck out with you the reasons for the Torah, just as an infant sucks at the breast of its mother." For all the time that I was wandering outside my land, when I was mindful of the Name of the Great God and gave up my life for His divinity, even the nations of the earth did not despise me. I will lead you, O King Messiah, and I will bring you into my Temple, and you will teach me to fear the Lord, and to walk in His ways. There we will partake of the feast of Leviathan and we will drink [from] old wine which has been preserved in its grapes from the day that the world was created, and from pomegranates and fruits which were prepared for the righteous in the Garden of Eden. (Targum Song of Songs 8:1-2, trans. Alexander).⁴⁵

The Messiah's chief characteristic is that he is a great sage, who will teach Torah to Israel. The restored Temple becomes not a place where the priests re-inaugurate the sacrificial cult, but a Beit Midrash for the study of Torah. The underlying, anti-activist thrust of this scenario is explicitly stated at Targum Song of Songs 8:4:

The King Messiah will say, "I adjure you, O my people of the House of Israel, not to be stirred up against the nations of the world, in order to escape from exile, nor to rebel against the hosts of Gog and Magog. Wait yet a little while till the nations that have come up to wage war against Jerusalem are destroyed, and after that the Lord of the World will remember for your sake the love of the righteous, and it shall be the Lord's good pleasure to redeem you."

⁴⁵ Alexander, *Targum of Canticles: Translated, with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus, and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible 17A; Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2003), 189-91.

There are wars here, but the reference is vague, and the Messiah's role in them unclear. The clear message is not to take up arms to force the redemption.

In keeping with the scenario in *Sefer Zerubbavel* and several other texts of the apocalyptic revival, wars figure more prominently PRE's vision of the end, and the Messiah is in the thick of them. Take the following:

(1) PRE 19, 207/2-16:

But my horn have you exalted like that of the wild ox (Ps 92:10). Just as the horns of the wild ox are taller than those of all beasts and animals, and it goes to its right and to its left, so with Menachem, son of Ammiel, son of Joseph: his horns are taller than those of other kings, and he goes to the four winds of the world, and concerning him Moses said, His firstling bullock, majesty is his, and his horns are the horns of the wild ox: [with them shall he gore the peoples, all of them, even the ends of the earth] (Deut 33:17). And with him are the myriads of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh, as it is said: And they are the myriads of Ephraim and the thousands of Manasseh (Deut 33:17). [And against him kings will take a stand to slay him, as it is said, The kings of the earth will take a stand (Ps 2:2).] And Israel who are in the Land will be in great tribulation, but their tribulation will be like a fresh olive, as it is said, I am anointed with fresh oil (Ps 92:11). And Israel who are in the Land shall see the downfall of these who hate them, as it is said, My eye shall look on my enemies (Ps 92:12).

Menachem son of Ammiel as the name of the Messiah is found also in *Sefer Zerubbavel*. There he is the Davidic Messiah and clearly distinguished from Nehemiah ben Hushiel, the Messiah of the lineage of Joseph, who will fall in battle against Israel's eschatological foe Armilos.⁴⁶ PRE does not seem to recognise a Messiah ben Joseph. Menachem ben Ammiel is its name for the Davidic Messiah, but

⁴⁶ *Sefer Zerubbavel*, ed. Israel Lévi, "L'apocalypse de Zorobabel," *REJ* 68 (1914), 131-144. Note p. 134, 3: *וזה משיח בן דוד וישמו מנחם בן עמיאל*.

then how come he is said to be a descendant of Joseph, when the Davidic Messiah is of the tribe of Judah? A few manuscripts of PRE omit “son of Joseph”. It is possible it began as a marginal gloss by someone who, wrongly, thought Menachem here must be the Messiah ben Joseph, which then got incorporated into the text. However, we should be a little cautious. It is worth noting that the Messiah ben Joseph is also known as the Messiah of Ephraim, and in *Pesiqta Rabbati* 34, 36 and 37 Ephraim is given as the name of the Davidic Messiah. Alexander comments on this:

Pisqaot 36 and 37 illuminate a number of cryptic passages in Piska 34. The references to ‘Ephraim, the true messiah’ in Piskaot 36 and 37 show that the quotation in Pisqa 34 of Jeremiah 31:9, “for I [the Lord] am become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn”, discloses the name of the messiah. It is at once tempting to link the messiah called Ephraim with the doctrine of the messiah son of Joseph or the messiah of Ephraim, who, according to a widespread Jewish eschatological scenario, will come before the messiah son of David, and fall in battle fighting against the enemies of Israel. He is the forerunner of the real messiah, who, of course, is not from Ephraim, but from Judah. However, Piska 36 makes it clear that Ephraim *is* the messiah son of David! There is no doctrine here of a dual messiahship, and indeed our homily categorically rejects it: ‘What is implied by the seemingly unnecessary “he” in the words “righteous and saved is he” [Zech 9:9]? That what he is in the days of the messiah, he will be in the world to come, and there will never be another beside him.’ This is surely a categorical rejection of the slain messiah son of Joseph. Why the Davidic, Judahite messiah should be called Ephraim remains, however, a puzzle. The name is explicitly derived from Jeremiah 31:9-10, but whether anything other than straightforward exegesis is involved is unclear. (Philip Alexander, “The Mourners for Zion and the Suffering Messiah,” in *Midrash Unbound*, 151.)

As Alexander shows Pisqaot 34, 36-37 emanate from the circles of the Mourners for Zion (the ‘*Avelei Zion*’), a non-rabbinic, perhaps proto-Qaraite group. The possibility that the author of PRE may have known this tradition is intriguing, but we must not press the evidence too hard. After all, PRE does not say the Messiah is called

Ephraim. However, it is interesting that it does not embrace the doctrine of the two Messiahs which is so prominent in *Sefer Zerubbavel*,⁴⁷ despite agreeing so strikingly that the Davidic messiah's name will be Menachem ben Ammiel.

(2) PRE 30, 351 / 7-23:

And further Rabbi Ishmael says: Three wars of confusion will the sons of Ishmael in the future wage in the Land in the latter days, as it is said, *From before the swords they fled* (Isa 21:15), swords signifying wars: one in the forest in Arabia, as it is said, *From the drawn sword* (ibid.); another on the sea, as it is said, *From the bent bow* (ibid.); and one in the great city which is in Rome, which will be more grievous than the other two, as it is said, *For on account of the grievousness of war* (ibid.). From there the son of David will flourish and see the destruction of these and these, and from there he will come to the Land of Israel, as it is said, *Who is this who comes from Edom, with crimsoned garments from Bozrah? He who is glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save* (Isa 63:1).

What is striking here is that Ishmael (i.e. the Arabs) appear to be seen as the main eschatological enemy of Israel, not Edom (Christian Rome). Edom was the traditional foe, and for many eschatological scenarios (e.g., Targum Song of Songs) it remained so, even after the rise of Islam. Here the Messiah defeats *both* the Muslims *and* the Christians ("these and these"). In the phrase "the great city which is in Rome", "Rome" here denotes the *territory* of the Byzantine empire. It reflects the Arabic/Persian use of *Rum* in this sense. "The great city" is, of course, Constantinople. It is from there that the Messiah will appear – an allusion to the idea that the Messiah is already living in occultation in Rome, waiting for the moment to

⁴⁷ Targum Song of Songs also has the two Messiahs: see Philip Alexander, *Targum Canticles*, 24.

declare himself.⁴⁸ Originally in this tradition “Rome” was Rome in Italy, but here the Messiah’s hiding place has been moved to Constantinople, New Rome.

PRE presents a classic example of what Alexander calls in his taxonomy of Jewish messianisms, catastrophic pre-millennialism, the type which Scholem argued was the default type of Jewish messianism.⁴⁹ There is a strong sense of the imminence of the end in PRE. This comes out most strongly in PRE 30 which contains a list of fifteen things which the Children of Ishmael will do in the land of Israel in the last days. This is a typical motif of catastrophic pre-millennialism – a list of “signs” or “traces” of the Messiah (*‘otot ha-mashiah* or *‘iqvei ha-mashiah*). The events that serve as harbingers of the Messiah are often, though not invariably, disasters and troubles – tribulations which will befall the people of Israel before the dramatic redemption. It is clear that, although there has been scholarly dispute as to the actual historical events alluded to in the signs of the Messiah in PRE 30 (see 2.6 above), our author clearly expected them to be decoded by his audience *as events which had already happened*, and since the list is completed the coming of the Messiah must be imminent: the last of the fifteen signs is the reign of the “two brothers” over the Islamic world, “and in their days the Branch, the Son of David, will arise, as it is said: And in the days of those kings shall the God of Heaven set up a kingdom, which will never be destroyed (Dan 2:44)” (PRE 30, 351 / 3-6). Here Islam is, apparently, identified as the Fourth Kingdom, but it is on the verge of passing away.

⁴⁸See Abraham Berger, “Captive at the Gate of Rome: The Story of a Messianic Motif,” *PAAJR* 44 (1977): 1-17.

⁴⁹ See Philip Alexander, “Towards a Taxonomy of Jewish Messianisms,” in *Revealed Wisdom: Studies in Apocalyptic in Honour of Christopher Rowland* (ed. John Ashton; Leiden: Brill, 2014), 52-72.

There is another element of the scenario of the *eschaton* which receives extensive treatment in PRE, viz., the resurrection of the dead. The theme is clearly of great importance for the author, and an extensive discourse is devoted to it in PRE 34. The resurrection is for the purposes of final judgement (PRE 34, 423/7-425/10), but it is unclear when in the chronology of the end of days this event takes place, and how it relates to the final messianic wars. See, however, on PRE 51 below. The autonomy of the theme *vis-à-vis* the messianic scenario is reminiscent of how resurrection and the day of judgment are handled in Islamic eschatology.⁵⁰ For PRE resurrection will not be universal. The generation of the Flood will not be raised at all, their spirits, however, which have been causing humanity trouble, will be finally annihilated by God. The bodies of the heathen will be raised, but they will not be reunited with their souls. What happens to these souls is not clear; perhaps they are assigned to Gehinnom and suffer what PRE 34 (409/6-18) calls “a second death”. The bodies of Israelites will be raised and reunited with their souls, and presumably, if righteous, enjoy the messianic kingdom, though this is not said in so many words (PRE 34, 411/1-11).

PRE’s treatment of the resurrection also touches on the intermediate state. What happens to the soul and to the body before the final resurrection? According to one statement the soul returns to the treasury of souls from when it came (PRE 34, 421/9-11).⁵¹ PRE subscribes to the doctrine of the pre-existence of the soul, before it

⁵⁰ For a useful overview of Islamic eschatology see William C. Chittick, “Muslim Eschatology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology* (ed. Jerry L. Walls; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). Accessed online, 21 July 2014.

⁵¹ See also Friedlander, *Pirḳê deRabbi Eliezer*, 257: “All the seven days of mourning the soul goeth forth and returneth from its (former) home to its sepulchral abode, and from its sepulchral abode to its (former) home... The soul goes forth and returns to the place whence it was given, from heaven, as it is said, “And the soul returns unto God who gave it” [Eccl 12:7].” This text is absent from the Börner-

is inserted into an earthly body. According to another statement, souls after death are differentiated; the righteous are gathered with other righteous souls (and perhaps enjoy felicity), whereas the wicked are gathered with the wicked (and perhaps suffer punishment) (PRE 34, 413/13-17). A third statement sees the differentiation of souls as happening along national lines: the souls of Israelites who died in the diaspora will be gathered into the Land, whereas the souls of gentiles who died in Israel will be slung out beyond the borders of the Land (PRE 34, 415/3-8). It is not at all obvious how these three statements can be reconciled; PRE makes no effort to present an integrated, coherent account. After death the body decays and crumbles till only a spoonful of its matter is left. This is, apparently indestructible, and it forms the core from which the resurrected body will be reconstituted (PRE 34, 419/8-13). A somewhat similar doctrine was embraced by Islam.⁵²

PRE 51, 709/3ff contains another extensive discourse on the redemption, which fills in some of the missing details of PRE's eschatology. PRE envisages a total renewal of heaven and earth, and the new heavens and the new earth will manifest all sorts of magical and utopian qualities. This modifies the realism of its basic scenario. The action still basically occurs on the historical plane, and humanity will still live an embodied existence as before, but nature will be praeternaturally fecund and abundantly supply all their needs, and heal them of all their sicknesses. The locus of this transformation will be Jerusalem. The Temple will be miraculously restored, and function almost of its own accord. All this, of course, is picking up on a powerful vein of utopianism in biblical prophecy, but it is worth noting that not

Klein edition.

⁵² On resurrection (*qiyāma*) in Islam, see L. Gardet, "Qiyāma," in *EI*, accessed online 18 July 2014.

every form of historical messianism does so. Maimonides' messianism is notably realist and low-key, and envisages little dramatic difference between the present time and the days of the Messiah, other than the establishment of justice and peace, and it does not envisage the total transformation of the cosmos.⁵³

Two aspects of PRE 51 are worth mentioning in the present context.

(1) The first is that, at first sight, it seems to give some sort of indication where it places the resurrection of the dead on the timetable of the eschaton – a point over which we puzzled above. The crucial passage is PRE 51, 711/1-5:

All [earth's] inhabitants shall taste the taste of death for two days, when there will be no soul of man or beast upon the earth, as it is said, *And they that dwell therein shall die in like manner* (Isa 51:6). On the third day he will renew them all and revive the dead, and he will establish them before him, as it is said, *After two days he will revive us. On the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live before him* (Hos 6:2).

On closer inspection, however, the reference here is not apparently to the general resurrection for judgement, but to a death and resurrection which all the inhabitants of the earth alive in the messianic age, presumably *after* the last judgement, will undergo as part of the process of renewal of the heavens and the earth – a physical transformation to fit them for the new conditions.

(2) In PRE 51, 711/16–713/12 we find an interesting dictum in the name of Rabbi Yannai, which seems to argue that the renewal of the heavens and the earth is not something that takes place only at the eschaton. It is something that takes place in a sense *every day*. He quotes as an example of this the renewal of the sun: when the

⁵³. See his *Commentary on Mishnah* (Sanhedrin, *Heleq*), his *Yad: Hilkhoh Melakhim*, his *Epistle to the Yemen*.

sun sets in the west it sinks into the waters of Ocean and its fires are quenched, and it travels back dark to the eastern horizon, where it bathes in the river of fire, and its fires are rekindled. This passage, of course, recalls the exposition of cosmology at the beginning of the book. The theory solves a cosmological problem. Flat-earthists faced a major problem of how to get the sun back to the eastern horizon to rise again the next morning. One solution was to have it travel beneath the earth in a boat. Another was to suppose that on the northern rim of the world stood a high range of mountains (the mountains of darkness) and that the sun passed behind these on its way back to the east. The solution offered here is, as I have already indicated, that the sun's fires were quenched in the waters of ocean, which meant it went dark and so could travel unseen back across the dark sky to the east. In the midst of a long discourse about the end of time PRE is still worrying away at cosmology, the topic with which the book opened. But this is precisely the point. For PRE cosmology and redemption are closely intertwined. The point of this pericope is that the total renewal of heaven and earth at the end time is already partially prefigured in the workings of the cosmos now.

It is fundamental to the message of PRE that the *Endzeit* does not come, so to speak, "out of the blue": it is prefigured – in the *Urzeit*, and also in key events in the *Heilsgeschichte*. Of the latter four stand out as particularly important in PRE – the ʿAqedah (PRE 31), the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (PRE 33), the story of Elisha and the Shunnamite woman (PRE 33), and the story of Jonah (PRE 10). I have already touched on the first and fourth of these in the discussion of narrative above, and the fourth will again receive attention in the discussion of the relationship of PRE to Christianity (see 4.7.1 below). Here it is the theological aspects

which require comment, and particularly the way in which all four stories are narratives of redemption which prefigure the messianic age.

To begin with the ^cAqedah, which is chronologically first in the Bible, but actually comes second in PRE. A motif in PRE's account at once catches the eye. It is the claim that the ass which Abraham saddled as he set out for the sacrifice was the same ass which Moses rode when he came into Egypt (Exod 4:20), and it will be the ass which in the future the Son of David will ride, "as it is said, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold your king comes to you. He is just and saved; lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt, the foal of an ass* (Zech. 9:9)" (PRE 31, 355/5-13). The ass is given a "genealogy", like the altar on which Isaac was offered up. The difference is that the altar could conceivably have survived from the time of Adam to Abraham, but it would be a special animal that could survive from the time of Abraham to the time of the Messiah, without divine assistance. It carries three agents of redemption and links the events of Moriah to the end of history. It invites a comparison between the work of Abraham in the ^cAqedah and the work of the Messiah in the final redemption of Israel. It invites it, but it only hints at that comparison.

What PRE 31 offers is a retelling of Genesis 22, in which certain theological points are stressed: (1) The willingness of Isaac to be offered. He was thirty-seven years old when the incident took place, and, therefore, it could not have happened without his co-operation. (2) The binding took place at Mount Moriah, at the very spot where later the high altar of burnt offerings and the Temple was erected. This is interpreted to emphasise the importance of worship: "Rabbi Isaac said: Nothing has been created except by the merit of worship. Abraham returned from Mount Moriah only through the merit of worship ... The Temple was fashioned only through the

merit of worship" (PRE 31, 367/2-4). (3) Isaac in effect died: as soon as the knife touched his neck his soul fled, but it returned when it heard God saying, "Lay not your hand upon the lad!" (Gen 22:12). "And Isaac knew that in this manner the dead in the future will be quickened. He opened his mouth and said: Blessed are you, O Lord, who quickens the dead" (PRE 31, 363/1-8). The 'Aqedah is a prefigurement of the resurrection. (4) The ram was part of the pre-mundane creation, and so the 'Aqedah was foreseen in the purposes of God. Its left horn was the horn blown at Sinai, its right horn will be sounded in the messianic age to inaugurate the ingathering of the exiles. Thus once again we have the 'Aqedah, Sinai and the messianic age linked (PRE 31, 363/9-367/1). (5) Isaac's offering led to God's blessing of his descendants – not only in this world, but in the world to come (PRE 31, 365/1-6). The implication surely is that the messianic age will happen only because of the merit of Isaac's offering. It is all subtly put, but it did not have to be laboured. The binding of Isaac was well established as a key text in Jewish theology, and all the basic elements of PRE's interpretation were already well known. *Verbum sapienti sat est.*

The stories of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath and Elisha and the Shunnamite woman are also subtle. In both cases the prophet brings a dead boy back to life, and this is seen as prefiguring the resurrection of the dead at the end of time. Ezekiel's resurrecting of the dry bones on the plain of Dura is thrown in for good measure at the end of the chapter. The link with resurrection is specifically made in the case of the son of the widow. Elijah prays: "Now let all generations learn that there is a resurrection of the dead, and restore the soul of this lad within him" (PRE 33, 385/12-13). A curious detail is that the widow of Zarephath is said to have been the mother of Jonah (PRE 33, 383/15). The implication here surely is that Jonah

was the boy who died and was brought back to life (PRE 33, 385/4-15).⁵⁴ This is suggestive in that, as we shall see in a moment, the story of Jonah and the Big Fish offers another obvious type of the resurrection. Thus a subtle link between the two stories is adumbrated. No Jewish reader of PRE, once this hint had been made, would surely have forgotten that, in the last days, Elijah will return as the forerunner of the Messiah.

Finally, the story of Jonah and the Big Fish contains foreshadowings of the last days. I have already mentioned one of these: its potential to symbolise resurrection. Jonah goes down to Sheol, the abode of the dead, but is then brought back to the land of the living; note the precise wording of his prayer to God: “You are called ‘the one who kills’ and ‘the one who makes alive’. Behold, my soul has reached unto death, now restore me to life” (PRE 10, 103/8-10). The prayer, which is immediately answered by God, is offered beneath the Temple, thus making once again the point about the power of worship (see above: PRE 16, 153/11-155/8). The story can also be read as an allegory of the deliverance of Israel, with Jonah symbolizing Israel, and the agent of deliverance, the fish, foreordained, like the ram of the ‘Aqedah, for this very purpose from the six days of creation (PRE 10, 99/5-7). Jonah, himself, is given messianic attributes. He is an agent of deliverance in the end, a reluctant one but an agent nonetheless. He preaches repentance to the Ninevites, and as a result of his preaching they repent and are saved. This idea is not actually developed in PRE 10, but in PRE 43 in connection with the theme of repentance (see above). There is a clear reference to the messianic era in Jonah’s vow that “on the

⁵⁴. BerR 98.11 offers a contorted argument to prove that the boy and his mother must have been non-Jewish. PRE need not necessarily have subscribed to this. See also *y.Sukkot* 5.1, 55a, and Yalqut Jonah 550.

day of the salvation of Israel” he will draw up Leviathan and prepare him for the messianic banquet – “the great feast of the righteous” (PRE 10, 99/15-101/3). Finally the pagan sailors’ abandonment of their idols and their acknowledgment of the God of Israel can surely be read as a foretaste of the conversion of the gentiles at the end of history to a knowledge of the one true God, a motif deeply embedded in scenarios of the messianic age (PRE 10, 103/17-105/8).

3.6.4.5 Torah

Given its centrality in rabbinic theology, it is hardly surprising that Torah should be a major theme of a work such as PRE, and much of PRE’s teaching on the subject is traditional. Its choice of traditions, however, is instructive. PRE presents tradition in its own distinctive way, and some of its ideas are rather original. Torah stands at the beginning of the PRE (it was part of the pre-mundane creation (PRE 3, 15/4-8), and played a leading role in creation (PRE 3, 17/19-15; PRE 11, 109/5-10), and it stands at its end; PRE effectively concludes with the climactic revelation of that Torah to Israel at Sinai (PRE 41, 46). Torah is also one of the three pillars on which the world rests (PRE 16, 153/11-155/2).

The key discourses on Torah are to be found in PRE 41 and 46, which are about the revelation at Sinai. Among the traditional elements we find there are the following:

(1) God offered the Torah to Esau and the Ishmaelites, and then to all the other nations, but they refused. Only Israel accepted (PRE 41, 539/1-541/15). This is a well-known midrash, but the singling out of Esau and Ishmael is noteworthy. Esau stands for Christianity and Ishmael for Islam. There is here, it would seem, a

polemical implication that neither of these two religions had received divine revelation. Both Christian and Islamic theology would, of course, have disputed this. Islam honoured Moses and the revelation at Sinai, but regarded Muhammad as the last great prophet (the seal of the prophets), and his revelation as taking precedence over all other revelations. So too Christianity regarded the revelation at Sinai as a genuine revelation, but it had been superseded by the revelation in Christ. A nuanced Christian position recognised that the moral law, represented by the Decalogue, still had validity. It was the ritual law that had become obsolete. It argued this by pointing out that only the Decalogue was said in the voice of God himself in the hearing of the people. The rest was communicated to Moses, and he told it to the people. PRE records this fact and does not seem to sense any problem in it, which may suggest that it was unaware of the Christian exegetical argument (see PRE 41, 551/5-15).⁵⁵

(2) The angels resisted the giving of the Torah to Israel, claiming that it belonged to them, and was given for their sake, but Moses refuted them by pointing out that one of the commandments of the Torah, “Honour your father and your mother” (Exod 22:12), could not apply to them, because they did not have fathers and mothers. Another verse of Torah spoke of what should happen if someone died in a tent (Num 29:14), but angels never die. The Torah, then, was given for the sake of humanity (PRE 46, 623/10-625/3). The angels tried to kill Moses when he ascended into heaven, out of jealousy that he was going to be shown the divine glory (PRE 46, 631/7-9). This is a variant of the widespread tradition in rabbinic literature

⁵⁵ A good example of Christian polemical use of the idea that only the Decalogue was spoken by God is Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* IV, 16.3-5. For attempts to counter this see the Targums (Onq., Neof. 1, and Ps.-J.) to Deut 5:22(19) where *ve-lo' yasaf* is taken to mean “and he [God] did not cease”, not “and he added no more”. See also *Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael, Neziqin* 1.

about the rivalry between the angels and human kind.⁵⁶ Once the angels were assured that the Holy One intended to give the Torah to Moses, they showered him with other gifts, including “tablets (*pittaḡin*) for healing the sons of men” (PRE 46, 625/8-10). These tablets were different from the Written or Oral Torah. The reference may be to magical spells: some of the early Jewish magical texts (e.g. *Sefer ha-Razim*) are attributed to revelation from angels, and angels are often invoked in magical spells.⁵⁷

(3) Moses received both the Written and the Oral Torah on Sinai: PRE 46, 621/1-4: “Rabbi Joshua ben Qorḡah says: Moses spent forty days on the mountain reading Miḡra by day and learning Mishnah by night. After forty days he took the Tablets and descended to the camp.” The doctrine of the two Torahs is, of course, fundamental to rabbinic theology,⁵⁸ but it is seldom explicitly articulated. It tends to come out in apologetic and polemic contexts where Rabbinic authority is at stake. The precise wording here should be noted: it is not *Torah she-bikhtav* v. *Torah she-beʿal peh* but *Miḡra* v. *Mishnah*. There is no reason not to take Mishnah here as a reference to *the* Mishnah, rather than in a more general sense of the oral teaching (so Friedlander, who translates “Oral Torah”, and Börner-Klein, “die [mündliche]

⁵⁶ See Peter Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engelen und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvorstellung* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975).

⁵⁷ Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 171-72, 197-98, 305-06, 381-82 and *passim*.

⁵⁸ Standard syntheses can be found in George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (2 vols.; Boston: Harvard University Press, 1927) 1:251-62, and in the chapter on “The Written Law and the Oral Law” in Ephraim E. Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979). For a more critical perspective see Peter Schäfer, “Das ‘Dogma’ von der mündlichen Torah”, in *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des rabbinischen Judentums* (ed. Peter Schäfer; Leiden: Brill, 1978), 153-97. For a theological reflection see A.J. Heschel’s classic, *Heavenly Torah: As Refracted through the Generations* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2006).

Lehre"). Mishnah stands here for the Oral Torah as a whole, as the quintessential codification of it, but in a late text such as this the actual text, the Mishnah, must surely be in view. One recalls the late Midrash that on judgment day the true Israel will be distinguished from the false Israel (the Church), not because she has the Scriptures, since the Church also has the Scriptures (in Greek), but because she has God's "mysteries", that is to say the Mishnah (Tanḥuma Buber, *Ki Tissa* 24). The doctrine of the Oral Torah can be formulated in a "high" and a "low" form. In the latter what Moses received on Sinai were the principles whereby the Written Torah was to be interpreted, and which passed on from teacher to pupil, generation after generation, and steadily applied, engendered the texts of the Oral Torah. In the former Moses actually received on Sinai the concrete traditions in the names of the scholars who were centuries later to enunciate them.⁵⁹ The use of the term Mishnah here suggests PRE inclines to the high view. The reference to Moses studying "day and night" echoes the injunction of Josh 1:8 to meditate in the Torah "day and night", but the distribution of Miqra to "day" and Mishnah to "night" reflects traditional practice. This may be one of the earliest references to what became a widespread custom.

All this is very standard, though with some interesting twists. Outside the key discourses on Torah in PRE 41 and 46, we find a reference at PRE 31, to Abraham keeping the Torah before the Torah was given: "*And it came to pass after these things that God tried Abraham* (Gen 22:1). He was trying Abraham every time to know his heart, if he was able to persevere and keep all the commandments of the Torah [Epstein ms adds: and whilst as yet the Torah had not been given, Abraham kept all

⁵⁹ See Urbach, *Sages*, "The Written Law and the Oral Law," *passim*.

the precepts of the Torah], as it is said: *Because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my Torah* (Gen 26:5).” The point at issue here, correctly identified by the addition in the Epstein manuscript, which probably results from the incorporation of a marginal gloss, is whether or not Abraham kept the commandments *before* the Torah was given on Sinai. This is an old problem already answered in the affirmative in Second Temple times. As Friedlander correctly notes, Abraham observed the laws of tithes (Jub. 13.25-29), celebrated the feast of the first-fruits of the grain harvest on 15th Sivan (Jub. 15.1,2), and the feast of Tabernacles (Jub. 16.20-31), ordained peace-offerings and regulations as to the use of salt and wood for the offerings, washings before sacrifices, and the duty of covering the blood (Jub. 21.7-17), and prohibited intermarrying with the Canaanites (Jub. 22.20; 25.5), and adultery (Jub. 39.6).⁶⁰ This answered the obvious question of how the Patriarchs could be righteous before the giving of the Torah: the substance of the Torah was known before Sinai – though carrying the *minutiae* of the Sinai Torah back into the Patriarchal era creates its own theological problems. The debate was sharpened by Christian polemical use of the idea to argue that if Abraham and other Patriarchs could be righteous before the Sinai revelation, and without the benefit of the Torah of Moses, then the Torah cannot be all that important. The standard Rabbinic view is that the commandments *were* known and *observed* by the Patriarchs before Sinai, and this is the view taken by PRE. It fits in well with its general tendency to project back even the customs of its own day into the time of the Patriarchs and to depict the Patriarchs as observing them (see 3.6.4.8 below).

⁶⁰ Friedlander, *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*, 222, fn. 3.

A final tradition about Torah in PRE should be noted as showing a certain originality, though the originality consists of “spinning” an old motif; I refer to its role in creation. This comes out in two places: (1) At PRE 3, 17/20-19-15 it is said that Torah, which was created before the world was made, acted as God’s counsellor and urged him to create the world. I will discuss this passage in more detail, in relation to BerR 1.1, below (4.3.1). And (2) in PRE 11, 109/3-10 God is said to have consulted Torah before the creation of Adam:

Forthwith the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the Torah: *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness* (Gen 1:26). Torah replied and said: Lord of all the worlds, it’s your world! (But) the man whom you want to create will be limited in days and full of anger (cf. Job 14:1); and he will come into the power of sin. Unless you will be long-suffering with him, it would be better for him if he did not come into the world. The Holy One, blessed be he, said: And is it for nought that I am called ‘slow to anger’ and ‘abounding in love’.

(See further 4.3.1). The problem which this interpretation is meant to solve is an old one: why the plural “Let *us*” in Gen 1:26? PRE’s interpretation is surely meant to have a polemical edge: it denies not only Christian interpretations which reads into the “we” Christ or even the Trinity, but also Jewish interpretations which read in the angels. The exchange between God and the Torah here is noteworthy. God’s reply is quite tetchy, and suggests that Torah is to some degree *opposing* the creation of Adam. In tradition it is usually the angels who oppose the creation of Adam, so one wonders if PRE is here adapting a tradition in which the angels play the role here assigned to Torah, and argue with him along these lines. However, it is also possible that the Torah’s words could be read in a more positive way, as reminding God of the need for him to show mercy.

It is unclear how hard we should press the idea of Adam being created not only in God's but in the *Torah's* image. There are theological possibilities here, particularly if one has subscribed, as PRE has done, to the notion of a pre-existent Torah. The pre-existence of the Torah was, as we shall see below, argued on the basis of pre-existent Wisdom in Proverbs 8, but according to Proverbs 8 Wisdom which dwelt with God in eternity, and was his agent (*'amon*) in creation, also dwells with humankind – a “dwelling” which Ben Sira identified with the giving of the Torah on Sinai (Ben Sira 24). The possibility, then, is raised of exploring congruences between human nature and Torah (in what sense can it be said that Adam was created in the image of Torah?), but they are not exploited. It should also be noted that, given PRE's interest in eschatology, which I discussed above, there is no obvious reference to the Torah in the messianic age. This is a major theological problem, but it is not one that seems to have troubled the author of PRE.⁶¹

3.6.4.6 Idolatry

Idolatry is also a significant concern for PRE, and as with many of the main themes it has a discourse devoted to it, and a series of passing references scattered through the rest of the book. The main discourse concerns the making of the Golden Calf (PRE 45), widely regarded in Jewish thought as one of the most shocking instances of Israel's unfaithfulness to God, a case of her playing the harlot under the bridal canopy. The story is included in the lists of forbidden Targumim, which shows an uneasiness about it, expressed in a reluctance to translate it in public.⁶² Christian apologists used it as evidence of the fundamental flaw in the character of the Jewish

⁶¹ See the classic study by W.D. Davies, *Torah in the Messianic Age and/or the Age to Come* (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1952).

⁶² *m.Megillah* 4.10; *t.Megillah* 3.31-41 (ed. Lieberman); *b.Megillah* 25a-b.

people, which led them ultimately to reject God's Messiah, and God, in turn, to reject them.⁶³ PRE shows no queasiness about the story, but gives a full-on retelling of it, which may, however, contain elements of apologetic.

Several aspects of this deserve note:

(1) The reason for the making of the Calf was not that people got impatient with Moses tarrying on the mount (so, on the face of it, Exod 32:1), but because they saw the Egyptians carrying around their idols and wanted to do the same (PRE 45, 605/15-16). This has been rather cleverly read out of "Come, make gods for us, *who shall go before us*" (Exod 32:1). The contrast is between the visibility of the Egyptian gods, and, implicitly, the comfort and reassurance this brings, and the invisibility of Moses' God, and the absence of Moses himself. The sin of the Calf arose out of a yearning for the visible, the concrete, the tangible.

(2) A great deal of narrative time is spent on how the gold for the idol was obtained. The Bible says it came from the gold rings that were on the ears of the wives, the sons, and the daughters of the Israelites, which the men were told to take and bring to Aaron (Exod 32:2). In an extraordinary spin on this PRE claims that this was a ploy of Aaron's to nip the project in the bud. He knew that if the husbands asked their wives to give up their precious adornments they would refuse, which they duly did. What Aaron did not reckon on was that the men would then use their own ear-rings, which they wore in the style of the Egyptians (PRE 45, 609/10-11)⁶⁴.

⁶³ See Pier Cesare Bori, *The Golden Calf and the Origins of the anti-Jewish Controversy* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press: 1990).

⁶⁴ Friedlander, *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*, 354 has "Until that hour the earrings were (also) in their own ears, after the fashion of the Egyptians, and after the fashion of the Arabs."

According to PRE the women's stand was principled; it did not arise out of selfishness or vanity. They say to their husbands: "To make an idol and an abomination that has in it no power to save! We won't listen to you" (PRE 45, 609/3). The exclamatory sentence is vivid, and conveys nicely the women's feistiness. There is surely a certain slyness here, which can be the mark of clever preaching – a reversal of the trope that it is women who lead men astray, and in particular who were responsible for much of the idolatry of ancient Israel. God rewards them in this world and the world to come for their refusal to be tainted by idol-worship: "And the Holy One, blessed be he, gave them a reward in this world, that they should observe New Moons more stringently than men. And he will give them a reward in the world to come, that they will be renewed like the New Moons" (PRE 45, 609/4-8). So the Palestinian custom of the New Moon being observed specifically as a women's festival (cf. *y.Pesahim* 4.1, 30d; *y.Ta'anit* 1.6, 64c) is aetiologised as a recurrent, monthly reminder of the women of Israel's refusal to be involved in the wicked enterprise of the Golden Calf. This puts the women in a good light, but makes the men all the more culpable.

(3) The women are exonerated, but so too is Hur, who pays with his life for resisting the idolators' demands. He thus dies a martyr's death, because refusing to engage in idolatry is one of the classic reasons for sanctifying the name of God in martyrdom. The nobles also are exonerated (on the basis of Exod 32:10), as is the whole of the tribe of Levi (on the basis of Exod 32:6). Even Aaron is partially exonerated, in that he tried to stop the enterprise by a rather feeble stratagem, which did not work. It must be said he does not come out of the episode with much credit. His fear for his life, his failure to embrace martyrdom, contrasts unfavourably with Hur's courageous stand. The stress in PRE on the fact that by no means all Israel

were implicated in the sin of the Calf may have an apologetic edge to it. A blanket condemnation of the whole people is, therefore, not in order. A similar concern to exonerate Israel as a whole can be found in Targum Song of Songs treatment of the Golden Calf incident – a treatment which echoes many of the themes in PRE.

According to the Targum to Song 1:12, the “mixed multitude” that came up with Israel out of Egypt were among the prime movers in the making of the Calf. One wonders how this would have resonated in the Targumist’s own time: did he see a problem with converts to Judaism yearning for the idolatrous practices that they were supposed to have left behind?

(4) An apologetic thrust may lie also behind PRE’s stress on the fact that the sin of the Calf was atoned for. The guilty parties were brutally punished by the people themselves. The merit of the fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, also helped. This is dramatized. Moses goes to the Cave of Machpelah, where they are buried, and invokes them. The ritual described here is noteworthy, and may reflect rituals actually performed in PRE’s day at the tomb of the Patriarchs.⁶⁵ We would thus have, yet again, the valorisation of contemporary religious custom (see 3.6.4.8 below).

Moses went to invoke Abraham, Isaac and Jacob at the Cave of Machpelah, and he said: “If you are the children of the world to come, stand before me in this hour, for behold your children are given over like sheep to the slaughter.” Abraham, Isaac and Jacob stood before him. Moses said before the Holy One, blessed be he: Lord of all the worlds, did you not swear to these to increase their seed like the stars of heaven, as it is said: *Remember Abraham, Isaac and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore*

⁶⁵ See Joseph Meri, *The Cult of Saints among Muslims and Jews in Medieval Syria* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

by your own self, and said to them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven” (Exod 32:10). (PRE 45, 615/14–617/4).

The merit of the Patriarchs helps, but it still requires some energetic intercession by Moses finally to allay God’s anger, and to stay his threat to blot out the entire people. In the end God is appeased, and that is the positive point that PRE seems to want to leave us with.

(5) The exegetical tradition made much of the curious wording of Exod 32:24, where Aaron, explaining himself to Moses, says: “So I said to them, Whoever has gold take it off. So they gave it to me, and I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf (*vayyetze’ ha-^cegel ha-zeh*)!” Some commentators took the view that Aaron is not here trying rather lamely to distance himself from events, but that there was dark forces at work. PRE follows this line. It was only one of the ornaments that Aaron threw into the fire (note “and I cast *it*”), and it was one already inscribed with an image of a calf. In other words it was an image that no Israelite should have been wearing: there were already the seeds of idolatry in the camp. The fire seemed to activate this image: the calf came out lowing. The Israelites saw it, and they went astray after it (PRE 45, 611/4-7).⁶⁶ A gloss of Rabbi Judah’s is added to the effect that Sammael, the great angelic adversary of Israel and humanity, entered into the calf and made it low, in order to deceive Israel (PRE 45, 611/8-10). Ancient Jewish opinion on idols was divided as to whether they were simply inert lumps of matter, or whether they were vehicles for more sinister, demonic forces. PRE seems to subscribe to the latter view. Almost certainly there would have been in the writers’ milieu Christian images for which miraculous powers were claimed. Rather than

⁶⁶ The text of the Venice edition is compressed. The Epstein ms clearly gives the sense.

dismissing these as total fantasy PRE seems to assume that there could be demonic powers at work.

Besides the concentrated discourse in PRE 45, there are numerous references to idolatry scattered throughout the work, which show how Israel engaged in idolatry repeatedly throughout its history. In PRE 27, Abraham is told that his descendants will in the future worship idols at Dan (PRE 27, 295/4-7). This refers to Jeroboam's golden calves, which disturbingly replicated the sin of the Golden Calf, and suggested that lessons had not been learned: "So the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold. He said to the people, 'You have gone up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt.' He set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan" (1 Kgs 12:28-29: NRSVA).

In PRE 33 Nebuchadnezzar sets an idol on the plain of Dura and commands that those who do not worship it should be burned with fire (Dan 3:1). All Israel worships the idol except Daniel, who was not burned because his Babylonian name Belteshazzar invoked the name of the king's god. Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were cast into the furnace, only to be rescued by Gabriel. Nebuchadnezzar, ironically, admonishes the Israelites for not following their God and for worshipping powerless idols (PRE 33, 399/13-401/14).

In PRE 17 King David tries to end a three-year-long famine by conducting annual inspections to search for traces of idolatry in the land of Israel (the suspected cause of the lack of rain), but to no avail. After a conversation with God, David finds the solution lies in returning the bodies of Saul and Jonathan to Israel and showing loving kindness to them. After each tribe has shown loving kindness to the coffins of

Saul and Jonathan, God in his compassion allows rain to return to the Land of Israel (PRE 17, 175/1–179/7).

As part of its exposition of Psalm 92, PRE 19 reflects on verses 7-8: “though the wicked sprout like grass, and all evildoers flourish, they are doomed to destruction for ever, but you, O Lord, are on high for ever.” (NRSVA) David saw wicked people and idolaters spring up like grass and flourish, and he was relieved when he understood that they would be destroyed from this world and the world to come (PRE 19, 205/1-14).

In PRE 36, Rachel steals the Teraphim of Laban, in order to cleanse her father’s house from idolatry (36, 453/8–455/5). In the same chapter, the Jebusites are said to have made images of copper inscribed with the covenant Abraham had made with them that he and his descendants would not take their city. David was not able to enter Jebus until the idols were removed, because he hated to hear of or see idolatry (PRE 36, 457/1–461/6).

PRE 46 reiterates some of themes covered in the discourse on the Calf in the preceding chapter. It records again how Moses spent forty days in the camp pounding the Calf into dust and eradicating idol worship from Israel. When he re-ascended Mount Sinai, the Israelites were instructed to sound the Shofar, so that they would not return to idol worship while Moses was away a second time (PRE 46, 621/1-16).

In PRE 47 the worship of the Calf is bound up with wider immorality associated with Israel’s relations to the nations. Before Israel had worshipped the Calf, God had deemed them to be equal to the ministering angels. When he

descended on Sinai, he brought with him sixty myriad angels who crowned the Israelites with the Divine Name. Once Israel had worshipped the Calf, God was angry with them and the ministering angels took back the crowns. Israel committed idolatry wherever they were in the wilderness, and this was all of a piece with their immoral acts with Midianite women (idolatry as adultery is, of course, a well-known prophetic trope). Balaam and the Midianites conspired to corrupt Israel by erecting a market outside the camp, where they sold all kinds of merchandise. The Israelite men left the camp and took wives among the Midianite women, and great immorality ensued. Phineas killed the offenders, which appeased God's anger, and he was rewarded with the name Elijah, given life in this world and life in the world to come, and to him and to his sons was granted an everlasting priesthood. This whole chapter is heavy with concern about Israel's relationship with the non-Jewish world – with intermarriage, with the effects of trade, and with the drinking of gentile wine, which Phineas bans, with the most powerful ban imaginable, because it was devoted to idolatry and immorality (PRE 47, 633/10–645/12). Is PRE advocating a return to zealotry, of which Phineas was the great exemplar, even to direct action and the murder of offenders?⁶⁷ Wine not trodden out by the Israelites themselves is banned, not because it may not be kosher, but because of the suspicion it might have been used for idolatry. This is curious and its contemporary resonance obscure. In pagan society wine libations were common, and the idea that if a part of a batch of wine had been offered, say by the manufacturer, as a libation to a god, then the whole batch would have been contaminated, would make some sense, but surely paganism was long gone by the time PRE was composed, or so residual as to be

⁶⁷. On Phineas as the “patron-saint” of the Zealots see Martin Hengel, *Die Zeloten* (3d ed; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011); Robert Hayward, “Phineas – The Same is Elijah: The Origins of a Rabbinic Tradition,” *JJS* 29 (1978), 22-34.

unlikely to have much effect on Jewish communities. Perhaps the use of wine in the Christian Eucharist is the problem. Perhaps the consecration of some of the wine produced by gentile Christians (and, of course, on religious grounds Muslims would have been less involved in wine-production) for ritual purposes was deemed to have a similar effect to libation. But the matter is obscure.

The stress on idolatry in PRE is unmistakable but the reasons for it, given the historical context of the work, are less than clear. This theme is prominent in other texts of the period, notably Targum Song of Songs. With regard to the latter, Alexander notes:

The sin that seems to vex our Targumist most is idolatry. He dwells much on the making of the Golden Calf, and clearly regards it, as did many Jewish commentators, as a particularly heinous act, committed as it was at the foot of Sinai (1:5, 12; 2:17), though he is careful to note that it was atoned for (2:17; 3:4). 'Idolatry' ('the molten calves') was the cause of the exile of the northern tribes (5:4). Gehinnom was created specifically for idolators (8:6). At 1:4 he has Israel pledge: 'We will love your divinity and shun the idols of the nations' (cf. 8:6). But at 1:6 Israel says to the nations: 'Do not despise me because I am darker than you, because I did what you did and bowed down to the sun and the moon. For it is the false prophets who have caused the fierceness of the Lord's anger to be visited upon me. They taught me to serve your idols and walk in your laws, but the Lord of the World, who is my [own] God, have I not served, nor followed His laws, nor kept His commandments or His Torah.' (Philip Alexander, *Targum Canticles*, 20.)

The thematic parallelism of the Targum and PRE is rather impressive – the same concerns, the same exempla. Note how in both the Targum (2:17) and PRE (PRE 45, 615/14-617/6) the merit of the Patriarchs is invoked to cover the sin of the Calf (cf. Exod 32:13). Alexander continues: "It seems fairly obvious that 'idolatry' carries a special meaning for our Targumist. It was probably for him a code-word for

assimilation to the surrounding culture: he seems to have witnessed in his own milieu a loss of communal identity, a breaking down of the barriers between the Jewish community and the non-Jewish world, and perhaps widespread apostasy.”⁶⁸ Given the references to idolatry, that apostasy must surely have been to Christianity rather than Islam. Might there be an allusion to Christians parading religious statues round the streets:

When Israel received the commandments they forgot their God after forty days, and they said to Aaron: The Egyptians are carrying their god, and are singing and uttering hymns before it, and they see it before them. Make for us a god like the god of the Egyptians, and let us see it before us, as it is said, *Up, make us a god*. (Exod 32:1) (PRE 45, 405/13-18).

Idolatry also features in *Sefer Zerubbavel*, and there it is quite clearly the idolatry of the Byzantine Church.⁶⁹ It might seem odd that apostasy to Christianity should have been a significant threat to the Jewish community of Palestine in the early Islamic period, but it should be borne in mind that Christianity was still the dominant religion of the region, and now that it was no longer the political master and oppressor, some Jews may have found it attractive. Alexander detects a hint of this

⁶⁸. Alexander, *Targum Canticles*, 20-21.

