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Seder Eliyahu: A Narratological Reading

Constanza Cordoni

For Joseph, the rocker

Preface

I first came across the title *Seder Eliyahu* in the course of a conversation with Prof. Günter Stemberger. I thank him for suggesting this fascinating research topic. I also want to express my thanks to both my supervisors, Prof. Günter Stemberger and Prof. Gerhard Langer, for their precise readings and comments on my work in progress.

Note on translations, transliteration, and style conventions: Scriptural passages are quoted primarily from the *New Revised Standard English Version*, occasionally from *King James Bible*. If required by the rabbinic context of quotation the text of the translations has been modified. The letters "ch" (as in *achat*) represent the Hebrew letter ח (*chet*).

The Mishnah is quoted after Herbert Danby's translation, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (London: Oxford University Press, 1933) (older forms of personal pronouns have been modernized). Translations from the Babylonian Talmud and the Midrash Rabbah follow Isidore Epstein, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud*, 18 vols. (London: Soncino, 1935–1952) and H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 10 vols. (London: Soncino, 1939).

The texts of *Seder Eliyahu* I have used for my translation is Meir Friedmann, ed., *Seder Eliahu Rabba and Seder Eliahu Zuta (Tanna D'be Eliahu)* (Vienna: Israelitische-Theologische Lehranstalt, 1902; reprint, Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1960) and *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta (Derech Ereç und Pirkê R. Eliezer nach Editio princeps des Seder Eliahu und einem Manuskripte, hierzu drei Abschnitte der Pirkê d'Rabbi Eliezer Kap. 39–41 nach demselben Manuskripte* (Vienna: Israelitische-Theologische Lehranstalt, 1904; reprint, Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1960). Passages from its three parts are quoted using the abbreviations "ER" for *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, "EZ" for *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, and "PsEZ" for *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta* before page and line numbers. For a list of abbreviations of talmudic tractates and Rabbinic documents quoted throughout the book see 9.1. Words and phrases which in Friedmann's text are in square brackets [ ] are put in the text of my translation in angular brackets < >. Wording added by me to facilitate the comprehension of either an elliptical phrase or sentence in rabbinic wording or the scriptural co-text of a quoted verse part I put in square brackets [ ]. The round brackets ( ) I use for a) literal translations (preceded by the abbreviation lit.) in cases in which I opted for clearly non-literal rendering, b) translations of text set

in Hebrew (text in double inverted commas), transliterated expressions from Hebrew (set in italics), but also for the original Hebrew wording of certain words or phrases.

I have consulted the manuscript transcription on the Maʾagarim Database of The Academy of the Hebrew Language and the English text of *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu = The Lore of the School of Elijah,* trans. William Gordon Braude and Israel James Kapstein (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1981), whose introduction and notes I quote throughout the book in shortened form.

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction: Narratological Readings of *Seder Eliyahu*

> Rather than possessing a hermeneutics, a systematic base for interpretation, midrash may be said to have been impelled by a narrative of interpretation. Accordingly, the goal of a theoretical study of midrash would be less a matter of hermeneutics, of learning the system of interpretive procedures, than a project of constructing a narratology.[1]

With these words David Stern summarizes his reflections in the book of essays *Midrash and Theory* on what he describes as "the most clearly definable form of narrative in midrash, the parable or *mashal*."[2] In this essay Stern is concerned with the parabolical narrative per se, but primarily with recovering what these narratives say about themselves, about their being told for the sake of interpreting, in short, he is concerned with the poetology, one aspect of the "literariness " of the rabbinic parable in midrash.

Since the publication by Hartman and Budick of the collected volume *Midrash and Literature* in 1986[3] the study of the literary character of rabbinic documents and of rabbinic narrative in particular has developed into a legitimate approach to these texts, one with findings (*Erkenntnisgewinn*) of its own right. This is manifest in the wide range of publications on rabbinic texts and subjects which rely on notions of different schools of literary theory, including New Criticism, New Historicism, Cultural Studies, Feminism, Gender Studies, and Narratology, to name but some.[4]

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1 David Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 53.

2 Ibid., 39.

3 Hartman, Geoffrey H., and Sanford Budick, eds., *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986).

4 See among others Ofra Meir, *The Exegetical Narrative in Genesis Rabbah* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Ha-meuchad, 1987) (Hebr.); Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*

Somehow parallel to these developments in the field of Jewish Studies a boom of narratology can be ascertained in the literary studies. Narratology emerges in the 1970s as a structuralist theory of narrative (a phase generally referred to as classical narratology), and develops from the 1980s onwards into several kinds of theoretical and applied post-classical narratologies.[5] Characteristic for the latter is a different, larger corpus which includes non-literary sources, i.e. sources might be non-written, or non-fictional texts, in short sources of contexts other than the fictional narrative of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including visual arts, culture, society, gender. The new types of sources determine new sets of questions, e.g. pertaining to a given text's narrativity.[6] The questions asked by these post-classical narratologies are also determined by a transfer of theory from disciplines such as cultural studies, anthropology, media studies, gender studies etc. It is in this post-classical context of a widened scope of narratology's object of study that ancient and medieval sources have come to be considered suitable for a narratological reading.[7]

(Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990); Yonah Fraenkel, *Darkhe ha-agadah vehamidrash* (*The Hermeneutics of Aggadah and Midrash*), 2. vols. (Givataim: Yad La-Talmud, 1991); Fraenkel, *Sipur ha-agadah, ahdut shel tokhen ve-tsurah: Kovets mekharim* (Tel Aviv: Hakibutz Ha-meuchad, 2001) (Hebr.); David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Michael Fishbane, *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History* (Albany, NY: SUNY, 1993); Jeffrey Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Stern, *Midrash and Theory*; Judith Hauptmann, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998); Judith Baskin, *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2002); Joshua Levinson, *The Twice-Told Tale: A Poetics of the Exegetical Narrative in Rabbinic Midrash* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005) (Hebr.); Carol Bakhos, *Ishmael on the Border: Rabbinic Portrayals of the First Arab* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2006); Bakhos, ed., *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Dina Stein, *Textual Mirrors: Reflexivity, Midrash, and the Rabbinic Self* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012); Inbar Raveh, *Feminist Rereadings of Rabbinic Literature* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2014).

5 The term "postclassical narratology" was coined by David Herman, "Scripts, Sequences, and Stories: Elements of a Postclassical Narratology," *PMLA* 112, no. 5 (1997): 1046–1059.

6 See Matei Chihaia, "Introductions to Narratology: Theory, Practice and the Afterlife of Structuralism," *Diegesis* 1, no. 1 (2012): 27. For recent examples of reflection on the narrativity of legal documents in the field of Jewish Studies see Barry Wimpfheimer, *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011) and Moshe Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the Law: Narrative Discourse and the Construction of Authority in the Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

7 For the major trends in post-classical narratology see e.g. Ansgar and Vera Nünning, "Von der strukturalistischen Narratologie zur 'postklassischen' Erzähltheorie: Ein Überblick über neue Ansätze und Entwicklungstendenzen," in *Neue Ansätze in der Erzähltheorie* (Trier: WVT, 2002), 1–33; Ansgar Nünning, "Narratology or Narratologies," in *What is Narratology? Questions and Answers regarding the Status of a Theory* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2003), 239–275; Monika Fludernik, *Erzähltheorie: Eine Einführung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft,

It is at the crossroads of both these trends – the reading of texts of Rabbinic Judaism as literary texts and the practice of narratological criticism on sources from discursive contexts other than narrative fiction – that the present study is situated. It seeks not to define what the work of late midrash known as *Seder Eliyahu* or *Tanna debe Eliyahu is*, or to read it in search of passages that can be valued as historical sources, but rather to describe some of its constitutive parts, the narrative ones, by presenting and discussing them with a view to elucidating how they interact with those of non-narrative character *within* which they are (generally) found. Midrash is a discourse that makes frequent use of narrative.[8] That is why narrative in midrash never occurs on an independent level of communication, but could be described as framed by midrashic discourse.

A post-classical narratological approach to narrative texts that are part of (i.e. instrumentalized by) a non-narrative discourse such as that of midrash can contribute to dealing with a series of important questions for the study of rabbinic texts. As the survey in chapter 2 shows such an approach to a comprehensive study of *Seder Eliyahu* is still missing. The work was for a long time studied primarily with the aim of dating it, or of determining whether it is of Babylonian, Palestinian or even European origin, and seldom with a view to analysing it in its own right, as a work of rabbinic *literature*.[9]

Chapter 3 deals with the apparent multiple voices of *Seder Eliyahu* and is concerned with the question whether the categories author, narrator or author image are viable when reading a work of midrash, even a special work of late midrash such as this one which is considered as the work of a single author. I will first consider the problem of the work's alleged pseudepigraphy and then turn to the voice that speaks in the first person,

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2006), 103–123; Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer, "Narratology and Interdisciplinarity," *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*, ed. Sandra Heinen and Roy Sommer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 1–10; Jan Alber and Monika Fludernik, eds., *Postclassical Narratology: Approaches and Analyses* (Columbus: Ohio University Press, 2010), 1–31.

8 A plethora of definitions have been proposed. For descriptions of what midrash is and how it operates see e.g. Addison Wright, *The Literary Genre Midrash* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1967); James Kugel, "Two Introductions to Midrash," in *Midrash and Literature*, ed. G. H. Hartman and S. Budick *Midrash and Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 77–103 (originally published in *Prooftexts* 3 [1983]: 131–155); Avigdor Shinan and Yair Zakovitch, "Midrash on Scripture and Midrash within Scripture," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 31 (1986): 257–277; Gary Porton, "Defining Midrash," in *The Study of Ancient Judaism*, ed. Jacob Neusner, vol. 1, *Mishnah, Midrash, Siddur* (New York: Ktav, 1981), 55–92; Arnold Goldberg, "Die funktionale Form Midrasch," in *Rabbinische Texte als Gegenstand der Auslegung: Gesammelte Studien*, vol. 2, ed. Margarete Schlüter and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 199–229 (originally published in *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 12 [1984]: 1–45); Porton, "Definitions of Midrash," in *Encyclopedia of Midrash*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 1:520–534; Alexander Samely, *Forms of Rabbinic Literature and Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), chapters 4, 5, and 10.

9 Max Kadushin's more detailed readings in *The Theology of Seder Eliahu* and *Organic Thinking* attempt at abstracting from the disparate text passages a series of theological and ethical concepts, an organon, the ideological structure of the work.

both in narrative and non-narrative contexts. I shall also examine whether this voice is stylized after the figure of the prophet Elijah, that is to say the rabbinic reception of the prophet Elijah, and to the question of what the reader learns from the governing voice in the text, from the image the author gives of himself in his two main roles of midrashist and narrator.

Chapter 4 contains a first typology of the narrative forms of *Seder Eliyahu*. Before turning to them I discuss selected textual passages that are not considered of narrative character. Among the narrative texts I distinguish small, simple forms, such as the *maʿaseh* and the *mashal*, and longer, composite, complex ones, such as the first person narrative and the exegetical narrative. In the case of the latter it might be argued that function is not as intrinsically related to form as might be the case with the simple forms, which, in turn holds more clearly for earlier rabbinic documents.

In the two subsequent chapters I will deal with the most conspicuous of these literary forms. For my discussion of the parables in chapter 5 I expand on the classification proposed in the Typology of the previous chapter. Out of a corpus of 78 parables I discuss selected examples for each of the following parable types: exegetical parables; not explicitly exegetical, narrative-recapitulative parables, those I designate as meta-exegetical parables; and parables that seem to provide an answer to a rhetorical question. I pay special attention to the way the parable interacts with its immediate linguistic co-text, but also with the wider thematic context of which it is part, the thematic agendas of *Seder Eliyahu*, among which the exaltation of the "disciples of the wise," i.e. the rabbinic class, is particularly remarkable.

The point of departure of chapter 6 are contributions by Wilhelm Bacher and Moshe Zucker, according to which a prominent feature of the late midrash *Seder Eliyahu* is the fact that its "author" depicts himself as impersonating an apologetical discourse on Rabbinic Judaism before the challenge of Karaism. The passages in question are dialogical passages set within a brief narrative frame, in the context of this study designated as first person narratives, which I discuss in order to reconsider the problem of *Seder Eliyahu*'s anti-Karaism, or the positivistic certainty with which scholarship attributed such an agenda to a work that so decidedly resists being dated and located.

In the last chapter I attempt to apply notions of feminist narratology to readings of select passages on the world of women in *Seder Eliyahu*. The discussed passages on e.g. women as legal personae, rabbinic nameless women in domestic contexts, biblical women, as mothers, wives, or martyrs are found mainly in contexts dealing with legal questions, hence the designation "Halakhic contexts," or with matters of scriptural interpretation, hence "Exegetical contexts."

The texts discussed are selected segments of *Seder Eliyahu*, some of them more representative of the entire work than others. In any case and as it emerges from the survey in chapter 2 a narratologically informed study of *Seder Eliyahu* represents a new approach to the work.

Chapter 2

Seder Eliyahu and Rabbinic Scholarship: A *Forschungsbericht*

Seder Eliyahu has been very heterogeneously appreciated in scholarly literature: It is described as a "uniform work stamped with a character of its own,"[1] as "wahres Juwel innerhalb der rabbinischen Literatur,"[2] but also as "one of the most baffling and intractable midrashim in our possession."[3] In the following pages I will briefly discuss what appear to have been the main interests of research with respect to this work.

Among the aspects of the work that have received most of scholars' attention, none has been as central as that concerning its *date and place of composition*. Myron B. Lerner even mentions *Seder Eliyahu* as prime example of how scholarship has passionately tried to fix the date of composition of a midrashic work:

> Among the midrashic works dealt with by Zunz, special attention should be focused on *Seder Eliyahu Rabba*. An allusion to 'more than 700 years' that have transpired since the fourth millennium (= 240 CE) in chapter two prompted Zunz to assign the composition of the work to a Babylonian rabbi c. 974 CE. Nevertheless, almost one dozen scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth century contested these conclusions and have consequently offered multiple conflicting solutions to the date and the provenance of this enigmatic aggadic work.[4]

1 Jacob Elbaum, "Tanna De-vei Eliyahu," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: MacMillan Reference, 2007), 19:508.

2 Günter Stemberger, *Midrasch: Vom Umgang der Rabbinen mit der Bibel* (Munich: Beck, 1989), 52.

3 J. Zvi Werblowsky, "A note on the text of *Seder Eliyahu*," *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 6 (1955): 201.

4 Myron B. Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash and the Esther Midrashim," in *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part*, ed. Shmuel Safrai, Zeev Safrai, Joshua Schwartz, and Peter J. Tomson (Assen, Minneapolis, MN: Van Gorcum, Fortress, 2006), 147.