⁶⁹. I refer to the passage in which Armilos is said to be born as the result of Satan’s intercourse with a marble statute (presumably of the Virgin Mary). Reeves translates as follows: “I continued asking there about the prince of the holy covenant. He held me close and they [*sic*] brought me to the ‘house of filth’ [and scorn]. There he showed me a marble stone in the shape of a maiden: her features and form were lovely and indeed very beautiful to behold. Then he said to me, ‘This statue is the [wife] of Belial. Satan will come and have intercourse with it, and a son named Armilos will emerge from it, [whose name in Greek means] ‘he will destroy a nation.’ He will rule over all (peoples), and his dominion will extend from one end of the earth to the other, and ten letters will be in his hand. He will engage in the worship of foreign gods and speak lies’.” (Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*, 58-59).

in Targum Song of Songs 2:15 which talks of Amalek, the descendant of Esau (= Christianity) stealing souls from Israel.⁷⁰

The situation is complicated because there were two periods of iconoclasm in the Byzantine church at the time PRE was written, the first 730-787, the second 814-842, but iconoclasm was deeply controversial and it is not clear how effective the iconoclastic decrees would have been even in the Byzantine empire.⁷¹ They could certainly not be enforced over the border in Umayyad or Abbasid territory, and it was from there that John of Damascus was able, around 730, to write with impunity his famous defence of icons (*The Apology against those who decry Holy Images*). If PRE was written in Palestine, within the Islamic world, then Jews there probably saw little or no change in the use of images by the Church during the iconoclastic controversies. It would seem odd to describe any attraction Islam may have held for Jews as an attraction to *idolatry*, given the fierce monotheism and aniconism of that religion, but note how Targum Song of Songs 1:7 accuses Ishmael (Islam) as well as Esau (Christendom) of associating their idols with God. Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 21:9,11,15 depicts Ishmael, Abraham's son, as a noted idolater, though this may be read not as a statement about the idolatry of contemporary Islam, but about that of the ancestors of the Arabs – a statement which any Muslim Arab might have been inclined to accept, though it contradicts Muslim tradition which regarded Ishmael as a prophet (see 4.7.2 below). Perhaps “idolatry” is to some extent in the eye of the beholder.

⁷⁰ Alexander, *Targum Canticles*, 21.

⁷¹ For an overview see: L. Brubaker and J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c.680-850* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2011). For the situation specifically in Palestine see: R. Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule: A Historical and Archaeological Study* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1995), 180-219.

What PRE would have regarded as idolatry would not have appeared as such when judged by other criteria. I will return to this issue in Chapter 5 below.

3.6.4.7 Musar

Considerable space is devoted in PRE to right behaviour not in the strict halakhic sense but in the sense of what might loosely be called ethics, or to use a later Jewish term, *Musar*. PRE 15-17 are totally devoted to this theme and it comes up *en passant* elsewhere. The section opens with a version of the ethical trope of the Two Ways that are set before humanity – the way of goodness (*toṽah*) which leads to life and the way of evil (*raʿah*) which leads to death. Each of us is faced with the ethical choice of which way to follow. This trope is a mainstay of ancient wisdom and ethical literature. The most famous version of it in classical antiquity was the myth of the Choice of Herakles created by the sophist Prodicus of Ceos around 400 BCE, and reported in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* 2.1.21-34. It occurs also in Tanakh: PRE derives it from Deut 30:15, but it could equally have quoted Deut 11:26-28; Jer. 21:8; Pss 1:1,6; 119(118): 29-30; 139(138):24; Prov. 2:13; 4:18-19; 11:20. Interestingly the LXX introduces it in places where it is not in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Prov. 12:28). The Sermon on the Two Spirits in the Community Rule of Qumran (1QS 4) offers a highly theologized version of it which seems to rob the individual of choice; which path each takes is foreordained by God. The trope is also common in Patristic literature, starting with the Didache 1-6.⁷²

PRE has its own original take on it. Its way of good itself bifurcates into two – the way of righteousness (*tzedaqah*) and the way loving kindness (*hesed*). The

⁷² For a useful survey see Huub van de Sandt and David Flusser, *The Didache: Its Jewish Sources and its Place in Early Christianity* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 2002), 55-270.

opposition here is not clear and potentially theologically problematic, but *Tzedaqah* probably stands primarily for one's duties towards God, for fulfilling the strict letter of the law, whereas *Hesed* has more in view one's relations with one's fellows: it involves cultivating kindness towards them, which is over and above that demanded by the strict letter of the law. Though *Tzedaqah* is not defined, the meaning of *Hesed* is filled out in the following two chapters by enumerating some concrete acts that manifest it – rejoicing with the bride and groom at a wedding feast, supporting mourners in their grief, acts that can hardly be deemed to fall within the list of Torah *Mitzvot*, but which are, nonetheless, important for social cohesion and the functioning of civil society.

The distinction here recalls two other oppositions found within Jewish ethical thought: the opposition between the *tzaddiq* – a person who fulfils the *mitzvot* to the letter, and a *hasid* who not only fulfils the *mitzvot* but goes beyond what they demand; and the opposition, indeed the tension, between *din* and *hesed*, justice and mercy, within the divine nature.⁷³ What the distinction between *Tzedaqah* and *Hesed* in PRE seems to recognise is that there is a whole area of life, which is not covered by the *mitzvot*, where actions can nevertheless be deemed good or bad. There was a growing recognition of this in rabbinic ethics in the late ancient and early Islamic periods: the most comprehensive term for this area of action which emerged was *derekh 'eretz* (literally, “the way of the world”), and an attempt was made to

⁷³ See Louis Jacobs, *Holy Living: Saints and Saintliness in Judaism* (Northvale, N.J.: Jason Aronson, 1989). Jacobs notes (pp. 19-20) that the relative standing of the *hasid* and the *tzaddiq* became reversed in Hasidism, when the Rav became the *tzaddiq* and the *hasid* his follower. See further on this: Gershom Scholem's essay, “Zaddik” in his *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah* (New York: Schocken, 1991), 89-139. The divine name 'Elohim was traditionally associated with *din*, and YHWH with *hesed*. Rashi exploits this trope to explain the variation in the divine names in the Genesis account of creation.

formalise it in the *derekh 'eret* literature.⁷⁴ This tended to be presented in the form of norms of behaviour, of etiquette, which fill in the gaps, so to speak, between the *mitzvot*. This normative, apophthegmatic, approach had, of course, deep roots in ancient Wisdom, and was well represented within Rabbinic literature in PA, but the *derekh 'eret* literature extends it, and attempts to systematise it, and present a sort of ethical Mishnah. PRE's ethical material should be seen against this background, though it is important to note that its literary presentation differs from the *derekh 'eret* literature. The latter, as I have just indicated, is propositional in content, it takes the form of norms, whereas PRE, as we shall see, tells exemplary *stories*. Its relationship to the *derekh 'eret* literature is not unlike that between ARN and PA.

PRE refuses to choose between Tzedakah and H̥esed: Samuel the prophet stands between the two ways and says, "On which of these shall I go? If I go on the way of Tzedakah, then the way of H̥esed is better; if I go on the way of H̥esed, then the way of Tzedakah is better: but I call heaven and earth to be my witnesses that I will not give up either of them" (PRE 15, 149/8-12). And God duly approves:

The Holy One, blessed be he, said to him: Samuel, you have placed yourself between these two good ways. By my life, I will give you three good gifts. This teaches you that everyone who does righteousness and shows the service of love, shall inherit three good gifts, and they are: life,

⁷⁴ The principal texts are: *Derekh 'Eretz Rabbah*, *Derekh 'Eretz Zuta*, *Pirquei Derekh 'Eretz* (= *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta* 16-18) and *Pereq ha-Shalom* (= *Derekh 'Eretz Zuta* 11). The source and redactional history of these works, and hence their date, is not well understood. Some would argue that parts of them go back to the Tannaitic period, but even if they were old, they seem to have enjoyed a new popularity in the Gaonic era. See Stemmerger, *Introduction*, 230-31. Further: M. Van Loopik, *The Ways of the Sages and the Ways of the World: The Minor Tractates of the Babylonian Talmud, Derekh 'Eretz Rabbah, Derekh 'Eretz Zuta, Pereq ha-Shalom, translated on the basis of manuscripts and provided with a commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991); Daniel Sperber, *A Commentary on Derech Erez Zuta Chapter Five to Eight* (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990).

righteousness, and glory, as it is said, *He who follows after righteousness and love, finds life, righteousness and glory* (Prov 21:21). (PRE 15, 149/13-17).

The way of evil does not bifurcate, but it too has its complications. It is blocked by four successive doors (*petaḥim*), at each of which stands seven angels, four merciful (*raḥmanim*) on the outside and three cruel (*'azkarim*) on the inside. The merciful angels, who significantly outnumber the cruel, attempt to dissuade the man from entering the door: "Listen to us and return in repentance. If he hearkens to them and repents, behold it is well, and if not, he says to them: Among those yonder let my life be. They say to him: You have entered the first door; do not enter the second." This is repeated at the next two doors, but if he insists on going through the fourth door, the cruel angels carry off his spirit in death, and repentance is no longer possible (PRE 15, 149/18-153/7). The importance of repentance here should not be missed. It is a central theme of PRE to which I will return in a moment. What should be noted here is that repentance is integrated by PRE into its *ethical* schema.

PRE 16-17 illustrate concretely the theme of "doing loving kindness" (*gemilut ḥasadim*). The term *gemilut ḥasadim* is taken from PA 1.2 which serves as the motto for the section: "The world rests upon three things: upon Torah, upon divine service (*ʿavodah*) and upon the doing of loving kindness (*gemilut ḥasadim*)." All three of these are themes of PRE. PRE's concept of Torah as a foundation of the world was discussed above, as was its idea of the power of worship to effect things. In the original saying in PA the precise wording is "*the divine service*" (*ha-ʿavodah*), and the reference is to the Temple cult, seen as the guarantor of the stability of creation – an idea that goes deep into ancient near eastern thought. PRE, written well after the Temple was destroyed, seems to have widened the concept to worship in general – to prayer and praise. In PRE 16-17, however, it focuses on the third pillar of the

world – the doing of lovingkindness. Loving-kindness is illustrated mainly from two areas of life – weddings and funerals. The restriction is somewhat surprising, in that there are surely many other areas of life where the principle should apply, but these two areas allow certain comparisons and contrasts to be made, e.g., between the seven days of the wedding feast and the seven days of mourning. Perhaps by advocating solidarity and support for one's fellows in times of extreme joy and sorrow PRE meant to suggest that the principle applied to the whole gamut of human experience lying in between. As already noted the acts of loving kindness are not stated propositionally, but in terms of exemplary stories drawn from the Bible, and a number of them involve instances where God showed loving kindness. The principle of *imitatio dei* is clearly important for our author, a principle which, as we saw above, is easily problematized.

Repentance is integral to the concept of the Two Ways, and so belongs the ethics of PRE. It is the way one changes from the evil to the good path. The theme of repentance is touched upon time and time again throughout PRE, and the effect of this is to bind the key ethical discourse in PRE 15 tightly into the work as a whole. It is in this discourse on the Two Ways that PRE comes closest to a definition of the term. It has become a commonplace to distinguish between the Christian concept of *metanoia* and the Jewish concept of *teshuvah*, the former focusing on the change of *mind*, the latter on a change of *action*.⁷⁵ The distinction may be useful in some contexts but it is too trite for PRE. PRE sees repentance first and foremost as an

⁷⁵ This is, perhaps, more a trope of preaching than of scholarship, but it seems hard even for some scholars to avoid the etymological fallacy and discount the fact that the *-noia* element in *metanoia* is connected to *nous* and so must emphasize a change of mind, as against *teshuvah* from the root *shub* which basically means "to turn back". See the article *metanoeō, metanoia* in G. Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (trans. G.W. Bromiley; 9 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1967), 4:995-1008.

ethical *choice*: faced with the crisis of whether or not to go through the door, urged not to by “the better angels of our nature”, we make a decision. Repentance, therefore, begins with a mental act, which has, of course, to be followed up by action, but, by implication, the acts that follow belong to both *tzedaqah* and *hesed*. They are a return not simply to Torah, in the narrow sense of the term, but to something more. This concept of repentance may be reflected in a linguistic nuance, as Friedlander shrewdly observed. He may be correct that the curiously redundant phrase, *shuv bi-teshuvah* (PRE 15, 151/4) implies, “repent and return”.⁷⁶

Repentance for PRE is integral to the fabric of creation. God traces his plans for the world, but finds that creation could not endure without repentance (PRE 3, 15/3). Repentance is one of the seven things created before creation (PRE 3, 15/4-5 and 17/7-10). As a result, God’s hand is outstretched, ready to redeem repentant sinners (PRE 43, 577/2-4): repentance activates God’s *hesed* towards humanity. A whole discourse is devoted to theme of repentance in PRE 43. It opens with an echo of PA 4.11, תשובה ומעשים טובים כתרס לפני הפורענות, “Repentance and good works are like a shield against punishment” (PRE 43, 577/1). Note once again the implication here that *teshuvah* is fundamentally an attitude of heart, in contrast to actions (“good deeds”).

PRE gives examples of individuals who chose to repent. Adam says that it is good to confess to God in order to be delivered from judgement and Gehinnom (PRE 19, 199/16 - 201/8). God accepts Adam’s repentance and removes his sin, so that he may be an example to the generations to come (PRE 20, 219/1-7; cf. PRE 19, 199/16-201/2). Cain repents following his murder of Abel (PRE 21, 231/17-21), and

⁷⁶ Friedlander, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer*, 104, fn. 1.

Joshua begs for repentance, rending his garments and prostrating himself before the Ark of the Covenant (PRE 38, 495/11-12). David, who had not fulfilled God's promise to the Patriarchs to multiply their number, rent his garments, put on sackcloth and ashes, and prostrated himself before the Ark of the Covenant to stay the hand of the destroying angel (PRE 43, 579/1-581/8). Ahab, King of Israel, murdered, robbed, and coveted before Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, instituted a regime of punishment, fasting, and prayer to effect his repentance (PRE 43, 577/5-14). Manasseh, son of Hezekiah committed all kinds of sin, including the sacrifice of his son in the fire to Baal. When the Babylonian army came to bring him to Babylon and put him in a pan over a fire, Manasseh appealed to a number of gods for rescue to no effect. It was not until he turned to the God of his fathers that his plea was heard (PRE 43, 581/9 - 583/8). The story of Rabbi Simeon ben Laqish, the only non-biblical character in the catalogue of exemplars of repentance, illustrates the necessity for a complete change of life following repentance. Having repented, he returned to the God of his fathers, studied Torah, prayed, and gave charitably to those in need. His two companions continued plundering in the mountains, and remained unrepentant throughout their lives. All three died on the same day, but only Resh Laqish was spared Gehinnom because he had repented in his lifetime (PRE 43, 583/9 - 585/7).

The appeal by PRE to biblical stories of individual acts of repentance is matched by an interest in corporate/national repentance. In PRE 10 God instructs Jonah to travel to Nineveh to prophesy destruction on its people, if they do not repent (PRE 10, 91/3-12). PRE 43 returns to the repentance of the Ninevites, explaining it through the curious story of how Pharaoh, having repented of his actions in Egypt, had gone to rule over Nineveh. When Jonah delivered his prophecy

to the city, Pharaoh, drawing on the lessons of the past, successfully urged the people of Nineveh to repent. When they returned to their evil ways after forty years, “they were swallowed up like the dead in the lowest Sheol” (PRE 43, 587/1 - 589/17). PRE concludes its discourse on repentance (PRE 43) with a dictum of Rabbi Judah: “If Israel does not make *teshuvah*, she is not going to be redeemed (*nig’alin*)” (PRE 43, 591/13). In other words there is an intimate connection between *teshuvah* and *ge’ullah*: the collective repentance of Israel is a pre-condition of the coming of the messianic age. The text goes on: “Israel repents only because of distress, oppression and wandering (*tiltul*), and because they have no sustenance. Israel is not going to make full repentance till Elijah comes, as it is said: *Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers* (Mal 4:5-6)” (PRE 43, 591/16-18). PRE 43 appropriately concludes with the fifth benediction of the ‘Amidah: “Blessed are you, O Lord, who delights in repentance” (ברוך אתה יי' הרוצה) בתשובה; PRE 43, 596/19).

3.6.4.8 Custom

I referred in 2.7 above to the fact that PRE records and justifies a number of customs (*minhagim*), and that some of these seem to be distinctively Palestinian, which provides a strong argument for the Palestinian provenance of the work. It is now important to note that this interest in custom is sufficiently pervasive for it to be deemed a significant theme of PRE.

The most striking and the most studied of these customs are PRE's rules for the performance of Havdalah (PRE 20, 213/7–217/14).⁷⁷

"A. At twilight at the end of Sabbath Adam was sitting and pondering in his heart and saying: 'Woe is me, lest the serpent who deceived me on 'Erev Shabbat should come and bruise me in the heel' (cf. Gen 3:15). A pillar of fire was sent to him to give him light, and to guard him from all evil. Adam saw the pillar of fire, and rejoiced in his heart and said: "Now I know that the Omnipresent is with me. And he stretched out his hand to the light of the fire and pronounced the blessing, "Creator of lights of fire" (*bore' me'orei 'esh*). And when he removed his hands from the fire, Adam said: "Now I know that the holy day has been separated from the secular day, because it is not permitted to kindle fire on Shabbat. He said: 'Blessed is he who separates the holy from the profane.'

B.1 Rabbi Mana says: How is this done? A man (*'adam*) is obliged to pronounce the blessing over the cup of wine to the light of the fire, and say: 'Blessed [is he who creates] the lights of fire.' And when he removes his hand from the fire he says: 'Blessed is he who separates the holy from the profane'.

B.2 If he has no wine he stretches out his hands to the light of the fire and looks at his nails, which are whiter than his body and says: 'Blessed [be he who creates] the lights of fire'. And when he has removed his hands from the fire he says: 'Blessed be he who divides the holy from the profane.'

B.3 If he has no fire, he stretches out his hand to the light of the stars, which are fire. And he looks at his finger-nails, which are whiter than his body, and says: 'Blessed be he who creates the lights of fire.' If the heavens are overcast he takes a stone and lifts it up, and says: 'Blessed is he who separates the holy from the profane'.

⁷⁷ The most recent and thorough discussion is Adiel Kadari, "Narrative and Normative: Havdalah in *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*," *JSQ* 21.2 (2014): 136-152.

- C. Rabbi Eliezer says: After a man (*'adam*) drinks the Havdalah cup, he is commanded to put a little water into the Havdalah cup and drink it, to show his love for the commandments. And whatever is left in the cup of the water, he smears it on his eyelids. Why? Because the Sages say: The remnants of a commandment keep back punishments.
- D. Rabbi Zadoq said: Whoever does not make Havdalah over wine at the end of Sabbaths, or does not listen to those who perform Havdalah, will never see a sign of blessing. And whoever hears those who perform Havdalah, or makes Havdalah over wine, the Holy One, blessed be he, makes him his special treasure, as it is said: *And I will separate you from the peoples* (Lev 20:26). *And you will be to me a special treasure* (Exod 19:5)."

The blizzard of variant readings to this passage shows how much the text was tinkered with in transmission to bring it into line with accepted practice as understood by those who copied it. Though details of the text as translated above are not entirely clear, the broad outline is not in doubt. The *hiddush*, at least as compared to present-day practice, is obvious: B.2, B.3, and C do not seem to accord with present-day practice in any tradition. The apparent use of shorter forms of the Berakhot is interesting, though one cannot rule out the possibility that the scribe is shortening simply because everyone knows the words. The absence of any reference to the spices suggests that they formed no part of the ceremony as known to our author, perhaps because they were introduced later.⁷⁸

For our present purposes, however, the important point is the way in which an attempt is made to link a custom, the Havdalah ceremony, to Scripture. Havdalah was instituted by Adam. No proof of this given: it is simply asserted as fact. It is

⁷⁸ See P. Levin, "On the Omission of Spices from the Order of Havdalah," *Ha-Ma'ayan* 38 (1998): 12-18 (Hebrew).

distinctive that the bulk of the halakhic interest in PRE focuses on custom (*minhag*). In rabbinic jurisprudence a traditional distinction is drawn between *halakhah* and *minhag*, where *halakhah* denotes a legal ruling, which may be directly sanctioned by Scripture (*de-'oraita*) or by classic rabbinic authority (*de-rabbanan*), whereas *minhag* constitutes a custom of a community relating to practices or liturgy which is precisely not covered by *halakhah*. An example would be the Passover Seder. The core of this is laid down in *halakhah*, but the fine details of performance (e.g. how the Seder-plate is organized) differ from community to community and belong to *minhag*. This variation of practice is recognized as legitimate: *minhag* has the force of Torah within the community that observes it, but it is not binding on other communities if their customary practice is different.⁷⁹ What is the significance then of PRE attempting to relate *minhag*, and in some cases, distinctively Palestinian *minhag*, to Scripture?

This might seem to replicate a move that had already taken place in the case of many *halakhot de-rabbanan*. These began life as customs which were ruled into law by classic authorities, in the process often being speciously or casuistically justified from Scripture. One of the main aims of classic Rabbinic literature (Talmud and Midrash) was to justify pre-existent practice from Scripture.⁸⁰ So is PRE simply extending this process to customs not hitherto covered? In a way it is, but the implications are significant. On the face of it what it seems to justify from Scripture is

⁷⁹. For the concept of Minhag in rabbinic jurisprudence see Menachem Elon, ed., *The Principles of Jewish Law* (Jerusalem: Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1975), 91-110; Joel Roth, *The Halakhic Process: A Systemic Analysis* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1986), 205-30; Gideon Gibson in *An Introduction to the History and Sources of Jewish Law* (ed. N.S. Hecht, et al.; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 218-19.

⁸⁰. See David Weiss Halivni, *Midrash, Mishnah, and Gemara: The Jewish Predilection for Justified Law* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1986).

Palestinian minhag. Where does that leave Babylonian *minhag*, when it differs from Palestinian? Was Babylonian *minhag* not kosher? Could there be a polemic edge to this move in PRE? I noted in 2.7 that around the time PRE was composed there seemed to have been something of a controversy over *minhag* in North Africa, the local communities there being split over whether to adopt Palestinian or Babylonian practice. The Babylonian authority Pirqoi ben Baboi attacked Palestinian practice (and, indeed, PRE as a noted exponent of it), and advocated Babylonian instead. There was clearly politics and influence involved here; the adoption by a North African community of Palestinian or Babylonian *minhag* would be a clear indication of which Gaonate it favoured. This controversy may already have been afoot when PRE was composed. Was PRE's attempt to justify *Palestinian minhag* from Scripture a subtle way of advocating it, or defending it from Babylonian attack. Babylonian influence in Palestine itself was growing in the time of PRE. Could PRE be asserting local custom against it?

Not necessarily. We need to read PRE carefully. The Palestinian customs are contained in sections B and C, and are explicitly put in the mouths of two Palestinian authorities. It is not claimed that *Adam* instituted those precise customs. What Adam instituted was the core of the Havdalah ritual, which is pretty universal. We should probably read B+C in some sense in opposition to A. PRE takes the opportunity to state Palestinian custom in B+C, but it is not claiming that it was instituted by Adam. Besides, as I have already noted, the Scriptural justification is blatantly weak. The link with Adam is merely asserted, and provokes the obvious question: Where is this in *Scripture*? It is at best oral tradition – on a par with all those other instances where Patriarchs and others are shown observing much later customs.

PRE's picture of Adam instituting Havdalah at the end of the first Sabbath should be considered in the context of a point I noted above, viz., PRE's valorisation of *avodah*, seen not as the Temple service, but as worship in the broader sense of ritual and prayer. Its depiction of the first Sabbath, observed by God in heaven and Adam on earth, is powerful. It lends immense antiquity and solemnity to the Havdalah ritual. Adam's Havdalah light, which was apparently given by God, protected him from harm, specifically from attack by the serpent. The implication is that the Havdalah candle today will do the same. The idea of the immense power of the ritual is picked up in Rabbi Zadoq's extraordinary claim in C that it is by observing Havdalah that Israel is constituted as a holy people and becomes God's "special treasure" (*segulah*). In some forms of the text the language is even stronger: e.g. the Epstein manuscript used by Friedlander reads: "Everyone who makes Habdalah at the termination of Sabbaths, or whosoever hears those who perform the Habdalah, the Holy One, blessed be He, calls him holy to be His holy treasure, and delivers him from the affliction of the peoples, as it is said, 'And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy' (Lev. xx. 26)."⁸¹ In other words, correct performance of the Havdalah is a precondition of the redemption. Many scholars have noted PRE's interest in liturgy, but it has, perhaps, not been stressed enough how utterly central it is to its theology. Here in a well-crafted unit the author manages subtly to state one of the major themes of his work – the power of *avodah*. As I suggested above (3.6.2.2) we should read the quotations and allusions to the *Amidah* scattered throughout PRE in the light of this analysis. They are not fundamentally structural, nor are they purely homiletic. The implication is that many of these *berakhot*, like the *berkahot* of the Havdalah, are of immense antiquity; they were around already in the

⁸¹ Friedlander, *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*, 146-47, with p. 147, fn. 1 on other variants.

biblical period, while the Temple still stood, and sprang naturally to the lips of biblical figures, and even of angels. They are part of Israel's ancient *'avodah*.

3.6.5 How Coherent is PRE?

In the light of this analysis of its structure, small forms and thematic inventory how coherent is PRE? The short answer is: More, perhaps, than one might at first suppose. There is no way that PRE can be defined as a strongly bounded text, in the sense that one knows that it has definitely come to an end. Its macro-structure is sufficiently loose that additional elements could be bolted on without creating any sense that the structure has been distorted. It has a strong opening, but a weak ending, and more or less peters out. The elements of macro-structure that might have given it a stronger sense of coherence are missing. For example, if it had shadowed a single biblical book, say the book of Genesis, then the pre-set, known boundedness of the underlying text would have defined its limits. If it had shadowed Genesis right to the end, then the reader would have had a sense of closure. BerR is internally a very diverse work, but it has comments all the way to the last verse of Genesis (Gen 50:26), and hence it needs no other sense of closure. Besides, its macro-structure is consistent: lemma + comment from beginning to end. It is, therefore, a bounded and coherent text. It is structured by Genesis. The fact that Genesis may not itself be all that bounded or coherent is beside the point. PRE runs across into Exodus, and it is hard to know where precisely it has stopped shadowing the Bible. It doesn't in any meaningful sense reach the end of Exodus. Generations of scholarly readers of the text (scholars brought up in a textual culture with a strong tradition of textual coherence) have reacted to this lack of boundedness by concluding that the text is incomplete – either in the sense that the ending has been lost, or the author never finished his project. Yet one can overdo the lack of

coherence in PRE. As I argued above PRE shadows the Bible up to the giving of the Torah on Sinai: that is the last episode of the biblical narrative that it treats at any length, and that, given the inherently climactic nature of the Sinai event, is a satisfactory place to stop. From the creation of the world to the revelation of the Torah at Sinai is from a theological perspective a significant and well defined span of the *Heilsgeschichte*.

In addition I have argued that the chapter divisions are probably original and actually define the separate sections of the book. Each marks a discourse. Those discourses are not always *formally* well defined, though some of them have a clear opening, but they tend rather obviously to follow a single theme. If we had been presented with PRE as a continuous text it is probable we could have segmented it into the present chapters. The chapter divisions don't feel arbitrary, and yet they are not entirely obvious. If PRE macro-structurally consists of thematic discourses strung out sequentially along the narrative of the *Heilsgeschichte* from the creation to the revelation at Sinai, it can be judged as having a reasonable level of coherence. It is not a random collection, a mere miscellany of traditions. Its broad structural similarity to the form of Philo's *Allegories of the Laws* is worth noting – a point to which I will return below (5.2).

The small forms contribute little to the sense of coherence. They create no obvious patterns, and although the repertory is limited the limitation does not in itself create a sense of boundedness; the addition of one more form, or one more example of an existing small form would not make a jot of difference. The problem is that there there is too much “white space” between the forms, that is to say there is too much unformalized text in common speech. On the other hand the presence of the small forms creates a sense of style. These are forms that the readers of PRE

would know from extant rabbinic works, and the fact that this style, allied to the uniform use of rabbinic Hebrew, pervades the whole work from beginning to end, does create a certain sense of unity.

Finally, what does the thematic inventory contribute to the coherence of PRE? It is certainly possible to group the numerous individual themes into clusters.

(1) As we saw there is a group that clearly relates to the two topics which, since the time of the Mishnah at least, were known as Ma'aseh Bere'shit and Ma'aseh Merhavah. The account of the latter is so nested in the account of the former, that it is possible to envisage one topic here – the structure of the cosmos, heaven and earth, in both its spatial and temporal aspects, the latter coming out in the strong interest in the calendar and hence in the measurement of time.

(2) There is also a group of themes which could be seen as broadly theological. Under this could be ranged the doctrine of Torah (which comes out *passim*, but especially in the treatment of the revelation at Sinai); the doctrine of idolatry (note particularly the rich treatment of the Golden Calf episode), which would chime with the fact that PRE was composed at a time when Islam had put aniconism firmly back on the theological agenda not only of Christianity but of Judaism as well; and the doctrine of redemption, under the umbrella of which we could bring the Jonah narrative, the rich exposition of the 'Aqedah, the discussion of repentance and the resurrection of the dead, as well as the scenarios of the Messianic age such as the mini-apocalypses in chapter 30 and 51. Scholars such as Adelman have rightly stressed the importance of Messianism for PRE: it seems to have been written under the impression that the *eschaton* was imminent. This makes sense,

given that it was probably composed during the so-called apocalyptic revival of the 7th-9th centuries CE.

(3) There is a third group of themes clustered around the topic of what would later be known as Musar, particularly if we can include under Musar etiquette and proper behaviour (*derekh 'eretz*), as well as the philosophically ethical. The theme of *Gemilut Hasadim* would certainly belong here, and the specific manifestation of it towards bridegrooms and mourners. The biblical figures whose actions are most fully treated are often depicted as exemplars – models of how or how not to behave. PRE belongs to a time when ethics is beginning to emerge in Judaism as a topic distinct from halakhah. This can be seen in works such as *Derekh 'Eretz Rabbah* and *Massekhet Semahot*, both of which are included in the Vilna edition of the Bavli as so-called Minor Tractates. These attempt to determine correct behaviour in all sorts of areas which are not covered by halakhah. We also get the emergence of ethics in discourse form, and here the remarkable Tenth Treatise of Saadya's *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* ("Concerning how it is most proper for man to conduct himself in this world") deserves mention – a work which, according to Joseph Dan, "marks the beginning of Jewish medieval literature, and signifies the fact that ethics was separated from the vast body of the aggadah and Midrash and could be studied as a specific subject, expressed through its own literary vehicle".⁸² PRE, while not quite reaching the levels of discourse of Saadya, is nonetheless discursive as opposed to normative/ apophthegmatic, in the manner of the *derekh 'eretz* literature. It is discursive and exemplary in the manner of ARN or some of the discourses of the

⁸² Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism and Jewish Ethics* (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, 1986), 7.

Tanna deBei Eliyyahu (TdBE).⁸³ One wonders if PRE's interest in *minhag* could be squeezed in here – *minhag* being seen as religious etiquette, and bearing the same sort of relationship to *mitzvah* as *derekh 'eretz* does to ethics proper.

So with some valiant generalizations we could reduce the multifarious themes of PRE to three big topics – cosmology, theology, and musar, but that is as far surely as one could go. Indeed it is almost certainly too far, because there is no evidence to suggest that the author of PRE would have generalized in this way, though one should not forget his intention, stated in a big generalization at the very beginning of his work, that he was going “to inquire into God's mighty deeds, with reference to what he has done, and what he will do in the future”. The bare fact is that there is no overarching theme into which all the topics and themes can be logically absorbed, so in that sense there is no thematic unity to PRE. And yet, the author of PRE constantly works to forge connections between his themes. When dealing with one, he constantly notes echoes of the others. His seeking for connections is relentless. Each major theme has a main discourse or discourses devoted to it, but the tentacles of the theme spread out from there into the surrounding text, until all the themes are thoroughly tangled up together. It is a compositional *tour de force*, which is easier to explain as the product of a single author than of a diversity of authors.

⁸³ It should be noted that the relationship here between ethics on the one hand, and halakhah on the other in PRE is not that drawn by Bahya Ibn Paquda in the *Duties of the Heart*, between the duties of the heart and duties of the limbs. PRE is not primarily concerned with inner attitudes, but with actions. *Derekh 'eretz* belongs to the sphere of duties of the limbs. This sharpens up the problem of the relationship of *derekh 'eretz* to halakhah which also belongs to the duties of the limbs.

Chapter Four:

Intertextuality - PRE and Other Texts

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of the present chapter is to complete the literary profiling of PRE begun in chapter 3 by considering PRE's relationship to other texts. That it has relationships with a wide and diverse range of texts is not evident from the surface of PRE itself. It openly acknowledges only two sources, viz., Tanakh and rabbinic tradition, quotations from which pepper its discourses. It is only because we have a substantial body of literature belonging to PRE's milieu that we are aware it overlaps with many other texts as well.

I use the term "intertextuality" to designate the relationship between PRE and other texts. This term has been employed in various ways.¹ I use it in a simple way to designate cases where a significant narrative, thematic, or verbal overlap can be identified between PRE and another text. The three situations here are not mutually exclusive. A narrative overlap occurs where PRE tells the same story, possibly, though not necessarily, in the same or similar words. A thematic overlap is where it expounds the same idea or concept, though not necessarily in the same or similar

¹ Since Julia Kristeva coined the term in 1966 it has been used in all sorts of diverse ways. I use it precisely as stated above. Where my use may differ from that of others is that others tend to use it only when there is *verbal* overlap (as in allusion, quotation, plagiarism, translation, pastiche, parody), whereas I use it to cover also conceptual overlaps (plot in narrative, or theme in discourse), where there is not necessarily a verbal overlap, and I use it precisely to remain neutral on the direction of influence or borrowing. Daniel Boyarin seems to have been the first to introduce the term to the study of Midrash. See his *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1990).

words. A verbal overlap is where a significant quantity of wording is shared between PRE and another text. Verbal overlap involves either thematic or narrative overlap, and is strong evidence of a relationship. Narrative and thematic overlap, where the verbal overlap is minimal or nonexistent, are weaker evidence. The potential strength of the relationship in this case will depend on (1) how exactly the narrative or the exposition of the theme in each text mirrors that in the other, and (2) how exclusive to the two texts the narrative or thematic exposition is.

I have already noted that PRE acknowledges that it is quoting only in the case of Tanakh and rabbinic tradition, and in this case the relationship of dependence is clear. In other cases of verbal overlap the direction of dependence should be left open, and the value of the term intertextuality is that it does precisely that: it is neutral as to the existence or direction of borrowing in a way that the terms “quotation”, “borrowing”, and “source” are not. There may be *external* grounds, relating to the relative dates of PRE and the other texts, for determining which text came first, and so for establishing a presumption as to who might be quoting from whom, but, contrary to a widespread assumption, this can seldom be established from the synoptic comparison of texts alone.² The same applies to narrative and thematic overlaps. The situation is complicated by the way texts were created and disseminated in the milieu in which PRE was created, and more generally by the textual culture of the time. There were few written texts, and only a rudimentary book-market through which they could have been circulated. Though things may have begun to change around the time of PRE (see further 5.2 below), oral

² For example, it is remarkable how often a principle of “the longer the later” is applied in such comparison, ignoring the obvious fact that later writers can abbreviate their sources as well as expand them.

transmission of knowledge was still the norm, and so the idea that the author of PRE could have had in front of him a number of written texts, from which he might have extracted quotations or wording, or borrowed stories or themes, is problematic. The picture is complicated by attitudes at the time towards what we would now call intellectual property. People were not regarded as having ownership of what they said in the way in which we would think of it today. They freely took from each other, without acknowledgement, unless they wanted explicitly to invoke the *authority* of the other text. On the one hand there was no premium on originality: it was not necessary to say something new. Tradition was prized, and handing it on was a duty. On the other hand, in the act of passing it on authors felt free to rewrite it to match their own agendas, while often at the same time protesting their utter fidelity to it. This mindset and the textual culture it generated was very different to that which emerged in post-Enlightenment Europe, and we should bear this in mind when exploring PRE's relationship to its intertexts.

In the remainder of this chapter I will explore PRE's relationship to a number of intertexts: the Bible (4.2); Rabbinic literature, both the classical "canon" and "late midrash" (4.3); the Targum (4.4); the Pseudepigrapha (4.5); Piyyut (4.6); and Christian and Islamic tradition (4.7). To analyse these relationships exhaustively is impossible within the confines of this dissertation: monographs could, and in some cases have, been written on some of them. All I shall attempt is to probe each area, where feasible through selected test cases, in order to clarify the nature of PRE's relationships, and to begin to locate it on the map of Jewish literary and intellectual activity in late antiquity and the early middle ages.

4.2 PRE and Hebrew Bible

Tanakh is by far the most important of PRE's intertexts, for several reasons. It is the only text which PRE explicitly acknowledges as a *written* text.³ It explicitly quotes from it over 600 times, in ways that suggest it regards it as the supreme authority in religious life, and these quotations are spread throughout the work. Apart from Genesis and Exodus, which form the subtext of PRE, every other book of the Bible is quoted by it at least once, with spikes of interest in Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Proverbs. There are also numerous quotations from the Psalms: a fact which is consonant with later interest in that book, as evidenced by Midrash Psalms and Targum Psalms.⁴

PRE exemplifies three different relationships to the Bible: (1) shadowing, (2) commenting, and (3) quoting. These have already been analyzed elsewhere in the dissertation and need be treated only briefly here.

(1) Shadowing (see 3.4 and 3.6.2.2) is where PRE follows the biblical narrative, reproducing it in part, often in interpretative paraphrase. The pervasive subtext, as already stated, is Genesis and Exodus, though other subtexts can underlie short sections (e.g., Jonah 1-2 in the case of PRE 10). As I noted, it is one of the features of the PRE supertext (a feature which sets it apart from Rewritten Bible) that it regularly keys its text into the biblical text by using a quotation formula, the most

³ PRE probably acknowledges the Mishnah as a written text, but it doesn't actually identify any quotations from it. See below 4.3.

⁴ Midrash Tehillim is a very diverse composition derived from different sources, but the 9th century date assigned by Zunz (*Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge*, 278-80) may not be far off the mark, and he may be right that, although the bulk of the work was composed in Palestine, it underwent a redaction in southern Italy. Targum Psalms is in Late Literary Jewish Aramaic, so again an 8th-9th century date is plausible. See further David Stec, *The Targum of the Psalms, Translated with a Critical Introduction, Apparatus and Notes* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 4.

frequent of which is *she-ne'emar*. The literary function of this seems to be to remind the reader of the subtext, and to express dependency on it. In other words, unlike Rewritten Bible, PRE refuses to create a narrative that stands on its own, but seems to expect the reader to remember the biblical text *in between* the points it anchors with quotation, and *constantly* to read its supertext against the subtext. The supertext thus stands in a dialectical relationship to the subtext, and to get the full sense of the supertext the reader must continuously recall the subtext to mind. This was a realistic compositional strategy for the author of PRE to adopt because Tanakh, and particularly Torah, was the one text he could assume his readers to have known in depth.

(2) Commenting (see 3.4) is where PRE quotes a verse of Scripture (a lemma) and offers an explanatory comment on it. By the time that PRE was written Judaism had developed an extensive range of hermeneutical techniques for expounding Scripture. The techniques of Midrash have been studied in detail by others. Suffice to say here that, insofar as PRE's techniques can be discerned (and it should not be forgotten that we are dealing here with inference, because PRE does not explicitly set out its exegetical working), they seem to conform very broadly to the hermeneutical praxis of the classic midrashim. Ute Bohmeier has challenged this in her *Exegetische Methodik* and argued that PRE's hermeneutic is radically new, but her arguments have gained little support (see 1.2). She fails to define adequately classic rabbinic hermeneutics, in order to create a secure base-line from which to measure PRE's supposed divergence. There seems to have been an interest in formalizing the rules of classical hermeneutics in the time of PRE. This is suggested by the work known as Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer ben Yosi ha-Gelili, which is probably a little later than PRE, and by the Baraita of Rabbi Ishmael (now attached as a preface to Sifra), which, at

least in its commentary part, may be contemporary with PRE, but it has long been noted that these lists of Middot are not a good description of *actual* hermeneutic practice.⁵ They are certainly not much use in describing the hermeneutics of PRE, but that does not mean PRE diverges from classical Midrash, because they are not much use in describing the hermeneutics of Bere'shit Rabba either. However, Bohmeier's suggestion that Saadya or one of his circle was the author of PRE is intriguing, even if far from proven. Given the strong Palestinian perspective of the work, PRE would have to be assigned to the period when Saadya was in the Galilee, prior to his departure to Babylonia – the period when he wrote the *Agron*. The thesis that PRE's exegesis may, to some degree, reflect the new linguistic turn exemplified by the *Agron* deserves further investigation,⁶ but *by and large* the hermeneutics of PRE are traditional.

(3) Quoting (see 3.6.3.3 above) is where PRE introduces a direct quotation from Scripture by means of the standard quotation-formula. The most common formula is *she-ne'emar*. Linguistically this simply means “that which is said”, and at this level does not indicate whether the text was oral or written, nor whether all the quotations come from the same textual source. That these quotations are from a *written* text and come from a *defined canon* of Scripture (the Tanakh) is purely a matter of convention, which the author of PRE shares with his readers. I have already mentioned the use of the *she-ne'emar* formula to anchor the supertext to the subtext, and create a dialectical relationship with it. Elsewhere PRE uses it,

⁵ See Philip Alexander, “The Rabbinic Hermeneutical Rules and the Problem of the Definition of Midrash,” *PIBA* 8 (1984): 97-125.

⁶ See Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1998), 316-323, on the linguistic turn in Saadya.

sometimes strengthened by the question *minnayin* (“from where”) to introduce a Scriptural proof of a preceding proposition or statement.

4.3 PRE and Rabbinic Literature

4.3.1 PRE and the Classic Rabbinic “Canon”

Apart from Tanakh the only other intertext which PRE openly acknowledges is Rabbinic tradition. Its relationship to the latter is complex and hard to construe. PRE asserts its credentials as a rabbinic work, by implying that it is a discourse delivered by Eliezer ben Hyrcanus in the Beit Midrash of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, and it quotes numerous dicta in the names of rabbinic authorities, mainly from the first to the third generation of the Tannaim, clearly as authoritative. Yet it is not what it seems to be, and the author must have known that. The author is passing off his own ideas as those of older, recognized authorities. The pseudepigraphy seems to affect even the quoted dicta. The names in which they are quoted are for the most part well known from the classic rabbinic corpus (though a few are strange: see **Appendix E**), but the actual dicta quoted are not found in that corpus, at least not as we now have it. Even the dicta attributed to Rabbi Eliezer are not found in earlier extant sources.⁷ It is possible that the author of PRE had access to texts and traditions which have not survived, but it is unlikely his corpus would have been all that different from ours. The dicta seem almost too well integrated into his discourse: their style and language is identical to that of the surrounding text in which they are embedded. Indeed, one could remove the names and the flow of the argument would not be

⁷ The texts are conveniently set out at length in Jacob Neusner, *Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: The Tradition and the Man* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1973).

affected. It is almost as if the author composed his discourse and then peppered it with names of well-known authorities from the past.

The phenomenon of pseudepigraphy was widespread in the ancient world, but its significance differs from situation to situation.⁸ It was common in late Second Temple times when a number of texts appeared which claimed as their authors great figures of the biblical past. The phenomenon as it appeared then was predicated on a closed, biblical past, which had come to an end. It makes little sense if this was not a widely shared opinion, if the majority of people who constituted the readership of these texts did not believe that they lived in post-prophetic times. A central element in the consigning of the biblical era to the past was the acceptance that prophecy had come to an end, and the concomitant process of forming and closing a canon of sacred Scripture as a guide for future generations as to the divine will.⁹

Pseudepigraphy in itself made a contribution to the construction of this biblical past. Authors felt they had more chance of being taken seriously if they passed off their own work as having been written long ago. Does this indicate a failure of intellectual nerve, a sense of the decline of the generations, a feeling on the part of authors that if they presented their work in their own voice, it would carry less weight with their contemporaries? The morality of the situation cannot be avoided, and must surely have been as evident to their contemporaries as it is to us now. Perhaps the pseudepigraphy was a transparent fiction. Readers would have recognized that the

⁸ On pseudepigraphy see, e.g., Lewis R. Donelson, *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986); Jörg Frey et al., eds., *Pseudepigraphie und Verfasserfiktion in frühchristlichen Briefen/Pseudepigraphy and Author Fiction in Early Christian Letters* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Vincente Dobruka, *Second Temple Pseudepigraphy: A Cross-Cultural Comparison of Apocalyptic Texts and Related Jewish Literature* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014).

⁹ See L. Stephen Cook, *On the Question of the "Cessation of Prophecy" in Ancient Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011).

book was not by Enoch, nor by Jeremiah. It was purely a literary device: a way, perhaps, of capturing attention. There can be little doubt that some believed the fiction, whether or not it was intended to deceive. Some actually held that the Books of Enoch were by Enoch. The relationship to biblical authority is, to say the least, ambivalent. In writing pseudepigraphically the authors were acknowledging the existence of a biblical canon, but, in the same breath, they were subverting it by composing texts which on the face of it had a claim to be included in it, and, of course, some of these texts ended up being included. For example, both the Synagogue and the Church accepted as canonic the pseudepigraphic book of Daniel which modern scholarship has convincingly shown to have been composed after the generally accepted ancient date that prophecy came to an end.

Similar questions can be raised about the pseudepigraphy of PRE, only in its case it presupposes, and indeed helps to construct, a closed *rabbinic* past, particularly the world of the Tannaim, the masters of the Mishnah. The Mishnah is the one rabbinic text whose existence as a written text PRE seems to acknowledge, though apart from a few (unacknowledged) quotations from the atypical PA, it does not actually quote from it. This rabbinic past is a world of schools and scholars, whose names were widely known, and whose authority was highly respected. Again it was a literary event that played a decisive role in creating that past world, viz., the editing and closing of the Talmuds. PRE has a post-talmudic feel to it. Here it is worth recalling the role of the Stammaim in the creation of the Bavli, and the possibly substantial element of pseudepigraphy which they may have already introduced into that composition (see above). Alongside the *literary* construction of the world of the Talmudic Sages that was going on in the time of PRE, there was a growing interest in the *historiography* of the Talmudic era. This led to an effort to

understand the generations of rabbis, which involved recording the names of the principal scholars and working out who studied with whom. This study reached a peak, probably a little later than the time of PRE, in the famous *Iggeret* of Sherira Gaon, but it was probably well afoot for at least a century or so before.¹⁰ It is into this almost mythical world that the author of PRE attempts to insert his work. His act of pseudepigraphy raises exactly the same questions as pseudepigraphy in the Second Temple period. Does it reflect some sort of failure of nerve – a sense of the decline of the generations? This seems, on the face of it, unlikely given the boldness and confidence of PRE. What is the morality of the situation? Did the author of PRE adopt a transparent literary fiction, which his readers would have seen through, or was there an intention to deceive? Certainly many later accepted at face value the attribution of PRE to Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. What attitude towards the authority of classic rabbinic tradition does PRE's pseudepigraphy project? Again it is surely ambivalent. On the one hand it feeds off the authority of the classic rabbinic tradition, but on the other it subverts it by trying to insert into what in its day was probably a pretty closed "canon" of rabbinic texts a work, which ostensibly claimed to belong to that canon, but which propounded many radical new ideas, and included many traditions ultimately deriving from non-rabbinic sources – Second Temple pseudepigrapha, even Christianity and Islam (see 4.5 and 4.7 below).

The literary device by which PRE keys itself into rabbinic history is one that was exploited by Second Temple pseudepigraphists to frame their texts into the milieu of the biblical *Heilsgeschichte*. Second Temple pseudepigraphists looked for lacunae or niches in the biblical narrative into which they could insert their own

¹⁰ See Margarete Schlüter, *Auf welche Weise wurde die Mishnah geschrieben? Das Antwortschreiben des Rav Sherira Gaon* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993).

narrative. The most obvious case of this is how the huge Enochic corpus was inserted into the gaps in the story of Enoch in Gen 6:24-26.¹¹ The niche which PRE exploited in the existing rabbinic narrative was the fact that in the famous story of Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus's discourse in the school of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, the content of the discourse is never given. PRE's strategy only makes sense if the story was already well known, and this seems to have been the case. Three versions of it are extant in rabbinic literature: the first in BerR 41(42).1, and the other two in ARN (A6 and B13). The texts of the two ARN versions differ from that in BerR and from each other. PRE agrees almost verbatim with that in ARN B13. It makes best sense to see PRE 1-2 as an unacknowledged quotation from ARN B13. It is surely highly unlikely that this degree of verbal overlap could have been achieved without the aid of a written text. The dating of ARN B is still a matter of some dispute but most would put it earlier than PRE, though some not by much.¹² As I argued earlier, PRE does not develop any of the themes adumbrated in the story of Eliezer in the Beit Midrash of Rabbi Yoḥanan. From a compositional perspective it uses the story for one, and only one purpose, viz., to create a niche into which it can insert its material and so suggest that that material is Tannaitic in origin. It remains a moot point whether the choice of this niche was purely opportunistic (it simply presented itself), or whether there might have been any additional reason relating to the image of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus in the tradition that would have made him a suitable spokesman for the ideas that PRE presents. Eliezer was certainly an eminent Tanna, who came to be known as Rabbi Eliezer the Great. He was famous for holding

¹¹ Some have argued that Gen. 6 alludes to traditions contained in 1 Enoch, but Philip Alexander argues that the Enoch literature can be seen as "midrash" on Gen. 6. See his "The Enochic Literature and the Bible: Intertextuality and its Implications," in *The Bible as Book*, 57-69.

¹² See Stemmerger, *Introduction*, 225-27; further: Nathalie C. Polzer, "Interpreting the Fathers: Parallel Narratives in Avot de Rabbi Nathan, Versions A and B" (Ph.D. diss., Cambridge, 1991).

minority views: he was represented often as being in a minority of one against the rest of the sages. Many of his rulings in the Mishnah are given in the form: “Rabbi Eliezer says ... but the Sages say.” On one famous occasion his ruling was said to have been confirmed by a *bat qol* as being also the opinion of the heavenly court: indeed the *bat qol* went further and stated that Eliezer’s opinion was *always* in agreement with the heaven – but still the rest of the sages did not accept it (*b.Bava Metzia*^c 59a-b). Could it be that the choice of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus was tacit acknowledgement by the author of PRE that he was propounding ideas which did not have majority assent? Eliezer was a dangerous figure to play with, because tradition had it that he was accused of heresy (*minut*), and that he was excommunicated by his colleagues (*y.Mo’ed Qatan* 3.1; *b.Berakhot* 19a, 52a). This may, perhaps, have commended him to the author of PRE, if he felt he was treading a controversial line at the limits of rabbinic acceptability. We can’t be sure. One thing does seem reasonably clear, and it is that the author of PRE found a niche in rabbinic history into which to slot his ideas. The fact that the niche involved a figure, Rabbi Eliezer, who on other grounds was suitable to play the role of “lone voice”, was serendipity.

It is one of the deepest puzzles presented by PRE that while its rabbinic dicta are almost totally pseudepigraphic, there is overwhelming evidence that it was acquainted with a wide range of *genuine* traditions which belong to the classic rabbinic canon. It trumpets a fictitious relationship to the rabbinic canon, while concealing a real one. Many of its traditions can be sourced in the rabbinic canon, and here I am happy to accept in many cases, given the relative dates of the works in question, that we are talking about a source. Much labour has been expended by earlier generations of scholars in indentifying these sources: they can be found in

abundance in the commentary of David Luria and in the notes of Friedlander. Three sources stand out: PRE seems to have known BerR, the Yerushalmi Talmud, and ARN. The form in which it knew these texts is open to debate. The tendency has been to assume that it was through oral tradition passed down within the schools, but given the date of PRE the possibility of written texts has to be seriously considered. There is evidence that in rabbinic circles rabbinic texts were beginning to be written down from the 9th century onwards (see 5.2 below). In some ways it is easier to assume that PRE had access to written texts: as already noted, the large verbatim overlap with ARN B13 is best explained on the basis of a written text. The only written rabbinic source which PRE seems to acknowledge is the Mishnah (see above), but there were probably other written texts that it used, though no point crucially turns on this. But we have to be realistic. It is unlikely the author of PRE would have owned a complete written copy of the Yerushalmi: it would have been massive, and very expensive, but he might have had access to a copy of it in a Beit Midrash.

What is more important is what PRE may have done with the rabbinic traditions it received. To explore this I will return again to the theme of the role of Torah in creation. One of the most important statements on this is found in BerR 1.1. It runs as follows:

ר' אושעיא פתח ואהיה אצלו אמון ואהיה שעשועים אמון פידגוג אמון מכוסה
 אמון מוצנע אית דא' אמון רבתה אמון פידגוג היך מה דאת אמר כאשר ישא
 האומן את היונק אמון מכוסה היך מה דאת אמר האמונים עלי תולע אמון מוצנע
 היך מה דאת אמר ויהי אומן את הדסה אמון רבתה היך מה דאת אמר התיטבי
 מנא אמון ומתרגמין האת טבא מאלכסנדריא רבתא דיתבא ביני נהרותא [ד"א]
 אמון אומן התורה אומרת אני הייתי כלי אומנותו של הקדוש ברוך הוא בנוהג
 שבעולם מלך בשר ודם בונה פלטין ואינו בונה אותה מדעת עצמו אלא מדעת
 אומן והאומן אינו בונה אותה מדעתו אלא דיפטראות ופינקסות יש לו לידע
 היאך הוא עושה חדרים ופשפשים כך היה הקדוש ברוך הוא מביט בתורה

ובורא העולם והתורה א' בראשית ברא אלהים ואין ראשית אלא תורה היך מה
 ד'את אמר י"י קנני ראשית דרכו וגו'

Rabbi 'Osha'ya opened: *Then I was by Him as an 'amon; and I was daily all delight* (Prov 8:30). 'Amon means tutor; 'amon means covered; 'amon means hidden; and some say 'amon means great. 'Amon means tutor, as you say, *As the nurse ('omen) carries the sucking child* (Num 11:12). 'Amon means covered, as you say, *They that were covered* (ha-'emunim) *in scarlet* (Lam 4:5). 'Amon means hidden, as you say, *And he was hiding ('omen) Hadassah* (Esth 2:7). 'Amon means great, as you say, *Are you better than No-Amon?* (Nah 3:8), which we translate, *Are you better than Alexandria the Great, that is situated among the rivers?* [Another interpretation:] 'amon means a architect ('uman). The Torah declares: "I was the working tool (*keli 'umanuto*) of the Holy One, blessed be He." In the custom of the world, when a king of flesh and blood builds a palace, he does not build it from his own knowledge but from the knowledge of an architect. The architect does not build it from his own knowledge, but he has plans and diagrams so that he might know how to make the rooms and the wicket gates. Thus God looked into the Torah and created the world. The Torah says, *In the beginning God created* (Gen 1:1), and there is no beginning other than Torah, as you say, *The Lord made me as the beginning of His way* (Prov 8:22).

Though it is one of the best known pericopes in Midrash, standing as it does at the opening of one of the most important of the classic Midrashim, the meaning of BerR 1.1 remains somewhat allusive. It is artfully constructed. Its basic form is a *petiḥah*, but the *petiḥah* is hugely compressed. The base verse is Gen 1:1, the intersecting verse is Prov 8:30, but in fact the whole of Prov 8:22-31, which is about the role of Ḥokhmah in the creation and ordering of the world, is tacitly in play. Ver. 22 is vital for establishing the link with Gen 1:1 through its use of the term *re'shit*. BerR's understanding of Proverbs 8 turns on a suppressed premise, viz., that Ḥokhmah there is identical with Torah. That might seem self-evident, but it leads to the surprising conclusion that Torah must, then, have predated creation and been involved in the creative process. The nature of its pre-mundane role is seen as

expressed above all by the term *'amon*, interpreted, in the end, not as agent (“craftsman, demiurge”) but as instrument (“working-tool”, *keli 'umanut*). A *mashal* clarifies the precise point: just as an architect first draws up plans, and then on the basis of these builds a city, so God looked into the Torah and created the world: the Torah is the blue-print of creation.

The *mashal* is, in fact, overburdened, and this creates some confusion. It has *three* elements where it really only needs *two*: first there is a king, then the king employs an architect (who is called an *'amon*), and the architect draws up plans, which he consults to build the city. The Torah is clearly equivalent to the plans: they are what God “looks into”. Why do we have *both* a king *and* an architect, both of whom can only be cashed out as “God”. Surely we should have either the king (= God) consulting the architect (= the Torah), or the architect (= God) consulting the plans (= the Torah), but not both. The reason for this confusion may lie in the fact that *'Osha'ya* is here adapting a tradition in which the three elements had point. Exactly the same simile is used in Philo's *De Opificio Mundi*, and there the king = God, the architect = the divine Logos, and the plans = the ideas, which inhere in the Logos and constitute the noumenal world after which the physical world is patterned. Origen of Caesarea took over this metaphor from Philo to explain the role of the pre-existent Christ in the creation of the world. Christ slots neatly into the role of the Logos in Philo's Platonic scheme.¹³ *'Osha'ya*, who lived in Caesarea in the time of Origen, may have been aware of this Christian appropriation of the simile, and so been sensitive lest by emphasizing *agency* he risked introducing a second power. It is

¹³ See Origen, *De Principiis* 1.2 and 2.6.2, and *Homilies on Genesis: Homily I* on Gen. 1:1. On possible contacts between Origen and Rabbis see: Nicholas de Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

clear that in the end he wants to portray the Torah as an instrument, not as an agent, but he has failed to tidy up the parable he received in order to make this absolutely clear. Be this as it may, Proverbs 8 is obviously interpreted to mean that Torah played a role in the creation of the world. This idea is then imported into Gen 1:1, via the term *re'shit*: Prov 8:22 equates Torah and *re'shit*, thus allowing *be-re'shit* in Gen 1:1 to be interpreted as *ba-Torah*, “by means of Torah God created the heavens and the earth”.

What does it mean to say that Torah is the blue-print of creation? The statement is theologically problematic. What is indicated by Torah here? Is it precisely the same as the Torah found in the Sefer Torah in synagogue? That might make some sense if we supposed that the Sefer Torah existed in heaven prior to creation as the scenario of the *history* of the world. It would be like the text of a play, before the play was performed: the events on stage would follow the script. So did the Holy One, blessed be He, read Genesis 1 before creating the world, and follow it to the letter, like a cook would follow a recipe for baking a cake? Was that the only bit of Torah which was played out? Can the later history of the world also be seen as the playing out of a pre-existent heavenly scenario? This has interesting theological implications, since it would suggest that the Fall was anticipated and predestined. Certainly the Torah as we have it addresses a broken world. This was a problem with which the later Qabbalists wrestled, and it led some of them to postulate that in the perfect messianic age a new Torah would have to be promulgated, one that does not reflect and legislate for a broken world.¹⁴ The precise wording of the pericope,

¹⁴ See Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts* (3 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), vol. 3, Section III: Torah.

however, suggests that Torah is somehow seen as the blue-print not of historical time of the world, but of its physical constitution. How can this make any sense?

An alternative understanding would be to suppose that the Torah 'Osha^cya means is not the precisely the Torah as found in the synagogue Sefer Torah, but its essence; the eternal, underlying principles that its supremely embodies – an entity sometimes referred to as “the heavenly Torah”.¹⁵ Thus the meaning is that the fundamental principles which underlie the Torah are exactly the same as those that underlie the natural world, since those principles came first and were followed by God in creation (in that sense the Torah is prior to the world.) From our perspective those principles on the face of it would appear to be moral in character, rather than physical laws, but that distinction would, perhaps, not have been perceived so sharply in a rabbinic, or even in a hellenistic milieu. For a rabbinic thinker it would have been possible to assert, very much along the lines of Proverbs 8, that rational and moral principles underlie the physical world (rational and moral here not being too sharply differentiated) and that those principles are supremely promulgated in Torah.

All this is speculation because 'Osha^cya does not make clear what he means. Driven by exegetical logic (and possibly by anti-Christian polemic) he identifies Torah as the instrument of creation, but leaves the meaning of this claim open for others to wrestle with. That wrestling begins already in BerR itself, in the way in which the pericope is used in the overall argument of the opening section of this

¹⁵ A similar idea is found also in Islam with regard to the Qur'an. See F.E. Peters, *The Monotheists: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Conflict and Competition: Volume 2, The Words and Will of God* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 15-16. On the Jewish side see further, A.J. Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, 274-80.

midrash. Alexander has argued that the opening section of BerR on the creation of the world has been constructed within the framework of the prohibition on the public exposition of cosmology in *m.Hagigah* 2.1.¹⁶ How can you expound Genesis 1, and not expound Ma'aseh Bere'shit? Genesis 1 *is* Ma'aseh Bere'shit. The result is that Genesis 1 is used to talk about morality, about history – about anything other than the physical world. Whatever 'Osha'ya's intentions, its place in the text as the preface to such an exposition results in the opening pericope taking on a distinct meaning: it asserts the primacy of Torah over nature. God “looked into Torah”, and that is precisely what the sage should do. Since nature follows Torah you will have to look into it in order to understand nature yourself. Thus, there is no need to look to nature to understand it; all you need to know about it is contained in Torah.

Two passages in PRE should be set against BerR 1.1:

(1) PRE 3, 13/11–15/3

עד שלא נברא העולם היה הקב"ה ושמו [הגדול] בלבד ועלה במחשבה לברוא את
העולם והיה מחריט את העולם לפניו ולא היה עומד משלו משל למה הדבר דומה
למלך שהוא רוצה לבנות פלטרין שלו אם אינו מחריט בארץ יסודותיו ומובאיו ומוצאיו
אינו מתחיל לבנות כך הקב"ה החריט לפניו את העולם ולא היה עומד עד שברא את
תשובה

Before the world was created, the Holy One, blessed be he, existed with his Name alone, and the thought arose in him to create the world, and he was tracing out the world before him, but it would not stand.

They told a parable. To what is the matter like? To a king who wishes to build a palace for himself. If he had not traced it out in the earth its foundations, its exits and entrances, he does not begin to build. Thus the

¹⁶ See Philip Alexander, “Pre-emptive Exegesis: Genesis Rabba’s Reading of the Story of Creation,” *JJS* 43 (1992): 230-45. Further: Annette Yoshiko Reed, “From ‘Pre-Emptive Exegesis’ to ‘Pre-Emptive Speculation’?” 115-32.

Holy One, blessed be he, was tracing out the world before himself, but it would not remain standing until he created repentance.

(2) PRE 3, 15/4-19/4:

שבעה דברים נבראו עד שלא נברא העולם ואלו הן תורה וגיהנם וגן עדן וכסא
הכבוד ובית המקדש ותשובה ושמו של משיח תורה מניין שנאמר יי' קנני ראשית
דרכו קדם מפעליו מאז קדם – רוצה לומר קדם שלא נברא העולם ... מיד
נתייעץ הקב"ה בתורה ששמה תושיה לברא את העולם השיבה לו ואמרה רבון כל
העולמים אם אין צבא ואם אין מחנה למלך על מה הוא מולך ואם אין עם מקלסין
למלך איזה הוא כבודו של מלך שמע אדון העולם וערב לו אמרה תורה בי נתייעץ
הקב"ה לברא את העולם שנאמר לי עצה ותושיה

Seven things were created before the world was created. They are: Torah, Gehinnom, the Garden of Eden, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, Repentance, and the Name of the Messiah. Whence do we know that this applies to the Torah? Because it is said: *The Lord possessed me as the beginning of his way, before his works of old* (Prov 8:22). 'Of old' means before the world was created. ... Forthwith the Holy One, blessed be he, took counsel with the Torah whose name is *Tushiyyah*, with reference to the creation of the world. The Torah said to him: Sovereign of the Worlds, if there be no host, and if there be no camp for the king, over whom does he rule? If there be no people to praise the king, where is the honour of the king? The Holy One, blessed be he, heard this and it pleased him. The Torah said: The Holy One, blessed be he, took counsel with me concerning the creation of the world, as it is said: 'Counsel is mine, and *tushiyyah*' (Prov 8:14).

I have already considered the literary aspects of the first of these passages in 3.6.3.7 above. The point to note here is that it shows a knowledge of BerR 1.1, a point which it more or less gives away by the unusual formula *mashelu mashal*, "they told a parable". Where? The most economical answer surely is, "In Bere'shit Rabbah". So PRE knew BerR 1.1. This makes all the more significant its idea of the role of Torah in creation, as expounded in the second extract. Like BerR 1.1, PRE 3 assigns Torah a role in creation through identifying it with Hōkhmah in Proverbs 8: "Whence do we

know that this applies to the Torah? Because it is said: *The Lord possessed me as the beginning of his way, before his works of old* (Prov 8:22). 'Of old' means before the world was created." The proof-text is, of course, spoken by *Wisdom*, so once again we have the assumption that Wisdom in Proverbs 8 is Torah. This is a very old assumption, as old as Ben Sira 24. It cannot be simply seen as a reaction to Christology. Indeed, some have made the case that a doctrine of the pre-existent Torah, seen as the *re'shit* of creation, influenced the early Christian doctrine of the Christ as the agent and *archē* of creation.¹⁷ If this was the case, then 'Osha'ya's polemic (if such it was) was a re-assertion of the original idea against Christian appropriation and adaptation of it.

PRE 3 focuses on a different part of Proverbs 8 to explain the role of Torah in creation, viz., verse 14, which does not figure in BerR 1.1, and, indeed, lies outside of the section of the chapter strictly devoted to Torah's cosmic role: *miyyad nitya'etz HQB"H ba-Torah*. The *miyyad* here is awkward but presumably links back to the first item of the series of seven things that were created before the creation of the world. God creates Torah, and no sooner is Torah created than it gives him a bit of advice. He should create a world, for a king without a people to rule over is not much of a king: "Sovereign of the worlds", Torah says, "if there be no host for the king, and if there be no camp for the king, over whom does he rule? If there be no people to praise the king where is the honour of the king?" God takes the advice – "it pleases him" – and he creates the world. This is immediately moralized: if God, the King of the kings of kings, did not hesitate to take counsel, then so should lesser rulers. They should imitate God, with the added implication, perhaps, that, in line with Deuteronomy 18, the Torah should be their supreme guide. All this reinforces the

¹⁷ See the classic statement of this view by W.D. Davies in his *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (London: SPCK, 1970), 148-76.

impression that the link with Proverbs 8 uppermost in the author of PRE's mind is Prov 8:15-16, "By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just; by me rulers rule, and nobles, all who govern rightly".

Torah's name *Tushiyyah*, derived from ver. 14, may underscore the political message. The meaning of this term which occurs about a dozen times in Tanakh, mainly in Wisdom literature, is not altogether clear, so it is uncertain how the author of PRE understands it. It seems to denote *practical* rather than *theoretical* wisdom. Friedlander suggests as a possible translation here "stability", presumably thinking of a derivation from *'ush*, "foundation".¹⁸ This is a guess, but it is a reasonable presumption. If Torah is the foundation of the world, then it is of the moral, not the physical order. The idea in PRE 3, somewhat obliquely expressed, may then be: God took counsel with Torah and on its advice created the world. This creates a precedent that other rulers should follow: they too should rule with counsel. By implication, there is no better counsel for them to follow than the counsel of Torah (echoing perhaps Deuteronomy 18), the guarantor of the stability of the political and moral order. What is striking here is the total absence of any reference to or development of the Proverbs 8 idea of Torah/Wisdom as an *'amon*, which is so important to BerR 1.1. PRE is looking in another direction entirely. Add to this the fact that, as I argued earlier, PRE in effect turns the fundamental message of BerR's exposition of Ma'aseh Bere'shit on its head by claiming that it is legitimate to read the book of nature to understand how God created the world (see above 3.6.4.2). It becomes clear that at this point at least PRE has a very dynamic and creative

¹⁸ Friedlander, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer*, 12.

relationship to its classic rabbinic source. It is not subservient to it. While drawing on its authority it spins its rabbinic source to serve its own agenda.

4.3.2 PRE and “Late Midrash”

The previous section was devoted to PRE’s relationship to rabbinic texts which predate it, and which had by its day been in some sense canonized as authoritative. Relationships with rabbinic texts more or less contemporary with it have been alleged, and it is to these I will now briefly turn. I am not thinking here of later texts which are almost certainly quoting PRE, or dependent on it (a very well known work), but texts where the dependency (if it exists) could go either way. The following are the more important of these.

4.3.2.1 Midrashei Yonah

Besides the discourse in PRE 10, at least three other tracts devoted to expounding the story of Jonah are attested in rabbinic literature. (1) The first is printed in Yalqut Shim‘oni, 2:550-51; (2) the second is *Midrash Yonah*, first published in Prague in 1595, and reprinted by Jellinek in *Bet Ha-Midrash* I; and (3) the third is a *Midrash Yonah* found in a de Rossi manuscript, ms 563 in the Vatican Library, printed by Horowitz in his *Qovetz Midrashim Qetanim*. PRE 10 together with nos 2 and 3 are printed in Eisenstein’s *Otzar Midrashim* 2:217-222. The Yalqut Shim‘oni text is close to PRE 10, and almost certainly derived from a version of it. The other two are quite different. Vatican 563 is concerned almost entirely with Jonah’s visit to Nineveh, and has a long section on the greatness of the city. Prague 1595 shares a few motifs with PRE 10, but is more striking for its differences. For example, it opens with an elaborate and rather contrived mashal comparing Jonah to a wet-nurse whom a king

employed to nurse his son after the death of his wife. The wet-nurse ran off neglecting the baby, but the king sent his servants after her, and they hauled her back and put her in a dungeon. The king, however, passing by and hearing her cries took pity on her, and brought her out. Prague 1595 also introduces into the story a female fish. This is based on the fact that mysteriously the gender of the fish changes in the biblical text between 2:1 and 2:2: at 2:1 it is masculine (*dag*), but at 2:2 it is feminine (*dagah*). Prague 1595 explains: Jonah was first swallowed by a male fish, but he found being inside it so comfortable that he didn't bother to pray to God to save him. So God sent a female fish to swallow him instead. The female fish was pregnant with myriad little fish, so life inside her was going to be crowded and unpleasant. The female fish swims up beside the male fish and tells him to cough Jonah up, and if he doesn't she'll swallow him and all. After consulting Leviathan, the male fish obliges. Jonah is swallowed by the female fish, and finding life unpleasant inside her duly cries out to God and is saved.

All four of these texts share the theme of Jonah and the Big Fish, and various motifs connected with it, but their relationship to each other is deeply unclear. Given its later date, and the fact that it transmits its text in the name of Rabbi Eliezer, it is reasonable to assume that the Yalqut is quoting PRE. Are the other two Jonah midrashim earlier or later than PRE? It is very hard to say. If they are earlier, then PRE evidently did not know them, or, if it did, chose not to use them. If they are later, then it is somewhat curious, given the popularity of PRE, that they do not show more signs of its influence. Cumulatively, however, they point to the growth of interest in Jonah in the early medieval period and the emergence a cycle of Jonah legends, of which PRE is an early and important example. PRE 10, as we saw, is well integrated into the argument of the book. The other Midreshei Yonah give no

support to the argument that this chapter of PRE is a secondary intrusion from elsewhere.

4.3.2.2 Baraita diShemu'el

The astronomical chapters of PRE (6-8) are often compared to the astronomical / cosmological work known as the Baraita diShemu'el. Mentioned by a number of writers in the middle ages, the Baraita appeared to be lost until it was published by Nathan 'Amram at Salonica in 1861. The Shemu'el of the title seems originally to have been identified as Shemu'el bar Abba, the famous first generation Babylonian Amora, who was reputedly learned in astronomy,¹⁹ but later editions, without any obvious justification, retitled the work Baraita diShemu'el *ha-Qatan*, thus ascribing it to a late first-century Tanna, a contemporary of Gamaliel II.²⁰ Shemu'el ha-Qatan is, indeed, associated in passing with astronomical knowledge in *b.Sanhedrin* 11a, but the more obvious reason for the change of title may have been that a Baraita should be the work of a Tanna not an Amora. Such an argument would be somewhat pedantic, since a first generation Amora of the standing of Shemu'el bar Abba, who did so much to transmit the Mishnah in Babylonia, could easily be counted as a Tanna.

When PRE 6-8 and the Baraita are compared, the differences are immediately striking. They share an interest in particular astronomical subjects, but there are no significant verbal overlaps between them. The Baraita is longer, and contains much material which has no parallel in PRE. For example, it has extensive material on

¹⁹ He reputedly said: "The paths of the heaven are as clear to me as the paths of Nehardea" (*b.Berakhot* 58b).

²⁰ See the editions of Frankfurt a.M. 1863, Piotrkov 1901, and Eisenstein, *Otzar Midrashim*, 2:542-47.

astrology²¹ – a topic which PRE conspicuously avoids –²² and its cosmos is both less realistic and more symbolic than of PRE. PRE may have had an influence on the development of the symbolic cosmology of the Zohar. Furthermore, the Baraita's Hebrew style is often obscure and difficult where PRE's is generally clear.

Nevertheless there are some instructive points of comparison which make the Baraita worth invoking in the context of PRE. (1) Both works were written around the same time. The Baraita mentions the date AM 4536 = 776 CE, and was already known to Shabbetai Donolo in the 10th century. So, like PRE, the Baraita was probably composed around the 9th century.²³ (2) Both works are attributed pseudepigraphically to early rabbinic authorities in order to validate their novel interest in astronomy and their astronomical doctrine. (3) The astronomy of both was well out of date by the time they were written. In both, key astronomical calculations are incorrect. Sacha Stern suggests that their calculations were never meant to be correct, and that both present what he calls “fictitious calendars”.²⁴ There is surely a problem with this. It is hard to see why anyone would give wrong values if he knows the correct ones. Rounding up or rounding down complicated numbers to create a simplified calendar, or creating an ideal calendar by imposing rigorous symmetry on the messiness of the data, makes sense, but to create

²¹ See Shlomo Sela, “Dos textos astrológicos conservados en el comentario al Sefer Yesirá de Yehudá ben Barzilay al-Bargeloni”, *Sefarad* 68.2 (2008), 261-90, esp. 271-88.

²² PRE 50, 691/5, “Haman was a great astrologer,” may indicate a negative attitude towards astrology.

²³ E. Beller's proposal of a third century date for the early chapters of the Baraita has not met with acceptance: see his “Ancient Jewish Mathematical Astronomy,” *AHES* 38 (1988): 51-66, esp. 55.

²⁴ Sacha Stern, “Fictitious Calendars: Early Rabbinic Notions of Time, Astronomy, and Reality,” *JQR* 87 (1996): 103-29, esp. 117ff; further Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar Second Century BCE – Tenth Century CE* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2001), 186; Katharina Keim, “Cosmology as Science.”

deliberately a fictitious calendar that lacks either simplicity or symmetry is hard to understand.

Neither PRE 6-8 nor the Baraita solves any literary problems in the other work. Neither can reasonably be posited as a source for the other. Some, puzzled by the fact that PRE 6-8 concentrates so exclusively on the movements of the sun and the moon, have speculated that its astronomical-cosmological section was once longer, and, indeed, that the missing sections may be contained in the Baraita. In fact Judah Halevi in the *Kuzari* lists the contents of an astrological/astronomical treatise he calls *Pirquei Rabbi Eliezer*, which do not correspond to PRE 6-8, but are closer to the Baraita.²⁵ Detailed analysis, however, suggests the safest conclusion is that this treatise is *neither* PRE 6-8 *nor* the Baraita, and therefore does not show that Judah knew these two works fused under the title *Pirquei Rabbi Eliezer*. PRE 6-8, as I have tried to show, is well integrated into the argument of the book as a whole, and there are no obvious grounds for supposing that it is incomplete. Setting the two works side by side does, however, serve a purpose. Each provides context for the other. Together they suggest, in a way that individually they do not, a growing interest in matters astronomical and scientific matters among rabbinical Jews in the early Islamic period, and an attempt to justify that interest and knowledge within rabbinic culture. These tentative, early forays into science were not, understandably, abreast of the best knowledge of their day.²⁶

²⁵ Judah Halevi, *al-Kitab al-Khazari*, ed. D. Baneth and H. Ben-Shammai (Jerusalem, 1977), 186, and for discussion see Bernard R. Goldstein, "Astronomy and the Jewish Community in Early Islam," *Aleph* 1 (2001): 17-57 (55-57).

²⁶ See Goldstein, "Astronomy and the Jewish Community in Early Islam."

4.3.2.3 Midrash Shemḥazai ve-ʿAzaʿel

In 4.5 below I discuss the striking parallels between PRE 22 and the Enochic Book of the Watchers. Similar parallels are found also in another late Hebrew text transmitted in a rabbinic milieu, the so-called *Midrash Shemḥazai ve-ʿAzaʿel*. The question naturally arises whether or not the latter bears any relationship to PRE.

Midrash Shemḥazai ve-ʿAzaʿel is preserved in quotation in Midrash Bereʾshit Rabbati, Yalqut Shimʿoni, Raymundus Martini's *Pugio Fidei*, and the Chronicles of Yerahmeʿel.²⁷ Its interest for us is heightened by the fact that it appears to be part of the lost Midrash 'Abkir,²⁸ fifty or so excerpts from which have been preserved in Yalqut Shimʿoni. Midrash 'Abkir was, apparently, similar in form to PRE, i.e., it was a series of discourses arranged in the order of the chapters of Genesis and Exodus. The antiquity of some of the material in Midrash Shemḥazai ve-ʿAzaʿel is suggested by parallels to 4Q530, a fragment of the lost Enochic Book of Giants.²⁹

Among the noteworthy parallels to PRE are: (1) Angelic opposition to the creation of Adam (quoting Ps 8:5), which leads to God testing the angels – a test they

²⁷. (1) *Midrash Bereʾshit Rabbati*, ed. Hanokh Albeck (Jerusalem: Meqitzei Nirdamim, 1940), 29-31. (2) *Yalqut Shimʿoni*, Genesis §44, reprinted as a separate tract in Jellinek's *Beit ha-Midrash* 4: 127-128 and Eisenstein's *Otzar Midrashim*, 2: 549-50. (3) Raymundus Martini, *Pugio Fidei adversus Mauros et Judaeos* (Leipzig, 1687), 937-39. (4) Chronicles of Yerahmeʿel, Oxford Bodleian ms. Heb. d. 11 (Neubauer 2797), fol 21v, ed. Eli Yassif, *The Book of Memory, that is, The Chronicles of Yerahmeel* (Tel Aviv University: Tel Aviv, 2001) (Hebrew); Eng. trans. in Moses Gaster, *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel* (repr. Ktav: New York, 1971), 52-54. For a synoptic edition see: J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1976), 322-26.

²⁸. On Midrash 'Abkir see Stemberger, *Introduction*, 341.

²⁹. See Milik, *The Books of Enoch*, 321-30; John C. Reeves, *Jewish Lore in Manichean Cosmology: Studies in the Book of Giants Traditions* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992), 86-87; Loren Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran: Texts, Translation, Commentary* (Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 1997), 114-15; Andrei Orlov, *From Apocalyptic to Merkavah: Studies in the Slavonic Apocrypha* (Brill: Leiden, 2007), 124-27.

fail. The tests, however, are different. In Midrash Shemḥazai ve-^עAza'el the angels claim that if they lived on earth they could, unlike Adam, resist the evil inclination (the *yetzer ha-ra'*), so God lets them try. They descend and are overpowered by it, and begin to lust after human women. In PRE, as we shall see, the test is to name the animals. And in PRE the context of the test is the first account of the fall of the angels, connected to Genesis 3, and not the second connected to Genesis 6. (2) The claim that the angels were able to have sexual intercourse with mortal women because their fall reduced their stature and incarnated them in material bodies. We should, however, be a little cautious here. This idea is only found in the Bere'shit Rabbati version of Midrash Shemḥazai ve-^עAza'el, and the verbal overlap with PRE 22, 239/6-16 is of a kind to suggest that the former is a compressed quotation of the latter. In other words, the compiler of Bere'shit Rabbati, probably the 11th century French scholar Mosheh ha-Darshan,³⁰ had already spotted the parallelism between Midrash Shemḥazai ve-^עAza'el and PRE, and supplemented the former with material from the latter.

As with some of the Midreshei Yonah and PRE, it is difficult to say what the relationship is between PRE and Midrash Shemḥazai ve-^עAza'el is. There are strong thematic links, and even, possibly, verbal overlaps, but it is hard to say that one text is directly dependent on the other. There are also notable differences, e.g., the names of the two angels, Shemḥazai and ^עAza'el, Shemḥazai's two sons and their respective dreams, and the legend of the origin of the star Asterah in the Pleiades are found only in *Shemḥazai ve-^עAza'el*.

³⁰ Jacob Elbaum, "Genesis Rabbati," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2d ed., 7:449-50.

4.3.2.4 Tanna deBei Eliyyahu

The final late rabbinic text which I will consider in relation to PRE is the TdBE (composed of the Seder Eliyyahu Rabba [SER] and the Seder Eliyyahu Zuta [SEZ]) – a collection of discourses which scholarly consensus dates to the later 10th century, and so is broadly of the same period as PRE.³¹ There are some thematic overlaps between the two works (e.g., SER 5 deals with resurrection, and SEZ 22-23 with repentance, both significant themes in PRE), but given the size of both works it is perhaps surprising that there are not more. Even when both treat the same theme, they do so in very different ways. The Tanna totally lacks the scientific interest of PRE and overwhelmingly concerned with ethics and *derekh 'eretz*. There are some verbal overlaps between the two works, particularly in the last three chapters of SEZ, a section, to which Friedmann gave the title *Pirqei ha-Yeridot*, discussing the fourth, fifth, and sixth descents of the ten descents of God, with obvious parallels to PRE 39, 40, and 41. This section clearly constitutes an appendix to the Tanna, and so the parallelism may not be all that significant. If the section is original to the Tanna, then it surely indicates, given the relative dates of the two works, that the Tanna knew and borrowed from PRE. The biblical subtexts on which the Tanna comments

³¹ Edition: Meir Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu Rabba und Seder Eliahu Zuta* (Vienna, 1902; repr., Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1969), and Friedmann, *Pseudo-Seder Eliahu Zuta* (Vienna, 1904; repr., Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1969); English translation William G. Braude and Israel J. Kapstein, *Tanna d'Be Eliyyahu: The Lore of the School of Elijah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society of America, 1981). Translations below are my own, Braude and Kapstein's being too free for my purposes. Lennart Lehmhaus's doctoral dissertation at the Martin-Luther Universität Halle-Wittenberg, "Seder Eliyahu Zuta – A guide to ethics for religious laymen?" (defended 21 March 2013), offers a new German translation of SEZ with commentary. Lehmhaus is posing the sort of questions to the SER which I am posing to PRE: see his "Between tradition and innovation," 211-42; further, Lehmhaus, "Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from heaven? Minimal Judaism and the unlearned 'Other' in Seder Eliyahu Zuta," *JSQ* 19.3 (2012): 230-58.

are not confined to Genesis and Exodus (as in PRE) but range more widely across Tanakh, and, unlike PRE, are not structured according to the biblical order.

SEZ 19-25 is of particular interest to our present concerns. Meir Friedman gave this section the title "Pirquei Rabbi Eliezer." Although this is not original, it correctly records the fact that the section is made up of seven discourses attributed to Eliezer that formally constitute a distinct unit within the work. The discourses begin as follows:

(1) SEZ 19:

שאלו תלמידיו את רבי אליעזר אמרו, מנין שעתיד הקב"ה לעשות נקמה באדום בעצמו,
מיד פתח ואמר, מי זה בא מאדום (ישעיה ס"ג א') זהו שנאמר ברוח הקדש על ידי דוד
מלך ישראל ...

His disciples asked R. Eliezer: From where do we learn that the Holy One himself will take vengeance on Edom? At once R. Eliezer opened (*patah*) and said, *Who is this that comes from Edom?* (Isa. 63:1). This is that which was said in the holy spirit by David, king of Israel ...

(2) SEZ 20:

אמרו [לו] תלמידיו לר' אליעזר, [רבינו] אמור לנו מה יהיה [בסוף] אחריתנו, אמר להם
[אני אודיע אתכם מה יבא] אין [כל] בריה יכולה להנצל מיום הדין, שנאמר וחפרה
הלבנה ובושה החמה (ישעיה כ"ד כ"ג), [זהו] שנאמר ברוח הקודש על ידי ירמיהו
הנביא ...

His disciples said to R. Eliezer: Our master, tell us, what will be our latter end? He said to them: I will tell you what will come to pass. No creature will be able to escape the Day of Judgment, as is said, *Then the moon will be confounded, and the sun ashamed* (Isa 24:23). This is that which was said in the holy spirit by Jeremiah the prophet ...

(3) SEZ 21:

אמרו לו תלמידיו לר' אליעזר, (רבי) [רבינו] אמור לנו באיזה אור אנו שמחים, באורו של הקב"ה או באורו של ירושלים (אומר) [אמר] להם באורו של הקב"ה, שנאמר אל ה' ויאר לנו (תהלים קי"ח כ"ז), [אמרו לו] והלא כבר נאמר קומי אורי כי בא אורך (ישעיה ס' א'), [מיד פתח ואמר], זו שנאמר ברוח הקודש על ידי דוד מלך ישראל ...

His disciples said to R. Eliezer: Our master, tell us in what light we shall rejoice – in the light of the Holy One, blessed be he, or in the light of Jerusalem? He said to them: In the light of the Holy One, blessed be he, as it is said: *The Lord is God, and will give us light* (Ps 118:27). They said to him: But has it not already been said, *Arise, shine, for your light has come* (Isa 60:1). At once he opened and said: This is that which was said in the holy spirit by David, king of Israel ...

(4) SEZ 22:

אמר להם ר' אליעזר לתלמידיו בניי יכולין אתם לעמוד בתוכחות, אמרו לו יהי רצון [לדברים] שתודיענו, מיד פתח ואמר, קרא בגרון אל תחשוך (ישעיה נ"ח א'), זהו שנאמר ברוח הקודש על ידי ישעיה הנביא ...

R. Eliezer said to his disciples: My sons, are you able to accept rebukes? They replied: Please explain to us. At once he opened and said, *Cry aloud, spare not* (Isa 58:1). This is that which was said in the holy spirit by Isaiah the prophet ...

(5) SEZ 23:

אמרו לו תלמידיו לרבי אליעזר, [רבינו] אמור לנו היאך נעשה תשובה ונחיה, מיד פתח ואמר, יענך ה' ביום צרה (תהלים כ' ב'), זו היא (שאמר) [שנאמר] ברוח הקודש על ידי שלמה [בן דוד] מלך ישראל ...

His disciples asked R. Eliezer: Our master, tell us how we may achieve repentance, so that we may live? At once he opened and said, *The Lord will answer you in the day of distress* (Ps 20:2). This is that which was said in the holy spirit by Solomon son of David, king of Israel ...

(6) SEZ 24:

אמר להם ר' אליעזר לתלמידיו, בני אל תבטחו [לא] בעושר [לא] בחכמה ולא בגבורה, שנאמר כה אמר ה' אל יתהלל חכם בחכמתו ואל יתהלל הגבור בגבורתו [אל יתהלל עשיר בעשרו] וגו' (ירמיה ט' כ"ב), זהו שנאמר ברוח הקודש על ידי שלמה בן דוד ...

R. Eliezer said to his disciples: My sons, do not trust either in wealth, or wisdom or power, as it is said: *Thus says the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his might, nor the rich man glory in his riches*, etc. (Jer 9:22). This is that which was said in the holy spirit by Solomon son of David ...

(7) SEZ 25:

אמר להם ר' אליעזר לתלמידיו, בני יודעים אתם (בשבח) [בשבחו של] אברהם, אמרו לו יהי רצון שתודיענו, מיד פתח ואמר תתן אמת ליעקב חסד לאברהם (מיכה ז' כ') זהו שנאמר ברוה"ק על ידי דוד מלך ישראל ...

R. Eliezer said to his disciples: My sons, do you know the praise of Abraham? They said: Please tell us? At once he opened and said: *You have given faithfulness to Jacob, mercy to Abraham* (Mic 7:20). This is that which was said in the holy spirit by David king of Israel ...

The formulaic nature of the openings is striking: either Rabbi Eliezer's students pose a question to him, or he poses a question to them; "at once he opens" his reply by quoting a verse, which he immediately relates to another verse (*zehu she-ne'emar be-ruah ha-qodesh 'al yedei ...*), and then he launches into his exposition. The use of *patah* here is interesting in view of our earlier discussion of the use of this verb in PRE. Here, however, there is arguably a ghost of the *petihah* in the second verse quoted, though the two verses are not linked by a *harizah* section. This formulaic opening is not found anywhere in PRE and, indeed, as we saw, the voice of Eliezer is really heard only at the beginning of the work, though individual dicta by him are quoted, along with other rabbinic dicta, throughout the work. The most interesting point of

comparison between PRE and SEZ 9-25 is simply the fact that both texts, which date from roughly the same time, pass themselves off as discourses uttered by the Tanna Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus.³² Together they suggest an interest in the figure of Eliezer at this period, possibly for the reasons suggested above.

4.4 PRE and Targum

One text that should, in principle, have been available as a source to PRE was the Targum. The institution of the Targum – the rendering of the lection for the day into Aramaic during the public reading of Torah in synagogue – predates PRE by centuries. Legislation for it is found already in the Mishnah, and it was almost certainly older still. By the time PRE was composed a number of Targums were in existence – several belonging to the so-called Palestinian tradition (Neofiti 1, the Fragmentary Targum, and a number of texts found in the Cairo Genizah), as well as Targums Onqelos and Jonathan, which had been reintroduced to Palestine from Babylonia in the early Islamic period. Targum was a ready source of exegesis of Scripture which had been exploited by earlier Midrashim such as BerR. Systematic analysis of the parallels, or lack of them, between these Targums and PRE has yet to be carried out, but with one Targum it has long been argued PRE has a particularly close relationship – the enigmatic Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (Tg. Ps.-J.) to the Pentateuch.

³² I assume that the Rabbi Eliezer mentioned in SEZ 19-25 is Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and not Eliezer ben Yosi ha-Gelili, to whom Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer is pseudepigraphically attributed. Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer is a post-Talmudic work, possibly as late as the 9th or 10th century. Confusingly there seems to have been an interest in Eliezer ben Yosi ha-Gelili as well as in Eliezer ben Hyrcanus in the early middle ages. See the edition by H.G. Enelow, *Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer: Midrash sheloshim u-shetayim middot* (New York, N.Y.: Block, 1933). Further: Stemberger, *Introduction*, 22-23; J.N. Epstein, "Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer," *HUCA* 23.2 (1950-51), *1-15 (Hebrew).

Friedlander was the first to propose a link. He recorded a number of parallels between Tg. Ps.-J. and PRE, and was so impressed by their strength that he concluded: "There is a very close connection between the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch, usually known as the Pseudo-Jonathan ben Uzziel, and our author. The present writer inclines to the view that our book [PRE] was one of the sources used by this Targumist."³³ M. Pérez Fernández took up the question in the introduction to his Spanish translation of PRE, and listed 39 significant parallels between the two works, which he implies indicate that the Targum relies on PRE. This was certainly an implication which Avidgor Shinan, who accepted Pérez Fernández's parallels, was prepared to draw. Robert Hayward carefully re-examined the parallels and argued that they did not prove the close relationship that Pérez Fernández and Shinan claimed, still less that Tg. Ps.-J. was dependent on PRE. In some cases the alleged parallel did not exist; the two texts were actually saying different things. In others a parallel does exist, but the tradition in question is found in other, earlier texts as well. There is no need to postulate that Tg. Ps.-J. could only have borrowed it from PRE, or vice versa.³⁴

There can be no question that Hayward has proved his point; there is no clear evidence that PRE was a source for Tg. Ps.-J. In fact it is difficult to compare the two texts: one is a discursive Midrash, with all the space it likes to develop its exegesis. The other, though willing to paraphrase quite extensively, remains constrained by its genre of translation, and is forced to be succinct, and allusive. I would, nevertheless,

³³ Friedlander, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer*, xix.

³⁴ See Miguel Pérez Fernández, *Los Capítulos de Rabbi Eliezer* (Valencia: Institución S. Jerónimo para la Investigación Bíblica, 1984), 31-36; Avigdor Shinan, "Dating Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Some More Comments," *JJS* 41 (1990), 57-61; Shinan, *The Embroidered Targum*; Hayward, "Pirkei de Rabbi Eliezer and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan."

argue that there is merit in seeing both works as emanating from the same Palestinian milieu, and insofar as they illuminate that milieu they throw light on each other. One has only to work through Le Déaut's notes to his French translation of Tg. Ps.-J. to see how often he quotes a parallel from PRE, and how often PRE is the *only* parallel he quotes.³⁵ Even when a tradition is found also elsewhere, the parallel with PRE remains a parallel, which at least suggests that both texts chose that tradition and not others and this, together with the small "unique" agreements, creates the cumulative impression that a significant level of correlation exists between Tg. Ps.-J. and PRE. A crucial aspect of this analysis has to be the date and provenance of Tg. Ps.-J. This remains a matter of dispute, and we must be careful not to fall into circular argument. Some have argued that the alleged parallels between PRE and Tg. Ps.-J. are evidence that the latter is of a similar date to the former. That argument, as Hayward has shown, is problematic. We must try to establish Tg. Ps.-J.'s date on other grounds.