2.1 The Problem of Dating and Locating *Seder Eliyahu*

The question of the work's date of composition was first dealt with by Solomon Rapoport,[5] who regarded the text that has come down to us, which consists of two parts, with 31 and 25 chapters each, as composed in Babylonia the middle or latter part of the tenth century, therefore not identical with the one that the *Arukh* describes, which is said to consist of three parts, whereby the *Rabbah* part is said to comprise 30 and the Zutta 12 chapters. Not just the conflicting length and structure of the *Arukh*'s description with respect to the conserved text, but also the relative chronology of two passages ER 6–7, and ER 163 led Rapoport to conclude that the text we know dates from the second half of the tenth century, i.e. from the time of Rav Sherira Gaon. The passages read as follows:

> For the world as we know it was intended to exist for six thousand years. Two thousand years in desolation, two thousand years with Torah, and two thousand years of the Messiah's reign. Because of our many sins enslavement has come upon us during the two thousand years which God had intended to be the Messiah's. Indeed, more than seven hundred of his years have already passed. (ER 6, l. 30–ER 7, l. 1)

> From the time the Second Temple was built until it was destroyed four hundred and twenty years elapsed, His hand being stretched out over them against every adversary and foe. From the time the Second Temple was destroyed until now nine hundred years have elapsed, during which time how often did He take them into His arms, hold them close, and kiss them! (ER163, l. 25–27)

These chronological notes can be interpreted by adducing a talmudic passage (bAZ 9a, bSan 97a–b), according to which the two thousand years of the Messiah's reign begin 172 years after the destruction of the Second Temple (in the year 242 C.E.): so while the first note would refer to some time after the year 942 C.E., the second would point to 968 C.E. A third passage can be understood on its own as referring to the year 4744 A.M. or 984 C.E.:

> Thus from the time the world was created until the present time ninety-four fifty-year periods and forty-four single years have gone by. (ER 37, l. 19–20)

The three chronological passages were considered by Leopold Zunz as evidence of the work's date of composition in the year 974. As to its place of composition he agreed with

[5] See Solomon Rapoport, "*Toledot R. Nathan*," *Bikkure ha-ʿittim* (1829): 43, n. 43.

Rapoport in that it originated in Babylonia.[6] Also Wilhelm Bacher dated the work to the second half of the 10th century, around the year 970.[7]

Italy as place of composition. Heinrich Graetz was the first to suggest that the work was written by an Italian, probably of Rome, in the 10th century. The references to Babel are nothing but an allegory for Rome and the mention of the punishment of Gog and Magog in ER 15 and ER 24 are explained as allusions to the Hungarian invasions in Europe (889–955), during which especially Italy suffered. The work's European origins are also attested by the use of a chronology based on the years since the creation, instead of the Seleucid chronology which was usual in Babylonia.[8] Moritz Güdemann agreed with Graetz as to the time of composition in the 10th century, and as to the work being written by an European living in Italy.[9] He quotes several passages of *Seder Eliyahu* that lead him to conclude that the work belongs to the first period of the history of the Jews in Italy, during which only the beginnings of a scientific activity are identifiable.[10] He assumed that only someone who regards the places named by the first person narrator (Jerusalem, Babylonia etc.) as exotic would name them at all: "[e]in weitgereister Mann spricht mit Vorliebe von den fernen Gegenden, die er gesehen, er wird nicht müde, von den äussersten Zielen seiner Wanderungen zu berichten."[11] Simon Eppenstein holds the purity of the work's Hebrew as evidence for Italy as place of composition where he also locates *Pesiqta Rabbati*, a work that in his view stands close to *Seder Eliyahu*. The warning against doing business with a non-Jew in chapter 8 and the designation of the latter as גוי excludes the possibility of a Muslim environment.[12]

Gottlieb Klein describes the original conception of the work, its "Urform" as "ein Missionsprogramm an die Heiden,"[13] which was rescued from oblivion and adapted to

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6 See Leopold Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, historisch entwickelt*, 2 ed. (Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann, 1892), 119.

7 Wilhelm Bacher, "Antikaräisches in einem jüngeren Midrasch," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 23 (1874): 266.

8 Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden: von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, vol. 5, *Geschichte der Juden vom Abschluss des Talmuds (500) bis zum Aufblühen der jüdisch-spanischen Kultur (1027)*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Leiner, 1895), 294–295.

9 See Moritz Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Italien während der Mittelalters, nebst bisher ungedruckten Beilagen*, vol. 2, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der abendländischen Juden während des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit* (Vienna: Hölder, 1884; repr., Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1966), 52–55, 300–303.

10 Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens*, 55: "Diese Auszüge mögen genügen, um einen Begriff von dem Buche zu geben, dem sie entnommen sind. Es bildet den Schlussstein der ersten Periode der Geschichte der Juden in Italien, in welcher zwar schon Anfänge wissenschaftlicher Bethätigung zu Tage treten, ohne jedoch zu weiterer Entfaltung und Ausbildung zu gelangen."

11 Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens*, 301.

12 See Simon Eppenstein, *Beiträge zur Geschichte und Literatur im Geonäischen Zeitalter* (Breslau: Koebner, 1908; repr., Berlin: Lamm, 1913), 182–183.

13 Gottlieb Klein, *Der älteste christliche Katechismus und die jüdische Propaganda-Literature* (Berlin:

suit his own purposes and audience by an unknown rabbi at the time of the Crusades. In spite of the additions of this medieval teacher, Klein is persuaded that the original plan of the work can be recognized and described as a type of catechism:

> In katechetischer Form erteilt der Prophet Elias, der Vorläufer des Messias, seinen Jüngern Weisheitslehren, allgemeine Normen der Sittlichkeit, nicht Thora, sondern Derech erez verkündet er, denn er will die Heiden für das Reich Gottes gewinnen. Mit diesen Lehren ausgerüstet, sollen Elias' Schüler als Missionäre durch die Welt reisen und die Wege Gottes der Welt verkünden. Kurz und bündig wird das Missionsprogram entwickelt.[14]

According to other scholars, *Seder Eliyahu* was composed much earlier. Meir Friedmann, whose introduction to his edition of the work is still today the most comprehensive study of the work,[15] regarded the work as the authentic product of talmudic times – between the composition of the Mishnah and the close of the Talmud. He was also persuaded of Elijah's authorship, identifying the first person narrator of the stories with the prophet, whom he refers to as "Abba Eliahu." The work as it has come down to us could have existed in some other form before it was eventually dictated to R. Anan in the third century, as the Talmud passage bKet 105b–106a, an etiological narrative, reports. Friedmann interprets several passages as allusions to Persia and its religion of fire-worship, and finds that several passages in midrashim undoubtedly quote passages from *Seder Eliyahu*, so he concludes that text must have been written between the third and the sixth century.[16] The dates that point to the tenth century in ER 6–7, ER 37 and ER 163 he dismisses as later interpolations.[17] As regards the parallel traditions in *Seder Eliyahu* and the Babylonian Talmud, Friedmann argues that neither borrowed from the other, but that these traditions would go back to earlier sources.[18] As regards the place of composition, Friedmann argues that the reference to tithes and the seventh year (ER 59) is evidence of the Palestinian origin of the work, where these practices were observed in the early time of composition assumed by Friedmann.[19] Friedmann's theory concerning

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Reimer, 1909), 68.

14 Klein, *Der älteste christliche Katechismus*, 79.

15 Friedmann's edition of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* first appeared in 1900 as "Beiheft" of the *7. Jahresbericht der Israelitisch-theologischen Lehranstalt*. In 1902 he published it with his edition of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* and a commentary to both parts, מאיר עין. This edition was reprinted in Jerusalem 1960, 1967 and 1969. I use the reprint edition of 1960: Meir Friedmann, ed., *Seder Eliahu Rabba and Seder Eliahu Zuta (Tanna D'be Eliahu)* (Vienna: Israelitische-Theologische Lehranstalt, 1902; Reprint, Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1960). C. M. Horowitz had edited *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* from the same manuscript in his בית עקד האגדות III (Frankfurt am Main 1882), 31–55

16 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, esp. 77, 82.

17 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, 37, n. 52, 163, n. 52.

18 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 48.

19 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 83.

the early date of composition of *Seder Eliyahu*[20] was still supported half a century later by Mordechai Margulies, who regarded the work as having been authored by a certain Abba Eliyyahu who is mentioned in EZ 197 and speaks of his own life experiences in several other first person narratives, in the first half of the 3rd century during the persecutions of the Jews by Yezdegerd I.[21]

Jacob Mann also dated the work early, though his arguments do not involve a chronological precedence of *Seder Eliyahu* over the Talmud. In the first section of his article on the modifications in the Jewish liturgy brought forth by religious persecutions Jacob Mann discusses examples of post-Talmudic liturgical literature that are evidence for the insertion of the first verse of Shema in different sections of the service apart from its daily recital with the Tefillah of Shaharit and Maʿarib. In the Babylonian rite, for example, this verse is introduced in the section known as לעולם יהא אדם. Mann argues that this section must have been known to the author of *Seder Eliyahu*, where it is introduced as an "anonymous composition" of the sages with the phrase *mikan amru* and cited "in a greatly shortened form due to the copyists."[22]

According to Mann, "[t]he whole setting of this section suggests a time of religious tribulation and trial when the declaration of the unity of God could only be made in secret (בסתר)."[23] Mann's interpretation is partly based in turn on that of R. Benjamin b. Abraham ʿAnav (13th cent.), who suggests that the expression "in secret" alludes to a generation affected by persecution.[24] Both Zedekiah and Benjamin appear to have had before them a text of *Seder Eliyahu* with passages that were omitted by the copyist of MS Vat ebr. 31, among others the very expresion בסתר, which, curiously enough, is missing in the text of *Seder Eliyahu* that has come down to us.[25] The phrase is used also in chapter 18, though not in a liturgical, but a narrative context, as part of the characterisation of a priest: מעשה בכהן שהיה ירא שמים בסתר. Mann sees the Babylonian origin of the work as

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20 Ibid., 77–83.

21 See Mordechai Margulies, "לבעיית קדמותו של ספר סדר אליהו," in *Sefer Asaf*, ed. Umberto Cassuto et al. (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kuk, 1953), 370–390. William G. Braude, "Conjecture and Interpolation in Translating Rabbinic Texts: Illustrated by a Chapter from Tanna Debe Eliyyahu," in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, part 4, *Judaism after 70; Other Greco-Roman cults; Bibliography*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 79, agrees with this dating.

22 Mann, "Changes in the Divine Service," 247.

23 Mann, "Changes in the Divine Service," 247.

24 R. Benjamin b. Abraham ʿAnav is quoted by his brother in his liturgical treatise *Shibboleth ha-leket*: ור"ב אחי נר"ו כתב שראוי לומר בסתר שלא אמרו אבא אליהו אלא כנגד דורו של שמד שגזרו שלא לקרוא את שמע ולא היו יכולין להיות יראין בגלוי, ע"כ הזהירם וזרזם לקבל עליהם עול מלכות שמים בסתר. Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, 118, n. 28.

25 See Albert Ringer, "*A persecution was decreed*: Persecution as a rhetorical device in the literature of the geʾonim and rishonim. Part 1," *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 6.2 (2012): 186–188 for a critical appraisal of Mann's methodology. Ringer argues that persecution as a stimulus for a change in liturgy can be understood in *Seder Eliyahu* as a part of a literary topos, instead of as a reference to a historical reality.

also evidenced in its contents, which he argues clearly show "that the author lived for a considerable time in Babylon and that in a good deal of his work he depicted conditions of Jewish life in that country."[26] So the first person narrative in the first chapter, an account of the anonymous rabbi getting arrested and being subsequently confronted by a (probably Zoroastrian) priest, he takes as factual account of events in the author's life in Babylonia. The episode demonstrates the power of the Zoroastrian priests usually designated as Magians.[27] Both the allusion to the private prayer in the phrase בסתר and the account of the dispute with a חבר, the name with which a Zoroastrian priest is referred to in the text, point to a redaction of *Seder Eliyahu* "not long after 455," i.e. after the persecutions of Jews in the Sassanid Empire under the rule of Yezdejerd II (454–455) and his son Perōz.[28]

In an appendix to his article Mann addresses the question of the date and place of redaction of *Seder Eliyahu* observing:

> All scholars, who have assigned the redaction of this Midrash to the 10th century by reason of the late dates ..., have overlooked the significant fact that nowhere is there mentioned the rule of Islām extending, as it did then, from Persia and the eastern provinces to Babylon, Syria, Palestine, Egypt and whole of North-Africa and reaching out to Europe by the occupation of Spain and also of Sicily.[29]

The only reference to the Ishmael's children (ER 65), he points out, "evidently alludes to the more or less independent Arab tribes extending from the Arabian peninsula proper right to the confines of Babylon at the lower Euphrates."[30] In recent times, Norman

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26 Mann, "Changes in the Divine Service," 249.

27 Mann, "Changes in the Divine Service," 306, argues as follows: "The priest promised the captive his freedom, if he answered his questions, which indicates the political influence the Magians had on the government officials, whose raid probably was the result of the former's instigation. Such a situation obtained in Babylon and in Persia under the Sassanids, especially under Yezdejerd II and Perōz, who were dominated by the powerful Magian priests, but certainly not under the rule of Islām, not to speak of Italy where such a situation does not apply at all." See also Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 82.

28 Mann "Changes in the Divine Service," 250 and 305.

29 Mann, "Changes in the Divine Service," 303.

30 Mann, "Changes in the Divine Service," 303–304. Jacob Epstein agrees with Mann's suggested date of composition, bringing forward a double authorship theory. R. Anan is seen as the compiler of a first version which was amplified in the course of the 5th century during the times of persecutions under King Perōz. See Jacob N. Epstein, *Introduction to the Text of the Mishnah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1948) (Hebr.), 762–767, 1302–1303. Other defenders of the early date of composition include Eliezer Atlas, *Ha-Kerem* (1888): 100 and Isaac Dov Ber Markon, "לתולדות המדרש תנא דבי אליהו," in מספרותנו העתיקה : שלשה מאמרים (Vilna: Piroshnikov, 1910), 4,2 who suggested the 3rd century under Jezdegerd I., respectively the first half of the 4th century under Constantine the Great; Samuel Klein, "דברים אחרים על סדר אליהו" *Ha-Hed* 7 5692/1932: 18 suggested the second half of the 4th century under Emperor Julian); Zeev Jawitz, כנסת ישראל I,

Roth has pointed to two further passages in *Seder Eliyahu*[31] that he regards as "clear anti-Muslim references." According to PsEZ 32 Abraham will refuse to say grace arguing that out of him "came seed which provoked the Holy One, blessed be He," i.e. the seed of Ishmael. In the context of a homily on the hidden light of creation in PsEZ 36 God explains to Israel that whereas the light is intended for them, darkness is meant for the children of Esau and the children of Ishmael.[32]

A third position, which is currently accepted as the correct one, dates the work to the ninth century. Avigdor Aptowitzer proposes the first half of the 9th century as date of composition of the text we know, which he assumes to have superseded a talmudic version of the same.[33] Among the arguments he adduces for such a dating are the recurrent warnings against close relations to non-Jews which he reads as emerging out of the same Sitz im Leben as the warnings against close relations between Christians and Jews by the Christian Patriarch Jeshu bar Nun who lived in the first quarter of the 9th century.[34] Furthermore, the depiction in ER 98 of Babylonia in glorifying terms as the place where the messianic times will begin, is a notion Aptowitzer sees as reminiscent of Pirqoi ben Baboi (end of eighth cent.).[35] As regards the place of redaction he argues that this is undoubtedly Babylonia: This can be read in the work's attitude towards conversion,[36] the liturgical formulas[37] used as well as the depiction of certain customs (pertaining to weddings for example) as practised in Babylonia.[38] The author himself, however, is seen as Byzantine.[39] To my knowledge, Aptowitzer is the only scholar who addressed the question of the multiple and diverse place references in the first person narratives (Jabne, Jerusalem, Babylonia) arguing that it is not possible to infer from them where the work was composed.[40]

Moshe Zucker suggests the middle of the 9th century as the time of composition of *Seder Eliyahu* due to its apparent polemics against the heretical writings of Chiwi al-

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London 5647/1887: 382–386 and תולדות ישראל, vol. 9, מראשית רבנן סבוראי 4234 עד סוף ימי הגאונים: המחצית הראשונה (London: Narodizqi, 5682/1922), 225–228, dates the work to the 7th century, under Emperor Heraclius, and locates it in Palestine.

31 These are actually in the so-called *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. See below.

32 See Norman Roth, *Jews, Visigoths and Muslims in Medieval Spain: Cooperation and Conflict* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 209–210.

33 See Avigdor Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," in *Jewish Studies: In Memory of George A. Kohut, 1874–1933*, ed. S. W. Baron and A. Marx (New York: The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1935), 23–24.

34 See Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," 17.

35 See Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," 20–23.

36 See Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," 6.

37 See Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," 6. E.g. the phrase אהבת עולם is part of the Babylonian rite.

38 See Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," 8. Whereas in Palestine the Tefillah was uttered aloud, in *Seder Eliyahu* we read: "A man who says the Tefillah loud enough so that he hears himself, [is praying as though God were hard of hearing, and hence] is bearing false witness against Him."

39 See Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," 13.

40 See Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," 32–33.

Balkhi (ninth cent.), against the Karaites in general and Daniel al-Qumisi (mid-ninth cent.), in particular. Zucker proposes the years between 850 and 860 as *terminus ante quem* for the composition of the work, because it is mentioned in the *Responsa* of R. Natronai ben Hilai, who was Gaon of Sura during the mid-ninth century.[41] Natronai is incidentally the first to claim that the work consists of a *Rabbah* and a *Zuta* part, that the former has three gates or parts, and thirty chapters, and the latter only twelve chapters, a description that would appear again in the *Arukh*.[42] The tone of the work's polemics was deliberately neutralized to let the reader regard the work as an ancient one.[43] In an article dedicated to the language of *Seder Eliyahu* Ephraim Urbach also came to the conclusion that the work was composed in the 9th century.[44]

Louis Ginzberg, finally, came up with a theory that seeks to explain why passages in *Seder Eliyahu* can be dated to a time shortly after the close of the Mishnah, while others appear to have originated only after the close of the Babylonian Talmud, and – if the chronological notes are not to be considered as interpolations – why a final redaction could have taken place only in the tenth century. In his introduction to chapters 22 and 23 ("Fragments on Repentance and Gehenna") of his *Genizah Studies*, he argues that *Seder Eliyahu* once consisted of a *baraita* and a talmud attached to it, as is the case with tractate *Kallah*.[45] This claim is based on rubrics in certain Genizah fragments which appear to allude to a "Talmud" of *Seder Eliyahu*.[46] The text which has come down to us is a combination of *baraita* and commentary or talmud,[47] and on the whole a much shorter text than the original one. Ginzberg further argues against Friedmann's treatment of the last ten chapters of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* as "Additions" arguing that it is likely that they

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41 See Moshe Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Torah: Exegesis, Halakha, and Polemics in R. Saadya's Translation of the Pentateuch* (New York: Feldheim, 1959) (Hebr.), 117–127, 205–219.

42 [וששאלתם] מהו סדר איליהו רבה וסדר אליהו זוטא (כתובות קו ע"א) ה[ללו משניות חיצוניות הן, וסדר אליהו רבא האוי ג' תלתין פירקי, סדר אליהו זוטא תרי עשר פי[רקי, ודאמרינן בגמרא תני דבי אליהו, כלהון בגווייהו]. Quoted after [Natronai bar Hilai, Gaon] *Teshuvot Rav Natronai bar Hilai Gaon*, ed. Robert Brody, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Ofeq, 1994), 651 (§553).

43 See Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation*, 205, n. 797.

44 See Ephraim Urbach, "*Lesheelat leshono u-meqorotaw shel Sefer Seder Elijahu*," in *The World of the Sages* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), 418–432 (originally published in *Leshonenu* 21 [1956–1957]: 183–197) (Hebr.).

45 See Louis Ginzberg, *Genizah Studies in Memory of Solomon Schechter*, vol. 1, *Midrash and Haggadah* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1928), 189–191.

46 See Ginzberg, *Genizah Studies*, 194 and 198. This theory was contested by Jacob Mann's review article, "Genizah Studies," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages* 46 (1930): 263–283.

47 See Ginzberg, "Genizah Studies," 190. See also Max Kadushin, *The Theology of Seder Eliahu* (New York: Bloch, 1932), 15, n. 46; Kadushin, *Organic Thinking: A Study in Rabbinic Thought* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1938), 48; and Constanza Cordoni, "The emergence of the individual author(-image) in late rabbinic literature," in *Narratology, Hermeneutics, and Midrash: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Narratives from the Late Antiquity through to Modern Times* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2014), 242–244.

once constituted a section of the original "Talmud" of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. In his book *Organic Thinking* Max Kadushin supports Louis Ginzberg's theory, according to which trying to fix the time of composition of *Seder Eliyahu* to the fourth or the tenth century is a fruitless task since "our text was written or compiled during the entire rabbinic period."[48] For this very same reason it can be seen as representative of the whole rabbinic period.[49] This might prove a sensible approach to the problem of the time and place of composition of *Seder Eliyahu*, though it would not be compatible with the idea of a single author behind this complex work.[50] It is precisely the difficulty or impossibility of fixing a work such as *Seder Eliyahu* or *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* that Dina Stein views as part of the poetology of which are collectively referred to as late midrash.[51]

2.2 Some Other aspects Receive Attention

Apart from this passionately discussed issue of when and where the work was composed a number of aspects of *Seder Eliyahu* have been studied. The most comprehensive pieces of research literature are Friedmann's introduction to his edition, and Max Kadushin's books *The Theology of Seder Eliahu* and *Organic Thinking: A study in Rabbinic Thought*. Friedmann is concerned in his detailed introductory study of *Seder Eliyahu* with demonstrating that the work was written down by pupils of the prophet Elijah, i.e. with demonstrating that it was ultimately authored by the prophet himself. For this purpose he discusses the biblical Elijah cycle and the rabbinic passages that deal with the prophet's apparitions,[52] the nine talmudic baraitot that are introduced with the phrase תנא דבי אליהו and other baraitot which have parallels in *Seder Eliyahu*.[53] The antiquity of the work Friedmann sees as attested by the fact that several midrashim and prayer books borrowed material from it.[54] Friedmann also provides an exhaustive list of the quoted scriptural verses,[55] pointing out which among them receive special midrashic attention, המקראות שעליהם הדרושים סבבים הם.[56] Both in *The Theology of Seder Eliahu* and *Organic Thinking* Max Kadushin discusses the statements or teachings of the work as constituting a coherent system, a "theology," or an "organic complex." The complex is understood as comprising several rabbinic concepts, built in their turn on the four so-called fundamental concepts of rabbinic theology – God's loving-kindness, God's justice,

48 See Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 12.
49 Ibid.
50 See chapter 3 for the problem of *Seder Eliyahu*'s authorship.
51 See Dina Stein, "Pirkei deRabbi Eliezer and Seder Eliyahu: Preliminary Notes on Poetics and Imaginary Landscapes," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 24 (2011): 73–92 (Hebr.).
52 Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 2–44
53 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 44–76.
54 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 77–83.
55 Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 133–139.
56 Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 132.

Torah, and Israel.

Other contributions have focused on aspects that can be interpreted as evidence of the work's cultural context. Jacob Elbaum for example analyzes passages of *Seder Eliyahu* that allow him to view it as having traits of esoteric literature;[57] Adiel Kadari analyzes selected passages of *Seder Eliyahu* and other works in terms of an idealization of Torah study: in those passages of *Seder Eliyahu* he discusses the importance of academies in small towns is emphasized and Torah study in described in terms of mystical experience, having the divine Beit Midrash in the time to come as spatio-temporal setting, whereby Kadari points to the possible presence of motifs of Hechalot literature.[58] In another article of his, Kadari discusses *Seder Eliyahu*'s ideology as placing Torah study above everything else, a study that can take place everywhere, thus opposing the centralization of knowledge at Babylonian academies.[59]

The problem of the work's polemics has been approached from diverse perspectives. Whereas Aptowitzer argued that the minority against which *Seder Eliyahu* polemicizes are the Christians living in Babylonia under Muslim rule,[60] Wilhelm Bacher and Moshe Zucker suggested that the work addresses the Karaites as its opponents.[61] Discussing an article of Jacob Elbaum in which the characteristics of late midrashim are summarized,[62]

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57 Jacob Elbaum, "The Midrash Tana Devei Eliyahu and ancient esoteric literature," in *Early Jewish Mysticism. Proceedings of the first International Conference on the History of Jewish Mysticism*, ed. Joseph Dan, Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 6 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University of Jerusalem Press, 1987), 139–150.

58 Adiel Kadari, "Torah Study, Mysticism and Eschatology: 'God's study hall' in the later midrash," *Tarbiz* 73, no. 2 (2004): 181–195, esp. 187, and 189–190.

59 Adiel Kadari, "Talmud Torah in Seder Eliyahu: The Ideological Doctrine in its Socio-Historical Context," *Daat* 50–52(2003): 35–59.

60 See Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," 14.

61 See Bacher, "Antikaräisches"; Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation*, 116–126, 203–219. For this problem see here chapter 6. The idea that *Seder Eliyahu* documents the controversy with the Karaites was formulated by others before: See Chayyim Oppenheim, *Bet Talmud* 1 (1881): 265–270, 304–310, 337–346, 369–377; Jacob Samuel Fuchs, *Ha-Maggid le-Yisrael* 11 (1897): 22–23, 34–35, 45–46, 57–58. Fuchs went as far as identifying Anan, Karaism's "grounder" with the 3rd century amora R. Anan mentioned in the Talmud passage dealing with the redaction of Eliyahu Rabba and Eliyahu Zuta.

62 See Jacob Elbaum, "On the character of the late Midrashic Literature," in *Proceedings of the 9th World Congress of Jewish Studies*, Division C, *Jewish Thought and Literature* (Jerusalem: World Congress of Jewish Studies, 1986), 57–62. Jacob Elbaum summarized the characteristics of late midrashim, works composed between 700 and 900 C.E. such as *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* or *Seder Eliyahu*, as distinct from those of earlier periods in the following terms – quoted here after Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash," 151–152: "1. Definite signs of usage of the classical Amoraic Midrashim (e.g. Genesis Rabba) and the reworking of their contents; 2. Possible usage of the Babylonian Talmud; 3. The disappearance of 'early' linguistic phenomena and the transition to a purely Hebrew mode of expression; 4. A synthesis between the exegetical and the homiletical methods of midrash or an organization of the material according to large formats (subject matter or organizational patterns); 5. Rhetorical expressions and extended speech; 6. Differing perspectives in the mention of the names of sage: on the one hand, a

Myron Lerner argued that Elbaum failed to mention precisely anti-Karaite polemics as one of two fundamental criteria for the identification of a document as a late midrash, the second being a tendency to pseudepigraphy:

> The Karaite schism begun by Anan b. David during the latter half of the eighth century evoked various forms of response from the leaders of rabbinic Judaism and it was only natural that anti-Karaite polemics would find their way into contemporary midrashic literature. Surprisingly enough, however, this phenomenon is not too widespread and there is only sporadic evidence for such occurrences in midrashic works dating from the eighth to the tenth centuries. Bacher et al. have argued that certain halakhic passages in *Seder Eliyahu* as well as those stressing the importance of Mishna study, instead of concentrating exclusively on the Bible, reflect the author's staunch opposition to Karaism. However, this conclusion has been challenged by some scholars, or simply ignored by others. ... Needless to say, the presence of polemical material against Karaite beliefs and practices in a particular midrash most likely attests to a ninth century or even later origin. However, the somewhat surprising paucity of such material in supposed later midrashic works raises some serious doubts as to the date which scholars have attributed to these works.[63]

It is incidentally in an attempt to draw a general picture on the main contributions of Karaism to Jewish culture in the 10th century that Rina Drory observes that midrash composed in this time tried to efface any trace of the time of composition, a characteristic that would account for the difficulty of dating *Seder Eliyahu*, as seen in the brief review of scholarship dedicated to give an answer to that problem.

> In the field of midrash too, classicist models, also originated in oral activity (as surviving written exemplars indicate), prevailed. Its norms and repertoire of items had been established centuries earlier. Its poetics dictated absolute acceptance of the literary paradigm created in previous generations; literary creativity was exclusively confined to the reproduction of that paradigm. Accordingly, every effort was made to conceal a work's contemporariness, presenting it as written in antiquity.[64]

Drory argues that a collateral phenomenon of this effacement of the time of composition is the previously mentioned tendency to pseudepigraphy, of which, in her view, *Seder Eliyahu* partakes: "Texts were therefore ascribed to ancient personae (usually Mishnaic

tendency to employ anonymity in the quotation of midrashic teachings (i.e., by eliminating the names), and on the other, the addition of various titles and epithets to the names of certain rabbis; 7. Style and content which are similar to the format of medieval Bible commentary."

63 Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash," 153.

64 Rina Drory, *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and its impact on Medieval Jewish Culture* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2000), 150.

or Talmudic: Pirke de R. Eliezer, Tanna de bei Eliyahu, Alfā Betā de Ben Sīrā)."[65] She also concedes that "[a]lternately, works were left anonymous, conveying as it were a collective, superpersonal and supertemporal message by obscuring or concealing any detail that might disclose the work's time or place of writing: realia, place names, indications of time, etc., were omitted or replaced by old, ready-made items."[66] I will discuss the problem of *Seder Eliyahu*'s alleged pseudepigraphy in chapter 3.