I would suggest that there are grounds for assigning Tg. Ps.-J. to Palestine in the early Islamic period. First there is its language. This belongs to the dialect designated Late Literary Jewish Aramaic (LLJA) in the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*. The key feature of this is that it is a mixture of Aramaic dialects. In the case of Tg. Ps.-J. the two main dialects are Palestinian-Jewish Aramaic (PJA) and the Onqelos-Jonathan dialect (OJ). The most obvious indication of this is the use of both חמא (PJA) and חזה (OJ) for "to see", sometimes, apparently, purely for stylistic variation. This odd linguistic situation is best explained by supposing that Tg. Ps.-J. is a literary Targum (i.e., it does not have a direct vernacular base), composed by

³⁵ Roger Le Déaut, *Targum du Pentateuque I*.

someone who knew a range of texts in Aramaic, and simply picked and chose among the dialects of those texts to create the language of his work. This, in turn, is best explained by assigning Tg. Ps.-J. to the early Islamic period when Aramaic was beginning to die out as a vernacular among Jews, and was replaced by Arabic. This clearly would have taken some time, but a watershed is surely marked by Saadya's *Tafsir*, which indicates that there was a need for a Targum in *Arabic*. The alternative would be to suppose that Tg. Ps.-J. had a very long literary gestation, and that it contains elements of the old Palestinian Targum (effectively = Onqelos) which was steadily modified over centuries by introducing Palestinian elements (the PJA-stratum). This might incidentally explain why it contains side-by-side some of the oldest and youngest aggadot in any Targum. This scenario is complicated, and difficult to work out in terms of source analysis. It is much simpler to suppose that it was composed in LLJA in the early Islamic period.

There are other works of this period in a similar dialect: an obvious case is Targum Song of Songs. The dialect is not stable; it depends on what texts the author knew in Aramaic, and how he mixed the linguistic elements, but they are all mixed (and mixed PJA and OJ), and all literary. This linguistic argument is reinforced by the fact that certain traditions in Tg. Ps.-J. seem to indicate a date in the early Islamic era (I will discuss one of the most famous of these in a moment). Even those who see Tg. Ps.-J. as older, or as containing older strata, tend to accept that its final redaction happened after the rise of Islam. Though in principle Tg. Ps.-J. could have been composed either in Palestine or Babylonia, Palestine is by far the more likely provenance. There is no evidence that the Palestinian Targums of the Torah were known in Babylonia, nor other clear examples of LLJA being used there. If, then, Tg. Ps.-J. was composed in the early Islamic period in Palestine, it should be read in the

context of that time. Even if it is recycling older tradition, it is surely doing it for a purpose, and that tradition must have some relevance to its own day.

I will illustrate some of these points by considering three small examples, not from the point of view of source-criticism, as Hayward has done, but from a more general cultural and historical perspective.

(1) Gen 21:21

MT: וישב במדבר פארן ותקח לו אמו אשה מארץ מצרים

Tg. Ps.-J: ויטיב במדברא דפארן ונסיב איתא ית עדישא ונסיבת ליה אימיה ית פטימא אתתא מארעא דמצרים

He dwelt in the desert of Paran, *and he took as wife* *‘Adisha*, *and he divorced her*, and his mother took for him as wife *Fatima* from the land of Egypt.

The subject is, of course, Ishmael, the progenitor of the Arabs, and that there is an Islamic reference here is suggested by giving to Ishmael's wife the name of the daughter of Muhammad, a descendant, so Muslim tradition had it, of Ishmael. Fatima as a female name seems to be attested only in Arabic, so its Islamic reference is hard to avoid. Indeed, could any Jewish reader of this Targum in the early Islamic period have failed to pick up here in "Fatima from Egypt," a sly allusion to the Fatimid dynasty which claimed descent from Muhammad's daughter Fatimah, which from 969 ruled a large swathe of north Africa, and for a time parts even of Syria-Palestine, from its new capital Cairo? The author of Tg. Ps.-J. might even have been writing under Fatimid rule. Might some of his readers have also have recalled the fact that the Fatimids were Isma'ilis? Now the Isma'il here is, of course, Imam Isma'il ibn Jafar, not the biblical Ishmael, but the identity of the names, even if not intended, would surely have been relished by a learned audience. Ishmael's first

wife, ^cAdisha, is a well-known conundrum. The simplest solution is to suppose that this is a corruption of עיישא, the name of Muhammad's third wife: the same name is spelled עישה in PRE 30, 341 / 15. The *yods* were doubled to indicate consonantal pronunciation, but then the first got corrupted into a *dalet*. *Dalet* and *yod* can look similar in some forms of Hebrew script. Tg. Ps.-J.'s gratuitous aggadic addition that Ishmael married *twice* is clearly allusive, and it is plausible that the fuller story to which it alludes is preserved at PRE 30 (discussed 4.7.2 below). Ishmael married first ^cAyesha, but divorced her because she was inhospitable to Abraham when he visited. His mother then arranged a second marriage with "Fatima from the land of Egypt". One does not need to assume direct dependence here. Indeed, the brevity with which Tg. Ps.-J. introduces the idea might suggest it was a well-known trope. That we are here firmly in an Islamic milieu is surely hard to deny.

(2) Gen 3:6

MT: ותרא האשה כי טוב העץ למאכל וכי תאוה הוא לעינים ונחמד העץ להשכיל ותקח מפריו ותאכל ותתן גם לאישה עמה ויאכל

Tg. Ps.-J: וחמת איתתא ית סמאל מלאך מותא ודחילת וידעת ארום טב אילנא למיכל וארום אסו הוא לנהורא דעיינן ומרגג אילנא לאיסתכלת ביה ונסיבת מאיביה ואכלת ויהבת אף לבעלה עימה ואכל

And the woman saw *Sammael, the angel of death*, and she was afraid, and she knew that the tree was good to eat, and that it was a remedy for the light of the eyes, and desirable to gain enlightenment from it, and she took of its fruit, and ate, and gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

The notable point here for our present purposes is the introduction specifically of Sammael into the temptation and fall of Eve. We find this also at much greater length in PRE 13 (see 4.7.2 below). Sammael is introduced again in Tg. Ps.-J. at Gen 4:1 (according to BL 27031; the *editio princeps* is perhaps a censored text), where he

couples with Eve to produce her monstrous offspring Cain (cf. Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 5:3). This idea is also found in PRE 21 (223/9; see further 4.7.2 below). All the parallels that Hayward, Le Déaut, Spurling and Grypeou, and others have found to the tradition that Sammael was the angel of the temptation and fall of Eve, and that it was he who had intercourse with her through the serpent and so fathered Cain are old, but more importantly they are *non-rabbinic*.³⁶ The idea is not found in the other Targums, nor, as far as I have been able to discover, in earlier Midrash. It represents an innovation in *rabbinic* Bible-interpretation, and that two texts circulating around the same time in a rabbinic milieu in Palestine should have independently picked up this old, non-rabbinic tradition strikes me as rather implausible. There is a suggestion that the tradition is Gnostic in origin, and certainly Sammael plays a part in some Gnostic texts (e.g., Apocryphon of John), but this is unlikely, because in Gnostic mythology the fall was a good event – a fall into Gnosis, and the agent who caused it a redeemer figure, whereas Sammael is definitely ignorant and blind, an agent of the forces of evil.

(3) Gen 6:4

MT: הנפלים היו בארץ בימים ההם וגם אחרי כן אשר יבאו בני אלהים אל בנות האדם וילדו להם המה גברים אשר מעולם אנשי השם

Tg. Ps.-J: שמחזאי ועזאל הינן נפלן מן שמיא והוו בארעא ביומיא האינן ואוף בתר כן דעלון בני רברביא אינשא וילידן להון והינן מתקריין גיברין דמעלמא אינשי שמהן לות
בנת

Shemḥazai and ʿAzaʿel – these had fallen from heaven and were on the earth in those days, and also after the sons of the great ones had had

³⁶ Hayward, "Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan", 181-82; Le Déaut, *Targum du Pentateuque I*, 100-01; Spurling and Grypeou, "Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer", 217-43 (221-23).

intercourse with the daughters of men, and they had borne them children.
And these are called mighty ones from of old, men of renown.

Tg. Ps.-J. has clearly interpreted the *nefilim* of the biblical text as the angels who fell from heaven, and it names two of them Shemḥazai and ʿAzaʿel. The names are ultimately derived from the Enochic tradition about the fall of the Watchers (see 1 Enoch 6:3,7; 8:1; 9:6,7; 10:8,11, and further 4.5 below). Their appearance here is startling, given that there was apparently a reluctance to see any reference to a fall of angels in Genesis 6 in classic rabbinic Midrash, and the earlier Targumic renderings seem to go out of their way to avoid it.³⁷ It is true that the names ʿUzza and ʿAzaʿel are found in *b.Yoma* 67b in connection with the scapegoat, the “goat for ʿAzazel (עֲזָאֵל)”, on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:5-10). The goat for ʿAzazel is meant to “atone for the deed of ʿUzza and ʿAzaʿel”, as if ʿAzazel represents some sort of fusion of these two names. Now one wonders what the “deed” is that needs atonement: was it the sins of the fallen Watchers? The text does not say. It is totally obscure, and makes no explicit link with Gen 6. It is highly implausible that Tg. Ps.-J. could have inferred this link from *b.Yoma* 67b. The same may be said of the passing reference to Shemḥazai in *b.Niddah* 61a. There it is said that Sihon and Og were descendants of Shemḥazai. Again there may be a distant echo of the fall of the Watchers, in that Sihon and Og were giants, monstrous offspring of the fallen Watchers, who survived the Flood by clinging to the ark, but none of this is stated in the text, and it is again implausible that Tg. Ps.-J. derived the name Shemḥazai from there. Both these Talmudic references may suggest that distant memories of the Enochic myth of the fall of the Watchers survived in rabbinic circles, but it is only in the early Islamic

³⁷ Philip Alexander, “The Targumim and Early Exegesis of ‘Sons of God’ in Genesis 6,” *JJS* 23 (1972), 60-71.

period that full-blown versions of it emerge in rabbinic tradition. It is found in the little Midrash Shemḥazai ve-ʿAzaʿel, mentioned above (4.3.2), and in PRE 22, discussed below (4.5).

The PRE parallel may help to sort out a linguistic problem in Tg. Ps.-J. נפֿלֿן is odd. This is the reading of BL Add. 27031. The *editio princeps* has נפֿילֿין, which makes better linguistic sense, and has the merit of corresponding with the Hebrew נפֿילים, but this is rather too easy. I would suggest we should emend to נפֿלו, and then translate, as I have above, as a pluperfect: “Shemḥazai and ʿAzaʿel – these *had* fallen from heaven, and were [already] on the earth [then], and also after the sons of the great ones had had intercourse with the daughters of men.” In other words, there is an allusion here to an earlier fall of angels under the leadership of Sammael, connected with Gen 2-3, as we find in PRE (see 4.5 below). This would make sense, since Tg. Ps.-J. seems pointedly to refuse to identify the “sons of God” in Gen 6:1 with *angels*. It identifies them as “the great ones”, or “magnates” (*ravrevayya*). In other words, what is at fault in Gen 6:1-4 is humans marrying beneath their station, not angels coupling with humans. *Ravrevayya* is Onqelos, which used this translation precisely to avoid the translation “angels”. So Tg. Ps.-J. follows the traditional line, but still manages to get the fallen angels into the picture through *Nefilim* – a neat and typical Tg. Ps.-J. fusion of tradition and innovation. Tg. Ps.-J. and PRE are, then, in broad agreement, but we should not ignore the differences: (1) PRE does not mention Shemḥazai and ʿAzaʿel. (2) PRE clearly takes the “sons of God” as angels not humans. And (3) Tg. Ps.-J. seems to take the fallen angels as *themselves* the giants: the הַיָּנֹן refers back to Shemḥazai and ʿAzaʿel, not to the implied object of וילידֿן (the human offspring of the magnates and the daughters of men) – as Le Déaut’s translation I think correctly implies: “ce sont ceux qui sont appelés les géants

d'antan, des homes de renom." PRE, however, takes the standard Enochic line that the giants are the offspring of the monstrous coupling of angels and humans.

It is hard to generalize from such a brief discussion, but the parallels between Tg. Ps.-J. and PRE are surely suggestive. Direct literary dependence remains, as Hayward argued, problematic, but some broad similarities do emerge. Tg. Ps.-J. can be seen, surely, as a bold attempt to refresh and renew the Palestinian Targum tradition, in part by introducing some old and some non-rabbinic aggadot, but also by re-aligning it to meet concerns occasioned by the rise of Islam. PRE can be seen as driven by similar motives, only in its case it is trying to renew the *Midrashic* tradition. The difference here should not be underestimated. In the case of PRE the author is concerned to align himself with *rabbinic* tradition. That is less clear in the case of Tg. Ps.-J. Its author could, surely, have produced a Midrash, but he did not; he chose to write a Targum, to align himself with a tradition the *rabbinic* credentials of which are far from clear. This is distinctive, though it should be noted that there seems to have been a surge of interest in Targum in rabbinic circles in the early Islamic period. Targum Song of Songs, for example, is thoroughly a rabbinic creation. In fact it is a paean for the rabbinic Beit Midrash. All that said, if we look at the broad literary and cultural patterns that both texts seem to exemplify, I would suggest that they display certain similarities: both are concerned with renewal, through innovation of the tradition, to meet the new challenges presented to Judaism in the early Islamic period.

4.5 PRE and the Pseudepigrapha

One of Gerald Friedlander's most important contributions to the study of PRE was to draw attention to the fact that it contained numerous parallels to Second Temple pseudepigrapha. As I noted earlier, he was working at a time when the Pseudepigrapha were being discovered by biblical scholarship, and his excitement at finding so many parallels to his text in the newly available literature is palpable. The nature of his work – a translation of PRE with brief notes – meant that he could only list what he saw as parallels. He did not attempt to analyze them in any depth, but the sheer listing of the parallels had an effect on later scholarship. Many traditions in PRE could not be found in earlier rabbinic literature, but they could now be shown to exist in Second Temple texts. How could this have happened? How could knowledge of Second Temple traditions have re-emerged in rabbinic Judaism after so many centuries? The traditions in question were attested in works which belonged to the category of "outside books" (*sefarim hitzonim*) which had been put under ban by rabbinic authorities, and which were read at peril of one's eternal destiny (*m. Sanhedrin* 10.1).

Two theories have been proposed to solve this conundrum.³⁸ The first presupposes a rediscovery of Second Temple Jewish traditions by rabbinical scholars in the early middle ages. Second Temple pseudepigrapha did not disappear off the face of the earth: they were preserved by the Church, either more or less in their original form, or in Christian adaptations. The suggestion is that rabbinical Jews, in the freer religious climate of the early Islamic centuries, became reacquainted with these traditions, and, recognizing them as old Jewish lore, reappropriated some of

³⁸ The most recent substantial discussion of the problem is Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed*.

them. This certainly happened in the case of some apocrypha, such as Tobit, which was even translated into Hebrew, though the locus for this translation activity was almost certainly southern Italy (in the 9th century).³⁹ The second theory that has been proposed is that these Second Temple traditions did not, in fact, all disappear. They were transmitted in post-70 Judaism, though not, on the whole, in rabbinic circles, and this is why they do not appear in classic rabbinic Midrash. This theory has been given a boost by growing scholarly understanding of the diversity of Judaism after 70. Rabbinic Judaism did not dominate to the exclusion of all other forms of Judaism. A priestly tradition, distinct in some ways from rabbinic, may have survived, and transmitted some of this old teaching, and it was from there that it re-entered the rabbinic mainstream in the early Islamic period.⁴⁰ The survival even of Second Temple *texts* has been confirmed by the Cairo Genizah, which contained copies of the Aramaic Levi Document in a form close to that attested at Qumran. Central to that document was the heavenly investiture of Levi with the priesthood – a motif which comes up in PRE 37, 471/9-16.⁴¹

The scholarly debate on this point still rages, but any sensible discussion of it depends on a close analysis of actual instances of parallelism, to assess their nature

³⁹ For the texts see Stuart Weeks, Simon Gathercole, and Loren Stuckenbruck, eds., *The Book of Tobit texts from the principal ancient and medieval traditions with synopsis, concordances, and annotated texts in Aramaic, Hebrew, Latin, Greek, and Syriac* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004).

⁴⁰ See Philip Alexander, "What Happened to the Jewish Priesthood after 70?," in *A Wandering Galilean: Essays in Honour of Seán Freyne* (ed. Zuleika Rodgers; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 5-34.

⁴¹ See J.C. Greenfield, M.E. Stone, and E. Eshel, *The Aramaic Levi Document: Edition, Translation, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2004). The two already known Genizah fragments (Cambridge University Library, T-S 16.94, and Bodleian Heb. C.27 f 56) have recently been supplemented by an additional fragment from the Gaster Genizah in the Rylands library, edited by Gideon Bohak in *From Cairo to Manchester: Studies in the Rylands Genizah Fragments* (ed. Renate Smithuis and Philip Alexander; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

and strength, and this has been somewhat lacking. I shall attempt to illuminate the matter by analyzing the myth of the fall of the angels in PRE and in Second Temple tradition.

(1) The Fall of the Watchers

The Second Temple tradition of the fall of the angels is dominated by the Enochic myth of the Fall of the Watchers, classically expressed in the Enochic Book of the Watchers, which now constitutes the first fourteen chapters of 1 Enoch, but which is rather frequently alluded to elsewhere in the pseudepigrapha (e.g., Jubilees). This section of 1 Enoch, in a Greek translation, certainly survived down to the early middle ages in the Church, and was quoted at length by Syncellus, the Byzantine chronographer.⁴² The myth takes as its starting-point the story of the sons of God and the daughters of men in Gen 6:1-4. The “sons of God” are identified as angels, who were seduced by the beauty of mortal women, descended to earth to have intercourse with them, and from them were born monstrous offspring – giants (the *Nefilim* of the Bible) who literally began to devour the earth, and had to be destroyed in the waters of the Flood. Their spirits, however, lived on as demons who attack and oppress humanity. God judged the Watchers himself, and locked them up in a place of punishment, pending the day of judgement. Jubilees 4, as already noted in passing, contains a version of this myth, but with a slight variation. The Watchers were not seduced *from heaven*, but descended to earth on a mission from God to bring culture to humanity, and it was only then that they went off message, bringing

⁴² See Matthew Black, *Apoclaypsis Henochi Graece* (Leiden: Brill, 1970).

culture they should not have brought (weapons of war and cosmetics), and being seduced by the beauty of women (Jub. 4.15).

There are some grounds for seeing this myth as having been suppressed in rabbinic tradition. This is suggested by the negative attitude towards Enoch in rabbinic texts, and by the pointed interpretation of *benei 'elohim* as “judges” or “nobles”, which cuts the tradition off at its exegetical roots.⁴³ There is also evidence for the re-emergence of the tradition in the early middle ages: note, e.g., Tg. Ps.-J.’s reference to two of the Enochic Watchers, Shemḥazai and ʿAzaʿel, described as “those who had fallen from heaven” at Gen 6:4, and *Midrash Shemḥazai ve-ʿAzaʿel*, discussed above.

(2) PRE 13, 133/4ff: The First Account of the Fall of the Angels

PRE has two accounts of the Fall of the Angels, the first in PRE 13, 133/4ff, the second in PRE 22, 235/6ff.⁴⁴ According to the first, which is based on Gen 3, the fall took place because of envy – the angels’ envy of Adam, and his place in God’s purposes. It was a manifestation of the intense rivalry between humanity and the angels, a well-known motif of rabbinic Midrash.⁴⁵ The angels denigrate Adam in the words of Ps 144:3, “What is man, that you should take note of him?” God replies that he intends no rivalry: angels and humanity are meant to be complementary, the

⁴³ See Alexander, “Targumim and Early Exegesis of ‘Sons of God’ in Genesis 6”; Alexander, “From Son of Adam to Second God: Transformations of the Biblical Enoch,” in *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible* (ed. M.E. Stone and T. A. Bergren; Harrisville, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 87-122.

⁴⁴ For a recent discussion of the passages, with exhaustive bibliography, see Ryan S. Dulkan, “The Devil Within: A Rabbinic Traditions-History of the Samael Story in Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer,” *JSQ* 25.2 (2014): 153-75.

⁴⁵ See Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen*.

former praising him in heaven, the latter proclaiming his unity on earth. And, anyway, if angels are so clever, why do they not give names to all the creatures he has just created? Adam names the created creatures, doing what the angels cannot. The angels, publicly humiliated, retreat and plot to get their own back by seducing Adam into disobeying God. Their ring-leader is Sammael, the highest of the archangels (the Ḥayyot have four wings, the Seraphim six, but Sammael had twelve). He descends “with his faction” (*ha-kat shelo*) to see how he can effect Adam’s fall. He enters into the serpent and through it seduces Eve to eat of the forbidden tree, and she, in turn, seduces Adam. When Adam realises what he has done he exclaims, “Just as my teeth were set on edge, so shall the teeth of all generations be set on edge” (PRE 13, 141 / 6) The taint of his actions will pass down to his descendants – a striking statement of the doctrine of original sin.

A twist to the tale is recorded at PRE 21, 223 / 9–225 / 1:

He [Sammael] came riding on the serpent, and she [Eve] conceived Cain, and after that Adam came to her and she conceived Abel, as it is said, *And the man knew Eve his wife* (Gen 4:1). What is the meaning of “he knew”? That she was (already) pregnant. And she saw his [Cain’s] likeness that it was not from those below but from those above, and she looked and said: *I have acquired the Lord as a man!* (Gen 4:1).

Eve’s demonic “husband”, Sammael, recalls the tradition of Adam’s demonic “wife”, Lilith. Sammael, though an angel, effects intercourse with Eve through the body of the serpent. The resultant offspring, Cain, is monstrous in some way, as Eve recognizes. The echoes here of the monstrous offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men is hard to miss.

(3) PRE 22, 235/6ff: The Second Account of the Fall of the Angels

The Second Account of the fall of the angels is based on Genesis 6. It takes the “sons of God” in Gen 6:1 as angels and the daughters of men as the daughters of Cain “who walked about naked, with their eyes painted like harlots”. The angels lust after them and have intercourse with them. A careful reading of this passage in context suggests that we should translate *nafelu* at PRE 22, 239/2 as a pluperfect, “The angels who *had fallen* from heaven ... saw the daughters of Cain.” In other words it is a reference back to the events described in PRE 13. Thus the two stories are reconciled: the angels who fell in Genesis 3 are now involved in another bout of wickedness, a further descent into evil, in Genesis 6. The angels, when they fell in Genesis 3, PRE 22 now tells us, were reduced in strength and took on human-like bodies: “When they fell from heaven, from their holy place, their strength and stature became like the sons of men, and their frame clods of dust”. This solves one of the trickiest problems posed by assuming that the “sons of God” in Gen 6:1 were angels. How could angels, who are fiery creatures, possibly have had intercourse with human women? Testament of Reuben offered an ingenious solution. There was no physical intercourse between the angels and the women. Rather, the angels appeared to the women when they were having intercourse with their husbands, and, following an ancient medical theory that whatever is in the mind of a woman at the point of conception is imprinted on her offspring, the daughters of men gave birth to monstrous offspring in the image of the angels (Testament of Reuben 5). PRE, however, has the fallen angels become incarnate, and so coition with women becomes possible.

From this union giants (*‘anaqim*) were born, who committed robbery and violence. The giants multiplied, and were warned by Noah that if they didn’t mend

their evil ways God would bring upon them a flood. To try and forestall this they decided to limit their offspring by spilling their semen on the ground. They also reckoned that they were too tall to be covered by water solely from heaven; the highest water from there could reach would be to their necks. To prevent it being augmented by water from the depths, and so they would drown, they closed up the holes from which it would have emerged with the soles of their large feet. God, however, made the waters of the deep boil, and it burned the skin of their feet, and peeled it off, and, by implication, they were forced to remove them; the waters of the deep then bubbled out and the giants were drowned.

Another bit of the story emerges at PRE 34, 409/12-18: "But the generation of the Flood shall not arise, even on the day of judgment, as it is said, *The Rephaim shall not rise* (Isa 26:14). All their souls became spirits and harmful demons (*mazziqin*) to men, and in the future the Holy One, blessed be he, is going to destroy them out of the world, so that they should not harm the sons of men from Israel, as it is said, *Therefore have you visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish* (ibid.)" This has, surely, to be read in the light of PRE 13. The generation of the Flood is the wicked giants. The idea may be that to revive the bodies of the giants was to ask for trouble, to invite another outbreak of violence on the earth. Their souls, which survived them, and became demons, are causing enough trouble to humanity. That God will in the future destroy also those demons, and so the giants will be eradicated. The echo of the Enochic etiology of demons is striking.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ See Philip Alexander, "The Demonology of the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years* (ed. P.W. Flint and J.C. VanderKam; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 2: 331-54.

Though some of the parallels between PRE and Second Temple Pseudepigrapha cited by Friedlander and others smack of parallelomania and prove little, there can be no denying that some are striking, and among the most striking of these is the fact that PRE produces a remarkable version of the Enochic myth of the Watchers. This is rendered all the more striking by the fact that the bulk of the *aggadot* presented in PRE 22 has no antecedent in rabbinic tradition, at least as we now have it, nor is it likely to have been there, given rabbinic Judaism's apparent censure of the Enochic tradition. PRE must have had another source. Any decision on what that might have been has to be founded on close observation of the nature of the intertextual relationship between the two traditions.

Several points deserve note here:

(1) The relationship is thematic. There are no significant verbal overlaps, no unacknowledged quotations, of Enochic *writings*, at least of those that are known to us. This is compatible with the author of PRE having received the traditions in oral form, and this possibility is somewhat reinforced by the observation that we have scant evidence of the survival of Enochic *literature* in the milieu in which he wrote. The Syncellus quotations from the Book of the Watchers might suggest that 1 Enoch 1-14 was extant in Greek in his day, but could our author have read Greek? Oddly, the Enochic writings seem to have disappeared from the Syriac Church, though Enochic traditions are found in Syriac writings, such as the *Cave of Treasures*. There is always *Midrash Shemḥazai ve-^cAzael*, mentioned earlier, but its date and provenance are problematic. There is also 3 Enoch, though it rather proves the point, for although it clearly knows traditions about the exaltation of Enoch there is no

evidence that it knew the earlier Enochic *literature*. Its relationship to that literature is thematic, rather in the way that PRE's relationship to it is thematic.⁴⁷

(2) Whatever traditions the author of PRE received, he has reworked them and made them thoroughly his own. The style of his discourse is the same as elsewhere in PRE. He has found Scriptural proof-texts for many of the statements, and he has even had the nerve to attribute some of the traditions pseudepigraphically to leading rabbinic authorities – Rabbi, Rabbi Joshua, Rabbi Zadok, Rabbi Levi. One recalls here the attribution of Heikhalot traditions to Rabbi ʿAqiva, Rabbi Ishmael, and Rabbi Nehuniah ben Haqqanah. His most striking innovation, however, was to link together the two accounts of the fall of the angels – the one hinted at in Genesis 3, the other in Genesis 6. This is found nowhere in Enochic literature.

(3) Finally, for all the substantial parallelism between PRE and the Enoch tradition of the fall of the Watchers, the tradition is fundamentally exegetical. If one knows that “the sons of God” are angels, that they fell from heaven, and that the results of their coupling with human women was a monstrous giant offspring who caused mayhem and had to be dealt with by the Flood, then one could recreate many of the details of the story – many, but not all. There would remain details (e.g., the part played by cosmetics, and the etiology of demons) which could not be deduced by exegesis. Nevertheless, the point holds good: complex though it looks, it doesn't take much to transmit this tradition; it could easily be passed on orally.

⁴⁷ See the list of 3 Enoch parallels in Hugo Odeberg, *3 Enoch*. Further, Annette Yoshiko Reed, “From Asael and Semihazah to Uzzah, Azzah, and Asael: 3 Enoch 5 (§§7-8) and Jewish Reception-History of 1 Enoch,” *JSQ* 8 (2001), 105-36.

4.6 PRE and Piyyut

Already in his *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden* Zunz noted parallels between PRE and Piyyut, and those parallels were augmented by Albeck in his Hebrew translation of Zunz's pioneering work.⁴⁸ This parallelism was picked up by Friedlander in the introduction to his translation of PRE, and rightly set in the wider context of PRE's interest in liturgy.⁴⁹ More recently Joseph Yahalom has argued that PRE drew on piyyutim relating to the ^cAvodah, the service for Yom Kippur, as well as on piyyutim composed by Yose ben Yose, and Eliezer Treitl has claimed to have detected in PRE the influence of piyyutim by Yannai.⁵⁰ It should be noted that where parallelism occurs the trend now is to see PRE as dependent on Piyyut rather than the other way round, which was often how Zunz saw it, and Zunz's view chimed in with the general scholarly understanding (till recently) of the relationship of Piyyut to Midrash.⁵¹ One reason for this change of view is a new understanding of the dating of early Piyyut, which would now put it firmly before PRE.

I will probe this relationship by examining in some detail PRE's relationship to the *piyyut 'Az be-'ein kol*, a massive composition for Yom Kippur which Joseph

⁴⁸ Leopold Zunz, *Ha-derashot be-Yisra'el ve-Hishtalshalutan ha-Historit* (*Die Gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt*, (ed. Chanoch Albeck; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1947), 138.

⁴⁹ Friedlander, *Pirḳê de Rabbi Eliezer*, xx-xxi.

⁵⁰ Joseph Yahalom, *Priestly Palestinian Poetry: A Narrative Liturgy for the Day of Atonement* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 46-54 (Hebrew); Yahalom, *Poetry and Society in Jewish Galilee of late Antiquity* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2000), 130-36 (Hebrew); Treitl, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, 199-206. The older trend is well illustrated by the work of Zvi Meir Rabinovitz: *Halakhah ve-Aggadah be-Fiyyutei Yannai: Meqorot ha-Paytan, leshono u-tequfato* (Tel Aviv; New York: Keren Alexander Kohut, 1965), and *Maḥzor Piyyutei Yannai le-Torah ule-Mocadim* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1985-87).

⁵¹ Shulamit Elizur, "From Piyyut to Midrash," in *Rabbi Mordechai Breuer Festschrift: Collected Papers in Jewish Studies* (ed. Moshe Bar Asher; Jerusalem: Academion, 1992), vol. 2, 383-97 (Hebrew), is indicative of the new trend.

Yahalom has skillfully reconstructed from fragments, and which he believes to be a very early work, predating PRE by some margin.⁵² 'Az be-'ein kol is an 'Avodah, a composition for Yom Kippur, and so, in keeping with the conventions of that genre, it recounts the *Heilsgeschichte* from the creation of the world to the establishment of the cult. Swartz and Yahalom explain the reason for the inclusion in an 'Avodah of an account of creation thus: "A major theme in the poems is that creation itself took place for the sake of the cult. This notion complements the rabbinic idea, formulated most famously in Midrash BerR 1:1, that the world was created by the pre-existent Torah and humankind was in turn created for the Torah's sake".⁵³ I am not convinced that the emphasis here is quite right. Rather behind the structure of the 'Avodah is the idea that creation could not have endured but for the cult: without the means of atoning for sin, God would have been compelled to destroy his world. The rituals of the Day of Atonement are, therefore, of cosmic significance, and prevent the world from returning to *tohu va-bohu*. Be this as it may, 'Az be-'ein kol, as a typical 'Avodah, covers from creation to Sinai, exactly the time-span embraced by PRE. There are, consequently, numerous opportunities for parallels to emerge, and Yahalom has drawn attention to a number of these. The one on which I will focus picks up again the discussion we had above with regard to BerR 1.1 and the role of Torah in creation. The crucial section of the piyyut runs as follows:⁵⁴

[ואהיה אצלו אמון]¹

⁵² Joseph Yahalom, 'Az be-'Ein Kol: *Seder ha-'Avodah ha-'Eretz-Yisre'eli ha-Qadum le-Yom ha-Kippurim* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1996). See further Michael D. Swartz and Joseph Yahalom, *Avodah: An Anthology of Ancient Poetry for Yom Kippur* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 95-220.

⁵³ Swartz and Yahalom, *Avodah*, 30.

⁵⁴ Note the line numbers here number the lines of the extract, not the lines of the original composition.

בדעתך נשענתה | בבינתך בטחתה | בעוזך נגליתה | ב[כח]ך [נסמכתה] | |
 בארוכה מארץ {התורה} | ברחבה מני ים | בקניין קדם | בר[אש]ית [לכל פועל] | |
 בקו צדקה | ו[משקולת חסד] | בימין חיים | ב[עושר] וכבוד | |
 בלבך הוצפנה | ומפיד הונבעה | בידך ה[...] תה | כ[ביד ח]רש | |
 [במר]איה חצבתה | עמודי שחקים | עד לא תהו [ובהו] | לקרות עליות | |
 ב[...] תה טווי | לולאו[ת] ושרשרות | עד לא [] [...] | [לב]נות אוהלך | |
 [ב...] תה | טבעות נש[יה] | עד לא ר[ו]חיד | מצ[רף צ...] ה | |
 [ב...] | אור כשלמה | עד לא המתקתה | טוב לעינים {אור} | |
⁴⁰ [ב...] ה | אור מ[ע]לה | עד לא הטמנתה | תהו ובהו בתהומות | |
 [ב...] | [שלג] וקיסור | עד לא תחסכם | ליום קרב ומלחמת | |
 [ב...] | [] | [...] | עד לא יוצק עפר | לדבק רגבים {ליצירת אדם} | |
 [ב...] | [] | [...] | עד לא תשמיע בכנף | זמר לרוקעה | |
 [ב...] | [] | [...] | עד לא ינוסו מגערך | |
 15 בחוטבה הנבכתה | שפך בדלי {המים} | עד לא תחצה | חפויים לחוקם {המים} | |
 בכלוליה נעלתה | אשנבי ארובות | עד לא יופתחו | ביום גשמת זעם {המבול} | |
 בחוגה חקתה | עינות תהום רנה | עד לא יובקעו | למחות יקומים [בזעף] | |
 בנופתה המתק[ת]ה | יבול מגד ותנוב | עד לא תטע אשל | לטעום מות וחיים | |
 בחר[...] ה[חווירתה] | צמר מ[רו...] ב[עת] | עד לא תתאיר קשת | ותדריך חץ לפג[ע] | |
²⁰ [בשננה] [ל]טשתה | חרב עקל[תון] | סנפירי לויתן | עד לא יברית | על בריחי מצולה | |
 [בבריכתה] העצמ[תה] | [ס]נפירים ודאים | עד לא תתן סיח | לדג ועורב {הדג שבלע את יונה.
 העורבים שהאכילו את אליהו} | |
 [בקומצה] קרצתה | [ש]אור מאדמה {אדם} | עד לא תתיך חלב | להקפיא גבינה | |
 [בשעשו]עיה | [ששת] ימי המעשה | עד לא יגיע נופש | ותשבות עבודה | |
 [בתמימה ...] {התורה} | כל פועל במחשבת | ואחר כך כחכם | התחלתה לבנות | |

²⁵ [ככ'] ייי בחכמה (משלי ג, יט)

⁴1 [And I was with him as an artificer]

On Your knowledge you relied, | on Your understanding You trusted, |
through Your strength You were revealed, | on Your power you
depended. | |

On that which is longer than earth {Torah}, | on that which is broader
than sea, | on Your primordial possession, | on the beginning for every
action, | |

On the measuring line of justice | and the scales of kindness, | on the
right hand of life, | on riches and honour; | |

⁵ In Your heart it was hidden, | and from Your mouth it poured forth, by
Your hand [...], | as by the hand of a craftsman. | |

By it envisionings You hewed | the pillars of the heavens, | before there
was primordial chaos | for the upper rafters.

By [its ...] You [made] a weaving | of loops and chains, | before [...] | to
build Your tent. | |

By [its ...] You [fashioned] | rings of the earth, | before Your winds |
were a crucible [...]. | |

By [its ... You clothed Yourself with] | light as a garment, | before You
made | a good for the eyes {light}. | |

¹⁰ [...] | light above, | before You hid | primordial chaos in the abysses.
| |

[...] | snow and smoke, before You made them ready | for the day of
battle and war. | |

[...] | [...] | before dust was kneaded | for the clumping of clods {to
make Adam}. | |

[...] | [that which is gathered in] the hollow of Your hand {the waters}, |
before they fled | at Your rebuke.

¹⁵ By its design You subdued | that which pours from a vessel {water} |,
before You divided it | humbled to its bounds. | |

By its fullness You closed | the sluices of the windows, | before they were
opened | on the day of furious rain {the Flood}. | |

By its circuit You set a limit | on the springs of the great abyss, | before
they were broken open | to blot out all that exists in anger. | |

By its honey You sweetened | produce, choice fruit, and crops, | before
You planted a tree, | for the tasting of life and death. | |

By [its ...] You made white | a fleece [...], | before You drew a bow, |
and aimed an arrow to strike. | |

²⁰ [By its whetstone] You sharpened the sword of the Serpent {Leviathan's
fins}, | before he locked the bars of the deep. | |

By its pools You increased | fin and fowl, | before You spoke | to a fish
and a raven {the fish that swallowed Jonah, the ravens that fed Elijah}. | |

By its grasp You nipped off | leaven from the ground {Adam}, | before
you poured milk | to curdle cheese. | |

By its delights | You created the world in six days, | before repose came,
| and a resting from toil. | |

By perfection [...] {Torah}, | each action according to plan, | and after
that, like a wise man, | You started to build. | |

²⁵ As it is written: *By Wisdom the Lord [laid the earth's foundations; by
Understanding He set the heavens in place; by His Knowledge the deeps were
divided, and the clouds let drop the dew]* (Prov 3:19).

Parallels between this passage and the discussion of the role of Torah in creation in PRE and in BerR are at once obvious. The figure of Wisdom in Proverbs plays a central role in all three texts. This section of the piyyut is rounded off with a quotation of Prov 3:19-20, and the language there is echoed in the opening stanza.

Prov 8 is also in play, seen, doubtless, as stating more fully what is implicit in Prov 3:19-20. The title of the section, with its quotation of Prov 8:30, is actually an addition by Yahalom, but it is a shrewd one that rightly recognizes the influence of that biblical verse on our poet. It may, however, be a little misleading, in that the key term *'amon* does not actually appear in the body of the poem. This is a little curious. At the end of line 5, if the text is sound, we find the word *ḥarash*, “artisan, carpenter”. The drift of the sense here appears to be: “By your hand you created, as by the hand of an artisan”. “Hand” here follows in the sequence “heart”, “mouth”, but in context must surely be yet another poetic designation of Torah. So Torah is a *ḥarash*. But why not an *'amon*? It is hard to see any metric or stylistic reasons why *'amon* could not have been used. Perhaps the meaning of *'amon* was deemed too unclear, and *ḥarash* represents an interpretation of it. The hearer, however, is still expected to recall *'amon*. A strong allusion to Prov 8:30 can be heard in the vivid word *sha'ashu'im* in line 23, but even more important is the repetition of the structural element *'ad lo'*. The majority of the stanzas of this section have the same form: by means of *x* (the preposition is *b-*), where *x* is a poetic designation of Torah itself, or an attribute of it (i.e. by means of Torah's *y*), God performed some general or specific act of creation, *before* (*'ad lo*) the physical reality came into being. The *b + noun* element is derived from Prov 3:19 (*be-ḥokhmah*, though see also *bi* in Prov 8:15), but the *'ad lo'* element picks up Prov 8:26, *'ad lo' 'asah 'aretz*. The argument of the section is pretty clear at stanza 24: the Torah is the “thought” of God, and in that thought was first conceived all the elements that were later to be created. Only then did God, like a wise man, begin to build.

For our purposes stanza 6 is crucial: “By means of its [i.e. Torah's] *mar'im* you [God] hewed out the pillars of heaven, before there was *tohu* and *bohu* for the upper

beams.” Swartz and Yahalom translate: “Looking into it, You carved out the pillars of the heavens before there was primordial chaos on which the rafters could rest”.⁵⁵ This is tendentious and involves assimilating the piyyut to BerR 1.1’s, *mabbat ba-Torah*. I am not sure what is meant here by the *mar’im* of Torah, but I suspect it is being used in some sort of technical sense akin to the Platonic ideas (perhaps, “by the images of the Torah”). The Torah contains the archetypes of creation and it is by following these that God created the world. The idea in BerR may be broadly similar, but it is not put that way, and the lack of *verbal* overlap between the texts should not be ignored. It is hard to make much sense of the piyyut unless it is talking, in a broadly Platonic way, about the creation of a *noumenal* world, prior to the creation of the material world. One inevitably thinks of the Platonic account of the creation of the world in Philo’s *De Opificio Mundi* where God creates the world in accordance with the ideas that inhere in the divine Logos. Here Torah plays the part of the Logos, and it is in accordance with its “envisionings” (*mar’im*) that God makes the material world. The verb *hatzab* may be used here in the technical sense of “hewing out” the material world, a sense which it may have also in the *Sefer Yetzirah*.⁵⁶ Also noteworthy here is the denial of the eternity of matter: there was a time when *tohu* and *bohu* were not: they do not constitute *eternal* primordial matter. When the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* is first clearly stated in Jewish thought is disputed: it is not in Gen 1:1-3, a point acknowledged as late as Rashi.⁵⁷ It is clearly implied here, and the philosophical sophistication of this idea chimes in with the generally philosophical reading of this passage I am proposing. In the light of this,

⁵⁵ Swartz and Yahalom, *Avodah*, 104.

⁵⁶ E.g., *Sefer Yetzirah* 10.

⁵⁷ See Rashi to Gen 1:1.

stanza 5 gains added significance. The Torah originates in God's "heart" – a poetic way, perhaps, of referring to the divine logos or intellect, and it was "poured forth from his mouth" – an allusion to creation by divine speech in Genesis 1. Here we have a philosophical statement of the role of Torah in creation, albeit dressed in poetic garb. There is here a sophistication of language and a theological subtlety that would be worthy of a *Kontakion* of Romanos the Melodist.

Once we analyse the piyyut in this way, on its own terms, it should be clear, in the light of the earlier discussion under 4.3.1, that, while there *are* parallels between PRE and the piyyut, there are also some very significant differences. As we saw PRE focused on the image of Torah as God's "counsellor", rather than on the image of Torah as God's "craftsman". In this respect the piyyut is closer to BerR than PRE. There is nothing in PRE about the creation of a noumenal realm, before the creation of the material cosmos. Indeed one wonders if its idea of the seven things that were created before the creation of the world (PRE 3, 15/4-5) implies a *denial* of the Platonic view. For PRE the pre-mundane creation is limited to only seven things, and they are not archetypes of the physical world, but, on the whole, instruments of salvation which God would deploy in his future moral governance of the world.⁵⁸ The idea of the prior creation of a noumenal world is not articulated even in BerR, though its position is not incompatible with it. In the light of these differences it would be very problematic to assert that PRE is here dependent on the Piyyut. This example, as far as I can see, is typical of all the alleged parallels between PRE and

⁵⁸ This comes out not so much perhaps in the list of seven, as elsewhere in PRE – the ram that saved Isaac belonged to the pre-mundane creation, and the fish that saved Jonah.

Piyyut. The parallels are thematic: there are no significant verbal overlaps, but the themes are treated in very different ways.

There are also pragmatic considerations which should make us cautious in principle about asserting the dependence of PRE on Piyyut.

(1) Almost inevitably, the Piyyut expresses the idea in a more oblique way than PRE because that is of the essence of its style. Its language is highly wrought and full of neologisms. In some respects it recalls the gnomic style of parts of the Qur'an. Note how here it relies linguistically heavily on Job, one of the most obscure bits of Hebrew in Tanakh. PRE's language is simpler, its style more limpid. It is hard to see how PRE could have acquired the doctrine of the role of Torah in creation from Piyyut, if it hadn't already known it from elsewhere. It was for this very good reason that older scholarship, when it discovered a parallel between Piyyut and Midrash, tended to favour the clearer Midrash as the source, rather than the obscurer Piyyut.

(2) Dependence in either direction between PRE and *'Az be-'ein kol* at this point would be more likely if the idea that Torah played a role in creation was exclusive to PRE and the Piyyut, but, of course, it is not. It is not even exclusive to PRE, the Piyyut, and BerR. It belongs to a very old discussion of the meaning of *re'shit* in Gen 1:1 that goes back to Second Temple times. The casual allusion in PA 3.15 to Torah as "the precious instrument by which the world was created" may suggest that this idea was something of a commonplace.

(3) We should never forget the problems of the creation and dissemination of texts in the literary environment in which PRE was created. It would be nice if we

could assume that the author of PRE would have heard the *'Az be-'ein kol* performed in his synagogue on Yom Kippur, but we can't. It is desperately unclear just how our extant ancient piyyutim relate to actual synagogue liturgy. They were probably *meant* to be performed, but surely there are too many of them to suppose that all of them were. It would have required a very patient audience to have heard the *'Az be-'ein kol* right through, and an astonishingly learned one to have made any sense of it. *Piyyutim* were incorporated into many *nusahim*, but many clearly were not, and that, presumably, is why the *'Az be-'ein kol* vanished from sight. So we should not assume that it is obvious how PRE could have known it. The parallelism between the two texts would have had to have been a lot stronger for us to brush these concerns aside.

4.7 PRE and Christian and Islamic Tradition

So far we have considered possible relations between PRE on the one hand and texts and traditions within Judaism on the other, but PRE lived in a world dominated by Christianity and Islam, both of which claimed a relationship with Judaism. Is there any evidence that it knew or used traditions originating in either of these two faiths, or defined its relationship to them?