Some other contributions to the study of *Seder Eliyahu* have dealt with the nature of the text, approaching it in a more immanent manner, analysing its language and style, its structure, and its hermeneutics. Some of them will be briefly discussed in what follows.

The language of *Seder Eliyahu* was studied, as mentioned above, by Ephraim Urbach who published a detailed analysis of the language used in the first chapter, focusing primarily on what the author borrowed from earlier sources.[67] Gershom Scholem observed that *Seder Eliyahu* shares a "periodic style" and the use of threads of adjectives for the description of God with the hymnology of the Hechalot literature.[68] Günter Stemberger describes the language of the work as "reines, doch mit eigenartigen Ausdrücken und zahlreichen neuen Wendungen geschmücktes, blumenreiches "klassizistisches" Hebräisch."[69] Braude describes it as "lucid and fluid."[70] William G. Braude describes the work's language as fundamentally asyndetic, which is why a so-called "scientific method" in translation, i.e. a literal translation is not an adequate option, for it would mean exposing "Rabbinic literature to ridicule."[71] Braude opts therefore for the use of interpolations that provide the transitions a reader of English literature is bound to expect from a text.[72] Ulrich Berzbach refers to a discussion with Jacob Elbaum on the EAJS summer colloquium "Jewish Bible Exegesis in the Middle Ages" which yielded the expression "piyyutic prose" to describe style and language of *Seder Eliyahu*.[73]

Some studies have focussed on the work's hermeneutics and literary forms. Zwi Werblowsky provides a close reading or "textual analysis" of two chapters of *Seder Eliyahu*, chapters 10 and 11, which he regards as "primarily a midrash on Deborah."[74] His starting

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 See n. 44.
68 See Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960), 24 and 42. See also Johann Maier, "Serienbildung und 'numinoser' Eindruckseffekt in den poetischen Stücken der Hekhalot-Literatur," *Semitics* 3 (1973): 36–66.
69 Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 9th ed. (Munich: Beck, 2011), 379.
70 Braude, "Conjecture," 78.
71 Braude, "Conjecture," 78.
72 See Braude, "Conjecture," 79.
73 Ulrich Berzbach, "The varieties of literal devices in a medieval Midrash: *Seder Eliyahu Rabba*, chapter 18," in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the 6th EAJS Congress, Toledo, July 1998*, ed. Judit Targarona Borrás and Ángel Sáenz-Badillos (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 389.
74 See Werblowsky, "A note on the text," 202.

appreciation of the text is not precisely enticing: "The midrash known as *Seder Eliyahu* (SE) or *Tanna debe Eliyahu* (TdbE) is, by common consent, one of the most baffling and intractable midrashim in our possession. … This text is admittedly faulty and corrupt, often beyond restoration."[75] He concedes, nevertheless, that the character of the text is "well-rounded, closely knit," which makes it a "genuine *midrash* as distinct form a *yalkut*." He describes the text as follows: "Its pericopes are coherent, well-developed expositions of specific themes, although it may often be difficult to follow the thread of the argument in the maze of incidental matter and tangential excursions."[76] In an analysis of two segments he attempts to show that Seder Eliyahu's versions of aggadic material appear "baroque" when compared with other, Talmudic versions.[77] The comparative reading of small units lets Werblowsky furthermore conclude that the form of the texts themselves reveals their diverse situatedness: A *maʿaseh* on the power of *tsedakah* told and retold in *Seder Eliyahu*, *Midrash Samuel*, and *Bereshit Rabbah* is read as "edifying stories meant to exhort the audience or reading public to practise charity," whereas its parallel version in bRH 18a "is no sermon; it is meant to proof. It is advanced as empirical evidence in order to settle an argument."[78]

William Braude published a short article in which he provides examples out of the first three chapters of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* of what he considers exegetical innovations of the author of *Seder Eliyahu*.[79] In an article on the literary devices employed in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and focussing on the third part of the book, i.e. chapters 18–29, Ulrich Berzbach argues that chapter 18, the longest in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and one which Friedmann held for not integral to the original text, can be read as containing evidence for four structuring principles that operate all over the work, on the chapter level as well as on the macro-structural level of the entire book: the principle of continuous expansion, the principle of symmetry, the principle of linking units within parts of the, and the principle of reversion of orders. These principles determine the characteristic architecture of a midrash, whose richness of literary devices – among which he illustrates the use of keywords to link exegetical units, a hermeneutic operation he terms "masoretic association," and the use of lists – is interpreted as a evidence of the work's "medievality."[80] After a short analysis of the chapter's structure and literary forms he concludes with a remark that seems to apply to the whole work: "None of these genres is unique to *SER*, but the high degree of combination and the interwoven texture created by the constant employment of all of them might be considered unusual for a "classical rabbini-

75 Ibid., 201.
76 Ibid., 201.
77 Ibid., 208.
78 Ibid., 209.
79 See W. G. Braude, "Novellae in Eliyyahu Rabbah's Exegesis," in *Studies in aggadah, targum and Jewish liturgy in memory of Joseph Heinemann*, ed. Jacob J. Petuchowski and Ezra Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1981), 11–22.
80 Berzbach, "The varieties," 384.

cal" midrash, together with the lack of a structure and organisation that is obvious at first glance. All this might point to a "medieval-minded" author, who consciously employed all material and all literary devices available to him, in order to create an educational as well as literary work with a structure and a flavor of its own."[81]

The illustrative function of *meshalim* in *Seder Eliyahu* is discussed to by a specialist in the field, David Stern, who attributes the late midrash *Seder Eliyahu* an inaugural role in the history of the parable:

> In literature from the rabbinic period, one can find other parables of this illustrational kind. But it is not until post-Rabbinic early medieval Jewish times that the use of the *mashal* as an illustration becomes the prevalent form. It occurs initially in the ninth-century composition *Tanna de-Bei Eliyahu*, and becomes even more prevalent in subsequent philosophical works by such authors as Maimonides.[82]

A further aspect which has received some attention from scholarship is the transmission of the text. The complete *Seder Eliyahu*, i.e. its *Rabbah* and *Zuta* parts, is transmitted in only one manuscript, the Vatican Codex ebr. 31[83] and in the *editio princeps* Venice 1598 printed by Daniel Zanetti and prepared after a manuscript of the year 1186 which is not conserved.[84] The codex Vat. ebr. 31, which also transmits the tannaitic midrash *Sifra*, was published in a facsimile edition as *Torath Cohanim (Sifra). Seder Eliyahu Rabba and Zutta*.[85] Ulrich Berzbach, who studied the transmission of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, lists following five MSS as independent textual witnesses of this part of the work: MS Parma 2785 (de Rossi 327), MS Parma 2342 (de Rossi 541), MS Oxford, Bodl. Libr., Mich 910, MS Parma 3111 (de Rossi 1240), MS Firkovitch Evr IIa 157/1.[86] The character of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*'s transmission in manuscripts, print edition and Yalkut

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81 Ibid., 391.

82 David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 1991), 45.

83 For a description of the manuscript see Umberto Cassuto, *Codices Vaticani Hebraici: Codices 1–115; Bybliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae Codices Manu Scripti Recensiti Iussu Pii XII Pontificis Maximi* (The Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1956), 38–41; Malachi Beit-Arié, Colette Sirat, and Mordechai Glatzer, *Codices Hebraicis Litteris Exarati Quo Tempore Scripti Fuerint Exhibentes: De 1021 à 1079* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1999), Nr. 38; Benjamin Richler, and Malachi Beit-Arié, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library: Catalogue* (The Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008), 20–21.

84 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Vorwort, V: "Der Herausgeber bezeugt, dass bis zu jener Zeit das Buch nur durch Citate bekannt gewesen sei, keiner aber kenne das ganze Buch."

85 The fact that the work is copied in the same manuscript with *Sifra* does not necessarily indicate that the copyist regarded *Seder Eliyahu* as a tannaitic work as Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna Dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 4, n. 4 and 35, n. 56, argue.

86 See Ulrich Berzbach, "The Textual Witnesses of the Midrash *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*: An initial survey," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 31 (2004): 63–74.

version has led scholars to assume several redactions.[87] Moshe Lavee reminds us that although the manuscript transmission is almost exclusively European, "there is evidence for the cultural presence of the book in the Cairo Geniza," e.g. in the fragments discussed by Louis Ginzberg in chapters 22 and 23 of his *Genizah Studies*.[88] Some manuscripts and the *editio princeps* of *Wayiqra Rabbah* conserve passages from the seventh chapter (i.e. Friedmann's chapter [6] 7) of *Seder Eliyahu* annexed as concluding sections to the first three pericopes.[89]

Depending on the textual witness the *Rabbah* part consists of 29 (MS) or 31 (*editio princeps*) chapters, whereas the *Zuta* oscillates between 15 (MS) and 25 (*editio princeps*) chapters. As was mentioned before, Natronai in his responsum and the *Arukh* describe the *Rabbah* part as consisting of 30 chapters, divided into three gates, and the *Zuta* as comprising 12 chapters.[90] Friedmann attempted to adapt the text of the manuscript distributing it so as to arrive at the number of chapters mentioned in the *Arukh* for the *Rabbah* part, which chapter numbers appear between parenthesis. The last ten chapters of the *Zuta* part as transmitted in the Venice print he separated from the rest and printed together with three chapters conserved in Codex Parma 1240 under the name of *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta* or "Additions to Seder Eliahu Zuta."[91]

A more recent chapter in the history of the transmission or rather reception of the work takes us to Prag, where the printer Samuel Haida prepared in the 17th century a new text edition based on the Venice print and a commentary, זקוקין דנורא ובעורין דאשא.[92]

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87 See Stemberger, *Einleitung*, 379.

88 See above p. 14. See also Moshe Lavee, "Seder Eliyahu," in *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, ed. Norman A. Stillman (Brill Online, 2010).

89 See Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash," 164, and Mordechai Margulies, ed., *Midrash Wayyikra Rabbah: A Critical edition based on Manuscripts and Genizah Fragments with Variants and Notes*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Ministry of Education and Culture of Israel, 1953), 32–34 (WayR 1:15) = ER 33–34; 46–54 (WayR 2:12) = ER 36, 72–75 (WayR 3:7) = ER 37.

90 Natan ben Yechiel, *Aruch completum*, ed. Alexander Kohut, vol. 6 (Vienna: Brög, 1890), 27. Friedmann comments in his foreword in German on Natan's description: "Ähnliches findet man im Aruch nicht zum zweitenmale; sah er sich etwa genöthigt, פרקי דר' אליעזר oder ילמדנו so zu beschreiben? Man kann dies nur begreiflich finden in der Annahme, dass das Buch zur Zeit wenig bekannt war." Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Vorwort, IV.

91 These thirteen chapters, referred to in this study as "Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta" (PsEZ) and as "Additions" by Max Kadushin in his books *The Theology of Seder Eliyahu* and *Organic Thinking*, were published by Friedmann separately in 1904 as נספחים לסדר אליהו זוטא and are appended to the rest of the work in the reprint editions. In Kadushin's view the first ten chapters constitute a unit that makes "of practically all of the concepts in the complex a configuration in which the concepts of Redemption, Paradise and Gehenna form the chief features." *Organic Thinking*, 199. The first three chapters of this *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta* are designated as *Pirke Derekh Eretz* (16–18), the seven chapters that follows *Pirke R. Eliezer* (19–25), and the last three chapters as *Pirqe ha-yeridot*, these being actually chapters 39, 40, and 41 of the work known as Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer.

92 Ulrich Berzbach refers to the fact that even if Haida included the original text of the Venice print next to his own corrected text, he changed the expression בן דוד found in the Venice print

Haida's edition of 1677 contains the text of the Venice print as נוסחא ישנה, followed by his own version, נוסחא חדשה, subsequent reprints conserved only the revised text.[93] In the foreword Haida tells how, given the numerous mistakes in his model he implored the Heavens for help to be able to cope with his work. Haida relates how he prayed and fasted until the Prophet Elijah appeared to him and dictated Haida the text he had dictated centuries before. Haida wrote two introductions to his edition and a commentary to the text. Every chapter of Haida's reworked text is preceded by the corresponding chapter of the Venice edition. Haida's version was long considered the standard version of the work being reprinted numerous times.[94]

2.3 *What* is then *Seder Eliyahu?*

In the 9th century R. Natronai Gaon probably got a question that read more or less like this: What is *Seder Eliyahu?* and having a contemporary reader in mind attempted to answer it in a responsum of his. For scholarly discourse of our times his is quite an unsatisfactory description.

In the course of the 20th century there have been many attempts at defining *Seder Eliyahu* by giving it (or denying it) a generic name. The fact that it does not appear to fit into the traditional genre categories of rabbinic literature is evidenced by the varied

for משיח.

93 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Vorwort, VII.

94 Haida's work appeared in following editions, generally accompanied with a commentary: Hrubieszów, 1817, Jerusalem, 1869, 1870, 1900, 1906, 1907 with commentaries by Aqiba Joseph ben Jehiel and Jacob Naphtali Hirz, 1954, 1956 published with an abridged translation in Yiddish by Judah Reuben Tsinkes and his son Abba Saul; 1959 with commentaries by Jacob Meir Schechter and Jacob ben Naphtali Hirz, 1960, 1967 with a commentary by Chayyim Isaiah ha-Kohen and Jacob ben Naphtali Hirz; Jerusalem, 1970 (synoptic edition with the text of the Venice print), 1972 with the commentary of Abraham Schick; Józefów, 1838, 1852; Königsberg, 1857, s.a. (ca. 1863) with the commentary of Jacob ben Naphtali Hirz; Lviv, 1799, 1826, 1849, 1850, 1859, 1861, 1862, 1863, 1864, 1865, 1867, 1869, 1870; Lublin, 1896, 1907, 1911, 1924 (synoptic edition with the text of the Venice print), 1927; Minkowce, 1798; New York, 1956, 1960; Ostrog, 1838; Polonnoye, 1818; Prague, 1814; Przemyśl, 1887 with a commentary of Joshua Alexander; Sudzilkow, 1826, 1833, 1834; Vilnius, 1839 with two commentaries by Isaac Landau; 1880, 1900 with the commentary of Jacob ben Naphtali Hirz, 1905; Warsaw 1850, 1857, 1863, 1870, 1873, 1874 (repr. Bergen-Belsen ca. 1946), 1876, 1880 (synoptic edition with the text of the Venice print), 1881, 1883, 1893, 1911, 1912 with commentaries by Aaron Simhah of Gumbin and Jacob ben Naphtali Hirz; Zolkiew, 1753, 1796, 1798, 1799, 1805, 1807, 1808. Furthermore, two commentaries should be mentioned which partially quote the text of *Seder Eliyahu*: 1) *Luach Erez*, commentary by Chaim Palagi (1788–1869), Smyrna, 1881 and 2) *Ramatayim Sofim*, a hasidic commentary by Samuel Shinwa, Warsaw, 1881, 1882, 1901, 1908, 1920; Jerusalem, 1937, 1954, 1959, 1966; Shangai, 1946. The latter does not comment upon the text of *Seder Eliyahu*, but rather uses it for homiletical purposes. See Institute for Hebrew Bibliography, *The Bibliography of the Hebrew Book 1470–1960*, http://www.hebrewbibliography.com/; Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 11–12.

gamut used to refer to it in rabbinic scholarship: ethical aggadah,[95] ethical midrash,[96] something *between* midrash and ethical treatise,[97] aggadic midrash work[98], *semi*-midrashic work[99] aggadic work, though in no way a midrash,[100] "*genuine* midrash,"[101] and "exoterically moralistic treatise,"[102] to name but a few of the designations.