4.7.1 Christian Tradition

To investigate possible intertextual relations between PRE and Christian tradition I will return to PRE's retelling of the story of Jonah and the Big Fish in PRE 10. As we saw, this is one of the most memorable discourses in PRE, and, apparently, one of the most original, since much of its content cannot be paralleled in antecedent rabbinic literature. Jonah figures prominently in Christian tradition, beginning with

the New Testament, and I propose now, briefly, to read PRE 10 against Christian readings of the story. It has to be conceded at the outset that it is impossible to prove that the author of PRE was aware of or reacted to Christian interpretation. That he *could* have known it is a reasonable assumption, given that in his Palestinian milieu Christians remained in his day a large and active religious community,⁵⁹ but there is no direct evidence that he did. We are here at the very limits of intertextuality, yet a cautious exploration may still prove worthwhile. A comparative midrashic approach is being applied more and more widely to the study of the Old Testament/Tanakh, and the evidence is growing that Jews in antiquity were more aware of Christian interpretation than has hitherto been supposed.⁶⁰ Silence about Christianity on the Jewish side is not necessarily to be understood as ignorance or indifference. In some cases it may be what Alexander has called a “loud silence”, aimed at denying an opponent the oxygen of publicity.⁶¹ The acid test is whether or not the exercise proves illuminating, whether it has heuristic value, sharpening up our understanding of PRE, and whether it helps explain puzzling features of the text.⁶²

⁵⁹ See in general Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008), and for religious interaction between Jews, Christians and Muslims at the grass-roots level, see Joseph W. Meri, *The Cult of Saints*.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012), and, at the exegetical level, Emmanouela Grypeou and Helen Spurling, eds., *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), and Grypeou and Spurling, *The Book of Genesis in Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

⁶¹ See Philip Alexander, “Jewish Believers in Early Rabbinic Literature (2d to 5th centuries)”, in *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries* (ed. Oskar Skarsaune and Reidar Hvalvik; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007), 659-709.

⁶² For a discussion and application of the principles of heuristic comparison see Ann Conway-Jones, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Tabernacle Imagery in its Jewish and Christian Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Christian appropriation of the figure of Jonah begins already in the New Testament. There are two key passages.

(1) Matthew 12:38-42:

³⁸ Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to him, "Teacher. We wish to have a sign from you." ³⁹ But he answered them, "An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For just as Jonah was for three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights, the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth. ⁴¹ The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here. ⁴² The queen of the South will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here!" (NRSVA)

(2) Luke 11:29-32:

²⁹ When the crowds were increasing, he began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah. ³⁰ For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so the Son of Man will be to this generation. ³¹ The queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation, and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and see, something greater than Solomon is here! ³² The people of Nineveh will rise up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the proclamation of Jonah, and see, something greater than Jonah is here!" (NRSVA)

Several points about these passages should be noted. (1) The polemical context of the tradition. It is deeply critical not just of the scribes and Pharisees, but of "this generation", the Jewish people as a whole. The people are taxed for their rejection of Jesus, and their wicked behaviour contrasted with the good behaviour of gentiles –

the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba. The gentiles play a central role in the argument. (2) The eschatological emphasis on the day of judgment. (3) The parallelism drawn between Jonah and Jesus. Jonah is a “sign”.⁶³ In Matthew this is interpreted to mean that his experience of being swallowed by the fish and three days later spewed out again onto dry land is seen as a foreshadowing of Jesus’ death and resurrection after three days. In other words the sign was to future generations, and particularly “this generation”. In Luke, however, it is Jonah himself who is the sign to the people of Nineveh. The meaning of this is not self-evident, but behind it may lie the assumption that the Ninevites knew of Jonah’s death and deliverance (as, interestingly, some Jewish interpreters suppose), and that the knowledge of that miracle was material in turning them to repentance. Either way, the reader is invited to draw parallels between Jonah and Jesus. Not only are their resurrections similar (a point explicitly made), but also their deaths, in that both give their lives to save others (a point implicit in the texts). (4) Fourth, the main stress is on accepting or rejecting *salvation*. It is true that the repentance of the Ninevites is mentioned, but the key point is the acceptance or rejection of God’s messenger, of God’s Messiah. The repentance of the Ninevites comes up primarily as evidence that they accepted Jonah.

The message of this Gospel tradition is reasonably clear, and it was interpreted very straightforwardly in patristic exegesis, which tended simply to paraphrase it, adding a few homiletic flourishes. It fitted neatly into the dominant typological reading of the Old Testament in the early Church, and, indeed, was seen as a major justification of it, drawn from Jesus’ own practice. All the points listed

⁶³ The sign of Jonah is mentioned again in Matt 16:4, but the reference adds nothing.

above are brought out one way or another, e.g., in Homily 28 of Chrysostom's influential *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*, though he notably sharpens the polemical angle into a typical full-frontal attack on Jews and Judaism of his own day.

The importance of the figure of Jonah for Christian iconography should also be noted, because it shows just how popular his story was, in a way that cannot be gauged from the written record. He escaped from the pages of Scripture and from preaching in the pulpit into popular culture, and was one of the most ubiquitous symbols of resurrection and salvation right across the Christian world. The entry "Jonas" in the *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie*, lists more than two hundred Jonah images in the form of sculptures and frescoes, as well as depictions on glass, on medallions, on oil lamps, and on sarcophagi, from all over the Mediterranean and Middle East.⁶⁴

The images record mainly two episodes from the story:⁶⁵ first, his being thrown overboard into the sea, and second, his resting under the gourd outside the city of Nineveh. Both are handled dramatically. In the case of the former Jonah is portrayed being *lowered* not *thrown* into the sea, sometimes directly into the mouth of the waiting fish (cf. PRE 10). He is usually naked, and enters the fish's mouth sometimes feet first, but sometimes (amusingly) head first. The "fish" is always a sea-monster – a *kētos*, in keeping with the LXX translation of *dag gadol* as "a large *kētos*", a mythical creature with the head of a dragon, long ears, big arms and paws like those of a dog, and the long, twisting body of a serpent ending in a fish-tail. Leviathan does not feature in the Christian retellings of Jonah, but surely in

⁶⁴ F. Cabrol and H. Leclercq, *DACL*, vol. VII part 2, 2572-2631.

⁶⁵ See especially the important study by Bezalel Narkiss, "The Sign of Jonah," *Gesta* 18/1 (1979), 63-76.

Christian iconography there is a nod towards him in the *kētos*. A classic example of this image is “The Jonah Ship” (No. 77.7, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art), a slightly damaged sculpture from Tarsus, dating to the first half of the fourth century CE.⁶⁶

Jonah under his gourd is iconographically more complicated. His pose is usually one of sleep, or deep rest, and there is clear reference to the figure of Endymion, the beautiful youth who was put into an eternal sleep by Zeus, and so remained forever young. His “gourd” is often botanically more like a vine. Sometimes the earlier episode with the big fish will be referenced, thus combining the two images. According to Narkiss this is “the most popular Old Testament scene depicted by the Early Christian artists”, pre- and post-Constantine.⁶⁷ A good example is a marble sculpture from the eastern Mediterranean, dating to the second half of the third century, that featured in the “Byzantium: 330-1453” exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts, 25 October 2008-22 March 2009.⁶⁸ Another is the relief on the front of the third century CE sarcophagus of Junius Bassus in the Santa Maria Antiqua (Rome), which features a naked Jonah lying stretched out Endymion-like, with his arm over his head, next to a *kētos* and a ship floating in the water near the shore.⁶⁹ An ivory pyxis in the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, offers an even

⁶⁶ Narkiss, “Sign of Jonah,” 65, fig. 1.

⁶⁷ Narkiss, “The Sign of Jonah,” 63, 66.

⁶⁸ Robin Cormack, and Maria Vassilaki, eds., *Byzantium: 330-1453* (London: Royal Academy of Arts: 2008), 53.

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, *The Iconography of the Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), Appendix 11. See also Appendix 12.

more dramatic fusing of the two images: Jonah reclines *on* the *kētos* with a vine growing over his head.⁷⁰

The main elements of the Jonah iconography have clearly been standardised from early on – particularly the form of the *kētos* and the Endymion-pose, the latter showing only small variations according to whether the figure is dressed or not, is young or old, bearded or clean-shaven, balding or with a head of hair. They constituted a fixed inventory of motifs used to depict Jonah, an inventory which was known and used by Christian artists right across the Christian world. What did the imagery mean? What did it symbolize? The short answer surely is death and resurrection/salvation. Jonah is lowered into the maw of death, but we know from the rest of the story that he will be saved and raised to life again. Jonah beneath his gourd does not really represent Jonah sitting morosely outside Nineveh longing for death, but Jonah saved, and saved eternally. This is why he is shown as Endymion, the eternal youth. Narkiss goes further, and suggests that an association is intended between Endymion/Jonah and the resurrected Christ. This interpretation is strengthened by the transformation of the gourd into a vine (“I am the vine”), and by the addition of pastoral elements in some versions of the image. For example, on the Junius Bassus sarcophagus, Jonah is depicted as a shepherd, with sheep around him. This is rather clever, because in one version of the classical legend Endymion was a beautiful shepherd-boy. In the Christian context Narkiss suggests the idyllic scene refers “to Paradise, in which the soul rests forever, after escaping from death and the fire of hell”,⁷¹ but it is surely more obvious to see here Jonah as a type of Christ, the Good Shepherd who gave his life for his sheep. However we look at it, it is hard to

⁷⁰ Narkiss, “The Sign of Jonah,” 68, fig. 8

⁷¹ Narkiss, “The Sign of Jonah,” 67.

avoid seeing the image as an image of salvation, and eschatological salvation at that. This is why images of Jonah were so popular on sarcophagi.⁷²

When we read PRE 10 against this Christian tradition it lights up in a number of distinctive ways. The same themes are there: death, salvation, resurrection, eschatological redemption. Friedlander suggested that PRE 10 may have been a *derashah* for Yom Kippur, when Jonah is read as the Haftarah for Minḥah. Certainly the biblical book's themes of repentance and divine forgiveness are appropriate for the occasion, but, as we saw, PRE 10 seems precisely to avoid those themes. It ignores the end of the book, where they are found, and picks them up separately in chapter 43. Its focus is on salvation, the salvation of the gentile sailors, and Jonah's part in it – a foreshadowing, surely of the eschatological, universal recognition by all the nations of the God of Israel. Jonah is a messianic figure, a type of the Messiah. Indeed, he seems to have a role at the eschaton. He tells Leviathan: "For your sake I descended, to see the place where you dwell, because in the future I am going to put a rope in your tongue, and bring you up, and sacrifice for the great feast of the righteous" (PRE 10, 99/18-20). In other words Jonah is reconnoitering Leviathan's abode, so he knows where to find him when the time comes for him to draw him up, and butcher him for the messianic banquet. This end-time role for Jonah is found elsewhere in Jewish texts. There is a tradition that Jonah was permitted to enter Paradise alive, and Ginzberg suggests that this was because he still had a role to play in the last days. Indeed, it is possible that some believed that he would come back as the Messiah son of Joseph.⁷³ Be this as it may, PRE 10 clearly assigns messianic

⁷² Narkiss, "The Sign of Jonah," 66, fig. 2: "Maritime episodes of Jonah on a sarcophagus," Ny Carlsberg, Copenhagen.

⁷³ See Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), 6:351, fn. 38. Ginzberg remarks: "It is ... possible that the Messianic part attributed to Jonah ... is an

functions to Jonah – both as a type of the Messiah, and as himself a divine agent at the end of days. A final point to note is that Jonah (Yunus) is important also in Islamic tradition, but Islamic tradition follows closely the biblical story and sees Jonah as a sign of repentance and divine forgiveness: the themes which PRE 10 shares with Christian tradition are absent (see above). This strengthens our suspicion that PRE 10 is related in some special way to Christian tradition.

The congruence between PRE 10's reading of the Jonah story and the Christian reading is thought-provoking. What might it mean? It is hard to see any strong polemical intent here. It is true that in restating a Jewish reading of the story of Jonah PRE may be seen as in some way denying the Christian reading. PRE could be fitted into the paradigm of polemical counternarrative discussed in 4.7.2 below, but an argument along these lines would strike me in this case as a little forced. Here the author of PRE seems happy simply to take a leaf out of Christianity's book and accept that it is right to see Jonah as a messianic figure, and as a type of the Messiah, though, of course, for PRE the Messiah is not Jesus. There might, however, be a subtle dig at Christianity at the end. The gentiles will convert, but in doing so they will be circumcised and abandon idolatry. PRE almost certainly regarded Christianity as engaging in idolatry (see 3.6.4.6 above). Is there, then, here an implicit answer to the Christian claim that the gentiles at the eschaton will condemn the Jews for rejecting Jesus. No, suggests PRE, they will condemn the Christians for *idolatry*.

adaptation of the Christian view which considers him a prototype of Jesus: see Matth. 12.39; Luke 11.29."

4.7.2 Islamic Tradition

We can read PRE not only against Christian, but also, in a similar way, against Muslim tradition, and in the latter case we are on somewhat safer ground because the presence of Islam in PRE is more obvious than the presence of Christianity. At least since the time of Bernard Heller it has been clear that the author of PRE was acquainted with Islamic sources.⁷⁴ The case I will briefly consider to illustrate this point is one that has already been extensively worked, and is the subject of a recent thorough and nuanced article by Carol Bakhos. It is the remarkable story, not attested in antecedent Jewish literature, of Abraham's visit to his expelled son Ishmael in PRE 30, 335/4ff.⁷⁵

The plot may be summarized as follows: One day young Ishmael, who was a skilled archer, instead of shooting at birds takes a shot at his brother Isaac. Sarah sees and, alarmed for her son's safety, demands that Abraham give Hagar a bill of divorce and send her away with Ishmael. Abraham is grieved and reluctant, but after a night-time intervention by God, he complies. Next morning he gives Hagar a *get* and packs her off with a water-bottle and bread, but he ties the water-bottle round her waist in such a way that it will drag behind her in the sand and so reveal where she and Ishmael went. The water lasts till they get to the entrance of the wilderness, but there Hagar reverts to the idolatrous practices of her ancestors. Immediately the water dries up. Ishmael, parched, throws himself under a thorn

⁷⁴ Bernard Heller, "Muhammedanisches und Antimuhammedanisches in den Pirke Rabbi Eliezer," *MGWJ* 33 (1925), 47-54.

⁷⁵ See Heller, "Muhammedanisches und Antimuhammedanisches in den Pirke Rabbi Eliezer"; Joseph Heinemann, *Aggadot ve-Toledoteihen* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974), 181-99; H. Schwarzbaum, *Mi-meqor Yisra'el ve-Yishma'el. Yahadut ve-Islam be aspaqlariyat ha-folqlor* (Tel Aviv: Don Publishing House, 1975), 220-25; Aviva Schussman, "Abraham's Visits to Ishmael – The Jewish origin and orientation"; Carol Bakhos, "Abraham visits Ishmael: A revisit," *JSJ* 38 (2007): 553-80.

bush and prays to God for death. God takes pity on him and reveals to him a well that had been created at twilight on the sixth day of creation. Hagar and Ishmael quench their thirst and fill their bottle, and are able to cross the wilderness to the fertile land of Paran, where they settle.

So far PRE follows the biblical narrative closely, with a few homiletic flourishes. Now it adds a story which has no biblical basis. Ishmael marries a Moabite wife called 'Ayesha. After three years Abraham comes on a visit to see his son, having promised Sarah it would be a fleeting one (he swore "he would not descend from the camel in the place where Ishmael dwelt"). He arrives in the midday heat and finds 'Ayesha. He asks her where Ishmael is, and she replies that he and his mother are away harvesting dates in the wilderness. Abraham asks for food and water, but 'Ayesha says she has neither. Abraham, offended by the lack of hospitality, gives her a cryptic message to pass on to Ishmael from "an old man from the land of Canaan" to "change the threshold of his house". Ishmael understands the allusion and divorces 'Ayesha. His mother takes him a new wife from her father's house, Fatima by name.

Three years later Abraham comes on a second visit, again swearing to Sarah that he will not descend from the camel in the place where Ishmael dwells. Again he arrives at midday, and this time meets Fatima. He asks where Ishmael is, and is told that he and his mother have gone to feed the camels in the wilderness. Again he asks for food and water, and this time Fatima obliges. In gratitude he prays to God for his son Ishmael, and at once Ishmael's house is filled with good things. Abraham departs and Ishmael returns, and when Fatima tells him what has happened he knows that his father still loves him. After Sarah's death Abraham remarries Hagar, now called Keturah, and has six sons by her, but, as with Ishmael, Abraham sends

them away from Isaac his son, with gifts. PRE 30 at this point goes over to more discursive mode, launching into a learned discussion about who are the descendants of Ishmael, and concluding with a mini-apocalypse about what the sons of Ishmael will do in the Land of Israel in the latter days.

Ishmael (Isma'il) is an important figure in Islam, and the traditions about him are rich and varied. They have been thoroughly studied by Reuven Firestone and his synopsis need not be repeated here.⁷⁶ For present purposes the essential point to grasp is that these traditions play a fundamental role in keying Islam into the *Heilsgeschichte*, and in validating its revelation and practices. Muhammad is the seal of the prophets – the last of a line of divine messengers sent by God to instruct humankind, the one who brought the climactic and definitive revelation. Establishing a link between him and earlier prophetic history was absolutely crucial, and the Ishmael-cycle played a central role in this. The way it did so was by making the claim that the place to which Hagar and Ishmael went, as told in the Torah, was Mecca, and indeed Abraham took them there and it was there that he offered up Ishmael, and built the Ka'aba. Details of Hagar's and Ishmael's adventures at Mecca are commemorated in rituals associated with the Hajj.

When we read PRE 30 against the Islamic tradition several points emerge.

(1) There can be little doubt that Islamic tradition is the source of some of the elements in PRE. For example, the story about Abraham's two visits to Ishmael, his encounter with his two wives, of whom the first does not offer hospitality while the

⁷⁶ Reuven Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands: The Evolution of the Abraham-Ishmael Legends in Islamic Exegesis* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990), 76-79. See also Carol Bakhos, *Ishmael on the Border: Rabbinic Portrayals of the First Arab* (New York: SUNY Press, 2006), 116-19.

second does, and Abraham's coded message to Ishmael "to change the threshold of his house" are straight out of Islamic sources.⁷⁷ It makes little sense to see this story as Jewish in origin. It is unknown in Jewish tradition before PRE, and the trope of hospitality which is central to it fits in with the Islamic depiction of Ishmael as exemplifying this virtue: he is shocked to discover that in his absence his first wife has been inhospitable, and so divorces her. PRE, however, is surely being a little mischievous in calling Ishmael's wives by the names of Muhammad's third wife A'isha, and his daughter, Fatimah.

(2) Though Bakhos is right that we should not assume that PRE's relationship to Islamic tradition at this point *must be* polemical or apologetic, and she is justified in criticizing Heller for carrying the supposed polemics down into the fine detail of PRE's narrative, she seems to have failed to notice that the intertextual relationship here is *intrinsically* polemic. Polemics do not have to lie on its surface: they are built into the very nature of the relationship. Islam originally appropriated the Abraham-Ishmael cycle of stories in Torah, and retold them to legitimise the cult at Mecca.⁷⁸ This was already a hostile move, because those stories (and particularly the 'Aqedah) had been used for centuries in Judaism to legitimise the cult in *Jerusalem*. The context of the appropriation was Muslim-Jewish inter-religious politics, symbolized by Muhammad's changing of the Qibla – the direction of prayer – from Jerusalem to Mecca. What we have here is a well-known strategy of inter-religious

⁷⁷ See, e.g., al-Tabarī's, *Tacrikh al-rusul wa-al-mulūk*, conveniently translated by William M. Brinner, *The History of al-Tabarī, vol. II: Prophets and Patriarchs* (Albany N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1987), 69-97.

⁷⁸ The identification of the biblical "Desert of Paran" with the Hijaz, or Paran/Faran with a place in the region of Mecca, is very old in Islamic tradition. It is found already in the *Kitāb al-Tigān* of Wahb bin Al-Munabbih, a famous transmitter of *Isra'iliyyat*, who died around 730 (see Wahb bin Al-Munabbih, *The Book of the Crowns on the Kings of Himyar: Kitāb al-Tigān* (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2009).

polemics – counter-narrative, i.e., taking a story from another religion and retelling it in some way *against* the religion which originated it. In re-affirming in an Islamic milieu the original story PRE is inevitably at some level engaging in polemic.⁷⁹ By absorbing into its version some of the details of the Islamic counter-narrative, but still asserting the essence of the original Jewish story, PRE is itself engaging in counter-narrative.

We should not miss some overtly hostile moves that PRE makes. (a) Implying that Ishmael was an idolator (see PRE 30, 339/7-9: Hagar is the culprit, but see 3.6.4.6 above) would not have gone down well in Muslim circles. It is true that Muslim historiography spoke of a time of ignorance (*jahiliyya*) among the Arabs before the coming of Muhammad, but that did not extend to Ishmael, who was revered as a prophet. (b) Ishmael's role in the 'Aqedah, which PRE retells in the following chapter (PRE 31), contains anti-Islamic elements. The very fact that Isaac is portrayed as the sacrifice negates the standard Muslim view that it was Ishmael.⁸⁰ Ishmael was present (PRE takes care to tie the 'Aqedah of chapter 31 into the Ishmael narrative of chapter 30: "Ishmael went out from the desert to see Abraham his father" (PRE 31, 353/7)), but he was not the sacrifice. Note the incident where an unseemly quarrel breaks out between Eliezer (Abraham's servant) and Ishmael over who will be Abraham's heir once Isaac is dead. "The holy spirit answered them, saying to them,

⁷⁹ For the idea of a polemical counter-narrative see Philip Alexander, "Jesus and his Mother in the Jewish Anti-Gospel (the *Toledot Yeshu*)," in *Infancy Gospels: Stories and Identities* (eds. Claire Clivaz et. al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 588-616, esp. 604. Alexander uses the *Toledot Yeshu* as an example of counter-narrative, but it should be noted that it differs strongly from the Abraham's Visit to Ishmael story. The latter lacks the parody and scurrility of many versions of the former.

⁸⁰ In some early Islamic sources it is Isaac who is the victim, as in Jewish tradition (Firestone, *Journeys in Holy Lands*, 135). This might work, if one identifies the Land of Moriah in the Bible with Mecca. It would, however, remain a hostile move, because Jewish tradition identifies Moriah as the Temple mount in Jerusalem.

‘Neither this one, nor this one shall inherit’” (PRE 31, 357/3). Isaac is the true Muslim, the true heir of Abraham. Then a little later when Abraham sees the place of sacrifice afar off, he asks Isaac, Ishmael and Eliezer what *they* see. Isaac says he sees “a pillar of fire standing from earth to the heavens.” Abraham understood that the lad had been accepted for the burnt offering. He said to Ishmael and Eliezer, ‘Do you see anything upon one of those mountains?’ They said to him, ‘No.’ He reckoned they were like asses so he said to them, “*Remain here with the ass* (Gen 22:5).” He said to them, ‘Just as the ass sees nothing, so you see nothing’ (PRE 31, 357/9-17). Ishmael did not receive divine revelation, he was not a prophet, and, perhaps, by implication, neither was his descendant Muhammad. (c) Note the gloss at PRE 30, 347/17–349/3: “Balaam said: Out of the seventy nations which the Holy One, blessed be he, created, he did not put his name on any of them except Israel. [But] since the Holy One, blessed be he, made the name of Ishmael similar to the name of Israel, woe to him who shall live in his days, as it is said: *Woe to him who shall live when his name is El* (Num 24:23).” The sense is obscure but it can surely be read as saying that Israel is the true chosen people of God, not the Ishmaelites, that the Ishmaelites will bring trouble on Israel, which anticipates the list of negative acts of the sons of Ishmael listed at the end of the chapter, notably the “wars of confusion” that they will bring upon the Land, and that in some sense Ishmael is a *counterfeit* Israel.

(3) And yet, having said all this, we can still accept that Bakhos is right in arguing that PRE’s acceptance of the Muslim story of Abraham’s visit to Ishmael is remarkable, and suggests a more complex and conflicted attitude towards Islam than is expressed by the idea of outright rejection. In accepting the Muslim story PRE is conceding a lot: Abraham visited Mecca, which is now, by implication,

identified with the place Paran mentioned in the Bible. Abraham maintained a loving and concerned relationship with his son Ishmael. It looks as if the author of PRE was willing to accept the truth of the Muslim claims that Abraham has connections with the region of Mecca. That tradition was not found in the Bible, but preserved by the Arabs. It is, however, compatible with the biblical narrative, and the author of PRE is prepared to take it as true and integrate it into his understanding of the Bible. PRE's depiction of the tensions within Abraham's family, between Isaac and Ishmael, between Sarah and Hagar, between Abraham and Sarah ("Abraham told Sarah he would not descend from the camel" is a masterly touch), between Abraham and 'Ayesha, between Ishmael and 'Ayesha, are vividly realized: the gender relations are subtly portrayed, Abraham, Isaac and Ishmael, in a way, lining up against Sarah, Hagar, 'Ayesha, and Fatima. The implication may be that the relationship between Judaism and Islam is like relationships within families; close but often complex. The analogy carries a positive as well as a negative charge.⁸¹

4.8 Conclusion: PRE and Other Texts

From this survey, it becomes reasonably clear that PRE is swimming in a sea of texts, a fact that only emerges because we still possess some of the texts and traditions that it knew. It openly acknowledges only two of these texts: Tanakh and rabbinic tradition. The others are used silently, leaving no indication of its relationship to them on the surface of its text. It is against the background of these intertextual relations, and the diachronic questions which they inevitably raise, that one has to

⁸¹. Despite the generally unfavourable criticism it received, Michael Cook and Patricia Crone, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977) contains a lot of material pertinent to our theme which deserves to be reworked.

read PRE. Intertextual analysis is a necessary supplement to the more synchronic analysis which I attempted in the previous chapter. Without it, it is all too easy to misread the literary codes embedded in the text. No text is an island; it cannot be read neutrally. If we do not make ourselves aware of the literary and intellectual tradition within which it was composed, then we will read it not against its true historical context, but inappropriately against our own very differently constructed literary expectations.

Can we infer PRE's attitude to its various intertexts from its use of them? The answer is: to some degree. It is surely significant that PRE openly acknowledges dependence on only two of them – Tanakh and rabbinic tradition, and clearly regards these as carrying great authority. What does it see as the relationship between Tanakh and rabbinic tradition? To answer this we do not have to rely purely on inference from its praxis. As I noted in 3.6.4.5 above, PRE subscribes to some version of the rabbinic doctrine of Oral Torah (possibly a high version of it), which sees rabbinic tradition as an authoritative interpretation of the Torah, and a supplement to it. PRE for certain regards the Torah of Moses as divine revelation, given in the most awesome circumstances to Israel at Sinai (as Torah itself claims), but it quotes the prophets and the writings equally freely, and, to judge by the range of its quotations, it subscribed to the standard synagogue canon of Scripture. This doctrine corresponds reasonably well to PRE's observable hermeneutic practice. Tanakh is treated as the supreme authority: there are more direct quotations of it than of any other source; its words are closely parsed and subjected to exegesis in a way that rabbinic dicta are not; and the rabbinic dicta themselves acknowledge, through quotation, the authority of Tanakh. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude from this show of deference that PRE is totally subservient to Tanakh and

rabbinic tradition. As already noted PRE was heir to sophisticated techniques of hermeneutics that allowed Scripture to be moulded to its own agenda, and, as we saw, it was equally capable of implicitly critiquing and reshaping rabbinic traditions to its own ends.

Though the author of PRE submitted to the discipline of presenting his ideas by relating them to Tanakh and rabbinic tradition, this does not seem to have stopped him innovating, and this is where his relationship to his unacknowledged intertexts becomes important. He drew on outside sources, and integrated them with Scripture and rabbinic tradition. This is true of his scientific ideas. There must have been sources on which he was relying (probably written), but we no longer have them. The Baraita diShemu'el, as I argued, was not a direct source, but it nevertheless attests to the presence of scientific interest and knowledge (of a sort) in PRE's milieu. PRE also picked up on Second Temple traditions, exactly how, again we do not know. Midrash Shemḥazai ve-ʿAza'el, however, suggests that written versions of some of them in Hebrew may have survived down to PRE's time. PRE was aware of and used aspects of Christian and Islamic tradition, but how they were mediated to it, whether by oral or written texts, and what form those texts took, we cannot now say. The author of PRE drew on all these non-rabbinic texts, and presented them as compatible not only with Scripture but with Scripture read *rabbinically*. He is adamant in not rejecting rabbinic tradition: he places himself squarely within it, but he silently integrates these new traditions into it. His aim can only be guessed at, but it may have been to enrich and refresh rabbinic tradition. He may not have been the only one in his day engaged in renewing tradition. Tg. Ps.-J. displays some striking parallels to PRE's distinctive material, and, although I argued that it is difficult to see it as a direct source for PRE, or vice versa, it does seem to

attest a similar interest in expanding tradition; a similar turn to new sources. Some of that expansion may have already happened in Piyyut, though we must be careful not to identify it too closely with rabbinic tradition (it may represent priestly lore, which, though overlapping often with rabbinic tradition, was fundamentally independent of it), and there are problems, I suggested, with seeing Piyyut as a direct source of PRE. The TdBE, which can also be seen as broadly representing this new turn, may attest like PRE to a revival of interest in the figure of Eliezer ben Hyrcanus, the great lone voice of the Tannaitic period, and in an interest in invoking him as the patron of new ideas. None of this can be proved, but there seems to be patterns here which are deeply suggestive, and point to a rich and illuminating context for PRE.

Chapter Five: Implications of the Profiling of PRE

5.1 Implications for the Inventory

The present dissertation has attempted a literary profile of PRE, informed by the approach theorized in the Manchester-Durham Inventory, but with modifications based on the experience of trying to apply it to this particular text. These modifications represent the first substantial critique of the Inventory, helping, I would hope, to refine it and carry it forward to the next stage of its development. My main theoretical contribution, I would suggest, has been to explore and clarify the relationship between the synchronic and diachronic aspects of the exercise. These have to be kept in constant dialogue, but in a disciplined and orderly way. The Inventory encourages us to begin synchronically by describing in as neutral language as possible the surface literary features of a single received text. However, as soon as we begin to ask what is the significance of these features, we inevitably find ourselves getting into diachronic questions which take us beyond the confines of the text in hand. We have to see the text in its literary context. In the case of PRE I achieved this by exploring its intertexts. The intertexts chosen were texts with which PRE has (or has been alleged to have) some sort of intertextual relationship: shared stories, shared themes, shared wording. Chapter 3 of this thesis was concerned fundamentally with synchronicity, and chapter 4 with diachronicity. What I did not do was to explore the diachronicity of PRE itself. I simply accepted the *textus receptus* and profiled that, but the *textus receptus* is only one historical recension of the work - there are others. These other recensions could be seen as the primary intertexts of the *textus receptus*, but to have tried to include them would have been impossible within

the confines of the present work, and the matter is best handled as a separate issue. Others have attempted a history of the text of PRE, notably Treitl. The fact is that the Inventory applies only to single *extant* texts; it does not offer a method for profiling *a whole textual tradition*. The title “Pirquei deRabbi Eliezer” is often used loosely in the scholarly literature to designate the *whole* textual tradition that has been passed down under that name, or some putative *Urtext* that lies behind it. However, both of these are scholarly constructs, their literary status is in some doubt. So I have confined my analysis largely to the *textus receptus* – itself, of course, in origin possibly a scholarly construct, but by now a given and part of the tradition. One has to start somewhere. I would argue that any history of the textual tradition we call “Pirquei deRabbi Eliezer” has to begin by profiling independently the major versions of it before speculating on their possible historical relationship. I would also argue that the sort of literary analysis which I have attempted in this dissertation is logically prior to all other modes of analysis, with the exception of philology and translation.

The profile of PRE I have offered above stands or falls on its own merits, but before I bring this dissertation to a close I would like to reflect on the profile’s implications in two areas: the genre of PRE and its literary-historical context.

5.2 Implications for the Genre of PRE

Literary genre has long been the subject of intense debate in literary studies, both with regard to modern and pre-modern literatures.¹ Genre is vitally important from two angles – that of the author and that of the reader. When authors set out to compose a work, they have to decide what sort of text they intend to write. The way, by and large, this seems to work is that they choose from types of texts known to them and use one of these as their model or starting point. Readers, when they pick up a work, have to decide what kind of work it is and that decision will colour how they read it: Is it a history? Is it a novel? Is it an academic article? The decisions they make on this point will be influenced by the literature *they* have read. They will successfully read the text if they correctly discern the genre intended by the author from the literary signals within the text. However, the possibilities for misprision² are endless, and often realized.

There were attempts in the ancient world to theorise genre, that is to say, to identify types of literature and to decide what their literary characteristics might be. The most sophisticated of these occurred within the Greek tradition with the development of rhetoric, the study of effective and persuasive verbal communication.³ Hugely influential examples of such theorising are Aristotle's *Poetics* (c. 335 BCE) and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* (c. 95 CE). To a degree these

¹ Some of the most interesting work on ancient genres has been done in connection with the study of the Gospels. See, e.g., Richard Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004).

² I use the word in the sense defined by Harold Bloom, e.g., in his *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). As Bloom argues, creative misreading can be a powerful driver of literary innovation.

³ See the useful survey in Stanley E. Porter, ed., *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C. – A.D. 400* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

were descriptive of actual practice in that they started with existing genres of text, but they also tended to pass over into prescription; they laid down the law as to how certain types of text *should* be written. These works had an enormous influence on literary criticism, but their influence on actual writers was more muted. Writers did not reach for rhetorical handbooks before they started to write, but worked more by *mimesis*. They copied existing models of the type of text they wanted to write, but often pushed the boundaries of the genre in the process. The more creative they were, the more they pushed these boundaries.

The sort of theorising of genre which we find in the Graeco-Roman literary tradition is totally absent from the Jewish. There were different genres of text (e.g., law, history, wisdom, prophecy, poetry, commentary, translation, etc.) but the definition of those genres was very primitive. People still composed in these genres, but they did so by *mimesis*, by copying existing texts in the genre, at times pushing the currently set boundaries of the genre in the process. The primitive nature of early Jewish genre descriptions is well illustrated by the titles under which PRE has come down in tradition: the “Haggadah” of Rabbi Eliezer; the “Baraita” of Rabbi Eliezer; the “Chapters” of Rabbi Eliezer, none of which tell you much about the type of text it is. Oddly the genre classification most commonly applied to it now – “Midrash” – is not one that is prominent in the tradition. It is also problematic as a genre description.

It was partly the perceived inadequacy of such traditional genre labels to capture what is actually going on in a text like PRE that inspired the Inventory to abandon them and start again with a modern, rigorous, comprehensive, scientific *description*. The Inventory does not itself define genres, but it provides a tool that can be used to that end. One can exploit it to create new taxonomies of texts based on

similarity of profile. There are problems with this: one would need to theorise a *hierarchy* of profile points and the status of the genres which would emerge would not be clear both with respect to the communication of the *author's* generic intentions and the *reader's* generic perceptions. To put this more simply, would an actual ancient reader recognise any of the profile points as being generically significant? These are not questions that can be pursued here.

So with these caveats in mind, what does our profiling exercise indicate are the defining characteristics of the type of text PRE is? I would suggest the following three points:

(1) PRE is fundamentally a collection of discourses, each discourse being on a particular theme, or a number of related themes. The texture of the discourses is varied and each includes a number of microforms – propositions, dicta, biblical proof-texts, lists, exempla, and the like – which drive the argument forward.

(2) The discourses to some degree stand on their own feet, but PRE on analysis displays high-levels of coherence – higher than one might at first suppose. In other words it is not simply a random collection of discourses. There is an overall unity to the work. That unity is in part achieved by grouping some of the discourses into series (e.g., one discourse on each of the six days of creation, with an opening discourse on the pre-mundane creation, and a concluding discourse on Shabbat forms an obvious block), but also in part by pervasively shadowing a subtext – the Bible, from the creation of the world to the giving of the Torah on Sinai. The unity of the text is fundamentally expressed at the thematic level: the author deals with a limited number of themes which at every opportunity he tries to link to each other.

(3) The content of PRE is primarily theological and ethical.

I will deal with the diachronic implications of the profile in a moment, but two aspects are relevant here:

(1) If genres tend to be mimetic, what type of text is PRE imitating? What were its models, what was its literary starting-point? There are no very obvious models among the texts which PRE would have known, though there are some texts which are more or less contemporary with it that show certain similarities of profile. One of these is the TdBE (both SER and SEZ), which I discussed at some length. Another would be *Pesiqta Rabbati*. The latter can be profiled as a series of thematic discourses ordered by a subtext, in this case the lectionary for the festivals, which is structured ultimately by the calendar that determines their sequence. Where are the parallels in the earlier rabbinic corpus? A Talmudic *sugya* might offer some similarities, or perhaps the long *petiḥot* at the beginning of *Eikhah Rabbah*. But they are not that close. Perhaps the closest parallel, as I mentioned briefly in passing, is Philo's *Allegories of the Sacred Laws*, a series of discourses on theological and ethical themes pegged sequentially to the biblical text, but this is a model which would *not* have been known to the author of PRE. There does seem, then, to be real innovation here, but PRE is not necessarily the innovator, since other texts from around the same time show similar literary features.

(2) The second question is the *Sitz im Leben* of this genre. Joseph Yahalom offers the following opinion: "It is usually thought that the prose writers belonged to the study hall, while the religious poets were of the synagogue. In this exceptional case [PRE], we have before us a prose midrash whose depictions, pictures, and

imagery are taken from the world of the synagogue.”⁴ This neatly captures the exceptionalism of PRE, but I have problems with seeing the synagogue as its primary *Sitz im Leben*. Yahalom’s view that it originates, in part at least, from his claim that there are close links between PRE and Piyyut, a claim which I gave reasons to question. It also goes against the fictional setting of the work itself, which identifies it as a lecture delivered in the Beit Midrash. Certainly there were some non-scholars present on the occasion, but they were *cognoscenti* and patrons, not the general public. The knowledge horizon of the text (which includes its language, Hebrew) is very learned, and indicates a scholarly text for a scholarly audience. If these discourses had been delivered in synagogue, they would surely have gone over the heads of the majority of the congregation. The main form that discourse took in the synagogue was the *derashah*. The nature of the *derashah* in late antiquity remains a matter of debate, but one would expect it to have been more closely linked to the lectionary and to the biblical text than we find in PRE.⁵ This is not to deny that

⁴ Joseph Yahalom, *Poetry and Society in Jewish Galilee in Late Antiquity* (Hakibbutz Hameuchad: Tel Aviv, 2000), 136 (Hebrew).

⁵ It has to be conceded, however, that the distinction I am drawing here must remain speculative and provisional until a lot more has been done to analyse the rhetoric, topics, and structure of the synagogue sermon. It is very difficult to get behind the written texts to the oral texts actually delivered, and too few researchers in the past seem to have recognized that this is a problem. From Zunz’s *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge* to Jacob Mann and Isaiah Sonne’s *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue* (2 vols.; 1940, repr. New York: Ktav, 1971), it was more or less taken for granted that the history of the sermon is the history of the midrashim or, more restrictedly, of the so-called homiletic midrashim: a *pisqa* of Pesiqta Rabbati is a close transcription of a sermon as spoken. More recent work has questioned this. See: Joseph Heinemann, *Derashot ba-Tzibbur bi-Tequfat ha-Talmud/ Public Sermons in the Talmudic Period* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1971); Heinemann, “The Art of the Sermon of the Palestinian Amora’im: An Analysis of Two Proems,” *Ha-Sifrut/Literature* 25 (1977), 69-79 (Hebrew); Joseph Heinemann and Jakob J. Petuchowski, *Literature of the Synagogue* (1975; repr. Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press: 2006), 107-96; Richard S. Sarason, “The Petiḥot in Leviticus Rabba”; Günther Stemmerger, “The Derasha in Rabbinic Times,” in *Preaching in Judaism and Christianity: Encounters and Developments from Biblical Times to Modernity* (ed. Alexander Deeg, Walter Homulka, and Heinz-Günther Schöttler; Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008), 7-21; Alexander Deeg, *Predigt und Derasha: Homiletische Textlectüre in Dialogue mit dem Judentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 88-104; Stuart S. Miller, *Sages and Commoners in Late Antique Erez Israel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck,

ideas that originated in synagogue preaching could find their way into Beit Midrash texts: synagogue preaching may have been one of the sources of Midrashim such as BerR; but the more plausible *Sitz im Leben* for the kind of discourse we have in PRE is surely the Beit Midrash. Given the probable date for PRE we should not rule out the possibility that, though drawing on oral sources and originally oral literary forms, it was a *written* composition right from the start, and intended to be *read*. In other words, it did not pass through an oral stage before being written down. Its *Sitz im Leben* would then be the private study – the private study of the scholar who composed it, and the private studies of the scholars who read it.

5.3 Implications for the Literary Historical Context of PRE

Though it is not my purpose here to attempt to set PRE in its historical context, the profile has thrown up a number of distinctive features of the work which cry out for historical reflection. The first is its innovation. Compared with the earlier literature which its author knew, PRE seems new and different. This comes out in two main ways: its literary form and its use of non-rabbinic tradition. As I noted, PRE shares its discursiveness with a number of other texts of the period. Where does this discursiveness come from? Is it due simply to internal literary evolution, or could there be external influence? There is, of course, one text of the period which is massively discursive, and which has long been regarded as breaking the literary mould within the rabbinic tradition, and that is Saadya's *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*.⁶

2006), 234-63; Holger M. Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies*, 51-94; Burton L. Visotzky, "The Misnomers 'Petihah' and 'Homiletic Midrash' as descriptions from Leviticus Rabbah and Pesikta D'Rav Kahana," *JSQ* 18.1 (2011): 19-31.

⁶ See the brilliant characterization of Saadya by Robert Brody, *Sa'adyah Gaon* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2013).

There are differences between Saadya and PRE. Saadya is much more flowingly discursive, much more logically and propositionally argued than PRE, and for all that he is a champion of the Rabbanites, he does not, unlike PRE, quote rabbis, though he is often quietly summarising and harmonising rabbinic tradition. His proofs are massively scriptural. Yet it is surely not fanciful to see PRE as sharing some of Saadya's discursiveness, especially in comparison to earlier rabbinic literature. It would be worthwhile to do a comparison of PRE's treatise on the resurrection (PRE 34) with that in the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions* (Treatise VII), not just in terms of doctrine but also in terms of literary form. Saadya's work is profoundly influenced by the Qalam, and this surely hints at a direction we should explore in seeking to explain the literary form of PRE: we should set it in the context of *Arabic* literature of its period.⁷ What we should remember is that, if it was the case that rabbinic Jews in the time of PRE were beginning to speak Arabic, then they were gaining access to the dominant intellectual and literary culture of their time in a way that they had not managed for centuries. In late antiquity the dominant culture in their world was Hellenism, and very few if any of them had the linguistic skills, let alone the inclination, to participate in this. Now they could participate in the dominant Islamic culture.⁸

The other area where I noted innovation was in the appropriation of non-rabbinic tradition. This involved not only the recovery of earlier non-rabbinic *aggadot* (some going back to Second Temple times) but also the probable adoption of Islamic

⁷ An obvious place to start would be Julia Ashtiany et al., eds., *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Abbasid Belles Lettres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁸ Hava Lazarus-Yafeh speaks vividly of the "intertwined worlds" of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in the period of PRE. See her *Intertwined Worlds: Medieval Islam and Bible Criticism* (Princeton N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

and Christian traditions, sometimes in an accommodating and sometimes in a polemical spirit. Again, PRE does not seem to have been alone in this. Other works of its period show a similar interest. One thinks of the texts of the apocalyptic revival which appropriate not only the old literary form of apocalypse, but also motifs of the old apocalyptic literature. How PRE and the other texts came by these old traditions remains an open question: Adelman and others have recently done important work in exploring it, but work remains to be done. One thing, however, seems clear and that is that PRE shows an attempt to prise open the rabbinic tradition as it knew it, to search for new sources of instruction and edification – a process which I suggested could be captured under the rubric “the renewal of tradition”.

Linked to this is another feature of PRE which emerged from the profile, viz., its use of pseudepigraphy. This seemed to involve a construction of the talmudic era as a mythic past, parallel to the biblical past, to which PRE tried to link itself through the figure of Eliezer and the other rabbis it “quoted”. The author of PRE seemed to feel that he lived in *post*-talmudic times, in much the same way as some Second Temple authors, who also resorted to pseudepigraphy, felt they lived in *post-biblical*, *post-prophetic* times. Again this phenomenon, as I argued, is paralleled in other texts of its time. Indeed, it is possible that for PRE the mythic rabbinic past is not the whole of the talmudic era, but precisely its earliest phase – the generations of the *Tannaim* from the period of the Mishnah, the only rabbinic work PRE actually names. I noted how PRE may share this interest with other texts of its time, and how it and Seder Eliyyahu Zuta show a fascination particularly with the great singular voice of the Tannaitic era, Eliezer Ha-Gadol. How this construction of a rabbinic *Heilsgechichte* fits into the emerging new historiography of the Talmudic era

(exemplified by the *Iggeret* of Sherira Gaon), and the probable use of pseudepigraphy by the Stammaim of the Talmuds, would be worth exploring.

Finally, in attempting to contextualize historically PRE it may be worth focusing on its strong ethical interest. The profile suggests that this is a major concern of the work: in the biblical narratives, the biblical and rabbinic figures are used overwhelmingly as exempla of ethical practice. It is possible that in terms of quantity, ethics constitutes the majority content of PRE, particularly if we widen the domain of ethics to include *derekh 'eretz* – correct behaviour of a more general kind – and allow *derekh 'eretz* to shade into *minhag*, seen as the correct performance of ritual. As I noted, there is a new interest in PRE in anchoring long-practiced rituals in *Scripture*, and, insofar as these constitute distinctively Palestinian *minhag*, we may have an insight here into intra-communal politics. Again we find parallels in contemporary literature, in the strong emergence of the *derekh 'eretz* tradition (see again the TdBE), and in a new interest in public prayer and ritual (note the codification of the synagogue liturgy by Amram [died 875]⁹) – the latter perhaps connected to a valorisation of the synagogue, over against the mosque and the church, as the locus where Jewish identity was publically expressed.¹⁰ PRE shares in one of the great rabbinic projects of its time – to wrap up together *halakhah*, *derekh 'eretz* and *minhag* into a new, comprehensive definition of Jewish identity.

⁹ See Lawrence A. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service* (Notre Dame, Ind.; University of Notre Dame Press, 1979).

¹⁰ See Gerald J. Blidstein's suggestive article, "From the Home to the Synagogue: On the Innovations of the Post-Talmudic Synagogue," in *Ta-Shma: Studies in Judaica in Memory of Israel M. Ta-Shma* (ed. Avraham (Rami) Reiner, et al.; Alon Shevut: Tevunot, 2011), vol. 1, 120-135 (Hebrew), which notes the transfer of a number of rituals from home to synagogue in the early Islamic period.