Instead of giving it a name, some scholars have attempted to describe it. It has been claimed that we have to do with a text that is "admittedly faulty and corrupt, often beyond restoration."[103] A rather negative judgement of what others perceive as a coherent text and one that reminds us of Werblowsky's description of the work as a "baffling midrash" is that given by Myron Lerner:

> The literary structure of *Seder Eliyahu* is most enigmatic and prima facie defies a logical presentation of the midrashic material. One receives the impression that the author has preserved his ethical teachings in the form of a continuous monologue on what may be termed: 'a midrashic stream of consciousness.'[104]

Seder Eliyahu is neither an anthology of homilies as those found in homiletical midrashim nor an anthology of exegetical midrashim on a biblical book; even if it contains passages that are near the so called rewritten Bible,[105] the work itself is no typical example of the genre. In his book *Parables in midrash* Stern dedicates the use of parables in *Seder Eliyahu* a section, describing the work itself in the following terms:

> Its author appears to have wished to compose a book that would be more unified and self-contained than a conventional midrashic collection, but he also seems to have wanted to preserve the traditional exegetical frame of midrash. The result is a kind of transitional work: an exposition of themes and ideas, but one whose coherent presentation is always being sidetracked by the lure of exegesis.[106]

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95 See Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge*, chapter 7, in which he discusses *Seder Eliyahu* bears the title "Ethische Hagada."

96 See Stemberger, *Einleitung*, 378–381 – chapter VII of the book part "Midraschim" is dedicated to "other aggadic works," among which are the so called "ethical midrashim."

97 Jacob Elbaum, "Between a Midrash and an Ethical Treatise," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 1 (1981): 144–154 (Hebr.).

98 See Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash," 151–153.

99 Lavee, "Seder Eliyahu." My emphasis.

100 Moshe David Herr, "Midrash," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), 14:185. According to Herr *Seder Eliyahu* is one of those aggadic works "which does not belong to the genre of Midrash at all."

101 Werblowsky, "A note on the text," 201. My emphasis

102 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 222.

103 Werblowsky, "A note on the text," 201.

104 Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash," 140, n. 28.

105 See Stemberger, *Midrasch: Vom Umgang der Rabbinen mit der Bibel*, 191–198.

106 Stern, *Parables in midrash*, 211.

Another general appreciation of the work, which emphasizes its coherence and consistency is given by Braude and Kapstein, the translators of the work into English, when they remark:

> *Tanna debe Eliyyahu* has a unity of thought and feeling, of style and structure, that makes it seem the work of a single individual. Even if it be considered the product of a school, it is still likely that the text as we have it came from the head of the school, possibly a school named for him. In any event, he was a man of so strong a spirit as to impress it deeply upon the work, no matter how many of his disciples may have participated in its composition.[107]

Both parts, *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, seem to have been conceived as distinct work parts that transmit an ethical discourse consisting of religious teachings, passages of retold Bible, exegesis, parables. Partly due to its textual coherence *Seder Eliyahu* tends to be viewed as the literary product of a transitional time in the history of rabbinic literature, between the time of the classical works of collective authorship and the literature of single authors that use their names as authors, in a modern sense of the word.[108] There is a clear continuation between *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, which can be grasped in their common topics, but above all in the phraseology used, and in the characteristic first person narratives. Each of the three sections that constitute the so called *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta* as edited by Friedmann in 1904 according to the *editio princeps* Venice 1598 and MS Parma De Rossi 1240, i.e. *Pirqe Derekh Erets*, *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer*, and *Pirqe ha-Yeridot*, has characteristic features of its own, which render the whole as having distinct textuality from that of the main body of *Seder Eliyahu*.[109] Probably the most salient among the distinguishing traits of this conglomerate is the fact that the Sages are in all three parts profusely quoted, and in the first two parts are given a sort of governing voice by having them open the chapters: the three chapters of *Pirqe Derekh Erets* begin in the manner of a petichah with the formula אומר ... רבי or ... אמר רבי; the chapters of *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer* open with the statement of a question by R. Eliezer's disciples and the subsequent answer by the sage, introduced with פתח ו אומר, or אמר להם. *Pirqe ha-Yeridot* offers a parallel to chapters 39–41 of *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer*, which contain an exposition on the fourth, fifth, and sixth of God's descents.

In the following chapters I will concentrate on different aspects of the Rabbah and the Zuta parts of *Seder Eliyahu*, in some cases I will also draw on material from *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. I will not discuss the date or place of composition. My main concern

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107 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 3.

108 See chapter 3.

109 According to Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 5, the 10 chapters which Friedmann separated from *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, i.e. the first two parts of *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, were "without doubt written at a late period."

will be narrative within the rabbinic discourse of a post-classical midrashic document. I will present narrative forms, describe them, analyze them, see how they interact with non-narrative co-texts.[110]

[110] The term "co-text" refers to the immediate linguistic environment of an expression, sentence, or passage, whereas with "context" I refer to the wider textual environment (an entire chapter or even the entire *Seder Eliyahu*) and to the non-linguistic situation of the text. See John Lyons, "Text and Discourse; Context and Co-text," chapter 9 in *Linguistic Semantics: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Chapter 3

The Voices of *Seder Eliyahu*

> Although most of the names of the rabbinic tradents quoted in midrashic literature are generally taken on face value and considered to be reliable, there are, nevertheless, certain midrashic works in which no authenticity whatsoever can be vouched for the names of the rabbis cited, and so these traditions must actually be considered pseudepigraphic.[1]

Myron B. Lerner points out that a distinctive characteristic of late midrashim is its tendency to pseudepigraphy; he does not, however, refer to entire works such as the Book of Enoch and many other Jewish hellenistic literary works which make use of pseudepigraphy as a literary convention,[2] i.e. as false attribution of a text to a well-known person of the biblical past in order to give the text authority. In the quoted passage he refers instead to the way single traditions contained in late midrashic works are intentionally attributed to rabbis who were not the first to express them.[3] Since classical rabbinic literature, i.e.

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1 Myron B. Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash and the Esther Midrashim," in *The Literature of the Sages. Second Part*, ed. Shmuel Safrai, Zeev Safrai, Joshua Schwartz, and Peter J. Tomson (Assen, Minneapolis, MN: van Gorcum, Fortress Press, 2006), 152.

2 See Ruben Zimmermann, "Pseudepigraphy / Pseudonymität," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, ed. Hans D. Betz et al. (Tübingen: UTB Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 1786–1788; James H. Charlesworth, "Pseudepigraphen des Alten Testaments," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. Gerhard Müller et al., vol. 27 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 639–645. Petr Pokorný and Günter Stemberger, "Pseudepigraphie," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 27 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1997), 645–659.

3 See Michael E. Stone, "Pseudepigraphy Reconsidered," *The review of rabbinic Judaism* 9 (2006): 1–15. For a general overview on the subject of pseudepigraphy in Second Temple literature see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Pseudepigraphy and First Person Discourse in the Dead Sea Documents: From the Aramaic Texts to the Writings of the Yahad," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Contemporary Culture*, ed. Adolfo Daniel Roitman, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and Shani Tzoref (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2011), 293–326. The works discussed by Stuckenbruck all name a biblical figure and present this as tradent of the whole or of the majority of the material comprised in the work.

Mishnah, Tosefta, Talmudim and Midrashim, is not "author literature," but the collective work of the community, and as Martin Jaffee argues, "'said,' 'received' or 'heard,' and 'transmitted'" but "not 'authored,'"[4] attribution remains a micro-phenomenon related to sayings but not to works or documents[5] until post-Talmudic times when works such as the Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer can be seen as an example of a whole work indirectly attributed to Eliezer b. Hyrkanos.[6]

When we look at *Seder Eliyahu*, a series of questions arise related to the problem of (individual) authorship, as well as to the very categories of author and narrator. Is it legitimate to consider a work which presents its material anonymously as a pseudepigraph just because it is apparently referred to with at least three names that include the name of Elijah?[7] Was the apparently pseudepigraphic title chosen by the author? To what extent can it be considered a work of pseudepigraphy if there is, as I will argue, no evident authorial intention of attributing the text to the prophet Elijah or to any other person of the name of Elijah *within* the text which has come down to us? Related to these questions is the problem of single authorship itself, that is to say, is it possible for a work to be authored by a single person and still be regarded as belonging to the rabbinic corpus? These are some of the issues I will consider in this chapter focussing on different perspectives from which to describe the text's *Urheber*, its authorial and narratorial instances as

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4 Martin S. Jaffee, "Rabbinic Authorship as a Collective Enterprise," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge, New York et al.: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17. See also Sacha Stern, "Attribution and authorship in the Babylonian Talmud," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 45 (1994): 28–51, and Stern, "The concept of authorship in the Babylonian Talmud," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 46 (1995): 183–195.

5 Pokorný and Stemberger, "Pseudepigraphie," 657. For the tendency of the redactors of the Bavli to attribute anonymous compilations such as the Mishnah or certain baraitot to individual authors see Stern, "The concept of authorship," 193.

6 See Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash," 153.

7 *Seder Eliyahu* has now and again been regarded as an example of pseudepigraphy, e.g. by Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden: Von den ältesten Zeiten bis auf die Gegenwart*, vol. 5, *Geschichte der Juden vom Abschluss des Talmuds (500) bis zum Aufblühen der jüdisch-spanischen Kultur (1027)*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Leiner, 1895), 294: "Dieses Werk ... läßt zwar den Propheten Eliah erzählen, ermahnen, predigen... Der Prediger unter Eliah's Verkappung räumt zwar ein, daß ein Nichtjude gleich einem Israeliten des göttlichen Geistes theilhaftig werden könne je nach seinen Thaten." See also Moritz Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Italien während der Mittelalters, nebst bisher ungedruckten Beilagen*, vol. 2, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der abendländischen Juden während des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit* (Vienna: Hölder, 1884; repr., Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1966), 52: "Das Buch ist das Werk eines unter der nicht durchweg festgehaltenen Maske des Propheten Elias schreibenden Reisepredigers, der viele Länder und Menschen kennen gelernt, viel erlebt und erfahren hat und nun theils in zusammenhängenden Reden, theils in einzelnen Maximen im Wege selbstständiger Auslegung des Schriftwortes oder an ältere Auslegungen anknüpfend die Summe seiner Erfahrungen und seine Lehren darlegt."

transmitted in the text itself as well as in some of its paratexts.[8]

I shall first consider the problem of the title or titles as main paratexts of the work, in order to approach the apparent pseudo-epigraphical character of the work, as evidenced mainly in the Babylonian Talmud. Secondly, I will attempt to give an overview of the instances in which the voice of a narrator-midrashist comes to the surface and says "I," both in narrative and non-narrative contexts. In the third place, I will discuss the reception of Elijah within *Seder Eliyahu*, in order to determine whether the narrator can be seen as stylized after the biblical character of the prophet Elijah. Finally, I will turn to the category of the implied author and attempt to draw some conclusions on the image the author gives of himself in the text and on how these textual strategies place *Seder Eliyahu* in the history of Jewish literature.[9]

3.1 The Title

Paratext 1: bKet 105b–106a

> A man once brought to R. Anan a bale of small marsh fish. 'What is your business here,' the latter asked him. 'I have a lawsuit,' the other replied. [R. Anan] did not accept it from him, and told him, 'I am disqualified to try your action.' 'I would not now request,' the other said to him, 'the Master's decision [in my lawsuit]; will the Master, however, at least accept [the present] so that I may not be prevented from offering my first-fruit? For it was taught: And there came a man from Baal-shalishah, and brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and fresh ears of corn in his sack; but was Elisha entitled to eat first-fruit? This, however, was intended to tell you that one who brings a gift to a scholar [is doing as good a deed] as if he had offered first-fruits.' It was not my intention to accept [your gift', R. Anan] said to him, 'but now that you have given me a reason I will accept it' – Thereupon he sent him to R. Nahman to whom he also dispatched [the following message:] 'Will the Master try [the action of] this man, for I, Anan, am disqualified from acting as judge for him.' 'Since he has sent me such a message,' [R. Nahman] thought, 'he must be his relative' – An orphans' lawsuit was then in progress before him; and he reflected: The one is a positive precept and the other is also a positive precept. but the positive precept of shewing respect for the Torah must take

8 For the concept of paratext see Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

9 An earlier version of this chapter was given as paper at the conference Narratologie, Hermeneutik und Midrasch, 23–25 October 2011, Vienna and subsequently published as "The emergence of the individual author(-image) in late rabbinic literature," in *Narratology, Hermeneutics, and Midrash: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Narratives from the Late Antiquity through to Modern Times*, ed. Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer (Vienna: Vienna University Press, 2014), 225–250.

> precedence. He, therefore, postponed the orphans' case and brought up that man's suit. When the other party noticed the honour he was shewing him he remained speechless. [Until that happened] Elijah was a frequent visitor of R. Anan whom he was teaching the Order of Elijah. but as soon as he acted in the manner described [Elijah] stayed away. He spent his time in fasting, and in prayers for [God's] mercy, [until Elijah] came to him again; but when he appeared he greatly frightened him. Thereupon he made a box [for himself] and in it he sat before him until he concluded his Order with him. And this is [the reason] why people speak of *Seder Eliyyahu Rabbah* and *Seder Eliyyahu Zuta*.

According to the passage in the Babylonian Talmud someone brings R. Anan a some fish as a present and asks him to act as judge in a lawsuit in which he is himself litigant. Anan refuses to act as a judge but is persuaded by the man to keep the present and as requested by the man assigns him another judge. Assuming that Anan is impeded from acting as a judge due to being related to the man, the newly assigned judge shows partiality towards the litigant and thus intimidates the other party. So far the first part of the story. Only in the second part does Elijah make his narrative appearance to punish his friend and disciple Anan for his carelessness: The reader is told that until this day Elijah has been a regular visitor of Anan whom he has taught the Order of Elijah (i.e. *Seder Eliyahu*). From that day onwards Anan fasts and prays for mercy, but Elijah refrains from appearing to him. As he eventually does come to see Anan, it is such a frightening sight for the latter that he makes a box in which he sits writing down the Order of Elijah. To close the passage talmudic narrator explains that To distinguish between the teachings before and after the incident of the lawsuit we speak of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.