All this is speculative, lines of fresh inquiry started by the profiling of PRE. I began this dissertation by noting how, until recently, PRE has tended to be seen as an “odd appendix” to classic rabbinic Midrash. I hope by now it should be clear that this does the work a grave injustice. PRE does look back, but it is more strongly looking forward. It is clear also that PRE belongs to a cluster of texts, which Lennart Lehmhaus has called “late midrash”,¹¹ which are looking in a similar direction. What needs to be done now is to gather together the corpus of these Gaonic era rabbinic works, to analyse them in the sort of depth that has hitherto been reserved for the classic rabbinic canon, to compare and contrast them, and to see how they relate to the new religious and intellectual climate engendered by the rise of Islam. This work should begin, I would suggest, with literary profiling.

¹¹ In the title of his article, “Between Tradition and Innovation – Seder Eliyahu’s Literary Strategies in the Context of Late Midrash,” in *Approaches to Literary Readings of Ancient Jewish Literature* (ed. Klaas Smelik and Karolien Vermeulen; SSN 62; Leiden: Brill, 2013).

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Appendix

Appendix A Profile for Pirquei deRabbi Eliezer in the TAPJLA Database

The Profile of Pirquei deRabbi Eliezer in the TAPJLA Database is available online at <http://literarydatabase.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/>. For convenience, it has also been included in this document (see pp. 433-439). The profile was entered in the online database in the name of Professor Philip Alexander for administrative convenience. It was, in fact, co-authored with me (see Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature*, xv, item 56.)

Appendix B PRE Manuscripts

B.1 PRE manuscripts, organized by location

Location	PRE Manuscripts
Basel, Bibliothek der Universität	Ms 238 (unverified).
Cincinnati, Hebrew Union College	Ms 75 - 75/76 folios, Constantinople (Barth: Iraqi/Mizrahit, 16th century (Barth: 14th/15th century (unverified))) ¹² ; Ms 2043 - 37 folios, chapters 1-47 (middle), Yemenite origin ¹³ .

¹² Images of ms 75 are available online on the *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer: Electronic Text Editing Project* website: <http://www.usc.edu/projects/pre-project/graphics/index-04.html>. The ms is in three hands: (1) folios 1a-3a - chapters 1-3; (2) folios 3a-51b, 53a-64b - chapters 3-34, 35-41; (3) folios 52a-52b, 65aa-76b - chapters 34-35, 42-54. The text in the third hand is copied from the first edition. See further Barth's notes on the webpage.

¹³ Images of ms 2043 are available online on the *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer: Electronic Text Editing Project* website: <http://www.usc.edu/projects/pre-project/graphics/index-05.html>. As with ms 75, this text

Florence, Laurenziana	Ms I.44.2
Haifa, University Library	HA 28 - folios 42-82, chapters 33-36, Moroccan origin, 1765.
Jerusalem, Benayahu	Benayahu T 341.1 - leaves 3a-164b, chapters 2-53, Yemenite origin, 1649 (uncertain); Unnamed ms. (44066-INL; Barth: 008) - 104 leaves, Yemenite origin, 1883.
Jerusalem, Mahalman	Ms. 35 - 84 leaves, Yemenite origin, 18th/19th century; Ms ? (31646-INL; Barth: 010) - 46; 75 pp., Yemenite origin, 1654?
Jerusalem, Mosad HaRav Kook	Ms 1144.1 - 202 folios, Yemenite origin, 19th century.
Jerusalem, Sassoon Library	Ms Sassoon 994 - 234 folios, in Yemenite cursive, 15th century (?c. 1450).
Leipzig, University Library	B. H. 10.2 - Ashkenazi origin, 15th/16th century [?].
London, British Library	Ms Or 9952 - 59 folios: folios 2-39, 52-59 (Barth: 2a-59b, Sephardi/Mizrahi script), Oriental script, 17th century; folios 40-51 in Sephardi script, 15th/16th century; Ms Or 11120 (Barth: 11120.1) - 87 folios, Yemenite script, 1671 (Barth: folios 1a-78a (unverified), chapters 6-53, c. 1671 (unverified)); Ms Or 12317 (Ms Gaster 1263) - 2 leaves, Chapters 6-8; Ms Or. 1076.14 - 15th/16th century (unverified); Ms Or. 10139.3 - folios 112a-138b, Moroccan origin, 19th century [?]; Ms Or. 1028 - c. 1100.

is also in three hands: (1) folios 1a-6b - chapters 1-10, c. 15th century Yemenite Rabbinic hand; (2) folios 7a-10b, 12a-33b, 35a-37b - chapters 13-44, c. 16th century Greek semi-cursive; (3) folios 11a-11b, 34a-34b - c. late 19th century? See further Barth's notes on the webpage.

London, Valmadonna Trust	Ms. 125 - Yemenite origin, 1897.
Modena, Archivio di Stato	Ms. 1.19 - 15th/16th century [7].
Montreal, Elberg	40596-INL (Barth: 021) - Yemen, 19th century.
Moscow, Russian State Library (formerly Lenin State Library)	Ms Günzburg 111.2 - 86 folios (1-86a), chapters 3-10 are missing (Barth: contains chapter 11-end), Sephardi/Italian script, 1467/68; Firkowitz I 249 - 47 leaves, chapters 1-47; Firkowitz II A493 - 1 leaf, chapters 20-21.
Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek	Cod. Hebr. 356.11 - 6 folios, Spanish script.

New York, Jewish Theological Seminary Library	<p>Ms R1658 - 87 leaves, chapters 1-49, Yemenite origin, 14th century(?);</p> <p>Lehman 300.1 - leaves 1a-86a, Yemenite origin, 1596;</p> <p>R1657 - 143 leaves (unverified), chapters 1-52 (beginning), Yemenite origin, 15th century;</p> <p>R1664 - leaves 1-72, Yemenite origin, 1642;</p> <p>EMC 866 Mic. 3847.8 - leaves 79b-155a, chapters 1-54, Yemenite origin, 1653;</p> <p>Unnamed ms. (no. 067 on Barth's list, identified by microfilm ID 5041b-JTS) - 53 leaves, Yemenite origin, 1754 (?);</p> <p>R1840 - 80 leaves, chapter 54, Italian origin, 1782/83;</p> <p>R1859 - 70 leaves, Italian origin, 1879;</p> <p>R1661 - 16 leaves, chapters 1-15 (beginning), Mizrachi script, 18th century;</p> <p>R1660 - 2 leaves, Italian origin;</p> <p>L 192; Adler 386 - folios 16b-22b, chapter 26, Mizrachit origin, 13th/14th century [?];</p> <p>R 1034 - folios 89a-90b, chapter 10, Yemenite origin, 18th/19th century;</p> <p>R1659 - 42 folios, chapters 1-middle of 20, Italian origin, 1750/1849;</p> <p>R2019 - 72 folios, chapters 7 (middle)-39 (middle), Persia, 17th century;</p> <p>Ms ? (2793-JTS; Barth: 077) - New York, 1900/39;</p> <p>Ms ? (39335-JTS; Barth: 026) - folios 81a-86b, chapters 1-2, Morocco, 19th century;</p> <p>Ms Adler 5103.5 - folios 117-120, chapter 13.</p>
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Oxford, Bodleian Library	<p>Ms Mich. Add. 59 - 25 folios(?) (Barth: folios 1a-25b), Spanish rabbinical script (Barth: Italian), 1538 (copy of <i>editio princeps</i> Constantinople);</p> <p>Ms Opp. Add. 4 to 167 - 67 folios, Yemenite square script (Barth: chapters 6-30, 15th century, damaged) [𐤒];</p> <p>Ms Heb. d.11 - folios 7b-11a, chapters 3-12, c. 1325 [𐤒].</p>
Paris, Alliance israélite universelle, Bibliothèque	<p>Ms 178.I (Barth: A.I.U Ms 178 H,I) - folios 1-73(?), Italian script (Ferrara), 1627 (Barth: Jan 16 1627) (copy of a printed text).</p>
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale	<p>Ms 334.13 - folios 196-203 (Barth: 198a-205a), chapter 49, 15th century (unverified) [𐤒];</p> <p>Ms 710.15 - 38a-59b, 65a-82b, Sephardi script, 15th-17th century;</p> <p>Ms Heb. 798 - chapters 38-41;</p> <p>Ms. 708.8 - folios 21-22v, chapters 38 (middle) - 41 (end), Byzantine origin, 14th century (?);</p> <p>Ms? (3242-INL; Barth: 042) - folios 6a-78a, Italian origin (Ferrara), 1627.</p>
Parma, R. Biblioteca Palatina	<p>Cod. Hebr. De Rossi 541.17 - chapters 39-41, Limoges, 13th/14th century (unverified date). (See H. M. Horowitz, <i>Biblioteca Haggadica</i> I, 2, 21-25).</p> <p>Cod. Hebr. De Rossi 563.31 - 13th/14th century;</p> <p>Cod. Hebr. De Rossi 566 - 63 folios, Italian origin, 1542;</p> <p>Cod. Hebr. De Rossi 1203.3 - 14th/15th century;</p> <p>Ms 1896.5 - folios 155b-200b (unverified), chapter 38, Sephardi origin, 14th-15th century [𐤒];</p> <p>Ms 1240.9 - folio 252b f. (unverified), chapters 39-41 (unverified), Italian origin, 1270?;</p> <p>Ms 563.31 (unverified) - folios 142a-159a, chapters 1-21, Ashkenazi script, 13th/14th century;</p> <p>Ms 1203.3 (unverified) - folios 56-93, chapters 1-31?, Mizrahit script, 14th century.</p>

Citta di Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana	Ms Vat. Ebr. 303.8 - chapters 1-2; Ms 43 (45).
Ramat Gan, Bar Ilan University Library	Ms 495.1 - folios 1a-6b, chapters 1-4 (uncertain), Persian origin, 18th/19th century; Ms 496 - 56 folios, chapter 3 (middle) - end, Yemenite origin, 1841; Ms 497 - 28 folios, chapters 9-48, Yemenite origin, 19th century.
Rome, Bibliotheca Casanatense	Ms I.IV.10; 2858 - 57 folios, chapters 1-52, Italian rabbinical script, 1325 (Barth: 15th/16th century, unverified date); Ms I.VI.1; 3158 - folios 1-143, chapters 1-53, Italian cursive, 15th/16th century; Ms I.VII.15; 3061 - folios 1-67, chapters 1-28, 29-38, Syrian rabbinical script, in bad condition, 14th/15th century ¹⁴ ; Ms Vat. Heb. 303.8 - folios 156-175, chapters 1-2?, 1-7?, 15th century.
Vienna, Israelit.- Theol. Lehranstalt	Hs. II.4 - leaves 1c-79b, contains chapters 1-53, Saloniki (Thessoloniki) origin, dated to 1509.
Warsaw, Jewish Historical Institute	Ms 240.5 - folios 83b-115b, Introduction to chapter 22, Ashkenazi script, 13th/14th century.
(Location unknown)	11598-INL (Barth: 062) - folios 38a-59b, 65a-82b, 16th/17th century; 13218-INL (Barth: 063) - 13th/14th century [?]; 21870-INL (Barth: 055/061) - 1431?

¹⁴ Dagmar Börner-Klein, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, xviii notes that these three manuscripts were edited by M. Higger from a copy of C. M. Horowitz. Horowitz took I.IV.10 as the base manuscript and noted the variations of the other two manuscripts against it.

B.2 PRE Genizah manuscripts and fragments, organized by location.

Location	PRE Genizah Manuscripts and Fragments
Cambridge, Cambridge University Library	<p>T-S NS 211. 51 (PRE chapters 26-29);</p> <p>T-S NS 217.32 (PRE chapters 12-13, divided into numbered paragraphs);</p> <p>T-S NS 252.62 (PRE chapters 50- 51);</p> <p>T-S NS 258.157, 258.171 (variant recension of PRE chapter 32);</p> <p>T-S NS 259.57 (PRE chapters 4-5);</p> <p>T-S NS 311.15b (PRE chapters 29-30);</p> <p>T-S 12.185 (PRE chapters 45-46);</p> <p><u>T-S AS 75.48</u>;</p> <p><u>T-S AS 78.53 (2-3)</u>;</p> <p>T-S AS 74.70;</p> <p><u>T-S AS 74-96</u>;</p> <p>T-S AS 83.246 (PRE chapter 9);</p> <p>T-S AS 88.197 (PRE chapter 4);</p> <p>T-S AS 90.111 (PRE chapter 10);</p> <p>T-S AS 93.115 (PRE chapter 49?);</p> <p>T-S AS 93.263 (PRE chapter 49?);</p> <p>T-S AS 199.242 (PRE chapter 19);</p> <p>T-S C1.27 (PRE chapters 2-3);</p> <p>T-S C1.28 (Compilation of selected sections from multiple chapters on creation; text organized by numbered paragraphs);</p> <p><u>T-S C1.30</u>;</p> <p><u>T-S C1.40</u>;</p> <p>T-S C1.76 (PRE chapters 48-49);</p> <p><u>T-S 262.50</u>;</p> <p>T-S Misc.15.101 (PRE chapter 49).</p>

Leningrad, Firkowitz Collection	<p>Yevr. II A 275;</p> <p>Yevr. II A 374 (PRE chapter 9 - middle of chapter 45, Spanish script, 14th century);</p> <p>Yevr. II A 411 (PRE chapters 11-16, 6 folios);</p> <p>Yevr. II A 582 (PRE chapters 17-19, Oriental script, 14th century);</p> <p>Yevr. II A 815 (PRE chapters 29-30, 8 folios).</p>
London, British Library	<p>OR 10429.9-12 (GASTER 1284.9-12; PRE chapters 1-2?);</p> <p>OR 12317.1-2 (GASTER 1263.1-2; PRE chapters 6 and 7)¹⁵.</p>
New York, Jewish Theological Seminary Library	<p>ENA 1495.1-3 (Folios 1 = chapters 4-5, folio 2 = chapters 1-2, folio 3 = chapter 31);</p> <p>ENA 2577.3-4 (PRE chapters 31-32);</p> <p>ENA 2625.23 (PRE, chapter 23);</p> <p>ENA 2943.28 (PRE chapter 42);</p> <p>ENA 3045.3-4 (PRE chapters 32-33);</p> <p>ENA 3479.4-5 (PRE chapters 39-40);</p> <p>ENA 3496.4 (PRE chapter 50);</p> <p>ENA 3629.2 (PRE chapter 42);</p> <p>ENA NS 11.7 (PRE chapter 51 / 52).</p>
Oxford, Bodleian Library	<p>MS heb. c.27/71-72 (PRE chapters 5-8, German rabbinical script);</p> <p>MS heb. d.35/35-48 (PRE chapters 4-15, Yemenite semi-cursive);</p> <p>MS heb. e.76/3-6 (PRE chapters 20-21).¹⁶</p>

¹⁵ Barth also lists ms **OR 11120**, but this manuscript number was not returned in a search of the Friedberg database.

¹⁶ Barth's list includes only one manuscript at the Bodleian (**Oxford MS Syriac c.4**), but it is not clear whether this manuscript is in the Friedberg search result under another name.

B.3 Printed Editions of PRE

There are around 44 printed editions of PRE. The following list of printed editions is reproduced from the introduction of Börner-Klein's edition of PRE¹⁷, based on the work of H. M. Haag.

1514	Constantinople (<i>editio princeps</i>) ¹⁸
1544	Venice (second edition, based on the <i>editio princeps</i>) ¹⁹
1567	Sabbioneta (third edition)
1584	Venice
1598	Lublin
1608	Venice
1617	Krakau
1660	Prague
1668	Amsterdam
1693	Dyhrenfurt
1708	Amsterdam
1709	Amsterdam
1711	Amsterdam
1725	Amsterdam
1725	Constantinople
1784	Prague
1784	Sokolow
1793	Maseirow
1794	Zolkiew

¹⁷ Börner-Klein, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, xix-xxi.

¹⁸ According to Barth's list (Barth, "Is Every Medieval Hebrew Manuscript a New Composition?" <http://www.usc.edu/dept/huc-la/pre-project/agendas.html>), the Bodleian Library holds a copy of the *editio princeps* (Unnamed ms. dated 1514; no. 003 on Barth's list; see M. Steinschneider's *Catalogus librorum hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, Berolini, (1852-1860), printed catalogue no. 4008). The Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati also holds a complete first edition, and images of the work are available online <http://www.usc.edu/projects/pre-project/graphics/index-01.html> (missing only folio 21ab).

¹⁹ According to Barth's list (Barth, "Is Every Medieval Hebrew Manuscript a New Composition?" <http://www.usc.edu/dept/huc-la/pre-project/agendas.html>), the Bodleian Library holds a copy of the Venice ed. (Opp. Add. 40 IV 566 - dated 1544 (see M. Steinschneider's *Catalogus librorum hebraeorum in Bibliotheca Bodleiana*, Berolini, (1852-1860), printed catalogue no. 3442).

1797	Horodno
1805	Zokliew
1818	Berditschew
1824	Lemberg
1825	Lemberg
1832	Warsaw
1838	Vilna (commentary by Wolf Einhorn; commentary to chapters 6-7 by B. Diskin)
1838	Vilna (annotations by R. Abraham Aaron Broda)
1841	Warsaw
1846	Lemberg
1849	Lemberg
1852	Warsaw (the <i>textus receptus</i> ; multiple reprintings; commentary by Rabbi David Luria; reprint Jerusalem 1963 has additional commentary by B. Diskin to chapters 6-7)
1858	Lemberg.
1860	Lemberg (anonymous short commentary, found also in other printings including the following: 1866 Lemberg; 1870 Lemberg; 1874 Warsaw; 1879 Warsaw; 1880 Lemberg)
1864	Lemberg
1864	Lemberg
1866	Lemberg
1867	Lemberg (with annotations by Brodas)
1870	Lemberg
1874	Warsaw (reprint Jerusalem 1970)
1879	Warsaw
1880	Lemberg
1949?	Landsberg (with annotations by Brodas)
195-?	Antwerp (with annotations by Brodas)
1973	Jerusalem (vocalized study edition based on Venice 1544; annotations by Brodas)

Appendix C The Structures of PRE

C.1 Structure of PRE

	Topic of Chapter	PRE	Structuring Themes
	Opening narrative – R. Eliezer’s calling to Torah	1	
		2	
		3	
	Premundane Creation, Day 1		Six days of Creation
	Day 2	4	
	Day 3	5	
	Day 4 - Cosmology	6	
		7	
		8	
		9	
	Day 5		
	Jonah and the fish	10	
	Day 6	11	
	Adam in the Garden of Eden	12	
	Serpent in the Garden of Eden	13	

10 descents of God: 1st descent	Sin of Adam and Eve	14	Six days of Creation
	The Two Ways of Good and Evil	15	
	The Service of Loving Kindness	16	
	Loving Service to Mourners	17	
	Day 7: Sabbath	18 ¹	
	Creation on Eve of First Sabbath	19	
	Sabbath; Adam driven from the Garden	20	
	Cain and Abel	21	
	Fallen Angels (Gen. 6:1-4)	22	
	Ark and Flood	23	
2nd descent	Tower of Babel	24	Abraham (including the 10 trials)
3rd descent at Sodom	Sin at Sodom	25	

¹The chapter listing here follows the ordering of the Börner-Klein edition of PRE. In this and some other editions, chapters 18 and 19 are swapped around and appear in opposite order than in the Friedlander edition.

	Ten Trials of Abraham: Trials 1-5	26	Abraham (including the 10 trials)
	Trial 6	27	
	Trial 7	28	
	Trial 8	29	
	Trial 9	30	
	Trial 10	31	
	Death of Sarah; Isaac and Rebecca	32	
	On Resurrection	33	
	Resurrection from the dead	34	
	Vision of Jacob at Bethel	35	
	Jacob and Laban	36	
	Jacob and the Angel	37	
	Joseph and his brothers	38	
	Joseph in Egypt	39	
4th descent in Egypt	Joseph in Egypt	39	Moses & Exodus
5th descent in thorn bush to Moses	Moses at the burning bush	40	
6th descent at Sinai	Revelation on Sinai	41	

	Exodus	42	Moses & Exodus
	The Power of Repentance	43	
	Amalek and Israel	44	
	Golden Calf	45	
7th descent	Moses on the Mountain	46	
	Zeal of Phineas	47	
	Egyptian Bondage	48	
	Seed of Amalek	49	
	Haman and Esther	50	
	New Heavens and New Earth	51	
	Seven Wonders of Old	52	
8th descent	Sin of Slander	53	
		54	

C.2 Abraham in PRE

Notes	PRE	Topic	Genesis
PRE 24 and 25 follow broadly the topic ordering of Genesis, until the text suspends its shadowing in favour of the thematic arrangement of the ten trials of Abraham.	24	Abraham and Tower of Babel	(Gen. 11:1-9)
	25	Sodom	Gen. 18:21
		Angels visit Abraham and Sarah	Gen. 18:1-15
		God tells Abraham about Sodom	Gen. 18:21
		Wickedness of Sodom	-
		Lot (retold in summary)	Gen. 19
		Ten trials of Abraham	-
		(1) Abraham in mortal danger, hidden under the earth until he is 13 years old.	-

(The prooftext given is Gen. 15:7 "I am the Lord who brought you out from Ur [Ur] of the Chaldeans..." Text makes a connection with Ur (place name) and Ur (flame) to say Abraham delivered from the furnace of the Chaldeans, freeing him from imprisonment. Cf. Neh. 9:7.)	(2) Abraham imprisoned for 10 years	(Prooftext: Gen. 15:7)
The two abductions of Sarah are told together, having been arranged according to thematic relevance rather than the Genesis chronology.	(3) Migration	Gen. 12:1
	(4) Famine	Gen. 12:10
	(5) Sarah taken by Pharaoh; Sarah taken by Abimelech	Gen. 12:11-20; (Gen 20)
27	(6) Kings came against Abraham to slay him	Gen. 14
28	(7) Abraham receives a vision from God, telling him not to fear, and that he will be protected	Gen. 15
29	(8) Circumcision (pain of circumcision is described as a test)	Gen. 17

		Birth of Isaac, who is circumcised when he was eight days old.	Gen. 21:1-4
	30	(9) Ishmael	Gen. 21:9-21
		(10) the Agedah (sacrifice of Isaac)	Gen. 22:1-19

C.3 Moses & Exodus in PRE

Notes	PRE	Topic	Exodus
Fifth descent of God at the thorn bush. Exegetical connection made between the thorn bush, a symbol of grief and distress, and the distress of the Israelites as captives in Egypt through Exod. 3:8.	40	God dwelt in the thorn bush	Exod. 3:2
		Rod created at twilight of the first Sabbath planted in Jethro's garden	-
		Zipporah given to Moses as his wife	Exod. 2:21

		Moses tended Jethro's flock (for 40 years)	Exod. 3:1 (-)
		Moses at burning bush	Exod. 3
		Moses asks for signs (rod and leprosy)	Exod. 4:2-8
		God tells Moses the divine name (YHWH)	Exod. 3:14-15; (6:3)
Sixth descent of God at Mt. Sinai. Proof-text: Exod. 19:20.	41	God descends and reveals himself at Mt. Sinai	(Exod. 19)
		God offers Torah to children of Esau, Ishmaelites	-(Exod. 20:3, 13, 15)
		Law given to Israel	(Exod. 19)
		Israel in the wilderness, camped at Sinai, Moses on Mt. Sinai	Exod. 19
		Giving of the commandments	Exod. 20
		Exodus from Egypt	Exod. (13), 14
	42	(Song of Miriam (Exod. 15) underscores the exposition)	Exod. 15:1-21
	43	Power of Repentance (including Pharaoh's repentance)	-
With ten trials the people of Israel tested God (cf. Pirkei Avot v.7, and ARN A34, B38)	44	Amalek and Israel	Exod. 17 (1Sam 15)

	45	Golden Calf	Exod. 32
Seventh descent of God in a cloud while Moses was on the mountain.	46	Moses on the mountain (7th descent of God)	Exod. 20, 24, 32-34
	47	Zeal of Phineas: Golden Calf, zeal against immorality	(Exod. 32, (33:4-6); Num. 25, 31:1-18)
	48	Egyptian bondage: Moses' birth and Pharaoh's daughter	Exod. 1, 2
		Plagues	Exod. 5-9
		Killing of first born Egyptians	Exod. 12

Appendix D First and Last Lines of Chapters in PRE

PRE 1

מעשה ברבי אליעזר בן הורקנוס שהיו לאביו חורשין והיו חורשין על גבי המענה ...

אחרי כן הלכו רבי יהושע בן חנניה ורבי יוסי הכהן ואמרו לו לרבן יוחנן בן זכאי והלא יש לו שמונה ימים שלא טעם כלום

PRE 2

אמרו בניו של הורקנוס לאביהם עלה לך לירושלים ונדה את בנך אליעזר מנכסיד ...

אלא לא בקשתי מלפני הקב"ה אלא תורה בלבד שנאמר על כן כל פקודי כל ישרתי כל ארח שקר שנאתי

PRE 3

רבי אליעזר בן הורקנוס פתח מי ימלל גבורות יי' ומי ישמיע כל תהלתו ...

כפולות נתנו למלך המשיח שנאמר ונחה עליו רוח יי' רוח חכמה ובינה בשלשתו

PRE 4

ובשני ברא הקב"ה את הרקיע והמלאכים ואשו של בשר ודם ואשו של גיהנם ...

והוא משיב לעמו ישראל אני יי' אלהיכם המציל אתכם מכל צרה

PRE 5

בשלישי היתה הארץ מישור בבקעה והיו המים מכסים על פני כל הארץ ...

וכתיב כי כאשר ירד הגשם והשלג מן השמים

PRE 6

ברביעי חבר שני מאורות הגדולים ...

ואלו הן קצות דרכיו של חמה

PRE 7

רבן יוחנן בן זכאי ורבן גמליאל ורבי ישמעאל ורבי אלעזר בן ערך ורני אליעזר בן הורקנוס ורבי
ורבי עקיבא היו יושבים ודורשין על מולד הלבנה ...

ומנין שהוא מתכסה כלו שנאמר תקעו בחדש שופר בכסה ליום חגנו ביום שמתכסה כולו

PRE 8

בעשרים ושמונה באלול נבראו חמה ולבנה ...

מכאן ואילך המנה יהיה לכם

PRE 9

בחמישי השריץ מן המים כל מין עוף זכרים ונקבות טהורים וטמאים ...

לו ששרצו מן המים פרים ורבים בבצים ואלו שנבראו מן הארץ פרים ורבים בוולדוא

PRE 10

בחמישי ברח יונה מפני אלהים ...

ונדרו ושלמו להביא איש את אשתו ואת בניו ואת כל אשר לו ליראת אלהי יונה ונדרו ושלמו
ועליהם הוא אומר על הגרים גרי הצדק

PRE 11

בששי הוציא מן הארץ כל מין בהמות זכרים ונקבות טמאים וטהורות ...

עין בעין כמו שכתוב כי עין בעין יראו בשוב יי' ציון

PRE 12

חיבה יתירה חבב הקב"ה לאדם הראשון שבראו ממקום טהור וקדוש ...

מה דרכו של חזן עומד ומברך לכלה בתוך חופתה כך הקב"ה עמד וברך לאדם ולעזרו שנאמר
ויברך אותם אלהים

PRE 13

הקנאה והתאווה והכבוד מוציאים את האדם מן העולם ...

כיון שאכל אדם מפירות האילן ראה את עצמו ערום ונתפקחו עיניו וקהו שיניו אמר לה מה הוא זה
שהאכלתני שנתפקחו עיני וקהו שיני על דעתי כשם שקהו שיני כך יקהו שיני כך הדורות

PRE 14

עשר ירידות ירד הקב"ה על הארץ ואלו הן ...

שבשעה שבני אדם חוטאין מעבירות חמורות הוא שולח מגפה לבני אדם ובשעה שבני אדם
חוטאין מעבירות קלות הוא מכה את פירות הארץ בעבור עונות בני אדם שנאמר ארורה האדמה
בעבורך

PRE 15

רבי אליעזר אומר אני שמעתי באזני ייי צבאות מדבר ומה דבר ...
וכך הוא קורא לאליעזר אומר לו הקב"ה אתה עשית את עצמך כחוט המשולש חייך אף אני קורא
עליך הפסוק הזה תמים תהיה עם יי' אלהיך

PRE 16

על שלושה דברים העולם עומד על התורה ועל העבודה ועל גמילות חסדים ...
מה המלך פניו מאירות כאור החמה כך החתן פניו מאירות כאור החמה שנאמר והוא כחתן יוצא
מחופתו

PRE 17

גמילות חסדים לאבלים מנין אנו למדין ...
ועליהם הוא אומר ברוך אתה יי' גומל שכר טוב לגומלי חסדים

PRE 18

בית שמאי אומרים השמים נבראו תחלה ואחר כך הארץ שנאמר ...
וכל מי שהוא שומר את השבת בעולם הזה הקב"ה מוחל לו כל עונותיו שנאמר שומר שבת מחללו
אל תקרי מחללו אלא מחול לו מלמד שמוחלין לו על כל עונותיו

PRE 19

עשרה דברים נבראו בערב שבת בין השמשות ואלו הן ...

כל אלה למה להגיד להלל ולשנן כח מעשיו של הקב"ה ולהגיד שהוא צדיק וישר ואין עול שנאמר
צורי ולא עולתה בו

PRE 20

ויגרש את האדם גורש ויצא מגן עדן וישב לו בהר המוריה ששער גן עדן סמוך להר המוריה ...
ועליהם הכתוב אומר יבוא שלום ינוחו על משכבותם הלך נכחו

PRE 21

דכתיב ומפרי העץ אשר בתוך הגן תנא רבי זעירא אומר ...
ולא עוד אלא שהן קוראים ליתן מטר על הארץ והקב"ה עונה אותן שנאמר נותן לבהמה לחמה
לבני עורב אשר יקראו

PRE 22

כתיב ויחי אדם שלשים ומאת שנה ויולד בדמותו כצלמו מכאן אתה למד ...
מה עשה הקב"ה הרתיח מי תהומות והיו שולקין את בשרם ופושטין את עורן מעליהם שנאמר
בעת יזרבו נצמתו בחמו נדעכו ממקומם אל תקרי בחומו אלא בחמימו

PRE 23

וזה אשר תעשה אותה תני רבי שמעיה באצבע הראהו הקב"ה לנח ...

והתקינו חכמים שיהו מזכירין שבועת נח בכל יום שנאמר למען ירבו ימיכם וימי בניכם על האדמה

PRE 24

ברך נח ובניו שנאמר ויברך אלהים ...

וכשיצא יעקב מאת פני יצחק אביו אמר אין עשו הרשע ראוי ללבוש את הכתונות הללו וחפר
וטמנם בארץ שנאמר טמון בארץ חבלו

PRE 25

ירידה שלישית שירד בקב"ה לסדום שנאמר ...

עדיה אשתו של לוט נכמרו רחמיה על בנותיה הנשואות בסדום והביטה אחריה לראות אם היו
הולכות אחריה אם לא וראתה אחריה השכינה ונעשית נציב מלח שנאמר ותבט אשתו מאחריה
ותהי נציב מלח

PRE 26

עשרה נסיונות נתנסה אברהם אבינו ועמד בכולן ...

עמד אברהם והיה מתפלל לפני הקב"ה ואמר רבון כל העולמים אדם בראת לפריה ורביה ואבימלך
וביתו יפרו וירבו ונעתר לו שנאמר ויתפלל אברהם אל האלהים וירפא אלהים את אבימלך ואת
אשתו אמהתיו וילדו

PRE 27

נסיון הששי ...

וענו העליונים ואמרו ברוך אתה יי מגן אברהם

PRE 28

נסיון השביעי ...

ואין תנור ולפיד אלא גיהנם שנאמר נאם יי' אשר אור לו בציון ותנור לו בירושלם

PRE 29

נסיון השמיני ...

אלהי ישראל יחיש ויביא בחיינו משיח לנחמנו ויחדש לבבנו שנאמר והשיב לב אבות על בנים

PRE 30

נסיון התשיעי ...

ומשם בן דוד יצמח ויראה באבדן של אלו ואלו ומשם יבא לארץ ישראל שנאמר מי זה בא מאדום
חמוץ בגדים מבצרה זה הדור בלבושו צועה ברב כחו אני מדבר בצדקה רב להושיע

PRE 31

נסיון העשירי ...

רבי יצחק אומר הכל לא נוצר אלא בזכות השתחויה שנאצר רוממו יי' אלהינו והשתחוו להדום
רגליו

PRE 32

ששה נקראו בשמותן עד שלא נולדו ואלו הן ...

וכשיצא יעקב מאת פני יצחק אביו יצא מעוטר כחתן וככלה בקשוריה וירד עליו תחיית טל מן השמים ונדשנו עצמותיו ונעשה גם הוא גבור חיל וכח לכך נאמר מידי אביר יעקב משם רועה אבן ישראל

PRE 33

כתיב ויזרע יצחק בארץ ההוא רבי אליעזר אומר וכי יצחק זרע דגן חס ושלוש אלא ...

באותה שעה אמר הקב"ה לנביא לך אמור להם חי אני שאעמיד אתכם בתחית המתים לעתיד לבא ומקבץ את כל ישראל לקבוצ גליות לארץ ישראל שנאמר הנה אני פתח את קברותיכם

PRE 34

ראו עתה כי אני אני הוא ואין אלהים עמדי מה ראה הכתוב לומר שתי פעמים אני אני ...

ולעתיד לבא מנער שער ראשו ומוריד תחיית טל ומחיה את המתים שנאמר אני ישנה ולבי ער עד שראשי נמלא טל

PRE 35

טוב אחרית דבר מראשיתו הברכות הראשונות שברך יצחק ליעקוב על טללי שמים ועל דגן הארץ שנאמר ...

וענו העליונים ואמרו ברוך אתה יי' האל הקדוש

PRE 36

בלכתך לא יצר צעדך ואם תרוץ לא תכשל לא צרו צעדיו של יעקב ולא נכשל כחו ...

ואחר כך כבש את ארץ ארם שנאמר ויך דוד את הדדעזר בן רחוב מלך צובה

PRE 37

כאשר ינוס איש מפני הארי ופגעו הדוב הארי – זה לבן שרדף אחרי יעקב לחטוף את נפשו ...

מכאן אתה למד שאין בני עשו נופלין עד שיבא שריד מיעקב ויקצץ רגליהם של בני עשו מהר
שעיר שנאמר וירד מיעקב וכתוב ולא יהיה שריד לבית עשו כי יי דבר

PRE 38

כתיב ובא הבית וסמך ידו על הקיר ונשכו הנחש וכשבא יעקב לביתו בארץ אחוזתו שבארץ כנען
נשכו הנחש ...

ועוד הוסיפו עליהם חרם על חרם והוסיף עוד המלך כורש וקבע עליהם חרם עולם שנאמר ואלהא
די שכן שמה תמן

PRE 39

ירידה רביעית שירד למצרים שנאמר ...

השיבתו רוח הקדש ואומרת חי אני לא יראה גאות יי' שנאמר ובל יראה גאות יי'

PRE 40

ירידה החמישית שירד לסנה שנאמר ...

וראו העליונים שמסר הקב"ה לו סוד שם המופרש וענו הרוך אתה יי' חונן הדעת

PRE 41

ירידה הששית שירד לסיני שנאמר ...

אשריהם בעולם הזה ואשריהם בעולם הבא ועליהם הכתוב אומר אשרי העם שככה לו

PRE 42

ויהי בשלח פרעה את העם זה שאמר הכתוב שלחך פרדס רמונים ...

בעולם הזה אתה מביא אותם ולעתיד לבא אני נוטע אותם נטע אמת שלא ינתשו מעל אדמתם
שנאמר ונטעתים על אדמתם ואומר יי' ימלוך לעולם ועד

PRE 43

תשובה ומעשים טובים כתריס לפני הפורענות רבי עקיבא אומר ...

ברוך אתה יי' הרוצה בתשובה

PRE 44

רבי יוחנן בן נורי אומר אחר כל הגבורות והנפלאות שעשה הקב"ה עם ישראל במצרים ובים סוף
חזרו ונסו הקב"ה עד עשר פעמים שנאמר ...

וכלם הם עתידין ליפול ביד בן דוד שנאמר אלהי שיתמו כגלגל כקש לפני רוח

PRE 45

רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר כשנגלה הקב"ה למשה מתוך הסנה שלחו למצרים ...

וכשמת משה מה עשה הקב"ה נתן את קברו כנגדו וכל זמן שישראל חוטאין והוא פוער את פיו
לנשוך ברוחו ולהשמיד את ישראל והוא רואה קברו של משה כנגדו הוא מתפחד וחוזר לאחריו
שנאמר ויקבור אותו בגי מול בית פעור

PRE 46

רבי אלעזר בן עזריה אומר ערב שבת בששה לחדש בשש שעות ביום קבלו ישראל את הדברות

...

אמר לו הקב"ה הרי כדברייך עשיתי שנאמר ויאמר יי' סלחתי כדברך

PRE 47

רבי אלעזר בן ערך אומר כשירד הקב"ה ליתן תורתו לישראל ...

אמר להם למשה צוה ואותי לא צוה

PRE 48

רבי יוחנן בן זכאי פתח ביום ההוא כרת ייי את אברם ברית ...

ויצאו ישראל ממצרים מלאים כל טוב ממין ברכות בזוכרו את הדבר שנאמר לאברהם וגם את
הגוי אשר דן אנכי ואחרי כן יצאו ברכש גדול

PRE 49

רבי שמעון בן יוחאי אומר רצה הקב"ה להכרית ולהשמיד כל זרעו של עמלק ...

והטה הקב"ה חן וחסד עליה בעיני כל רואיה שנאמר ותהי אסתר נשאת חן בעיני כל רואיה

PRE 50

איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי ...

ועליו הכתוב אומר שמר תם וראה ישר כי אחרית לאיש שלום

PRE 51

רבן גמליאל אומר כמו שראשי חדשים מתקדשים ומתחדשים בעולם הזה ...

אמר רבי יוחנן לתרפא מצצין עליה ושרף מזונה

PRE 52

שבעה דברים מופתים נבראו בעולם שלא היה כמותן ...

אלו הן דניאל חנניא מישאל ועזריה שנעשו סריסים בהיכל מלך בבל ולא הולידו בנים ועליהם
הכתוב אומר כה אמר יי' לסריסים אשר ישמרו את שבתותי ונתתי להם בביתי ובחומתי יד ושם
טוב מבנים

PRE 53

כל המלשין אדם בסתר אין לו חלק לעולם הבא שנאמר ...

והחזירו מחמשה פתחים והתחיל מהלל ומשבח ליוצרו ואמר עשה עמי אות לטובה ויראו שנאי
ויבשי כי אתה יי' עזרתני ונחמתני עזרתני – ממלחמת אבשלום ונחמתני – על אבלו

PRE 54

ירידה שמינית שירד הקב"ה באוהל מועד שנאמר ...

אמר שלמה כן לפני הקב"ה רבון כל העולמים אברהם יצחק ויעקב פועלים עצלים כשתתן לנו
שכרינו משלם ותרפאנו בודאי יהיו הכל מקלסין ומברכין אותך

Appendix E Rabbinic Attribution in PRE

Note:

(1) The data in this section was compiled with reference to the Friedlander edition of PRE. It represents the pseudepigraphal attributions to rabbinic figures in PRE, with the aim of examining: (a) whether the text favoured particular names (D.1) or generations (D.2); and (b) how the rabbinic attributions were distributed across the text.

(2) The organisation of rabbinic names by generation in tables D.2 and D.3 was done in consultation with Günter Stemberger's *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch* (9th ed.) This process cannot be free of error, but will provide the reader with an approximation that support some of the discussion in this thesis.

(3) There is a small margin of error in the data-gathering procedure. The tables in D.1 and D.2 have been checked and amended, where necessary, however it has not been possible to check through the data behind the table in D.3. It has been included despite the small errors that remain because it provides an impressionistic assessment of the distribution of the names across the text which is not (greatly) compromised by small inaccuracies.

There are approximately 57 rabbinic names in the text, and approximately 234 rabbinic attributions in PRE (or, 241 if the rabbinic schools of Hillel and Shammai are included) in the Friedlander ed.

E.1 Rabbinic speech reports in PRE chapters 3-54, by name

Rabbinic Name	No. of Speech Reports (descending order of frequency)
R. Eliezer	27
R. Judah (b. Ilai)	18
R. Shimon b. Yoḥai	16
R. Yose	12
R. Phineas	12
R. Joshua b. Qorḥach	11
R. Judah ha-Nasi ('Rabbi')	9
R. Akibah	8
R. Ishmael	8
R. Ze'era	7
R. Gamaliel	6
R. Meir	6
R. Zechariah	6
R. Yoḥanan	5
R. Joshua	5
R. Levi	5
R. Taḥanah	5
R. Elazar b. 'Arakh	4
R. Zadok	4
R. Abbahu	3
R. Azariah	3
R. Chanina b. Dosa	3
R. Elazar b. Azariah	3
R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai	3
R. Levitas of Yavneh	3
R. Mana	3
R. Nathaniel	3
R. Tarphon	3

Ben Azzai	2
R. Ḥakinai	2
R. Ḥanina	2
R. Elazar of Modein	2
R. Huna	2
Hillel the Elder	2
R. Yannai	2
R. Joseph	2
R. Shela	2
R. Tanḥum	2
R. Acha b. Jacob	1
R. Berachiah	1
R. Gamaliel b. Jehudah	1
R. Isaac	1
R. Johannan b. Nuri	1
R. Jonathan	1
R. Meharshyah	1
R. Miasha	1
R. Nehorai	1
R. Nehuniah b. Hakkanah	1
R. Reuben	1
R. Shemiah	1
Shemu'el ha-Qatan	1
Benei Bathyra	1
R. Tanḥuma	1
Ben Tema	1

E.2 Rabbinic speech reports in PRE chapters 3-54, by generation

Generation	Rabbis quoted	No. of speech reports	Total citations for generation
T1	R. Ḥanina b. Dosa	3	21
	Hillel the Elder	2	
	School of Hillel	3	
	School of Shammai	4	
	R. Neḥuniah b. Hakkanah	1	
	R. Shemiah	1	
	R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai	3	
	R. Zadok	4	
T2	R. Akibah	8	74
	Ben Azzai	2	
	Benei Bathyra	1	
	R. Elazar b. 'Arakh	4	
	R. Elazar b. 'Azariah	3	
	R. Elazar of Modein	2	
	R. Eliezer	27	
	R. Gamaliel	6	
	R. Ishmael	8	
	R. Joshua	5	
	R. Levitas of Yavneh	3	
	Shemu'el ha-Qatan	3	
	R. Tarphon	1	
	R. Yoḥanan b. Nuri	1	

T3	R. Abbahu	3	68
	R. Judah (b. Ilai)	18	
	R. Jonathan	1	
	R. Yose	11	
	R. Joshua b. Qorḥah	12	
	R. Meir	6	
	R. Nehorai	1	
	R. Shimon ('R. Shimon' (14), R. Shimon b. Yoḥai (2))	16	
T4	R. Isaac	1	25
	R. Judah ha-Nasi ('Rabbi' (8), 'Rab' (1))	9	
	R. Mana	3	
	R. Phineas	12	
T5	R. Huna	2	2
PA1	R. Chanina	2	5
	R. Yannai	3	
PA2	R. Jochannan	5	7
	R. Miasha	1	
	R. Reuben	1	
PA3	R. Joseph	2	9
	R. Levi	5	
	R. Tanḥum	2	
PA5	R. Azariah	3	5
	R. Berachiah	1	
	R. Tanḥuma	1	

BA1	R. Shela	2	9
	(?) R. Ze'era	7	
BA4	R. Aḥa b. Jacob	1	1
Misc.	R. Ḥakinai (?)	2	22
	R. Gamaliel b. Jehudah (Tanna?)	2	
	R. Meharshyah (?)	1	
	R. Nathaniel (?)	3	
	R. Shela (?)	2	
	R. Taḥanah (? Late Amora?)	5	
	Ben Tema (? Amora?)	1	
	R. Zechariah (?)	6	

E.3 Rabbinic speech reports in PRE chapters 3-54, by distribution

PRE Chap.	No. of Rabbis Quoted	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA5	BA1	BA4	?
1													
2													
3	1		x										
4	1		x										
5	2		x	x									
6													
7	1			x									
8	1		x										
9	3		xx		x								
10	4		x	xx		x							
11													
12	3			xxx									
13													
14													
15	1		x										
16	3		x	xx									
17	6			xxx	x			x					x
18	1			x									

PRE Chap.	No. of Rabbis Quoted	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA5	BA1	BA4	?
19													
20	5		x	xx	x								x
21	7			xxx				x	x		x		x
22	6		xx	x	x				x				x
23	7	x	x	x	x								xxx
24	7		xx	xx	x			x					x
25	5	x		xx							x		x
26	3			xxx									
27	3	x	xx										
28	7		xxx		x						x	x	x
29	11	x	xxx		xx			xx			xx		x
30	4		xx	x									x
31	6	x		xx	x						x		x
32	5			xxxx							x		
33	14	x	xxx	xxxx	x			xx			x		xx
34	8		x	x		x		x	x		x		x
35	3		xx						x				
36	6		xxx	x		x			x				
37	1		x										

PRE Chap.	No. of Rabbis Quoted	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	PA1	PA2	PA3	PA5	BA1	BA4	?
38	5		xx	x		x			x				
39	4		xx		x				x				
40	1								x				
41	8		xxx	xx	xx		x						
42	7		xxx	x				x					xx
43	7	x	xxxx	xx									
44	7		x	xx	xx					x			x
45	4			xxx	x								
46	5		xx	x									xx
47	7		xxx	xx	xx								
48	15		xxxxxxxx	xx		x			x				x
49	9		xx	xxx	x								xxx
50	6	x	x	xx	x								
51	10		xx	x	xx	x		x					xxx
52	1		xx										
53	5		x	xx	x								x
54	5		x	xx	x						x		
		8	74	66	25	5	2	10	9	5	7	1	29

Appendix F Small Forms in PRE

F.1 List Forms in PRE

F.1.1 Simple Lists

Corresponding to TAPJLA 8.1.10: 'List sentence enumerating items by words or phrases.'

Reference (in D. Börner-Klein)	List
3, 19/16-21	Eight things created on the first day
3, 19/22 - 21/1	Eight things created on the second day
3, 21/2-5	Ten things God thought of
3, 25/8-9	Unnumbered list of 6 items: "There is the home of demons, earthquakes, storms, evil spirits, lightning, and thunder."
3, 25/11-21	With ten sayings was the world created
4, 31/3-8	Four classes of ministering angels
6, 45/6-8	Seven planets
6, 45/16-19	Twelve zodiac signs
9, 83/16-17	Two signs creatures (fish) are pure (fins, scales)
9, 85/8-10	Two signs creatures (locusts) are pure (long legs, wings)
11, 105/10-11	Two signs creatures are pure (cloven hoof, chewing the cud)
11, 105/12-13	Three creatures chosen for sacrifice (bull, lamb, goat)
11, 105/14-15	Animals that are clean (not Nevelah/Terephah) can be eaten except three parts: fat, blood, and sinew of thigh
11, 107/2-3	Seven creatures created on the sixth day
19, 197/1-3	Ten things created at twilight on the eve of the Sabbath

19, 201/10-17	Six testimonies are recognised by the Israelites, which occur through ten persons/ things (Ps 92:4)
30, 349/4	Fifteen things will the sons of Ishmael do in the land of Israel in the future
39, 517/1	Three people 'conquered their passion before their creator': Joseph, Boaz, and Paltiel, Son of Laish
40, 527/11-18	Unnumbered list: People who handed down the rod created at twilight
50, 689/1-4	There were two rich people in the world: Korach in Israel, and Haman.

F.1.2 Complex Lists

Corresponding to TAPJLA 8.1.11: 'List enumerating items by whole sentences/ interpretation units.'

Reference (in D. Börner-Klein)	List
3, 15/4 - 17/18	Seven things created before the creation of the universe
3, 23/13 - 25/3	Four winds on the earth
3, 27, 1-14	Three sayings
11, 115/9 - 121/8	Ten kings who ruled from one end of the world to the other
14, 141/7-15	Ten descents of God on earth (first descent enumerated immediately, following descents spread out through the text)
16, 153/11 - 155/15	The world stands on three things
26, 283 - 31, 367	Ten trials of Abraham
29, 317/17 - 321/10	Five types of uncircumcised things (ערלה 'orlah): four of humans, one of trees
29, 327/16 - 329/8	Three kinds of suffering

30, 351/8-19	In the future, three wars will be waged on the land of Israel by the sons of Ishmael
32, 367/5 - 371/5	Seven people were called by their names before they were born
34, 411/12 - 413/12	Six times a scream will travel from one end of the world to the other, but it will not be heard
52, 725/1 - 731/11	Seven wonders created in the world, to which there is no comparison
53, 741/17 - 743/6	Six people were like the first man, and all were killed.

F.2 Question and Answer Units in Discourse

Reference (in D. Börner-Klein)	Question-Answer unit
4, 29/1-13	"Which firmament was created on the second day? ..."
7, 71/11-14	Concerns meaning of/truth of statements made about the waxing and waning of the moon (clouds).
10, 91/4 ff.	"Why did (Jonah) flee?"
12, 123/1 ff.	From whence did he take him? (first man)
16, 155/16 ff.	Where do we learn the feast has seven days? From Jacob...etc. (includes several patriarch mini-narratives).
17, 167/1 ff.	How do we know about the loving service for mourners? ...
17, 169/6 ff.	From where do we learn about the seven days of mourning? ...
17, 169/16 ff.	Where do we learn of the loving service to mourners?
17, 171/11	Where do we learn of the loving service to mourners?
20, 211/11-13	From what place did he take him?
29, 319/1-2; 319/7-8	Where is the proof for the circumcision of the ear and flesh?

29, 323/3-4	And where do we know that they (slaves) were circumcised?
29, 323/5-6	And why did he circumcise them?
29, 325/2-4	And where do we know that the sons of Jacob were circumcised?
29, 327/1-6	For what reason does scripture say twice 'in your blood is life'?
31, 353/11 - 355/4	Abraham asking God which son should be offered as a sacrifice.
31, 357/7-8	What did [Abraham] see? He saw...
31, 359/4-5	Isaac asked his father where the wood was (dialogue and prooftext)
32, 367/5 - 371/5	Seven people were called by their name before they were born (multiple questions and answers)
33, 383/12-14	And where do we learn this?
33, 395/1-13	All of the dead will be resurrected on the day of the resurrection. Where do we learn this? (Three cases...)
33, 395/14 - 397/7	Questions about Samuel, who prophesied during life after death (?)
33, 401/8-11	Why did God leave you and...?
33, 401/12-14	And where do we know that they all died before the sword? Because...
33, 417/1-3	Did you not hear that there is no ruler over the dead?
33, 417/6-9	Why can money not buy redemption/repentance?
36, 441/6 - 463/7	Series of questions and answers about thematic/narrative; questions built into exposition.
38, 477/10 ff.	Questions and answers related to exposition
41, 551/13-15	What is written after that?
42, 569/14-16	Where did they have tambourine and dance in the desert?
43, 581/1-2	What means 'enough'? ...

44, 599/17 - 601/5	How can both this 'remember' and that 'remember' be observed?
45, 607/1 ff.	Q+A in narrative context
47, 637/4-5, 8-9	What is written after that...? (x2)
49, 673/3-4	And who is that? It is Mordchai.
53, 739/8-9	Was she a Cushite?
53, 739/18-20	Was it Eved the Cushite? Was it not Baruch Son of Neira?
53, 741/2-4	Was he not a Cushite?

F.3 Question and Answer Units in Narrative

Reference (in D. Börner-Klein)	Question-Answer unit
1, 3/1 ff.	What did Rabbi Eliezer do?
7, 57/8-10	God blew life-giving breath to create the heavenly stars. *
10, 93/9-11	What did God do? He set a storm upon the ship.
12, 125/15 ff.	What did God do? He made the sleep of life...
12, 129/4-8	What did God do? He gave his name יהי...
17, 167/10-14	What did God do? He took Aaron's coffin and let it cross the camp of Israel, flying through the air (to show loving kindness to mourners).
18, 187/2	What did God do? He stretched out his hands to form heaven and earth.
20, 219/5-8	What did God do? He stretched out his right hand to take his sin from him and accepted his repentance.
21, 231/5-6	What did Cain do? He took the body of his brother, dug a grave, and concealed the body in the earth.

21, 233/2-5	What did God do? He took a letter and wrote it on Cain's arm, that he should never die.
23, 257/4-6	What did God do? He stretched out his right hand and promised Noah he would not bring another flood over the earth.
25, 281/13-16	What did Lot do? As Moses gave his life for Israel, Lot gave his life for them (two angels).
29, 317/2-3	What did God do? He drilled a hole...
31, 363/14-18	What did the ram do? He...
32, 371/8-12	What did [Abraham] do? He went and said to Sarah...
32, 375/2-4	What did Jacob do?
33, 391/10-11	What did [Shalun Son of Tikvah] do?
35, 437/10-15	What did God do? He used his foot to sink the stone into the depths, so that it became the foundation stone.
(36, 457/15-20)	What did the men of Jebus do?
36, 461/4-6	What did David do?
37, 467/4-5	What did God do? He sent Jacob an angel.
37, 467/11-14	What did the angel do? He began to sing from Earth...
37, 469/7-11	What did the angel do? He gripped the sinew of Jacob's hip...
37, 469/15-17	What did Jacob do? He took all his livestock...
37, 469/20-21	What did Jacob do? He...
38, 489/18-20	What did Reuben do? He...
38, 503/13-15	What did God do? He sent lions...
39, 513/13-15, 17-19	What did God do? He...
39, 523/12-14	What did Joseph do? He...
39, 525/8-14	What did Isaac do? He...
41, 549/15-18	What did Moses do? He...

42, 561 / 4-6	What did God do? He sent Michael...
42, 565 / 9-11	What did God do? He appeared in the water...
43, 581 / 3-8	What did the angel do? He...
43, 583 / 11-14	What did Simeon b. Laqish do? He...
43, 589 / 6-12	What did Jonah do? He...
45, 617 / 15-17	What did Moses do? He...
46, 631 / 10-12	What did God do? He... (7th descent)
47, 643 / 17-20	What did Moses do? He...
50, 689 / 8-12, 15-17	What did Haman do? He...
50, 703 / 11-12	What did Michael do? He...
50, 703 / 16-17	What did Michael do then? He...
52, 725 / 10-12	What did God do? He...
52, 731 / 1-4	What did Joshua do? He stretched out his hand to the sun's light...

F.4 Meshalim

Reference (in D. Börner-Klein)	'Mashal'
3, 13/14 - 15/3	משלו משל למה הדבר דומה למלך שהוא רוצה לבנות פלטרין... "A parable: to what is the matter like? To a king, who wants to build his palace..." (Thus (בך) God modelled his creation before he created it.)
13, 135/13-19	משל למה הדבר דומה לאדם שיש בו רוח רעה... "A parable: to what is the matter like? To a man, in whom there is an evil spirit..." (Thus (בך) the snake, whose deeds and words could not be done because of Sammael's ambitions.)

13, 137/1-12	משל למלך שנשא אשה והשליטה בכל מה שיש לו באבנים טובות ומרגליות... "A parable about a king, who married a woman and let her administer all that he owned, over precious stones and pearls..." (Thus (כך) it occurred with Eve and the snake.)
34 (Friedlander ed. p. 254; shorter passage in Börner-Klein PRE 34, 411/10-11.)	"Awakening in the morning is like the future world (<i>le-^catid la-bo'</i>). A parable – to what is the matter like? To a man who awakens out of his sleep. In like manner will the dead awaken in the future world. As it is said, <i>O satisfy us in the morning with your loving kindness</i> (Ps 90:14)."
34, 421/5-8	משל למה הדבר דומה לאחד שהיה מהלך בשוק ומפתח [ביתו] בידו... "A parable: to what is the matter like? To one who goes to the market, and (holds) the key (to his house) in his hand..." (Thus (כך) God has the key to the house of graves and the key to the treasury of the soul.)
41, 555/8-15	למה הדבר דומה למלך שהיה לו אסטרלגוס... "To what is the matter like? To a king who had an astrologer..." (Thus (כך) the king is God, and his son is Israel, and the bride is Torah.)
43, 585/8-14	משל למה הדבר דומה לאדם שהוא רוצה לפרוש בים... "A parable: to what is the matter like? To a man, who wants to travel by sea..." (Thus (כך) if a man does not repent in his lifetime, he will find no opportunity to do so after his death.)
44, 599/1-10	משל למה הדבר דומה למלך שהיה לו פרדס אחד [[וקשר המלך]] בפתח הפרדס לכב... "A parable: to what is the matter like? To a king, who possessed a garden, and chained a dog to the entrance of the garden..." (Thus (כך) said Moses, See, I told Israel the story of Amalek, so they will know, what is written above.)

Appendix G Dualism of Michael and Sammael in PRE

Citation	Descents of Michael and Sammael
[PRE 4, 31/3-8]	[Michael's position is given as one of the leaders of the camps of ministering angels.]
PRE 13, 135/1ff.	Sammael descends with his band of angels, having conspired to cause Adam to sin. [In PRE 21, it is made explicit that Sammael inhabits the snake in the Garden, and that it is in this guise that he caused her to conceive Cain (cf. PRE 21, 223/9).]
PRE 26, 291/2-7	Michael descends and draws his sword against Abimelech after Abimelech attempts to take Sarah as his wife.
PRE 27, 293/7-14	Michael explains to Abram that Sammael had grabbed his wing at the time of the fall, so as to bring Michael down with him. God allowed Michael to escape Sammael's grip, and thus he is called 'palit' (פליט), 'one who escaped'.
PRE 31, 363/9-13	Sammael distracts the ram at the Aqedah, in order to annul Abraham's offering.
PRE 33, 399/5-6	Michael descends to save Joshua from being burned in the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar.
PRE 36, 453/4-5	Michael descends and draws his sword behind him and wants to kill [Laban].
PRE 37, 471/9-16	Michael descends and takes Levi and brings him up before God, who blesses Levi and makes the descendants of Levi on earth like the ministering angels in heaven.
PRE 38, 479/ 11-12	Michael descends and takes Dinah and brings her to the house of Potiphera in Egypt.
PRE 41, 553/14-15	Michael and Gabriel take hold of Moses' hands and bring him into the darkness of the cloud on Sinai.
PRE 42, 561/4-6	Michael descends and became a wall of fire between Israel and the Egyptians.
PRE 45, 611/8-10	Sammael enters the golden calf in order to mislead Israel.

PRE 46, 627/10-629/10	Sammael has power over the nations but not over Israel, except on the Day of Atonement. Sammael finds there is no sin in Israel on the Day of Atonement, and likens them to ministering angels.
PRE 48, 669/1-2	Michael descends and takes a brick form with its clay and brings it before the Throne of Glory.
PRE 50, 703/11-16	Michael cuts down the plants in Ahasuerus' garden and lifts up Haman from Esther.

Appendix H "Cosmology as Science or Cosmology as Theology? Reflections on the Astronomical Chapters of Pirke deRabbi Eliezer."

See overleaf.

Time, Astronomy, and Calendars in the Jewish Tradition

Edited by

Sacha Stern and Charles Burnett



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CHAPTER THREE

COSMOLOGY AS SCIENCE OR COSMOLOGY AS THEOLOGY? REFLECTIONS ON THE ASTRONOMICAL CHAPTERS OF PIRKE DERABBI ELIEZER

Katharina Keim

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer

Pirke deRabbi Eliezer (PRE) is an unusual work dating to the early Gaonic period. Commonly classified as a midrash, it differs in style and content from earlier Rabbinic midrashim.¹ The bulk of the text can be described as an aggadic discourse that broadly mirrors the organisation and topical sequence of Genesis 1 to Exodus 32 with some verses of Numbers thrown in. Its early chapters, 3–19, covering just under a third of its total length, offer a substantial exposition on the seven days of creation, within which, in chapters 6–8, under the fourth day of creation, is to be found

¹ There is no adequate edition of PRE. For convenience I have used the text published by Dagmar Börner-Klein in *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, Nach der Edition Venedig 1544 unter Berücksichtigung der Edition Warschau 1852, aufbereitet und übersetzt* (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin and New York, 2004). This simply gives the *textus receptus*. Eliezer Treitl, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer: Text, Redaction and a Sample Synopsis* (Dissertation Series: The Hebrew University Department of Halakhah/The Institute for Research of Eretz Israel: Jerusalem, 2012) [Hebrew], offers the most thorough analysis of the manuscripts of PRE to date, the somewhat surprising conclusion of which is that the text is more stable than one might have supposed. Hence I felt justified in citing for my purposes here the *textus receptus*. Textual variants are unlikely to disturb my argument. However, like many classic Rabbinic texts, PRE lacks an agreed referencing system suitable for close analysis. I have cited it by the traditional chapters, followed by the page and line number in Börner-Klein: hence PRE 6, 53/10 = Pirke deRabbi Eliezer chapter 6, ed. Börner-Klein p. 53, line 10. My translations generally follow those of Gerald Friedlander, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer (The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great) according to the Text of the Manuscript belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna* (1916; repr. Sepher-Hermon Press: New York, 1981), but with modifications. Recent notable monographs on PRE include: Dina Stein, *Meimra, Magia, Mitos: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer le-'or ha-sifrut ha-'amamit* ('Maxims, Magic, Myth: A Folkloristic Perspective of Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer') (Magnes Press: Jerusalem, 2004); Ute Brohmeier, *Exegetische Methodik in Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer, Kapitel 1–24 nach der Edition Venedig 1544, unter Berücksichtigung der Edition Warschau 1852* (Peter Lang: Frankfurt a.M., 2008); Steven Daniel Sacks, *Midrash and Multiplicity: Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer and the Renewal of Rabbinic Interpretive Culture* (Studia Judaica: Forschungen zur Wissenschaft des Judentums 48; Walter de Gruyter: Berlin and New York, 2009); Rachel Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 140; Brill: Leiden and Boston, 2009).

an extensive scientific treatise on cosmology, astronomy and astrology. Taken at face value, this material is 'scientific' in character, but it raises on closer inspection a number of puzzling questions. Though it offers many observations of nature and mathematical calculations, its science is surprisingly primitive for its time, its data inaccurate and contradictory, and inadequate to determine a workable calendar. Some of the confusion may be due to scribal intervention in the transmission of the text, aimed at correcting its perceived errors, but even if we make a generous allowance for secondary working sowing confusion, the unsatisfactory nature of the original document's scientific knowledge, judged by the light of its time, cannot be disguised.

Even within PRE's total account of the creation of the world, chapters 6–8 stand out. The other chapters' treatment of the cosmos is strongly biblical, and takes the biblical text at face value. They accept, for example, Genesis' flat-earth, three-decker universe. In PRE 3, 21/10–23/3, the heavens are said to have been created from the light of God's garment, and the earth from a clod of snow which was taken from beneath God's throne and thrown into the waters to form the habitable world (a postbiblical, not a biblical, idea). The text continues: 'The hooks of the heavens are fixed in the waters of the ocean' (PRE 3, 23/4), and the inside shape of the firmament is compared to a dome or tent. The four quarters of the earth, pictured as four compass-points on a flat surface, are described. Chapter 5 (37/16) begins, 'On the third day all the earth was flat like a plain and the waters covered the surface of all the earth', and then proceeds to give an account of the creation of the depths beneath the earth. Given that PRE is commonly, and probably correctly, dated to the late eighth or early ninth century, this is astonishingly primitive. The idea, long ago expounded in both the Aristotelian and the Ptolemaic systems, that the earth is round, and sits at the centre of the cosmos, was well diffused among educated people by this date, but even more bizarre is the fact that the three-decker universe here sits side-by-side with the far more scientifically sophisticated (if, nonetheless out-of-date) science of chapters 6–8. Those chapters, to be sure, take no explicit position on the shape of the world, and their cosmology is, perhaps, just about compatible with a flat earth, but, scientifically speaking, they belong to a different universe of discourse. The short solution to this conundrum would be, of course, to regard PRE 6–8 as a secondary insertion, but this is not as attractive as at first sight it might seem. The chapters in question are in all the manuscripts of the work, and we are duty bound to try and make sense of it with them in.

PRE can be shown to have a strong coherence,² and to be largely the work of a single author. So why did he include the scientific material, and what part does it play in the argument of the book as a whole?

1. *Content and Structure of the Astronomical Chapters*

The general content and structure of the astronomical chapters of PRE are clear, but they pose many detailed problems of interpretation, and the calculations offered do not always agree with each other. The content is largely astronomical, but interwoven are passages of aggadah, and implied at various points is astrological doctrine, concerned with the *influence* of the heavenly bodies on human affairs (note, e.g., PRE 7, 67/13, כל המזלות, משרתים למולד הלבנה ולתולדות בני אדם, 'All the constellations serve the Molad of the moon, and the generations of the children of men'), rather than simply with their motions through the heavens and the establishment of a working calendar, but the astrology is not developed. PRE 6 is mainly about the sun, PRE 7 about the moon, and PRE 8 about intercalation.

PRE 6 opens with a version of the aggadah concerning the diminishing of the moon from parity with the sun at the time of the creation of the world. Then follows sections on the seven planets (and the days of the week over which they rule), and the twelve constellations. The sun resides in each of the twelve constellations for one solar month, which is set at 30 days 10½ hours. Various cycles of the sun are next identified, starting with a great cycle of 28 years, which is subdivided into seven small cycles of four years each. The solar year is set here at 365¼ days (the value 366 days is found elsewhere in the account), and it is divided into four *tequfot* (seasons), each of which lasts for 91 days 7½ hours. The date and time in the solar year when each *tequfah* begins is calculated for each year of the small (4-year) and great (28-year) solar cycles. There is then a long account of the 'windows' in the firmament (366 in number—183 in the east and 183 in the west) through which the sun rises and sets throughout the year (the implication is that as the sun moves north and south on the eastern and western horizons it will appear in each window twice in a year—once as it journeys north and once as it returns south). The account of the sun closes with two assertions about its nature: (1) it is

² I argue the case for this in my doctoral dissertation being completed at the University of Manchester.

inanimate, and cannot move by itself. It is moved through the heavens in a vehicle (chariot), led by angels (though the angels that lead it by day from east to west, are different to those who lead it, unseen, by night from west to east back to the eastern horizon). (2) The sun has two faces, one of hail and one of fire. When the fiery face is turned towards the world it is summer, and when the face of hail is turned towards the world it is winter. The other two seasons—spring and autumn—are caused by the sun presenting a face partly of fire and partly of hail to the world. This is most obviously explained by assuming that the sun rotates, and it is the proportions of its faces of fire and hail presented towards the world that determines the seasons.

Chapter 7 opens with an aggadah, based on Psalm 33:6, about the creation of the moon and the rest of the host of heaven from the breath of God's mouth, all on the fourth day of the week of creation. Then follows purely astronomical information. It is noted that if the Molad of the moon (the lunar conjunction) occurs on the fourth day of the week it will steadily regress for seven days over a period of 21 years till it occurs once again on the fourth day. A table of this regression is given. This 21-year cycle is the great cycle of the moon which is divided into seven small cycles of three years each. The lunar month is set at $29\frac{1}{2}$ days, 40 minutes and 73 parts. The moon passes through each of the twelve zodiac signs in a lunar month, remaining in each sign for 2 days and 8 hours, so that in 7 days it will pass through three signs. Thus all the signs will be traversed in 28 days. The remaining $1\frac{1}{2}$ days of the lunar month are ruled by the sign which ruled at the beginning of the month. A table of the hours at which the Molad begins is given, starting with the onset of evening on the fourth day of the week, the 'hour of Saturn'. It is claimed that over a period of seven years the Molad of the New Year will occur successively in the hours of the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, and Jupiter, returning to Saturn in the eighth year. This pattern will repeat itself three times within a lunar great cycle of 21 years. The movement of the moon relative to the constellations and the sun is covered at some length. The discrepancy between the lunar year and solar years is noted. The lunar year is set at $354\frac{1}{3}$ days and 876 parts, which is said to fall short of the solar year by 10 days, 21 hours and 204 parts. This leads naturally to the question of intercalation, and how the movements of the moon and the sun can be reconciled—a topic to which PRE returns in the next chapter. It is noted that 3 great solar cycles (28 years each) are equivalent to 4 great lunar cycles (21 years each), and this period (= 84 years) is said to be one hour of the 'day of the Holy One, blessed be he'. The implication

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is that a 'divine day' is 1000 of our years, which would make a 'divine hour' $83\frac{1}{3}$ years, here rounded up to 84. The chapter closes with a discussion of the moon's light: an explanation is offered of eclipses and of the waxing and waning of the moon between Molad and Molad.

PRE 8 develops the topic of intercalation which was broached briefly in the previous chapter. It opens with a long chain of tradition giving the names of those by whom the 'secret of intercalation' (*sod ha-'ibbur*) was passed on, beginning with Holy One himself at the time of creation. The Holy One transmitted the calculation to Adam who passed it down to his descendants. The passage ends by stating the principle that intercalation can only be done in the Land of Israel: 'Even when the righteous and the wise are outside the Land (of Israel), and the keepers of sheep and herds are in the Land, they do not intercalate the year except through the keepers of sheep and herds within the Land. Even when prophets are outside the Land they do not intercalate the year except through the ignorant who are in the Land.' This leads to a discussion of the basis on which intercalation is to be made, and two methods are proposed. The first is observation of nature—'trees, grass, the *tequfot*'.³ If all three of these are late, then the year should be intercalated, but one waits till 20th Tevet before doing so. The second is calculation: over a 19-year period one intercalates seven times, in the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years of the cycle. The chapter ends with a discussion of the legal procedure for intercalating the year.

2. *The Sources of PRE 6–8*

What were the sources of PRE's scientific knowledge? The mass of observations and calculations in PRE 6–8 regarding the movements of the sun, moon and stars through the heavens, cannot, for sure, be derived from Scripture, and the text does not waste time trying to claim that they can. But equally, the author is unlikely to have concocted them himself, so where did he get them from? What are his sources? There is a long-standing view that he was influenced by Second Temple texts. This perception has been fostered by Gerald Friedlander's widely used English version of PRE, first published in 1916. Friedlander frequently draws attention in his

³ The *tequfot* are the two equinoxes and the two solstices. See PRE 8, 83/1; cf. PRE 8, 73/9–14.

footnotes to parallels between PRE and Second Temple Jewish literature.⁴ He nowhere argues a detailed case, and the alleged parallels, when examined in detail, often turn out to be less convincing than his cross-referencing might imply. Nevertheless, a glance at his notes creates the impression that somehow the author of PRE did have knowledge of Second Temple traditions—in many cases traditions which appear nowhere in our extant Rabbinic literature. Friedlander himself cites parallels from the Second Temple Enochic texts specifically to PRE's astronomical data. Commenting on the appearance of Enoch as one of the patriarchs to have received the *sod ha-ibbur* ('secret of intercalation': PRE 8, 73/4), he observes: 'The mention of Enoch in connection with the Calendar is significant, suggesting an acquaintance with the Calendar systems associated with Enoch in the pseudepigraphic literature'.⁵ More concretely he posits an Enochic parallel to PRE's view of the relationship of the sun to the zodiac, and the relationship of both to earthly time, in the Astronomical Book of 1 Enoch (chapters 72–82), which implies that the sun passes through each of the zodiacal signs in turn, one per month. 1 Enoch is not entirely explicit about this,⁶ but 2 Enoch (which Friedlander also cites) is clear: 'And the sun goes in accordance with each animal. And the twelve animals are the succession of the months' (2 Enoch 30:6).⁷ PRE 6 probably echoes this view, implying that the sun resides in each sign in turn for one complete lunation, but it then muddies the waters by going on to state that the zodiacal signs rule in succession for two and a half days each *within* each month (PRE 6, 45/22–47/2).⁸

⁴ On PRE and the Second Temple pseudepigrapha see further Annette Yoshiko Reed, 'Who can Recount the Mighty Acts of the Lord?': Cosmology and Authority in Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer 1–3', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 80 (2009), pp. 115–141.

⁵ Friedlander, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer*, p. 52 fn. 7.

⁶ But see 1 Enoch 72:3–4. Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, p. 33, fn 1 refers vaguely to 'Eth. Enoch lxxiii–lxxiv', but this makes little sense. The parallel he needs is in chapter 72, and specifically in verses 3–4.

⁷ Translated by F.I. Andersen, in J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (Darton, Longman and Todd: London, 1983), p. 150. The text belongs to the so-called Long Recension of 2 Enoch.

⁸ כל המזלות משרתים את ימות חדש החמה וימות חדש החמה שלשים יום ועשר שעות ומחצה וכל מזל ומזל משרת את ימות חדש החמה שני ימים ומחצה שני מזלות לחמשה ימים ('All the constellations serve for the days of a solar month, and the days of a solar month are thirty days and ten and a half hours. And each constellation serves the days of the solar month for two and a half days, two constellations for five days.') The service for two and a half days has to be with respect to the *moon*, which passes through all twelve zodiacal signs within a solar month. See PRE 7, 61/10–11, though there the values are more precise (here they may have been rounded up): 'Each constellation serves the days of the lunar month for 2 days and 8 hours; three constellations serve for 7 days'. So the sun passes

Moreover the concept of the heavenly apertures is not confined to the Enochic literature. It has analogies in Rabbinic sources as well. Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 2, 58a refers to 365 'windows' created by God, 182 in the east, 182 in the west and one in the middle of the firmament. Exodus Rabbah 15.22 also calculates 365 windows.¹¹ The possibility that the

¹¹ Yerushalmi Rosh Hashanah 2, 58a: ברא הקדוש ברוך ושמנים ושתים במזרח ומאה ושמנים ושתים במערב ואחת ושתים בהן העולם מאה ושמנים ושתים (The Holy One, blessed be He, created three hundred and sixty-five windows of which the world makes use, 182 in the east and 182 in the west, and one in the middle of the firmament'). The text in Exodus Rabbah 15.22 is slightly different and dispenses with the window in the middle of the firmament: ושמנים ושתים ושלשה במזרח ומאה ושמנים ושתים במערב מהן ברא הקדוש ברוך הוא ברכי מאה ושמנים ושלשה במזרח ומאה ושמנים ושתים במערב.

Astronomical Book of Enoch introduced the concept of heavenly apertures into Jewish thought cannot, of course, be ruled out, and is, indeed, intrinsically likely, but this idea had probably become so widespread by the time of PRE that it cannot, on its own, be used to forge a direct literary link between it and the Enochic literature. The parallelism between PRE's astronomical material, on the one hand, and Enochic and Rabbinic literature, on the other, is very limited, but the suggestion that PRE reflects the latter has even less to commend it than the suggestion that it reflects the former. In fact, one of the important things we can say about this material in PRE is precisely that it has few, if any, significant parallels anywhere in antecedent Rabbinic literature of the Talmudic era. We will return to this point presently, but suffice to note here that PRE 8, 83/7, gives us the earliest example of a Jewish calendar with a 19-year cycle—an idea 'totally absent in early rabbinic sources'.¹² The innovatory character of PRE in comparison to the preceding Rabbinic tradition, at least as we now have it, is evident throughout PRE. It clearly wants to align itself with Rabbinic tradition, and regularly 'quotes' well-known Rabbinic authorities of an earlier generation. Indeed, at least in those manuscripts which begin with the story of Rabbi Eliezer's discourse in the Bet Midrash of Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, the whole treatise is apparently assigned to one of the most famous of the Tannaim. But the teachings and statements attributed to Rabbi Eliezer in PRE, like those of the other named Rabbis, can seldom be found in earlier texts, and are, presumably, pseudepigraphic. A better case can be made for linking PRE's scientific tradition with that in the Enochic corpus than that in the Rabbinic. This is hardly surprising, given that scientific statements, save possibly in fields such as medicine which can have a bearing on Halakhah,¹³ are rare in Rabbinic literature. Yet as

ברא לשמש ומהן ברא ללבנה ('God created 365 windows in the firmament, 183 in the east and 182 in the west. Some he created for the sun and some he created for the moon'). The passage in the Yerushalmi is a rare case where classic Rabbinic literature shows a fleeting interest in the study of nature, but it hardly compares to PRE. The parallel in Exodus Rabbah is more typical. This, having noted that Moses left many things out of his account of creation, supplements the information not by turning to nature but to the Book of Psalms!

¹² Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar Second Century BCE—Tenth Century CE* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2001), p. 196.

¹³ Julius Preuss collects together the scattered medical references in Rabbinic literature in his classic study *Biblisch-talmudische Medizin: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Heilkunde und der Kultur überhaupt*, (3 vols; S. Karger: Berlin, 1923). In the vast majority of cases the medical knowledge is introduced in the service of halakhic discussion.

we have seen the parallels with Enochic science are not, in substance, strong.

3. *PRE 6–8 and Bere'shit Rabbah's Account of Creation*

The relationship of PRE to antecedent Rabbinic literature can be explored more concretely by comparing and contrasting its treatment of Genesis 1 with that contained in Bere'shit Rabbah (BerR). BerR is undoubtedly the older text, and the chances are high that the author of PRE 6–8 knew it in some shape or form. As we shall see, it is hard to resist the conclusion at certain points that an intertextual relationship of some kind exists between PRE and BerR, but direct literary dependence of one on the other is not easy to prove, nor is it necessary for the present argument. What we are interested in is a heuristic comparison of how each work treats the same underlying biblical text.

When we compare PRE with BerR the first thing that strikes us is the absence in the latter of scientific statements involving direct observation of nature. Genesis itself offers a number of statements about the natural world, but BerR is not interested in going to nature to check these out and supplement the meagre data offered in the Bible. Instead it focuses narrowly on expounding the biblical words, and drawing from them moral or theological lessons. It is metalinguistic, i.e. making statements about other statements, rather than object-linguistic, i.e. making statements about objects in the real world beyond the text. Of course BerR, as a commentary, by its very nature has to be metalinguistic, but if the text commented upon refers to the world beyond the text, it can be seen as inviting the commentator to go to that world and to draw evidence from it to illuminate the text. So some commentators on Genesis 1 have used it as the basis for conveying masses of information about the natural world. And the Table of the Nations in Genesis 10 has been used to propound a geography of the world.¹⁴ But it is precisely this move to the world beyond the text that BerR shows no inclination to make.

¹⁴ Some texts in the Christian Hexaemeron tradition illustrate how Genesis 1 can become a peg on which to hang accounts of the physical world: see J. Zahlten, *Creatio Mundi: Darstellungen der sechs Schöpfungstage und naturwissenschaftliches Weltbild im Mittelalter* (Stuttgarter Beiträge zur Geschichte und Politik 13; Klett-Cotta: Stuttgart, 1979). The Book of Jubilees 8–9 shows how Genesis 10 can serve as the basis of a world geography and ethnography. See Philip Alexander, 'Notes on the "Imago Mundi" of the Book of

This approach is illustrated by its treatment of Genesis 1:16, where God is said to have created two 'great lights', clearly the sun and the moon as opposed to the stars. For the author of BerR the obvious implication is that these luminaries were originally created equal in brilliance, but this is contradicted by the text immediately referring to the one as the 'greater', the other as the 'lesser' light. So they were created equal but one was later diminished. Why? BerR's explanation is a moral one. It was because the moon strayed into the sun's territory.¹⁵ The domain of the moon was the night, but sometimes she can be observed in the sky during the day, the domain of the sun. Implicit here are two observations of nature: (1) that the sun and moon are not equal in luminescence; and (2) that the moon can regularly be seen shining faintly in the sky during the day; but nothing 'scientific' is made of these observations. Rather they are used to suggest a moral lesson, that we should stay in that station to which God has assigned us, and not stray from it, otherwise we will be punished, and this is what we should think about when we see the moon shining in the day, not where the moon gets its light from, or how big it is, or how far away from the earth, or what its cycles are, or why we never see the sun in the sky at night. The book of nature is a book of morals. BerR's moralizing interpretation of the text continues with a further point. Rabbi Naḥman observes: 'As long as the light of the greater luminary functions, the light of the smaller one is not noticeable, but when the light of the greater one sets, the light of the smaller one becomes noticeable'. This is then developed by taking the sun to stand for Rome, and the moon for Israel. As long as Rome is in the ascendant, Israel's light cannot be seen, but Rome's power will one day set, and then Israel will shine forth in all her glory (BerR 1.3). The *Urzeit* anticipates the *Endzeit* and looks forward to the redemption of Israel. That is the lesson which Israel should draw from the book of nature, when it contemplates the luminaries together in the sky.

Jubilees", in: G. Vermes and J. Neusner (eds), *Essays in Honour of Yigael Yadin* (Journal of Jewish Studies: Oxford 1982), pp. 194–214.

¹⁵ The expression of the idea is very compressed: BerR 6.3, 'ר' תנחום ר' פינחס בשם ר', סימון מאחר שהוא קורא אותן גדולים אתמהא הוא חוזר ופוגם אתמהא את המאור הגדול וגו' [ואת המאור הקטן] אתמהא, אלא על ידי שנכנס בתחום חבירו ('Rabbi Tanḥum and Rabbi Pinḥas said in Rabbi Simon's name: After calling them [both] "great", God turns round and denigrates [one of them by saying], "the great light... and the small light" [Genesis 1:16]! The reason is because it [the moon] penetrated into its neighbour's territory'). I quote here the text given in J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck (eds), *Bereschit Rabba: mit kritischen Apparat und Kommentar* (Akademie Verlag und M. Poppelauer: Berlin, 1912–1936), and so throughout this article when BerR is quoted, but the references are according to the more familiar numbering system of the Vilna edition.

There is merit in the suggestion that this deflection of the reader's gaze from nature to the text of Torah, characteristic of BerR's treatment of Genesis 1 as a whole, is deliberate, and motivated by theological concerns.¹⁶ It is precisely intended to exclude cosmological speculation, and to keep the exegesis within the framework of the ban on publicly expounding *Ma'aseh Bere'shit* laid down in Mishnah Ḥagigah 2.1: אין דורשין בעריות בשלשה ולא במעשה בראשית בשנים ולא במרכבה ביחיד אלא אם כן היה חכם ומבין מדעתו ('One must not expound the Forbidden Degrees in the presence of three, nor the Work of Creation in the presence of two, nor the Chariot in the presence of one, unless he is a sage who already understands from his own knowledge'). BerR is almost certainly a product of the School of Tiberias, and its compilers would have known this Mishnah. BerR 1.10 could be read as reaffirming and extending it: רבי יונה בשם ר' לוי אמר למה נברא העולם בב' אלא מה ב' זה סתום מכל צדדיו ופתוח מלפניו כך אין לך רשות לומר מה למטה מה למעלה מה לפניו מה לאחור ('Rabbi Jonah said in the name of Rabbi Levi: Why was the world created with a *beit*? Because just as a *beit* is closed on all sides and open before, so you have no authority to say what is below, what is above, what is before and what is hereafter').¹⁷ But how could they provide a commentary on Genesis 1 without falling foul of the ban? The answer is that they offered a moralizing exegesis, which was precisely intended to pre-empt cosmological speculation.

It is against the background of this apparent avoidance of direct appeal to the study of nature that we should read the famous opening pericope of BerR:

ר' אושעיא פתח ואהיה אצלו אמון ואהיה שעשועים אמון פידגוג אמון מכוסה אמון מוצנע אית דא' אמון רבתה אמון פידגוג היך מה דאת אמר כאשר ישא האומן את היונק אמון מכוסה היך מה דאת אמר האמונים עלי תולע אמון מוצנע

¹⁶ See Philip Alexander, 'Pre-emptive Exegesis: Genesis Rabba's Reading of the Story of Creation', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 43 (1992), pp. 230–45. Annette Yoshiko Reed attempts to take the analysis further in 'From "Pre-Emptive Exegesis" to "Pre-Emptive Speculation"? *Ma'aseh Bereshit* in Genesis Rabbah and Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer', in: D. Arbel and A. Orlov (eds), *With Letters of Light—Otiyot Shel Or: Studies in early Jewish Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Honour of Rachel Elior* (De Gruyter: Berlin, 2011), pp. 115–32; and "Who can Recount the Mighty Acts of the Lord?": Cosmology and Authority in Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer 1–3', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 80 (2009), pp. 115–141.

¹⁷ Clearly cosmogony is banned here ('what is before'), and astronomy and the contents of the heavens ('what is above'), which pretty much exhausts the substance of *Ma'aseh Bere'shit*. But it also, apparently, bans speculation about the underworld, represented in early Jewish tradition by the so-called 'Tours of Hell' literature, and about the end of history ('what will be hereafter'), well represented by Apocalyptic. All that seems to be left for study is history proper, and presumably specifically the *Heilsgeschichte*—the history of God's dealings with Israel.

היך מה דאת אמר ויהי אומן את הדסה אמן רבתה היך מה דאת אמר התיטבי מנא אמן ומתרגמין האת טבא מאלכסנדריא רבתא דיתבא ביני נהרותא [ד"א] אמן אומן התורה אומרת אני הייתי כלי אומנתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא בנוהג שבעולם מלך בשר ודם בונה פלטין ואינו בונה אותה מדעת עצמו אלא מדעת אומן והאומן אינו בונה אותה מדעתו אלא דיפטראות ופינקסות יש לו לידע היאך הוא עושה חדרים ופשפשים כך היה הקדוש ברוך הוא מביט בתורה ובורא העולם והתורה א' בראשית ברא אלהים ואין ראשית אלא תורה היך מה דאת אמר י"י קנני ראשית דרכו וגו'

Rabbi Osa'ya opened: *Then I was by Him as an 'amon; and I was daily all delight* (Proverbs 8:30). 'Amon means tutor; 'amon means covered; 'amon means hidden; and some say 'amon means great. 'Amon means tutor, as you say, *As the nurse ('omen) carries the sucking child* (Numbers 11:12). 'Amon means covered, as you say, *They that were covered* (ha-'emunim) *in scarlet* (Lamentations 4:5). 'Amon means hidden, as you say, *And he was hiding ('omen) Hadassah* (Esther 2:7). 'Amon means great, as you say, *Are you better than No-Amon?* (Nahum 3:8), which we translate, *Are you better than Alexandria the Great, that is situated among the rivers?* [Another interpretation:] 'amon means a architect ('uman). The Torah declares: 'I was the working tool (*keli 'umanuto*) of the Holy One, blessed be He.' In the custom of the world, when a king of flesh and blood builds a palace, he does not build it from his own knowledge but from the knowledge of an architect. The architect does not build it from his own knowledge, but he has plans and diagrams so that he might know how to make the rooms and the wicket gates. Thus God looked into the Torah and created the world. The Torah says, *In the beginning God created* (Genesis 1:1), and there is no beginning other than Torah, as you say, *The Lord made me as the beginning of His way* (Proverbs 8:22).

Here Wisdom in Proverbs 8 is equated with the Torah of Moses. The Torah preceded creation and was consulted by God when he came to create the world, in the way that a king would draw up and consult plans before he begins to build a city. Torah is the blueprint of creation: 'God looked into the Torah and created the world'. In the broader context of the argument in BerR one possible inference we might draw from this is that all we need to do if we want to know about nature is, in imitation of God, to 'look into Torah'. There is little to be gained from direct study of the book of nature itself.

When we turn to PRE we find the same elements in place as in BerR, but now they seem to be given a subtly different spin. The account of the fourth day of creation in PRE 6, 43/11–45/5, opens with a moralizing reading of the great luminaries:

ברביעי חבר שני מאורות הגדולים לא זה גדול מזה ולא זה גדול מזה ושון בגבהם ובתארן ובאורן שנאמר ויעש אלהים את שני המאורות נכנס תחרות ביניהם זה אומר לזה אני גדול ממך וזה אומר לזה אני גדול ממך ולא היה שלום ביניהם

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מה עשה הקב"ה הגדיל את האחד והקטין את האחד שנאמר את המאור הגדול לממשלת היום ואת המאור הקטן לממשלת הלילה

On the fourth day he connected together the two great luminaries, of which one was not greater than the other. They were equal as regards their height [above the earth], their form, and their light, as it is said, *And God made the two great lights* (Genesis 1:16). Rivalry ensued between them. One said to the other, I am bigger than you. The other answered, I am bigger than you. And there was no peace between them. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He made the one larger and the other smaller, as it is said, *The greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night.*

The PRE version is fuller than that in BerR, and, indeed, reads like an expansion of it. It is drawing from the precise wording of Scripture a rather similar point.¹⁸ The author of PRE was as happy as the author of BerR to read the book of nature in a moralizing way, though the moral he draws, interestingly, is different,¹⁹ but clearly he did not see such moralizing as *excluding* a cosmological reading, because he then goes on to make all sorts of statements about the movements of the sun, moon and stars in the heavens that can only be derived ultimately from the study of nature.²⁰

¹⁸ But note how in rewriting the tradition PRE seems to make a careless slip: it was surely not that God *increased* the sun and *diminished* the moon. Rather he left the sun as it was, and diminished the moon! Perhaps הגדיל should be translated 'left the one great'.

¹⁹ In BerR the moral lesson has to do with the transgressing of boundaries, with encroaching on domains where we have no right to be. In PRE, however, it seems to be about rivalry and hierarchy. The only way God was able to make peace between the sun and the moon was to impose on them a hierarchy: equality leads to rivalry. Elsewhere PRE significantly denies that the moon trespasses on the domain of the sun: 'Just as the moon's light does not rule over the sun's light by day, nor does the sun's light rule over the moon's light by night, likewise the calculation of the moon does not rule by day nor does the calculation of the sun (obtain) by night, and the one does not trespass on the boundary of the other' (PRE 7, 69/15–17, trans Friedlander).

²⁰ I am not suggesting here that the author of PRE derived his astronomical data from his own direct observation of nature. He makes no such claim, and, one assumes, he actually had written sources, but he presents the data in the form of objective statements about how nature works, not validated by any authority. Within the Enochic tradition, and related apocalyptic literature, the observational basis of its statements about nature is strongly asserted: the sage travels through the cosmos and *sees* the wonders of nature, or is *shown them* by an angel. See, e.g., 1 Enoch 75:6–8, 'I saw twelve gates in the heavens at the boundaries of the earth... and I saw many window openings to the right and to the left... and I saw chariots in the heavens'. This pattern continues down to 3 Enoch (see, e.g., 3 Enoch 42:2–3). The fact that the observations may be inaccurate should not blind us to the important nature of this claim. The contrast with the cosmologies in works such as Seder Rabba diBere'shit is striking. In the latter the modelling of the cosmos is so abstract

And we also find in PRE a version of the tradition based on Proverbs 8 of Torah's role in the creation of the world. It is at PRE 3, 15/4–19/4, and it deserves careful parsing:

שבעה דברים נבראו עד שלא נברא העולם ואלו הן תורה וגיהנם וגן עדן וכסא הכבוד ובית המקדש ותשובה ושמו של משיח תורה מניין שנאמר יי' קנני ראשית דרכו קדם מפעליו מאז קדם—רוצה לומר קדם שלא נברא העולם..... מיד נתייעץ הקב"ה בתורה ששמה תושיה לברא את העולם השיבה לו ואמרה רבון העולמים אם אין צבא ואם אין מחנה למלך על מה הוא מולך ואם אין עם מקלסין למלך איזה הוא כבודו של מלך שמע אדון העולם וערב לו אמרה תורה בי נתייעץ הקב"ה לברא את העולם שנאמר לי עצה ותושיה

Seven things were created before the world was created. They are: Torah, Gehinnom, the Garden of Eden, the Throne of Glory, the Temple, Repentance, and the Name of the Messiah. Whence do we know that this applies to the Torah? Because it is said: *The Lord possessed me as the beginning of his way, before his works of old* (Proverbs 8:22). 'Of old' means before the world was created.... Forthwith the Holy One, blessed be He, took counsel with the Torah whose name is *Tushiyah*, with reference to the creation of the world. The Torah said to Him: Sovereign of the Worlds, if there be no host, and if there be no camp for the king, over whom does he rule? If there be no people to praise the king, where is the honour of the king? The Holy One, blessed be He, heard this and it pleased Him. The Torah said: The Holy One, blessed be He, took counsel with me concerning the creation of the world, as it is said: 'Counsel is mine, and *tushiyah*' (Proverbs 8:14).

This reads less like an explanatory expansion of the corresponding tradition in BerR than a creative rewriting of it.²¹ Striking is the clever use of Proverbs 8:14 to prove that Torah played a role in creation—a verse that does not feature in BerR. In Proverbs 8:14 Wisdom/Torah proclaims that to her belongs 'counsel' and that counsel is interpreted precisely as her advice to God to create the world. God is depicted as hesitant, unable to make up his mind: it is Wisdom who sways him to act decisively. The

and stylized that it bears little or no relation to observable nature. See Nicolas Sed, *La mystique cosmologique juive* (Mouton: Paris, Berlin, New York, 1981).