Friedmann interpreted this passage as evidence for the authorship of the work by Elijah and, as Max Kadushin puts it, "that the entire text of Seder Eliahu was the result of abnormal mysticism."[10] We read in Friedmann's German preface:

> An stilistischer Schönheit, an ethischer Tiefe und Reichhaltigkeit, an Anregung zur Liebe der Thora wie des Volkes Israel kommt ihm [Seder Eliayu] kein Buch in der aggadischen Literatur gleich. Ähnlichen Tones sind wohl einzelne Beraithoht zu finden, aber kein Buch, und dennoch war dieses Buch, wie oben gesagt wenig verbreitet. Es scheint, dass die tonangebenden Lehrer es mit Absicht vermieden, dem Buche beim Volke Eingang zu verschaffen, seines mystischen Ursprunges halber, um mystischem Aberglauben nicht Thür und Thor zu öffnen.[11]

[10] Max Kadushin, *Organic Thinking: A Study in Rabbinic Thought* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1938), 239.

[11] Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Vorwort, V.

In his lengthier Hebrew introduction Friedmann adduces numerous talmudic passages which relate how the prophet Elijah revealed himself to rabbis and others.[12] Thus the transmission of *Seder Eliyahu* would be no isolated occurrence in Elijah's rabbinic tradition. Also Braude and Kapstein appear to follow Friedmann's theory when they remark in the introduction to their translation of the work "that the legendary account of the work's origin is closer to the truth than the common sense of scholars is willing to accept."[13] Furthermore, they argue:

> If R. Anan was a man open to such direct experience of the supernatural, he would have had no doubt that it was Elijah the prophet in person who, in the guise of a scholar, was visiting and instructing him in wisdom from above.[14]

It is beyond the scope of this chapter's inquiry to examine whether this account was ever thought of as a factual narrative on how men open to the experience of the supernatural can access wisdom. Interestingly enough, Elijah is said to have appeared to the printer Samuel Haida in Prague of the 17th century aiding him to publish a correct version of *Seder Eliyahu*.[15]

Paratext 2: MS Vat. Hebr. 31. The titles and colophons of the two parts of the work in the only manuscript which transmits both parts and which was copied in 1073[16] all contain the name *Eliyahu*, without any epithet. The word *seder* is only used for the Zuta part which is in both in title and colophon referred to as *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.[17] The Rabbah part is designated as "Eliyahu Rabbah" in the title and as *midrash eliyahu rabbah* in the colophon.

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12 Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 2–44.

13 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 10

14 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 10.

15 See Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 11.

16 The manuscript was copied in the year 1073, as stated in the colophon of *Sifra*, the first work transmitted in the manuscript, according to two chronologies: ונגמר בשנת תתלג ליצירה ובשנת אלף וחמש לחרבן הבית שיבנה במהרה בימינו אמן ("and it was concluded in the year 833 since the creation of the world and in the year 1005 since the destruction of the Temple. Let it be rebuilt soon. Amen.") The first one, the traditional Jewish chronology, should be read 4833 years since the creation of the world (3670 years are subtracted for the Gregorian chronology). The second date assumes that the destruction of the Temple took place in the year 68 C.E.

17 MS Parma 2785 introduces *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* with the phrase סדר אליהו זוטה אתחיל. See Ulrich Berzbach, "The Textual Witnesses of the Midrash Seder Eliyahu Zuta: An Initial Survey," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 31 (2004): 69 who points out that apart from codex Vat. 31 this is the only one which assigns *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* a name.

Table 3.1: Titles and colophons of MS Vat. Hebr. 31

Title of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*:	יסייעיני להתחיל ולגמור אליהו רבה ("Let him help me begin and conclude Eliyahu Rabbah") (fol. 112)
Colophon of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*:	סליק מדרש אליהו רבא בסיוע דגול מרבבה ("The *Midrash Eliyahu Rabbah* is concluded with the help of the chiefest among ten thousand") (fol. 159)
Title of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*:	יסייעיני להתחיל ולגמור סדר אליהו זוטא ("Let him help me begin and conclude the *Order [Seder] Eliyahu Zuta*") (fol. 159)
Colophon of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*:	הדרן עלך סדר אליהו זוטא ("We will come back to you, *Order [Seder] Eliyahu Zuta*."[18]) (fol. 167)

Paratext 3: Baraitot. The work is also known as *Tanna debe Eliyahu* or the "Teaching of the School of Elijah," a title that goes back to a number of passages in the Babylonian Talmud introduced with the very phrase תנא דבי אליהו.[19] However, only some of them are actually transmitted in *Seder Eliyahu* as it is conserved. This is the case with bSan 97a–b and its parallel bAZ 9a, bPes 94a and bShab 13a–b.[20]

Discussing the *Ketubbot* passage in the introduction to their translation Braude and Kapstein suggest that R. Anan can be viewed as the author of an attribution, one that consisted namely in giving his own school in the 3rd century and "the discourses comprising Tanna debe Eliyyahu,"[21] i.e. the work that has come down to us, the name of the prophet Elijah out of respect for him. Anan would be, according to this view, the author of a work whose authority he passes on to Elijah. According to yet another hypothesis *Tanna debe Eliyyahu* could have originated not at Anan's school but at one led by a certain Abba Eliyyahu who also lived in the 3rd century. The school head's name would have led people to attribute the work to the celebrated prophet. Subsequently the legendary account in *Ketubbot* would have been forged in order to legitimate this attribution.[22]

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18 This wording reminds of the Hadran prayer at the end of each Talmud tractate which is said upon completion of study of the tractate.

19 See Appendix 1 (3.4.1) at the end of this chapter.

20 Regarding the origins of the Talmud passages and their intertextual relation to *Seder Eliyahu* Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. VI, *Notes to Volumes III and IV: From Moses in the Wilderness to Esther* (1928; repr., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), 330–331, n. 70, remarked: "The nine haggadic Baraitot cited by the Talmud from Tanna de be Eliyyahu ... are very likely taken from a haggadic compilation by a Tanna called Elijah. ... In the above-mentioned Midrashim attributed to Elijah these nine Baraitot are incorporated ..., and in three passages the Talmudic תנא דבי אליהו is changed to by the author (authors?) of these Midrashim. This shows that at a comparatively early date תנא דבי אליהו of the Talmud was misunderstood to refer to the prophet Elijah." Those passages introduced with משום דבי אליהו הנביא are not transmitted in the Talmud but in the first chapter of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* and listed in Appendix 2 (3.4.2) at the end of this chapter.

21 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 10.

22 See Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 10.

The work is also designated as *Teni Eliyyahu* in *Bereshit Rabbah* 54,4,[23] as *Elijah* in *Bemidbar Rabbah* 4,20,[24] and as *Tanna debe Eliyyahu Rabbati* by Eleazar ben Judah von Worms (ca. 1165–1230) in his *Rokeach*, § 329, § 361. The *Arukh* in turn specifies that the parts of the work are called *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, coinciding with the Talmud passage bKet 106a–b.[25]

3.2 The "Metaleptic" Narrator-Midrashist

There are few studies on the narrator category in rabbinic literature. One of them is an article by Ofra Meir in which she presents the results of research based upon 679 stories found in *Bereshit Rabbah*, *Tanchuma* on Genesis and the *Berakhot* tractates in both Talmuds.[26] Meir distinguishes between so called "independent," "homiletical," and "Talmudic-type" stories which can be characterized by several different forms of narrator intervention. Direct narrator interventions are infrequent: Seldom are the thoughts or feelings of characters stated outright or are the characters judged by the narrator.[27] Instead of using description to mould his characters the talmudic and midrashic narrator opts for letting them present themselves using direct speech. If we consider Meir's results as expressed in numbers it becomes clear that action, as a part of the story which is transmitted by the narrator, does not play a central role in the textuality of these stories:

> 19.6 % of the stories are composed *entirely* of direct speech – with only such parenthetical phrases as "he said" or "he asked" added; in 43.3 % there is only one narrated action, while all the rest of the story unfolds through direct speech; in 31.7 % there are several actions, in addition to direct speech; and only 5.4 % there is a total absence of direct speech.[28]

Furthermore, Meir distinguishes what she terms narrator interventions through remarks not integral to the story. Among these interventions authorial comments are quite frequent and take many different forms, such as addresses to the audience, rhetorical questions, and supplementary Bible verses among others,[29] especially in the "homiletical"

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23 The passage introduced with *teni eliyahu* does not have a parallel in *Seder Eliyahu* as it is conserved in the Vatican codex.

24 This passage contains a parallel to ER 65–66 in *Seder Eliyahu*.

25 See Natan ben Yechiʾel, *Aruch completum*, ed. Alexander Kohut, vol. 6 (Vienna: Brög, 1890), 27.

26 Ofra Meir, "The Narrator in the Stories of the Talmud and the Midrash," *Fabula* 22 (1981): 79–83.

27 See Meir, "The Narrator," 80.

28 Meir, "The Narrator," 80.

29 Phrases such as "he avenged the insult to his mother" or "they did not know where they were going," which according to Meir are interpretive and explanatory commentaries that belong to this class of intervention appear to me to be integral to the diegesis, therefore not of commentary character.

stories of the midrashim *Bereshit Rabbah* and *Tanchuma*. Since narrator comments often take the form of addresses to the audience, Meir concludes that it is likely that the stories in which they are inserted "originate from oral sermons addressed to a listening audience."[30]

Most of the stories analysed by Meir have an omniscient,[31] heterodiegetic narrator, i.e. a narrator who is not part of the world of the story he narrates, but there is a group of eleven "independent" and "Talmudic-type" stories which are told in the first person. Interestingly, no "homiletical" story is told in the first person, since, according to Meir, "[t]he characters in 'homiletical' stories are always Biblical, and there is no way the narrator can substitute himself for one of them."[32] The main function of the use of the first person is, as Meir points out, the credibility it bestows on what is told.[33]

It is clear from this brief summary of Meir's analysis that it focuses on the story itself, irrespective of its being "independent" or "context-dependent." Whereas independent stories "can be understood equally well in the absence" of the contexts in which they are inserted, context-dependent ones "would lose their entire meaning if divorced from their contexts."[34] Unfortunately, no example of this kind of loss of meaning is given. In her conclusions Meir deals briefly on the way the broad context – Midrash compilation or Talmud tractate – might determine the type of narrator.

When we turn to *Seder Eliyahu* we notice that the homodiegetic narrator is not the exception, as in the corpus analysed by Meir, but rather a recurring feature.[35] The first person is used not only in first person narratives, but also in non-narrative segments. To distinguish the first person used by a narrative voice, i.e. the first person "narrator," from the agent who says 'I' in non-narrative passages I will refer to the latter with the expression "midrashist."

The stories told in the first person[36] in *Seder Eliyahu* could be described as indepen-

30 Meir, "The Narrator," 82.

31 Another term used for a narrator who is "'above' or superior to the story he narrates is 'extradiegetic'." See Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction: Contemporary poetics*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 95.

32 Meir, "The Narrator," 83.

33 Ibid.

34 Meir, "The Narrator," 79.

35 See Günter Stemberger, "Münchhausen und die Apokalyptik – Bavli Bava Batra 73a–75b als literarische Einheit," in *Judaica Minora*, vol. II, *Geschichte und Literatur des rabbinischen Judentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 299–316, and Dina Stein, "The Blind Eye of the Beholder: Tall Tales, Travelogues, and Midrash," Chapter 3 in *Textual Mirrors: Reflexivity, Midrash, and the Rabbinic Self* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012) on the tall tales told in the first person in the first part of the unit bBB 73a–75b. Stein points out that the tales in this unit constitute an anomalous form of discourse in the rabbinic corpus, she designates them as "discursive others." (61).

36 Leopold Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden, historisch entwickelt*, 2 ed. (Frankfurt am Main: J. Kauffmann, 1892), 120–121, identifies the narrator of these passages with Elijah: "Es ist dies, Elia, wie aus dem Buch selber und aus Parallelstellen hervorgeht, obwohl der Autor

dent, insofar as they are comprehensible if extracted from their respective homiletical or exegetical contexts, although they are clearly used to exemplify points made therein. They consist mainly of direct speech in the form of dialogues. In none does the narrator name himself[37] or describe himself explicitly, except by using direct speech. The degree of perceptibility of the narrator is thus, despite his participation in the stories he narrates, considerably low.[38] What we get to know about him is rather little: If we take all the stories as being narrated by one and the same narrator, i. e. as parts of a fragmentary autobiography,[39] he depicts himself as spending most of his time going from place to place or having arrived in Jerusalem, Ctesiphon or in Babylonia[40] and discussing matters of diverse character with people who address him or with people he himself adresses. This fragmentary autobiographical account does not include any aspect that could be de-

diese Einkleidung auch vergisst und von Elia in der dritten Person redet."

37 It should be noted out that the last chapter of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* contains a first person narrative featuring R. Jose as narrator. *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta* contains yet two first person stories whose narrator can be identified as R. Jochanan.

38 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, 97, observes with respect to the narrator's degree of perceptibility that it "ranges from the maximum of covertness (often mistaken for a complete absence of a narrator) to the maximum of overtness."

39 E.g. Moritz Güdemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der Juden in Italien während der Mittelalters, nebst bisher ungedruckten Beilagen*, vol. 2, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesens und der Cultur der abendländischen Juden während des Mittelalters und der neueren Zeit* (Vienna: Hölder, 1884; Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1966), 301: "Der Verfasser unseres Buches war, was von allen anerkannt wird, ein weitgereister Mann." See also Jacob Mann, "Changes in the Divine Service of the Synagogue due to Religious Persecutions," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 4 (1927): 240–310, and Ephraim Urbach "*Lesheelat leshono u-meqorotaw shel Sefer Seder Elijahu*," in *The World of the Sages* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002), 418–432 (originally published in *Leshonenu* 21 [1956–1957]: 183–197) (Hebr.). In her analysis of "biographical sketches" in *Bereshit Rabbah*, Maren R. Niehoff, "Biographical Sketches in Genesis Rabbah," in *Envisioning Judaism. Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Raʿanan S. Boustan, Klaus Herrmann et al, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 269, points out: "Given the popularity and cultural importance of biographical writing in the Hellenistic period, it is time to ask whether this genre altogether passes by the rabbis. Did they remain unaware of the intellectual and educational potential of the biography? A close reading of GR shows that while the rabbis did not write complete biographies, they were eager to insert biographical sketches of biblical heroes, thus making their stories livelier and more accessible to the reader. Indeed, this Midrash enthusiastically participates in the biographical discourse and engages in a creative reconstruction of the childhood as well as the inner lives of biblical figures." *Seder Eliyahu* does not contain this type of "biographical sketches" that participate in the Hellenistic biographical discourse as represented by Plutarch and Philo. We do not have to do with anecdotes illustrating specific character traits of known outstanding individuals such as Abraham, Joseph or Jacob.

40 Is this a remarkable fact that should be stressed or could it be taken as an indication of multiple narrative voices? Gérard Genette, "Discours du récit: Essai de méthode," in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 227, observed that "s'il est remarquable que les aventures d'Ulysse soient racontées par deux narrateurs différents, il est en bonne méthed tout aussi notable que les amours de Swann et de Marcel soient racontées par le même narrateur."

scribed as authorial, unless we consider the "testimony" of the first person narrator as a form of authorship.[41] The voice of the narrator does not deal with the poetics of *Seder Eliyahu*, i.e. on how the work in which he among other things narrates his own experiences came into being. And this is not because the author of *Seder Eliyahu* would not be acquainted with the notion of authorship and transmission of authored material: God, for example, is depicted as material author of the Torah, he speaks of himself as having written or created it or having had Mose write it down.[42]

Generally addressed by his interlocutors as "Rabbi" and replying with "my son" the dialogue situations he depicts consist, with one exception,[43] of one or several questions posed by the interlocutors and monologue-like answers given by the Rabbi-narrator. His interlocutors are only in two cases disciples but they also include a Zoroastrian priest, old men, men who know Scripture but no Mishnah,[44] a man not further described, a widow, non-Jews, a woman, a fisherman etc. The Rabbi's answers leave in no case room for doubt. Even if he engages in a conversation with the sages before whom he is "no more than dust under the soles of their feet,"[45] it is he who gives the answers.

Ginzberg, who appears to be of the opinion that *Seder Eliyahu* does identify the first person narrator with the prophet Elijah, notes in any case that the narratives do differ from the legendary Elijah stories:[46]

> These Midrashim quite often introduce the prophet as narrating events and incidents of his life, but they lack the simplicity of legend, and one immediately sees that the author put into the mouth of Elijah his own views concerning God, Israel, and the Torah.[47]

Given their illustrative function the first person narratives could be viewed as a sort of dialogical *meshalim* that are legitimated by the very presence and active participation of

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41 See Monika Fludernik, "Changement de scène et mode métaleptique," in *Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la représentation*, ed. John Pier and Jean-Marie Schaeffer (Paris: Éditions de l'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 2005), 91–92.

42 See ER 4, l. 13: כך אמר להן הקב"ה לישראל, בניי לא כך כתבתי לכם בתורתי, לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה מפיך; ER 16, l. 4: אמר לו, דוד בני לא כך כתבתי בתורתי אף על פי שאין בכם דברי תורה אלא דרך ארץ ומקרא בלבד ורדפו מכם חמשה מאה וגו' (ויקרא כ"ו ח); ER 33, l. 9: אמר לו, עמוס עמוס לא כך כתבתי בתורה על ידי משה רבך, אשריך ישראל מי כמוך וגו (דברים ל"ג כ"ט); ER 56, l. 27: באותה שעה ביקש הקב"ה להחריב את כל העולם כולו, אמר לא נתתי תורתי לאילו (לא) [אלא] שיקראו וישנו בה וילמדו הימנה דרך ארץ אלא לא כך כתבתי בתורתי אף על פי שאין בהן דברי תורה אלא מדרך ארץ ורדפו מכם חמשה מאה.

43 It could be argued that the story in chapter 18 of the master who died because of the conduct of his disciples (ER 100,l. 32–101, l. 6) inverses the usual teaching situation and makes the angel into a teacher and the Rabbi into a disciple.

44 On this subgroup of first person narratives see chapter 6.

45 See ER 9, l. 11, ER 49, l. 15 ER 51, l. 8 and ER 122, l. 1

46 See the next section in this chapter for the passages in *Seder Eliyahu* which deal with the prophet Elijah.

47 Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. VI, 330–331, n. 70.

the narrator. The arguments brought up in these stories are reinforced by the fact that they are retold by a witness. The first person narrator provides authenticity, even if he remains unnamed.

In general terms, however, the non-narrative context of these and other stories is not characterised by a voice in the first person, though occasionally a first person can be presupposed, as will be shown later on. The characteristic voice of *Seder Eliyahu* is rather that of an omniscient anonymous midrashist, a voice that can be designated as "governing voice" – to use the expression introduced by Alexander Samely et al. in their *Inventory of Structurally Important Literary Features in Ancient Jewish Literature*[48] –, a voice with which a number of functions are fulfilled, among others the interpretation of Scriptural verses to give an ethical message.

A close look at *Seder Eliyahu* shows that the governing voice of the midrashist and that of the first person narrator can be identified as belonging to one and the same (literary) person. It is as if from time to time, the governing voice of the midrashist, that is the voice of non-narrative segments, would transgress the limits of its own segments which can be globally designated as "homiletical discourse" and would transform itself into a voice suitable for narrative discourse. This transgression and mutation could be viewed as signalising a sort of *metalepsis*.[49] I use this term as defined by Gérard Genette

[48] The inventory was originally published online, as partial outcome of the research project Typology of Anonymous and Pseudepigraphic Jewish Literature of Antiquity (TAPJLA) Manchester-Durham 2007–2011, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (UK), and is still accessible on the World Wide Web: A. Samely, P. Alexander, R. Bernasconi, R. Hayward, "Inventory of Structurally Important Literary Features in Ancient Jewish Literature (Version Zero)" (Manchester: `http://www.manchester.ac.uk/ancientjewishliterature`, 2012), B. Perspective. See also the final publication of the project: Alexander Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature in Antiquity: An Inventory, from Second Temple Texts to the Talmuds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[49] A special case of narrative metalepsis comparable to the case of apparently alternating voices in *Seder Eliyahu* is found in the Acts of the Apostles where an extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator alternates with the first person plural in Acts 16:10–17; 21:1–18; 27:1–28:16). Anja Cornils, "La Métalepse Dans Les Actes Des Apôtres: Un Signe De Narration Fictionnelle?" in *Métalepses: Entorses au pacte de la représentation*, ed. John Pier and Jean-Marie Schaeffer (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2005), 103, describes it as follows: "Le narrateur passe de sa position artificielle de chroniqueur à la position historique réelle du témoin oculaire qui participe aux événements. Tandis que le narrateur de la première moitié des Actes ne figure pas comme personnage dans l'histoire qu'il raconte, dans la seconde partie du texte, il est identifié avec un groupe de personnages au niveau de la diégèse, devenant du coup un narrateur homodiégetique. Ce brusque changement du type de narration est ressenti par le lecteur comme la violation d'une norme implicite. ... Le constat d'une rupture dans la composition (des sources qui n'ont pas été suffisamment remaniées et rédigées avant leur adaptation) aussi bien que dans la conception (un récit à la troisième personne qui passe brutalement au récit à la première personne du pluriel) représente depuis toujours un problème grave pour l'exégèse du Nouveau Testament." Pokorný and Stemberger, "Pseudepigraphie," 646, interpret the first person plural passages in the Acts as an example of aesthetically and hermeneutically

in his treatment of the narrative voice in his "Discours du récit" in the broad sense of a transgression of the representational level.[50] David Herman, whose understanding of metalepsis as a transgression of narrative frames could prove to be more suitable for the study of *Seder Eliyahu*,[51] observes: beginquote ... metalepsis occurs when normative expectations about the modal structure of narrative universes – expectations activated by textual cues included in the narrative discourse at issue – are then deliberately subverted and countermanded.[52]
He explains metalepsis in its formal and functional aspects as follows:

> Formally speaking, metalepsis can be described as one or more illicit movements up or down the hierarchy of diegetic levels structuring narrative discourse. In order to describe such metaleptic movements, we would need to identify textual markers proper to the embedding and the embedded diegetic level(s), respectively. Then we would need to show how a given narrative, by transporting particular classes of textual markers across such levels, fails to respect (or actively abolishes) the hierarchy presumed by our initial taxonomy. Such formal transpositions can be more or less obvious and pervasive, and hence narrative featuring metalepsis can be more or less amenable to classical models for narrative structure itself – models

grounded pseudepigraphy: "In der antiken Historiographie und den verwandten literarischen Gattungen wird das Berichtete oft rekonstruiert und interpretiert. So ist es auch mit den Reden der Apostelgeschichte oder den Briefen und Texten von Verträgen, die wir in manchen biblischen Büchern finden (z. B. Esr 1,2–4; 4,8-10.11–16 u. a.; I Makk 8,23–30; 10,52–56 u. a.), welche nachträglich zur Illustration verfaßt sind. ... Ähnlich sind vielleicht auch die Wir-Stücke der Apostelgeschichte entstanden (Act 16,10–17; 20,5–15; 21,1–18; 27,1–28,16), in denen das 'Wir' ein dramatisches Mittel sein kann wie in der Schilderung des Seesturms bei Petronius."

50 See Genette, "Discours du récit," 244–245. Genette's concepts have been further developed in the course of the last decades, but his conceptualization remains one of the most important points of reference. It should be noted that none of the five types of metalepsis described by Genette is found in *Seder Eliyahu*: the reason for this is that whereas Genette's examples and those of most narratologists come almost exclusively from novels we don't have to do with a primarily narrative of length but with many short narrative segments embedded in non-narrative ones. See Genette's more recent contribution to this topic, *Métalepse. De la figure à la fiction* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2004), and the essay collection, John Pier and Jean-Marie Schaeffer, eds., *Métalepses: Entorses Au Pacte De La Représentation* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2005).

51 David Herman, "Toward a Formal Description of Narrative Metalepsis," *Journal of Literary Semantics* 26, no. 2 (1997): 132–152. Herman bases his assumptions on Ervin Goffman's definition of "frame" in *Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), which he paraphrases as follows: "The frame, then, is Goffman's generic label for the set of principles organizing interactional events of all sorts, including the events connected with the construction and elaboration of (narrative and other) discourse." (136).

52 Herman, "Toward a Formal Description," 136.

> which differentiate between, and differently rank, embedding and embedded diegetic levels of narration. … Functionally speaking, metalepsis signifies a transgression of the ontological boundaries pertaining to the diegetic and more broadly illocutionary levels structuring a given narrative text. [53]

It is clear that these definitions are based on a corpus of literature, broadly speaking one that encompasses modern fiction, i.e. quite different from that studied in this context. To begin with, *Seder Eliyahu* does not consist exclusively of narrative discourse; the concepts of embedding and hierarchy have to do here not just with narrative levels, but also with types of discourse, one of them being of narrative character. However, certain contributions on the topic have shown that metalepsis is not an exclusive phenomenon of post-modern literature.[54]

In what follows I will try to describe aspects of the text of *Seder Eliyahu* which could be viewed as instances of metalepsis, as a crossing of discourse borders and a transgression of narrative levels.

One such manifestation of metalepsis understood as a crossing of the limits of homiletic and narrative discourse pertains to the very use of the first person. The first person is a recurrent feature in several narratives,[55] but it is also present in the discourse within which these narratives are embedded, for example, in the form of formulas. Thus, the voice of the narrator of first person narratives and the voice of the midrashist whenever he says "I" can (in most cases) be identified as belonging to the same textual persona. A characteristic formula of the homiletic discourse which uses the first person is the expression "I call heaven and earth to witness" (מעיד אני את השמים ואת הארץ / מעיד אני עלי שמים וארץ). It is found ten times in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, three times in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* and once in *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.[56] In one case, ER 70, l. 20 the formula is used *within* a first person narrative, which can be seen both as marker pointing to the stylistic unity of non-narrative and narrative and as an indicator of the metaleptic character of the midrashist-narrator. The author of *Seder Eliyahu* also lets named rabbinic characters use the midrashist's language, as attested by R. Dosa b. Orkinas use of the formula in EZ 169, l.7.

Another strategy with which the author of *Seder Eliyahu* draws attention to the *persona of the midrashist* in the text, thus situating his voice, is the direct address of his

53 Herman, "Toward a Formal Description," 133–134.

54 See Fludernik, "Changement de scène," 87, who points out, for instance: "La métalepse n'est pas un procedé exclusivement postmoderne. Elle a une longue histoire qui remonte à la Renaissance et peut-être à l'Antiquité."

55 See chapter 6.

56 See ER 17, l. 19, ER 26, l. 24, ER 36, l. 6, ER 48, l. 20, ER 70, l. 20, ER 91, l. 32, ER 124, l. 10, ER 145, l. 17, ER 163, l. 11, ER 164, l. 7, EZ 169, l. 7 (in this case it is R. Dosa b. Orkinas who speaks the formula), EZ 175, l. 14, EZ 197, l. 10 and PsEZ 24, l. 1. The formula is known from other rabbinic documents, such as bYev 16a, bAr 16b, SifDev Devarim 1, BerR 2:4, MidTeh 137:1, MidMish 16:10, MidTan 1:1, among other. However, it is significant that among thirty-eight occurrences in rabbinic literature, fourteen stem from *Seder Eliyahu*.

audience. This is done with formulaic language containing verbal and pronominal forms in the second person singular, but also in the inclusive first person plural.[57] Examples of verbal and pronominal forms in the first person plural include למדנו,[58] מה עלינו לעשות[59] etc.

Further expressions which imply an audience in verbal or pronominal forms make use of a second person singular. They include among others וכי תדע לך שכן צא ולמד מ,[60] עלתה על דעתך,[61] – both of which generally introduce retellings of biblical accounts –, אלא ללמדך,[62] בוא וראה,[63] or כיוצא בדבר אתה אומר.[64] Even God is addressed by the midrashist using the second person: Whenever this is the case the midrahist's voice is represented as taking part in dialogues with God.[65]

These formulas suggest a male implied reader (or addressee or narratee depending on the communicative situation),[66] engaged in a learning situation. The verbs in the formu-

57 See Steven Fraade, "Rewritten Bible and Rabbinic Midrash as Commentary," in *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash*, ed. Carol Bakhos (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2006), 62; Fraade, *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 384: "Auch wenn sich rabbinischer Midrasch formal als einfache Erschließung der Bedeutung(en) bestimmter biblischer Wörter versteht und dabei der Schriftsequenz folgt, spricht er doch auf subtilere Weise oft selbst in der Sprache der Schrift, redet sein Midrasch-Publikum in der zweiten Person an, wie es Gott oder Mose in der Tora machen."

58 The expression is used very frequently in rabbinic literature. In *Seder Eliyahu* "we learn" has biblical characters as objects – "from Abraham" (ER 59, l. 22; ER 128, l. 18), "from Gideon" (ER 60, l. 22), "from Manoah" (ER 60, l. 24), "from Isaac" (ER 128, l. 35), "from Jacob" (ER 129, l. 3), "from our fathers" (ER 129, l. 5) –, rulings pertaining to the carrying of the sacrificial ram to the altar (ER 36, l. 20) and the immersion of the *niddah* (ER 75, l. 15), and theological concepts such as faith in the reward (PsEZ 22, l. 16) and fear of sin (PsEZ 22, l. 21), the two last occurrences are direct speech of R. Johanan b. Zakkai in first person narratives.