²¹ The Midrash on the seven things created before the creation of the world is fairly widespread in Rabbinic literature, so it does not in itself prove an exclusive relationship between PRE and BerR at this point. We also find the *substance* of the idea that Torah was the instrument of creation in Mishnah Avot 3.14 (חביבין ישראל שניתן להם כלי חמדה שבו נברא העולם יתירה נודעת להם שניתן להם כלי חמדה שבו נברא העולם, 'Beloved are Israel, because to them was given the precious instrument. Greater love was made known to them, because to them was given the precious instrument by which the world was created'), as well as in BerR 1.1. And the tradition of the diminishing of the moon also has parallels elsewhere. All of this makes it difficult to demonstrate that PRE has a direct intertextual relationship with BerR. But this still remains the most *economical* hypothesis.

highlighting of the word *tushiyah* catches the eye, but the point of this is a little obscure. The idea of counsel is already present in the noun *'etzah*, so does *tushiyah* add anything more? *Tushiyah* is a favourite term in the Wisdom literature but its meaning is hard to catch in English. In some contexts it seems to denote 'efficient wisdom', i.e., wisdom applied to bringing something about.²² In other words here it might assert that Wisdom not only gave advice, but was active in putting that advice into effect. It played an active role in creating the world. That would be consonant with the idea picked up more explicitly in *'amon*, 'craftsman', applied later in the chapter to Wisdom (Proverbs 8:30). We cannot be sure how the author of PRE understood *tushiyah* (might he have connected it with *'ush*, 'foundation?'), but that it denoted for him a role over and above that of counsellor, is plausible. Wisdom/Torah's role in creation is markedly more dynamic in PRE than in BerR. It has often been noticed that when BerR spells out the meaning of its own simile of the king, the architect and the plans, it effectively ignores the architect, and it flattens the *agency* implicit in *'amon* into *instrumentality* (*keli 'umanuto*, 'his working tool').²³ The probable reason for this is that it wants to define Torah as a *written text*, so that it can identify the pre-existent Torah with the text given to Moses on Sinai, which Israel now has in her hands. PRE's stress on agency arguably loosens that link, though it does not negate it. The author of PRE surely accepted that the Torah of Moses was a concrete manifestation of the pre-existent Torah, but he might not have wanted to claim, as is probably implicit in BerR, that it is *identical* with it.²⁴ There is room for another manifestation of the pre-existent Torah in the laws of nature.

²² See the long entry on the word in L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, rev. W. Baumgartner and J.J. Stamm (Study Edition; Brill: Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2001), vol. 2, pp. 1713–1715.

²³ See the text of BerR 1.1 quoted above. The contrast with Philo, *On the Creation of the World*, is instructive. Philo too uses the simile of the king, the architect and the plans, but when he spells out the simile each element has an equivalent: the king is God, the architect is the Logos, and the plans are the Ideas which inhere in the Logos. See especially *On the Creation of the World* 20, 'As , then, the city which was fashioned beforehand within the mind of the architect held no place in the outer world, but had been engraved in the soul of the artificer as by a seal; even so the universe that consisted of ideas would have no other location than the Divine Reason (*ton theion logon*), which was the author of this ordered frame' (trans. F.H. Colson and G.H. Whitaker, Philo, vol. 1 [Loeb Classical Library; Heinemann: London/Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1971], p. 17).

²⁴ Nowhere does BerR distinguish the pre-existent cosmic Torah *in any way* from the Torah given to Moses on Sinai. On the contrary the identity of the Torah by which the world was created and the Torah given on Sinai seems to be asserted in BerR 1.10 (ed. Vilna): א"ר אלעזר בר חנינא בשם ר' אחא עשרים וששה דורות היתה האל"ף קורא תגר לפני

Be that as it may, PRE's concept of the pre-existent Torah which was involved in creation has to be read in the light of its actual reading of Genesis 1, and here its *inclusion* of observation of nature in its interpretation, like BerR's *exclusion* of observation of nature, speaks volumes. It suggests that it regards the concept of the cosmic Torah as *legitimizing* the direct observation of nature, rather than making it redundant. There can be no conflict between the Torah of nature and the Torah of Moses, and so no harm can be done in bringing them together.

4. *The Theological Purpose of PRE 6–8*

In the light of this analysis of the intertextuality of PRE and BerR it looks likely that the inclusion of observation of nature (albeit, observation done by others²⁵) in PRE is making a theological point, and that point remains valid in principle, even if its observations prove inadequate or incorrect. In contradistinction to BerR, PRE implicitly draws from Proverbs 8 the conclusion that there is a Torah of *nature*, and that Torah is fundamentally the same as the Torah of Moses: both are manifestations of the pre-existing cosmic Wisdom, which God consulted when he created the world. Cosmology, therefore, cannot be wrong, nor can it be in conflict with the Torah of Moses: discovering from observation of the material world the laws of nature is, as Isaac Newton was to put it much later, 'thinking God's thoughts after him'.

If this is the implication of PRE's reading, then its position is reminiscent of the relationship which its near contemporary Sa'adya posits between

כסאו של הקדוש ברוך הוא אמרה לפניו רבש"ע אני ראשון של אותיות ולא בראת עולמך בי אמר לה הקדוש ברוך הוא העולם ומלואו לא נברא אלא בזכות התורה שנאמר ה' בחכמה יסד ארץ וגו' למחר אני בא ליתן תורה בסיני ואיני פותח תחלה אלא בכך שני' אנכי ה' אלהיך (Rabbi Eleazar said in the name of Rabbi Aha: For twenty-six generations Alef was complaining before the throne of the Holy One, blessed be He. She said before him: Lord of the World, I am the first of the letters, yet you did not create the world through me! The Holy One, blessed be He, replied, The World and its fullness was created only for the sake of Torah, as it is written, *The Lord through Wisdom founded the earth* [Proverbs 3:19]. Tomorrow I am coming to give the Torah on Sinai, and I am going to begin with you, as it is written, *I am the Lord your God* [Exodus 20:2]). The Torah which was the instrument of creation began with the letter Beit, as does Genesis 1:1, but Alef cried foul, and complained for twenty-six generations (the span of time between the creation of the world and the giving of the Torah on Sinai) that *she* should have been first. But God consoled her by promising that when he gave the Torah on Sinai the first word which he would utter to Israel would begin with an Alef, which is what we find in Exodus 20:2.

²⁵ See fn. 19.

reason and revelation. In the *Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, Introduction VI,²⁶ Sa'adya takes a very optimistic view of human reason. Humanity is capable of finding out for itself all necessary truths, because of its God-given reason. So why then did God give revelation? It was to bestow on humanity those necessary truths straightaway, and not leave them bereft of them while they worked them out. Indeed, some of weaker intellect—women and children—may never have been able to discover them, so God in his goodness, handed them to them 'on a plate'. Implicit here is a positive doctrine of the congruence of revelation and reason. True reason can never be in conflict with revelation, nor does revelation contain anything fundamental to human wellbeing that could not, eventually, have been discovered by reason. It is not easy to compare a work of philosophy such as *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions* with a work of aggadah such as a PRE. The reasoning is much more concealed in the latter, much more suggestive; fewer straightforward propositions are used to proclaim the message. But it makes sense of what the author of PRE actually does—it makes his practice *rational*—if we assume he subscribed to the axiom that correct observation of nature can never be inimical to, or contradict the Torah of Moses. Indeed it can be used to supplement and illuminate what the Torah of Moses says about nature, because both the laws of nature and the laws of Torah are alike expressions of the pre-existent cosmic Torah.

Arguing that the science in PRE serves theological ends is not to deny that it could, coincidentally, have served other purposes as well. It is tempting to see specifically the calendrical material as having something to do with the debate over the calendar in the Gaonic era. As Sacha Stern notes, the Palestinian Rabbinical authorities claimed a monopoly over determining the calendar and intercalating the year.²⁷ That monopoly is actually asserted in PRE 8, 79/1 (אין לך רשות לעבר את השנה בחוצה) 'לארץ, 'You have no authority to intercalate the year outside the Land of Israel'). By the mid-ninth century however, the 'secret of intercalation' (*sod ha-'ibbur*) was known in Babylonia, and a struggle began between the Palestinian and Babylonian authorities over who had the right to fix the calendar—a skirmish in a wider power-play between these two centres of Rabbinic authority. The struggle culminated in the controversy between Sa'adya Gaon and Ben Me'ir in the early tenth century, which dealt a blow

²⁶ See Samuel Rosenblatt, *Saadia Gaon: The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, translated from the Arabic and Hebrew (Yale University Press: New Haven, 1948), pp. 26–33.

²⁷ Stern, *Calendar and Community*, pp. 188–189.

to Palestinian claims²⁸ to exclusive jurisdiction in this matter.²⁹ The astronomical sections of PRE might be a way of asserting Palestinian calendrical expertise but if this was the aim, the author of PRE has failed to offer a model which could serve as the basis for a working calendar.³⁰

The question where PRE got its cosmology from remains open. We may not have identified its sources as yet, but that it had sources seems beyond reasonable doubt. We find similar ideas in the Baraita diShemuel, which probably belongs to the same period.³¹ The relationship between the Baraita and PRE has never been properly clarified. Might the Baraita be the source of PRE, or might it be extracted from PRE, in the way that Midrash Yonah³² may have been the source of PRE 10 or, alternatively, been derived from it? The analogy with Midrash Yonah is suggestive, but possibly misleading, because, whereas the verbal overlaps between the Midrash and PRE are numerous and close, there are substantial differences between the Baraita and PRE. It is probable that the Baraita and PRE emanate from the same circles in Palestine in the Gaonic era. We are unlikely to be able to throw much more light on those circles from Jewish sources, but it is possible that some illumination might come from Islamic astrological doctrine of the eighth-ninth centuries.

5. *The True Parallelism with the Enochic Calendar*

If this analysis is correct then it brings us back, somewhat paradoxically, to the Enochic calendar, because that too, came to serve theological ends.

²⁸ It is widely accepted that PRE was composed in Palestine, and with good reason. It is attributed to a Palestinian sage (Rabbi Eliezer), and almost all the authorities quoted are Palestinian. Though some parallels to it are to be found in Bavli, the majority come from the Palestinian sources, particularly the Yerushalmi and BerR. There is little evidence to suggest that this genre of aggadic midrash was of much interest to Babylonian scholars. It might be argued that the Babylonian Talmud quotes many Palestinian Rabbis and Palestinian traditions, but the case of the Bavli is different because there the Palestinian elements are counterbalanced by Babylonian names and traditions, whereas in PRE the identifiable Babylonian component is very small, and perfectly compatible with Babylonian influence on Palestine in the Gaonic period. For discussion see the secondary literature cited in footnote 1 above.

²⁹ Stern, *Calendar and Community*, pp. 265–268.

³⁰ For the possibility that PRE is offering a theoretical or ideal calendar see below.

³¹ Stern, *Calendar and Community*, pp. 203–204. For a text of the Baraita see J.D. Eisenstein, *Ozar Midrashim* (J.D. Eisenstein: New York, 1915), pp. 542–47 (conveniently reproduced in the Bar Ilan Responsa database, Version 20). Eisenstein has a short but valuable introductory note on the textual sources for this work.

³² For Midrash Yonah see Eisenstein, *Ozar Midrashim*, pp. 217–223.

Like the calendar in PRE, the calendar in 1 Enoch does not offer a calendrical model that will work in practice. Its 364-day solar year is one and quarter days behind the actual movement of the sun, and that will rapidly become apparent to any observer: within thirty years it will be around thirty-seven and half days out of phase. What is interesting to note in the case of 1 Enoch is that the text seems to be aware that the model does not work. Towards the end of the Astronomical Book (1 Enoch 80:2–8) it is claimed that the order of nature and motions of the luminaries, which determine the calendar, have been disturbed by human sin, or by some sort of rebellion among the heavenly bodies.³³ The connection of this passage with what precedes is awkward, and it may be a later addition.³⁴ One way of explaining such an addition would be to suppose that for a while it was assumed that the calendar actually did work, but when it became obvious, as it would have rather quickly, that it was out of kilter with reality, it was not abandoned, but the appearances were saved by the doctrine that the celestial motions had been changed by sin. The result was that the Enochic calendar became idealised: it was the calendar which God had intended at creation, and which would, perhaps, be restored at the end of time. The alternative would be to suppose that the Enochic calendar was always meant to offer a simple theoretical model, because the true values are complex, and lack elegance and symmetry. One could conceive of didactic or analytical or even homiletic purposes for such a simplification. But this is not how the author of 1 Enoch 80:2–8 understood the matter. He was clearly aware of the fact that the calendar did

³³ 'And in the days of sinners years shall become shorter, and their seeds shall be late in their lands and fields, and all the work on earth shall be changed, and shall not appear in its time.... And the moon shall alter her order and not appear at her (proper) time. And in those days she shall appear in the heavens, and shine more brightly than accords with the order of (her) light. And many leaders of the stars shall stray from the commandments (of God), and shall change their orbits and tasks, and not appear at the seasons commanded them' (1 Enoch 80:2, 4–6). I have quoted here the translation of Matthew Black, which seems to me to offer the most plausible rendering of this passage (Matthew Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch* [Brill: Leiden, 1985], p. 69). Is the reference to the moon shining 'more brightly than accords with the order of (her) light' an allusion to the moon appearing in the sky during the day, and from this it was inferred that she had disobeyed God's creation ordinance to rule the *night*? We saw earlier how BerR appeared to have moralized this phenomenon. See above.

³⁴ So Black, *The Book of Enoch*, p. 252, following R.H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1912) p. 170. More recent work on the Astronomical Book of Enoch by Henryk Drawnel, *The Aramaic Astronomical Book from Qumran* (Oxford University Press: New York, 2011), and Jonathan Ben-Dov, *Head of all Years: Astronomy and Calendars at Qumran in their Ancient Context* (Brill: Leiden, 2008), does not add to the source-critical analysis of 1 Enoch 80:2–8.

not correspond to reality, but his understanding is not that it is a simplified theoretical model, but that the discrepancy between the model and reality is due to the fact that the symmetrical order of nature established by God at creation has been disturbed.

Unlike the Astronomical Book of 1 Enoch (at least as we now have it), there is no evidence in PRE that the author perceived that the calendar he was presenting did not correspond to reality. Though this possibility cannot be ruled out, it is an hypothesis to suppose that he is offering an idealised calendar or a simplified theoretical model. On the face of it, he offers his values as *true* values: certainly some of them appear to have been rounded up, fractions being replaced by the next whole number (e.g., 366 used to represent $365\frac{1}{4}$: see above, p. 43), but others seem to be needlessly complicated if what he is offering is a simplified theoretical model (e.g., the lunar year = $354\frac{1}{3}$ days and 876 parts: see above, p. 44). But whether he thinks his calendar is true or theoretical or ideal does not affect the argument here. He is clearly attempting to model *nature*, and the sort of model he presents makes little sense if it is not ultimately based on observation.³⁵ Theoretical models are well-known to the sciences, and serve a number of purposes, but whatever his purpose here the author of PRE is, surely, offering a reading of *the book of nature*. The Enochic calendar can be seen as doing the same. Enoch, it has been argued, functioned as the patron-saint of Jewish science in the Second Temple period: his name, recorded obscurely in the account of the antediluvian period in Torah (Genesis 5:18–24), was used to domesticate within Jewish tradition ideas derived from Babylonian science, which had derived them, ultimately, from observation of nature.³⁶ He presides over the beginnings

³⁵ Stern argues that PRE is presenting a simplified model, and that the complex values are probably later scribal changes. See his *Calendar and Community*, p. 186: 'I have shown elsewhere ["Fictitious Calendars", 1996] that the Baraita de-Shemuel itself would not have believed its values to be functional or accurate, nor would it have been able to apply this calendar in practice; the calendar of the Baraita de-Shemuel was only theoretical, and in some respects, fictitious. . . . The same argument is likely to apply to Pirkei de-R. Eliezer, which belongs to the same period and which assumes, in chs. 6–7, the same simplified values for the year and the lunation as in the Baraita de-Shemuel.' Further, Stern, 'Fictitious Calendars: Early Rabbinic Notions of Time, Astronomy, and Reality', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series 87 (1996), pp. 103–129.

³⁶ See Philip Alexander, 'Enoch and the Beginnings of Jewish Interest in Natural Science', in C. Hempel, A. Lange, H. Lichtenberger (eds), *The Wisdom Texts from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought* (Peeters: Leuven, 2002), pp. 223–243. Further Annette Yoshiko Reed, 'Was there science in ancient Judaism? Historical and cross-cultural reflections on "religion" and "science"', *Studies in Religion* 36/3–4 (2007), pp. 461–495.

of Jewish interest in the natural world for its own sake, the beginnings of Jewish science.

The theoretical underpinnings of that development had been laid down a little earlier in Wisdom circles in the Persian period. The key text was Proverbs 8. That remarkable chapter had asserted two very important things, which were crucial for the emergence of science. The first was that a universal Wisdom underlies the whole of the natural world: the way the world works is governed by rational laws. The second was that humanity participates in that rationality, and therefore humanity has the capacity to discover and understand the laws of nature. Proverbs 8 makes it clear that the Wisdom which made the world dwells on earth and can be grasped by humankind. Later Jewish tradition, starting with Ben Sira (24:1–33),³⁷ tended to identify that dwelling very closely with the giving of the Torah on Sinai, but there was surely more to it than this. What the author of Proverbs is hinting at is that there is a profound congruence between the *logos* in man and the *logos* in the cosmos, on the basis of which humanity can understand how the world works. This is the opposite of the view asserted in Job 28, where God tells Job in no uncertain terms that he can never understand creation: there is an unbridgeable gulf between the rationality of God and his works, and the rationality of man.³⁸ PRE should be located on the same arc that runs from Proverbs 8 through 1 Enoch. It asserts, in its own way, possibly for the first time within *Rabbinic* tradition,³⁹ the validity of science. PRE was a surprisingly popular work in the Middle Ages and early modern times, and it is interesting to

³⁷ The Praise of Wisdom on Ben Sira 24 is clearly modelled on Proverbs 8. The identification of cosmic Wisdom with the Torah is suggested by ver. 8, 'Then the Fashioner of all gave me his command, and he who had made me chose the spot for my tent, saying, "In Jacob make your dwelling, in Israel your inheritance",' and put beyond doubt by ver. 23, 'All this is true of the book of the Most High's covenant, the Law which Moses enjoined on us as a heritage for the community of Jacob'. See the comments of Alexander A. Di Lella, in P. Skehan and A.A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (The Anchor Bible; Doubleday: New York, 1987), p. 336 ('V 23a is... one of Ben Sira's most emphatic statements that Wisdom is the Torah of Israel').

³⁸ Job 28:20–21, 'Where then does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living, and concealed from the birds of the air' (NRSV).

³⁹ Occasional 'scientific' statements in Rabbinic literature (e.g. the reference to heavenly windows in y.RH 2, 58a mentioned above) do not compare with the mass of 'scientific' observations in PRE 6–8, nor have they the same effect.

note that not a few of those who took it up and commented on it, used it as a pretext for discussing science.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ See, e.g., the list of editions and commentaries in Börner-Klein, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, pp. xix–xxiv. Further, D. Blumenthal, 'The Rationalistic Commentary of R. Hotei Ben Shelomo to Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer,' *Tarbiz* 48 (1978–1979), pp. 99–106 [Hebrew].

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Database for the Analysis of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Texts of Antiquity

Book details

Name: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer**Abbreviation:** PRE**Researcher:** Philip Alexander**Status:** Completed**Bibliography:**

Editions: PRE was a popular work: it is extant in numerous mss and printed editions, and attracted numerous traditional commentaries, the most influential of which was by the Radal: see Dagmar Boerner-Klein, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer: nach der Edition Venedig 1544 unter Beruecksichtigung der Edition Warschau 1852* (Studia Judaica 26; de Gruyter: Berlin/New York, 2004), introduction; further: H.M. Haag, *Pirke DeRabbi Eli'ezer 43: Aufbau und traditions-geschichtliche Analyse* (MA dissertation, Universitaet Koeln, 1978); Lewis M. Barth, "Is Every Medieval Manuscript a New Composition? The Case of Pirke Rabbi Eliezer", <http://www.usc.edu/dept/huc-la/pre-project/agendas.html>; E. Treitel, *Ede ha-nusach shel Pirke de-R. Eliezer -- Miyn muqdam* (MA dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2002); Treitel (PhD dissertation, Hebrew University Jerusalem, 2010). There is as yet no critical edition. C.M. Horowitz, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer. A complete critical edition as prepared by C.M. Horowitz, but never published. Facsimile edition of [the] editor's original MS* (Makor: Jerusalem, 1972) gives the Venice 1544 edition, with Horowitz's handwritten notes. It is very hard to use. The text underlying Friedlander's English translation (see below) is good, but the ms on which it was based is now lost. The text of PRE differs considerably between the various text-witnesses. The Inventory profile is based on the Venice 1544 edition, which is available in Horowitz in facsimile and in Boerner-Klein in transcription. Based on the editio princeps, Constantinople 1514, which is available online at *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer: Electronic Text Editing Project* (<http://www.usc.edu/dept/huc-la/pre-project/agendas.html>), the Venice 1544 ed. was in turn the basis of the later prints, such as Warsaw 1852. The *Pirke Rabbi Eliezer: Electronic Text Editing Project* has also digitized images of the Hebrew Union College mss 75 and 2043. The *textus receptus* has 54 chapters. Friedlander's translation (see below) has 53, because it runs together chaps 53 and 54. PRE lacks a proper referencing system. For detailed references the profile cites the (traditional) chapter number followed in brackets by the page and line number in Boerner-Klein: so 20 (86/10) means: chapter 20 in the *textus receptus*, Boerner-Klein edition p. 86, line 10.

Translations: English: Gerald Friedlander, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great): According to the Text of the Manuscript belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna* (1916, repr. Hermon Press: New York, 1965). Spanish: Miguel Perez Fernandez, *Los Capítulos de Rabbi Eliezer* (Valencia, 1984). French: M.-A. Ouaknin, E. Smilevitch, P.H. Salfati, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (Traduction annotée)* (Paris, 1984). German: Boerner-Klein, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*.

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Profile details

1.1 The text refers to itself as verbal entity (with implied or explicit boundaries).

1.1.5 Important text witnesses attest to a heading which is not integrated with the body of the text or with any introductory frame, implying one or more of the kinds of information under 1.1.1–4. The two main titles are: (1) Pirkei (de)Rabbi Eliezer, and (2) Baraita deRabbi Eliezer. Neither is informative generically speaking (in the sense of 1.1.1) or suggests the boundedness of the text. "Chapters" is particularly vague. The only parallel I can think of to this is Pirkei Avot. "Baraita" simply records the view that PRE contains material attributed to a Tanna (Rabbi Eliezer) which is not recorded in Mishnah (or other Tannaitic sources).

1.6 The approximate word count or other indication of comparative size is: 41,000 words in Hebrew counted from the Davka software.

1.7 The text's Inventory profile should be seen in the light of the following further information on completeness, thematic progression, aesthetic effects, etc. PRE does not present itself strongly as a bounded text. It rather peters out towards the end. The bulk of it is structured on Gen. 1 to Exod. 32 (see 5.5 below) which covers the biblical narrative from the creation to the giving of the Torah on Sinai. But there are in many text-witnesses some rather desultory chapters added at the end which spoil the sense of closure. And the failure to complete the schema of the Ten Descents and the Berakhot of the Amidah (see 5.5) has been taken to indicate that the text is incomplete. However against this it should be noted that the opening is quite strongly marked: It introduces Rabbi Eliezer in chaps 1-2, and then chap. 3 begins with, "Rabbi Eliezer b. Hyrcanus opened ...". And chap. 51 on the new heavens and the new earth provides an inclusio with the opening chapters on the first heavens and the first earth. The contents of the work are broadly similar in the various text-witnesses, and not the scribal conclusion (not part of the text!): "It is finished, praised be to God!".

2.1 The information conveyed in the text defines the perspective of the governing voice in the following way. N.B.: Despite the fact that the traditional form of PRE appears to distinguish clearly between an anonymous framing voice, and a majority voice (identified as that of Rabbi Eliezer) who says the vast bulk of the text, this distinction is not strongly sustained, and in consequence the profile identifies in the PRE only a single anonymous governing voice who says the whole of the text. See further 2.1.9.

2.1.1 The text does not thematize how the governing voice comes to know the text's contents (or its right to command obedience from the addressee), but suggests that its knowledge (or authority) is unlimited.

2.1.1.1 In narrative, the governing voice's perspective tacitly is that of someone "present" at all events equally, regardless of their time, place, or nature (e.g. thoughts or private utterances of characters). Applies to the narrative sections of PRE, but the text is not predominantly a narrative. See under 4.

2.1.1.2 The text is not narrative but the governing voice refers to utterances on the basis of unexplained knowledge of speech events of diverse periods and places. This obviously applies to the quoted dicta of Rabbis of different periods.

2.1.1.3 The text's governing voice speaks from the perspective of unmediated access to all levels and parts of some projected reality. Applies to PRE chapters 6-8, which contain cosmological/astronomical traditions, including calculations.

2.1.7 The governing voice (whether first or third person) is anonymous, that is, is not presented as tied to a specific personal identity (or to personhood in general).

2.1.8 The governing voice speaks at no point in the first person (except for any 2.2.4.3) and all persons/objects are mentioned from a third-person perspective.

2.1.9 An anonymous voice repeatedly reports the direct speech of a character whose speeches account for the bulk of the text (but not continuously). For those forms of PRE which contain chaps 1-2, this point arguably applies. The anonymous voice, having introduced Rabbi Eliezer, then assigns the rest of the text to his voice. This appears to be the meaning of the opening statement of chap. 3, "Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus opened" (on the use of patah here see 8.2.6 below). Indeed, the opening story apparently does more: it identifies the precise setting in which Rabbi Eliezer uttered his discourse: it was the famous occasion when, at the behest of his teacher Yohanan ben Zakkai, he expounded Torah in the presence of his father, who had come to the schoolhouse to disinherit him (see further 7.2.2.1 below). In the body of the text Rabbi Eliezer is quoted a number of times under the rubric: "Rabbi Eliezer

said". Friedlander (PRE p. 1, fn 2) claims chaps 3-54 "contain about twenty dicta attributed to Rabbi Eliezer", though in some cases there are variant readings which attribute the sayings to other sages. The dicta are well distributed through the book, and could, theoretically, be taken as the anonymous voice of the opening two chapters breaking in again periodically to remind the reader that Rabbi Eliezer is the speaker. But the fiction of Eliezer's authorship is not strongly sustained. There are numerous other Rabbis quoted in the body of the text under the formula: "Rabbi X said". The fiction would suggest that these would have to be read as quoted by Rabbi Eliezer -- a conclusion not suggested by the positioning and manner in which the Rabbi Eliezer quotations are introduced. These are often simply juxtaposed with short quotes from other Rabbis, presented in the same form, with no indication that the Eliezer quotes "govern" them. The possibility that Rabbi Eliezer could be quoting himself in the third person (cf. 2.2.5) cannot be ruled out, but it feels decidedly forced, and the illusion of Eliezer's authorship is shattered if the reader spots that Eliezer is apparently quoting authorities who lived well after his time, or that the quotations of Rabbinic authorities (including those of Eliezer!) are pseudepigraphic, or that even some of the authorities are fictional. The fact is that, although the attribution of the text to Rabbi Eliezer served the "author" of PRE's purpose, as did the fictional occasion on which it was supposedly uttered (7.2.2.1 below), the reader quickly loses sight of Eliezer's role after chap. 3 and no serious attempt is made to remind him of it. See further 2.1.

2.4 The governing voice defines a horizon of knowledge as shared with the projected addressee by taking for granted the following linguistic usages or references (in selection):

2.4.1 Persons or unique objects referred to by proper name or by technical expression:

2.4.1.1 for persons mentioned or presented in narrative usage; as characters; or topics, for example: (1) Biblical figures: e.g. Jonah, Abraham, Moses etc., etc.; (2) Rabbinic figures: e.g. Rabbi Eliezer, Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, Resh Laqish etc., etc.; (3) Non-biblical figures: e.g. Alexander of Macedon.

2.4.1.2 for persons quoted with direct speech in a non-narrative co-text, for example: Rabbaiu Zadoq; Rabbi Ishmael etc., etc.

2.4.1.3 for Gods/mythical figures/supernatural beings, etc., for example: God, the Holy One blessed be he, Bat Qol, angels (Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael, Gallizur, Sammael).

2.4.1.4 for locations, for example: Jerusalem, Israel, Egypt, Garden of Eden, Sodom, Nineveh, Sinai.

2.4.1.5 for times or calendar dates (specific to a language or culture), for example: Seven Planets (Mercury, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sun, Venus), the twelve constellations; solstices and equinoxes; Shabbat, Yom Kippur, Pesah.

2.4.1.6 for documents, texts, books, etc. (identified through being referred to or quoted), for example: Miqra, Mishnah.

2.4.2 circumlocutions, names or descriptions employed as "code" names. E.g. Ishmaelites = Arabs; Edomites = Christians; Edom = Roman empire/Christendom.

2.4.3 The text as a whole routinely employs the following language(s), knowledge of which is taken for granted: Hebrew and Aramaic.

2.4.4 Special linguistic usages occur pervasively or prominently: she-ne'emar; mashal (mashelu mashal le-mah ha-davar domeh etc.)

2.4.4.1 Technical expressions for a particular subject matter. E.g. Ma'aseh Bere'shit, Ma'aseh Merkavah.

2.6 [The text presents itself as speaking to certain persons, groups or entities, explicitly projecting a certain image of its addressee. The text is addressed to talmidei hakhamim through the Beit Midrash setting of the opening framing narrative.]

2.6.2 [The projected addressee is characterized as having a certain moral or epistemic stance, or as standing in contrast to another group's moral or epistemic stance. PRE presupposes that its audience will have a knowledge of two grand narratives: (a) the grand narrative of biblical history (particularly that part of it recounted in Genesis and Exodus); and (b) the grand narrative of Rabbinic history implicit in classic Rabbinic literature. The expectation that the reader will know these narratives is nowhere made explicit: hence 2.6 dubiously applies in its present formulation; but it is strongly implicit, in that PRE cannot be understood without it, and so this fact needs to be recorded. Diachronically speaking the fact that the Rabbinic grand narrative is treated in the same way as the biblical grand narrative, is a function of the lateness of PRE, and the "canonisation" of classic Rabbinic literature. See further under 7.1 and 7.2.]

2.7 The epistemic stance, knowledge horizon, moral stance and identity of the governing voice, and of the projected addressee, do not become thematic in the text.

4.1 [The text narrates events which are strongly emplotted, making reference to interlocking happenings, characters, motivations, causes, times or locations. There is a considerable amount of narrative in PRE. The two main narratives are (1) the Jonah Midrash; and (2) the Eliezer narrative that introduces the text. But also (3) other narratives: mini-narratives in thematic setting, mainly exempla.]

4.1.2 [All subordinate events are presented as preparing one crisis and its solution, or as addressing one unified timespan/location, or as telling the fate of one character or a group of characters. True for Midrash Jonah (PRE 10) and Midrash Eliezer (PRE 1-2).]

4.1.2.1 [The narrative builds up one central narrative tension as having special intrinsic interest, or unites in some other way a number of narrative strands.]

4.1.2.2 [The action pivots around one character or a small set of inter-connected characters.]

4.1.2.3 [The narrative emphasizes personal, private or domestic aspects of lives.]

4.1.3 [The narrative provides a clear closure, or dwells on the closure.]

4.7 Within a thematic (non-narrative) framework the text contains extensive telling of continuous and detailed events.

4.7.1 This narrative material is explicitly subservient to and integrated into a thematic discourse or thematic description (see under 5). This is the main point under 4. See under 5.5.

4.9 [There is prominent or sustained characterization of key figures in the narrative. The figures of Jonah, and Eliezer, Yohanan and Eliezer's father are well characterized.]

4.9.2 [All characterization is achieved only through reporting the actions, speech or thoughts of the characters ("dramatic").]

4.9.4 [A figure is characterized by her or his intellectual gifts or understanding. E.g. Eliezer and Jonah.]

4.10 [A character's relations to her/his community are foregrounded, including any two-fold social environment (e.g. a diaspora setting). E.g. Jonah's relation to his fellow Israelites and to the gentiles (sailors and Ninevites).]

4.11 [Supernatural characters appear in the narrative, whether introduced casually, or accounted for elaborately.]

4.12 [The narrative pace is slowed down or changed by the occasional or regular occurrence of extended descriptions.]

5.1 The bulk of the text is constituted by thematic discourse/description, albeit presented as speech/wording quoted from a narrative setting: See 2.1.9.

5.1.1 The discursive or descriptive treatment of themes is presented as one character's continuous speech or wording in a unique narrative situation. The bulk of the work, i.e. PRE 3-54, is presented as a discourse delivered by Rabbi Eliezer in the Beit Midrash of Yohanan ben Zakkai.

5.5 The text's sequence of sub-topics (discursive or narrative) mirrors a temporal or spatial order, but without narrative emplotment between the sub-topics. Or it mirrors the sequence of units of meaning in another text (from single words to whole books), while not reproducing the relationships between those parts, not using quotations from it as lemmatic progression (i.e., no 6.1), and not creating narrative emplotment. The order of topics mirrors selectively that found in the biblical Genesis and Exodus.

5.5.1 This order includes all parts of the text (excepting any frames), as follows:

5.5.1.4 An order of units of meaning in another text (from words to whole books) provides the sequence for the text's themes (including any normative themes). From PRE 3 to 47 the order of topics follows the order of the biblical text from Gen. 1:1 to Exod. 32, but highly selectively, and there are occasional analepses. E.g., having by the end of chap. 25 reached Gen. 19, the text, in a section structured by the ten trials of Abraham, jumps back to Gen. 11:27, the first trial (PRE 26) but continues forward to the end of Gen. 22, the tenth trial (PRE 31). It then proceeds, again selectively, in biblical order from the death of Sarah in Gen. 23 (PRE 32) to the giving of the Torah at Sinai in Exod. 20 (PRE 41). Then there is another analepsis in which the text jumps back to Exod. 13 (Exodus) (PRE 42), and continues forward to the episode of the Golden Calf in Exod. 32 (PRE 47). The remaining material in PRE (chaps. 48-53) is basically thematic and does not obviously follow any biblical order, though chap. 48 does deal (again) with aspects of the Egyptian bondage, and chap. 51 looks forward to the new heavens and the new earth. It should be stressed that the extreme selectivity of PRE with regard to the biblical text means, in effect, that it loses the narrative element in the Bible and treats the biblical text simply as a repository of themes. There are several other principles of ordering evident in PRE: (1) Chaps 14 to 53 are explicitly structured at the opening of chap 14 in terms of ten, listed, descents upon earth made by the Holy One, blessed be he. The opening schema is not fully realised, since the 9th and 10th descents are not picked up in the subsequent text. This schema relies on the ordering of the biblical text, and so can be considered as subordinate to the biblical ordering described above. (2) Chaps 3-21 are structured explicitly according to the seven days of creation, but again since this order is clearly dependent on the Bible, the biblical order can be deemed to have priority. (3) Chaps 26-31 are explicitly structured according to the ten trials of Abraham. Chap. 26 opens: "our father Abraham was tried with ten trials, and he stood firm in them all", but, unlike the ten descents, the trials are not summarily listed at the outset. However, in the subsequent text ten trials are clearly identified. Although the ten trials are not enumerated in the biblical text, they follow the order of events as recounted in the bible, and so this structure too can be seen as subordinate to the biblical order. (4) The first five Berakhot of the Amidah are quoted in order in PRE from chaps. 27 to 43, but they only weakly structure the text, if at all. See further under 7.2.

5.5.2 This order defines only a continuous substantial part of the text, as follows:

5.5.2.4 An order of units of meaning in another text (from words to whole books) provides the sequence for a

continuous substantial part of the text's themes (including any normative themes). The biblical order (5.5.1.4) accounts for the whole of PRE with the exception of chaps 1-3 and 48-53.

5.9 The text's governing voice projects the accuracy or validity of its statements as:

5.9.3 Pervasively in need of support by arguments, or open to discussion. The text explicitly and regularly cites Scripture and rabbinic opinion to justify its statements.

5.9.4 The following argument types occur:

5.9.4.3 Predominantly or exclusively arguments from the quoted wording of another text (e.g. paraphrases, interpretation units, proof-texts).

5.10 The governing voice ascribes statements about the text's thematic substance pervasively or prominently to speaker characters as utterances.

5.10.1 Isolated utterances (or dialogues) are presented without a unifying emplotment, but tacitly presuppose a unified grid of story/history.

5.10.1.1 The persons, groups or generic figures indicated as speakers tend to be only minimally identified or contextualized. Rabbinic authorities are quoted regularly by name, but no contextualization is provided. It is assumed the reader will know who they are.

7.1 Narrative or thematic correspondences, or overlap of specific wording, occur between a non-biblical text and one or more biblical texts in a manner that is prominent or pervasive.

7.1.3 There is prominent use of explicit quotations of biblical wording, whether in non-narrative or in narrative (but not in biblical commentary, for which see section 6).

7.1.8 The non-narrative text pervasively or prominently presupposes the narrative fabric of biblical events/reported speech, beyond the contents of any specific biblical quotations that may occur.

7.1.8.1 The text presupposing biblical narrative fabric has a thematic structure of discourse or description.

7.2 Narrative or thematic correspondences, or overlap of specific wording, occur between the non-biblical text under discussion and other non-biblical texts in a manner that is prominent or pervasive.

7.2.2 The overall chronological and spatial framework of the narrative, as well as certain events, are substantially or prominently co-extensive with that of a non-biblical narrative or with some extended part of it.

7.2.2.1 The narrative is located at a particular point ("niche") in a chronological-spatial framework also known from another non-biblical text, but there is no overlap in the narrative substance. This point applies after a fashion to PRE. The textus receptus of PRE presents itself as reporting the discourse which Rabbi Eliezer was supposed to have delivered in the school of Yohanan ben Zakkai in pre-destruction Jerusalem on an occasion when Eliezer's father came to the schoolhouse to disinherit him because he was spending his time studying Torah rather than doing the chores around the family farm. This story is well-known from other Rabbinic texts (see 7.2.6 below). It constitutes an episode in the grand narrative of Rabbinic history --a narrative which is not recounted continuously anywhere in classic Rabbinic literature, but which is presupposed by it, and was finally formally extracted from it in the Gaonic era in works such as Sherira Gaon's *Iggeret* and Avraham ibn Daud's *Sefer ha-Qabbalah*. The "author" of PRE is banking on his audience knowing this narrative, because it serves to validate what he is saying, by attributing it to a famous earlier authority and locating it at a well-known point in time. A niche is created by the fact that earlier accounts of the episode never gave the contents of Eliezer's famous discourse. PRE is, in effect, saying, "Here it is!" This is a well-known strategy of pseudepigraphy, and it is a moot point whether or not the author of PRE was using it "tongue-in-cheek" and expecting the readers to pick it up -- something which has implications for the epistemic horizon of the implied audience (cf. 2.4 above). There are other possible pseudepigraphic elements in PRE. Though it quotes Rabbis who are known actors in Rabbinic history, and attributes to them words which are attributed to them in other Rabbinic texts, in some cases it attributes to them dicta which are not paralleled anywhere else, and which may, therefore, be deliberately pseudepigraphic, and it cites Rabbinic authorities who are not known from elsewhere and may be totally fictitious. This latter phenomenon is in some ways parallel to introduction of fictitious characters into biblical niche narratives (cf. 7.1.9). The historical setting in which the author of PRE has placed the work has been chosen with some care. E.g., its interest in Ma'aseh Merkavah would be consonant with a setting in the school of Yohanan ben Zakkai, who is well-known from Rabbinic literature as an authority on this subject. See further 2.6.2.

7.2.6 There is extensive tacit overlap with the wording of a non-biblical partner text, whether in narrative or in non-narrative texts. (1) The story of how Rabbi Eliezer came to study Torah (PRE chaps 1-2) is paralleled ARN A6 and B13, and Gen.R. 42. The wording is close to some, but not identical with any of the other sources. On the role this story plays in contextualizing PRE, see 7.2.2 and 2.1.9 above. (2) Chap. 10, the Story of Jonah, is paralleled in Midrash Jonah (Yalqut) and similar texts. Here the wording is very close. The link between the Jonah story and the fifth day of creation in PRE is tenuous: it is forged through connecting the "great fish" with Leviathan, who was supposedly created on the fifth day. This might suggest, from a diachronic perspective, that this material has been taken over into PRE from elsewhere. However, it is not thematically out of place in PRE, since its theme of repentance is one of the major themes of the book. (3) There are numerous other less substantial overlaps both in theme and wording with classic Rabbinic literature. (4) There are parallels with Pseudo-Jonathan, (5) with Piyut, and (6) with Pseudepigrapha. In no case, however, is the parallel acknowledged nor another text explicitly highlighted as a source. The only textual source directly quoted in PRE is Bible (see 7.1.3).

7.2.6.4 The extensive wording overlap takes place across language boundaries. In the case of overlaps between PRE and the Targumim, esp. Pseudo-Jonathan, different languages -- Hebrew and Aramaic -- are involved. See 7.2.6 above.

8.1 Standard forms or contents formulated in set phrases, set sentence formats, or clauses in a standard syntactic connection.

8.1.4 Unit of a biblical quotation together with a hermeneutically dependent formulation; midrashic unit: Several cases, e.g. PRE 21, 221/9-223/8 (Gen 3:3).

8.1.10 List sentence enumerating items by words or phrases: E.g. PRE 3, 19/16-21, 8 Things Created on the First Day; PRE 30, 349/4, 15 Things that the Sons of Ishmael will do in the Future.

8.1.11 List enumerating items by whole sentences/interpretation units: E.g. PRE 14, 141/7-15, Ten Descents of God to Earth; PRE 26, 283 -- 31, 367, 10 Trials of Abraham.

8.1.16 Descriptive sentence of a static (ocular) structure or "scientific" descriptive sentence: Frequent descriptions of astronomical phenomena in PRE 6-8, e.g. the waxing and waning of the moon.

8.2 Non-narrative small literary forms that impose on their components a standard functional relationship to each other, while grammar and syntax may vary:

8.2.3 Self-contained question-answer unit in discourse concerning the meaning of an earlier word/words in the same text. Occasional examples, e.g. PRE 37, 465/8-11, meaning of "lion" and "bear" in Amos 5:19.

8.2.5 The summary exposition, in a number of sentences, of theological ideas. There are numerous ethical statements in the section PRE 15-17, as well as theological statements about resurrection and other eschatological matters (e.g. PRE 43).

8.2.6 [A Petichah or Petichah-like unit, which uses the wording of a general biblical verse to introduce by way of a hermeneutic link the main theme/event of another verse, usually quoted at the end of the unit. There are no classic examples of the Petichah form in PRE. The verb patah is used only twice, and then in the general sense of begin a discourse.]

8.3.1 [A ma'aseh or pared-down narrative of a unique event with normative-probative function: There is only one ma'aseh proper in PRE: the framing story about Eliezer's discourse in the Beit Midrash of Yohanan is introduced with ma'aseh be-.]

8.3.2 A mashal or other minimal (two-stage) narrative employed to model the emplotment of a biblical or other event: 8 meshalim are found in PRE (e.g. PRE 3, 13/14-15/3), but not all of them correspond to the classic form. One mashal, found in the Friedlander ms (PRE 34, Friedlander p. 254, is simply a simile dressed up as a Mashal.

8.3.3 A narrative unit which is not integrated into a larger chronological framework constituted by the co-text: Fairly long narratives (e.g. PRE 10, Jonah and the Big Fish, and PRE 33, Elisha and the Shunnamite Woman) occasionally stand outside the basic time-line (creation to the giving of the Torah on Sinai).

8.3.6 The narrative motif of humanized animals or animals as agents: In PRE 10, Jonah and the Big Fish, the fish and Leviathan are humanized.

8.3.7 The narrative motif of the fantastic, grotesque, or gross: PRE 10, JOnah and the Big Fish, has several fantastic elements.

8.3.8 A narrative motif that can be interpreted as humorous or ironic: PRE 10, Jonah and the Big Fish, has several humorous elements, e.g. the successive dunkings of Jonah, and his flashing of the sign of the covenant at Leviathan.

9.3 An extended passage consists in the elaboration of one by one the items of an initial list, making each list item the topic of one or more sentences, usually re-introduced by quoting the item or by a question. Several lists in PRE are extended in this way, e.g. the Six Days of Creation, the Ten Trials of Abraham, the Ten Descents of God. See 8.1.10.

9.6 An extended portion or substantial proportion of the text continuously explicates local thematic transitions, by means of:

9.6.2 Use of announcement of themes for text parts, full-sentence headings or summaries. Chapters occasional open with statements of the theme of the chapter. E.g. PRE 16, "On three things the world stands: On Torah, on divine service, and on the doing of kindnesses" (an unacknowledged quote from m.Pirquei Avot 1.2).

9.6.5 Use of ordinal or cardinal numbers to designate themes in text sequence (e.g., "first generation"). Used in the Six Days of Creation and the Ten Descents sequences ("on the first day" ... "the first descent was ...").

9.11 An extended part of the thematic text (or a part-text in the sense of section 10) is structured by an extra-thematic principle of order, as follows:

9.11.3 The sequence of text sections of Scripture. Apart from the macro-structuring of PRE as a whole on Genesis

and Exodus, several other sections shadow Bible, e.g. PRE 19 is structured largely on Psalm 92:1-16

9.1.2 Important manuscripts divide the text explicitly into parts by the use of single words or incomplete sentences which constitute sub-headings. The majority of mss of PRE divide the text into numbered *paraqim*. These divisions are so constant (with the exception of the occasional switching of chapters 18 and 19) that they must be very old if not original.

11.1 The non-narrative text projects its thematic concern as being mainly one or more of the following:

11.1.1 Description of a reality, including a physical reality. This applies to the astronomical sections and the *Hexaemeron* in general.

11.1.2 Moral values or value judgments, including practical instructions on proper behaviour or self-preservation. *Derekh erez* is a major theme of PRE.

11.1.3 Law, commandments or norms of behaviour. *Derekh erez* is a major concern of PRE.

11.1.5 The meaning of another text. Scripture is pervasively explained by paraphrase and commentary.

11.1.6 Reports of the speech of named characters. Speech reports in the name of rabbinic authorities are frequent, but are not explained, simply quoted.

11.1.7 Future events or future reward and punishment. Extensive sections in PRE deal with the messianic age, and future rewards and punishments.

12.1 Sampling of genre labels applied to the text in secondary literature: Midrash, Rewritten Bible, Narrative Midrash, Late Midrash.