59 See ER 69, l. 8. The phrase is also used as spoken by members of two families of priests within the narrative context of a *maʿaseh* (ER 53, l. 8) and within a first person narrative by the rabbi who narrates in the first person (ER 71, l. 28). It is also found elsewhere in rabbinic literature, e.g. MekhY *Beshallach* 2, MekhSh 14:14, SifBem *Naso* 45, ShemR 23:9, WayR 30:3–4, MidTeh 105:13. With a total of 15 occurrences it is not very frequent, though.

60 Variant readings include תדע לך שכן צא למד מ and שתדע לך שכן There is a total of 17 occurrences of the phrase in rabbinic literature, two in WayR, the rest in *Seder Eliyahu*.

61 This phrase is found twice in *Seder Eliyahu*, ER 82, l. 27 (within first person narrative) and ER 87, l. 13 where it introduces a dialogue between Elijah and Elishah. Elsewhere in rabbinic literature it is not a frequent expression, see ySan 9.3 (27a), SifDev *We-zot ha-berakhah*, 342 (שמב), *Pitron Torah, Zot chuqqat ha-torah*.

62 Eight occurrences.

63 14 occurrences. Both phrases are very frequent in rabbinic literature.

64 11 occurrences, and very frequent elsewhere in rabbinic literature.

65 See e.g. ER 90, l. 9.

66 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, 105 defines the narratee as "the agent addressed by the narrator." See also Genette, "Discours du récit," 265–267, and Seymour Benjamin Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 253–261. Direct addresses can be regarded as markers of a metalepsis crossing the ontological limit between the textual and the extratextual. See Brian McHale, *Postmodernist fiction*

las denote cognitive processes, the formulas themselves anticipate maxims to be learned or hint at a hermeneutic decision made by the midrashist. So not just the midrashist has a narrative alter ego in the rabbi of the first person narratives, but also his intended reader has a narrative alter ego himself in the narrative personas of the characters who converse with the rabbi, who find themselves in dialogical learning situations.

As Ofra Meir observed in the previously discussed article there are several ways in which a narrator can intervene in the narration he is telling. One of them is the use of rhetorical questions. In *Seder Eliyahu* the voice of the midrashist in non-narrative segments makes use not only of introductory formulas, but also of rhetorical questions (which can be formulaic), thus intervening in his own discourse and drawing attention to the discursive task he is performing. Rhetorical questions are posed to introduce passages of explicit exegesis or homiletical-exegetical ones that do not use Scriptural wording. At the opening of chapter (9) 10 Judg 4:4 is quoted followed by the question: וכי מה טיבה של דברה שהיא שפטה את ישראל ומתנבאת עליהם, the question sets the perspective from which the quoted verse is to be interpreted. Chapter 4 opens without quoting any verse but posing instead a more general question: מפני מה זכה משה למאור פנים בעולם הזה ממה שעתיד ליתן לצדיקים לעתיד לבא. This question is followed by an explanation in the form of an exegetical narrative. Although in both cases we do have to do with exegesis, the first type could be termed explicit, the second implicit exegesis and in both the textual presence, the agency of someone posing the interpretive query is made clear.

What has been termed here a "metalepsis" is a phenomenon which, in accord with Genette's understanding of metalepsis, produces and transgresses a limit. In the particular case of *Seder Eliyahu* the limit is not between narrative levels, but between discourse types, between the world of the homiletical discourse (that of the petichah, homily, or literary sermon) and the narrated worlds embedded in it. *Seder Eliyahu* presents a multifaceted or polyfunctional voice, which sometimes surprises his readers, by breaking norms or expectations concerning this type of text.[67] Another aspect of this presence of the same voice across discourse types is that by permeating the entire text it gives it a character of unity or consistency not usually expected of classical rabbinic documents.

3.3 The Character of Elijah in *Seder Eliyahu*

It is a well known fact that the post-biblical reception of Elijah pictures the prophet in his afterlife in multiple roles.[68] As Louis Ginzberg puts it in his *Legends of the Jews*:

(New York: Methuen, 1987), 222–227.

67 One of the effects of metalepsis is surprise. See Dorrit Cohn, "Métalepse Et Mise En Abyme," in *Métalepses: Entorses au Pacte de la Représentation*, ed. John Pier and Jean-Marie Schaeffer (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 2005), 123.

68 See Karin Hedner-Zetterholm, "Elijah's different roles: a reflection of the rabbinic struggle for authority," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (2009): 163–182; Kristen H. Lindbeck, *Elijah and*

"Sometimes he looks like an ordinary man, sometimes he takes the appearance of an Arab, sometimes of a horseman, now he is a Roman court-official, now he is a harlot."[69]

Elijah the Prophet is the protagonist of a number of short exegetical narratives in *Seder Eliyahu*. In some others he is rather a secondary character. The first one, ER 22, l. 24–29, is introduced by a rhetorical question that is used in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* to open a series of exegetical narratives in chapters 4, 5 and 6 dealing with Moses (ER 17), Elisha (ER 22 after that of Elijah), Ezekiel (ER 23), Abraham (ER 27), Jacob (ER 29) and Jethro (ER 30). The question "Why did Elijah merit the ability of bringing a dead man back to life?" presupposes an Elijah narrative in the Bible, that of the resurrection of the son of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17:17–24).[70] The answer, on the other hand, combines an allusion to the entire account of Elijah's doings in the Books of Kings – "Elijah did the will of God," "was anxious for the honour of God and Israel" – with rabbinic reworkings of the prophet's existence after his translation: He is said to be present "in every generation," his treatment of the righteous whenever he encounters them is described with characteristic phraseology of *Seder Eliyahu*: היה מגפפן מחבקן ומנשקן ומברך ומרומם ומשבח ומגדל ומקדש לשמו ("He would take the righteous in his arms, hold them close and kiss them and bless, praise, exalt, magnify, and hallow the name of Him at whose word the world came into being"). On this first narrative on Elijah in *Seder Eliyahu* Friedmann observes that although the entire book is attributed to Elijah, it narrates stories about Elijah in the same way the Torah does about Moses.[71]

In the second story in which Elijah appears, ER 22, l. 30–ER 23, l. 18, it is rather as a secondary character, while Elisha is the protagonist. The narrative is presented as surpassing the previous one by posing the opening question "Why did Elisha merit being able to bring *two* dead back to life?" What the exegetical narrative that follows the question illustrates is the exemplarity of Elisha's following Elijah and renouncing ownership, but above all the notion of ministering to a sage. In contrast to the first story this one does make explicit use of the biblical account it is based on by selectively quoting from 1 Kings 19:15–21. The exegetical narrative is thus closed with the maxim: "From here they taught: Attendance [on scholars] is greater than learning." (ER 23, l. 5)

Immediately following the Elisha story the text brings a third Elijah story. The passage is this time opened with a rabbinic statement: "From here they taught: No man should take leave of his colleague, but after [having brought up] a matter of halakhah." Master and disciple are in the narrative that follows this statement both main characters, engaged in matters of halakhah at the time they are separated – the biblical passage used as foil for this narrative is 2 Kings 2:11, the account of Elijah's ascension to heaven while

the Rabbis: Story and Theology (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

69 Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. IV, *Bible times and characters from Joshua to Esther* (1913; repr., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968), 203.

70 The same motif, Elijah as agent of the revival of the dead, appears also in ER 14. See also PRE33.

71 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, 22, n. 18.

he was walking with his disciple. Without attempting to reveal the whereabouts of Elijah, the story does imply no harm could have come to him on the occasion for he was clearly doing the right thing discussing with his disciple matters of Torah. This story is indeed closed with the following statement and proof-text: "Two men who are walking along and engage in matters of Torah, no harm can befall them, for it is said, *As they continued walking and talking[, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven.*" (ER 23, l. 16–18)

In chapter 17 (ER 87, l. 9–20), Elijah is again the main character of an exegetical story that gives an account of how the people of Israel became men in awe of Heaven at the time Elijah was on Mount Carmel by retelling Elijah's building of the altar and trench.[72] The biblical narrative on which this midrashic passage is based is that about Elijah's triumph over Baal's priests.[73] The midrashist focuses on the trench Elijah makes around the altar and on how it comes to be miraculously filled with water after Elijah asks his disciples to fill four jars of water and pour it on the burnt offering and the wood, as stated in the quoted verse 34. After this verse the narrator addresses the audience with the rhetorical question "Should you wonder how twelve[74] jars of water could fill the entire place with water?" (introduced with the above discussed phrase וכי עלתה על דעתך) and explains the nature of the miracle: only when Elisha approaches his master and pours the water of his jar over the latter's hands do ten springs begin to flow out of Elijah's hands and into the trench until it is filled with water. At the close of the story we read that at the time of the evening offering Elijah prays and the fire of the Lord consumes the burnt sacrifice and licks the water in the trench. Read together with the vain waiting for such signs from the Baal in the immediate preceding co-text of the biblical account (1 Kings 18:25–29), these signs persuade Israel to acknowledge that there is only one God, becoming fearers Heaven in the days of Elijah.

The midrashist opts for a rearrangement of the dramatis personae of the biblical account: in his version there is no mention of Ahab, nor of the prophets of Baal. The people Elijah addresses in Scripture are replaced by disciples, among them the only one named is Elisha, Baal is replace by the more generic rabbinic expression for idol, עבודה זרה.

The post-biblical Elijah makes his appearance in a sages narrative (ER 97, l. 32–ER 98, l. 2). There the sages discuss the genealogy of the prophet. Some state that he proceeds from the seed of Rachel, others from the seed of Leah. Elijah himself appears to settle the matter affirming that he comes from the seed of Rachel for what he (and / or the midrashist) adduces a proof-text (1 Chron 8:27). Not satisfied with this answer the

72 The opening of this narrative is a variation on the opening of the two narrative passages that precede it and which recount how "Israel took the rule of Heaven upon themselves." The first is set in the time of Joshua and the second in the days of the prophet Samuel.

73 See 1 Kings 18:17–40, especially verses 30–40. The only verses partially quoted in *Seder Eliyahu* are vv. 32, 34, 36, 37, and 38.

74 This number presupposes the fact that Elijah asked the people three times to pour four jars of water on the burnt-offering. See vv. 33–34.

sages argue that due to the episode with the widow of Zarephath he is held to be a priest, that he is therefore from the seed of Leah. Elijah himself interprets for the sages what he meant as he spoke to the widow saying "make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son." (1 Kings 17:13) The son he spoke of was the Messiah son of Joseph and Elijah himself hinted at his going down to Babylonia, after which the Messiah would come. The narrative contains a number of gaps, and only some of them can be filled with parallel passages in other works of rabbinic literature.[75] *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* contains in chapter 15 what can be regarded as an "internal" parallel of this narrative (EZ 199, l. 6–9). The text is shorter and ends with Elijah stating that he is a descendant of Leah – which Friedmann corrects to "Rachel." It is worth noting that both these short stories place women as the starting point of genealogy, whereas the sages in the parallel version ask whether Benjamin, Gad or Levi are Elijah's origins.

Elijah is also present in non-narrative contexts such as the interpretation in of the four blacksmiths of Zech 2:3 as "Messiah the son of David, Messiah the son of Joseph, Elijah, and the Righteous Priest." (ER 96, l. 32–33) Related to this issue, it should be mentioned that a eschatological account in chapter 3 of the so called *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer*, i.e. *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, relates how Elijah will be brought with the Messiah by the Holy One. He is thus, contrary to a wide-spread tradition, not depicted as a forerunner of the Messiah, but somehow as his companion. His messianic activity seems to be reduced to bearing a flask of oil.[76] In the first chapter of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, Elijah is referred to both as a companion of the Messiah and as his forerunner at the end of a sages narrative (EZ 169, l. 13–16).

In all of the passages briefly discussed Elijah is either the character of a narrative or functions the mouthpiece of an interpretation. Whenever his direct speech is represented it does not contain the characteristic phraseology with which the governing voice of the midrashist of *Seder Eliyahu* can be identified. It could be argued that this is at least a clear internal signal that the author of *Seder Eliyahu* did not intend his readers to identify him with the prophet nor his work with post-biblical words of Elijah. The author keeps, as far as *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* is concerned, the biblical character Elijah and the rabbinic traditions around him separated from the midrashist's voice.

Things appear to be slightly different in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. This part opens with a formula that names Elijah the prophet as head of a school in whose name ethical teachings were transmitted. This formula, used three times in chapter 1,[77] is a variation of

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75 A longer discussion among the sages to which tribe, Benjamin or Gad, Elijah belonged is found in BerR 71:9 (Theodor-Albeck), which makes use of more biblical quotations interpreted in turn by named rabbis (Nehorai, Leazar, Philippi [אמר ליה ר׳ פליפי]), is similarly brought to an end by the appearance of the prophet himself who uses the same words as in *Seder Eliyahu*. On the other hand Elijah is regarded as a Levite in bBM 114b and PesRab 4:2, since, according to legend he and the High Priest Pinchas, Aaron's grandson, were identical.

76 See PsEZ 34, l. 12–13.

77 EZ 167, l. 1, l. 14, and EZ 169, l. 17.

the one that introduces the previously mentioned baraitot in the Babylonian Talmud.[78] There we read תנא דבי אליהו, "the School of Elijah [itself] taught," whereas here the wording is משום דבי אליהו הנביא אמרו, i.e. "they (i.e. the sages) said in the name of the School of Elijah." It is significant that the author of *Seder Eliyahu* specifies at this point that this school was headed by no other than the *prophet* Elijah. He is, however, not presented as the speaker of these words, but rather constitutes their original authority. So the book part or the chapter (section) introduced with this formula can be seen as allegedly authored by his school, though the teachings are ultimately transmitted by the sages and by the midrashist who quotes them. This is the nearest the biblical character comes to be depicted as author of the text we read, so that we have to do with an alleged collective authorship and an indirect transmission of the original teachings.[79]

The name Elijah is used at the beginning of chapter 15 in the inquit formula אמר אבא אליהו זכור לטוב וזכור לברכה. In this case it is this very teacher Elijah who uses a characteristic phrase of the midrashist: "I call heaven and earth to witness." It was already mentioned that this chapter contains a short version of the sages narrative on the origins of Elijah transmitted ER 97.[80] Elijah is here referred to with the phrase אליהו זכור לטוב, i.e. with wording that can be understood as referring to the "authorial" figure mentioned at the beginning of the chapter. Even if it has been argued that this chapter does not belong to the original conception of the book[81] it must be noted that it contains evidence of a conflation of biblical character figure and authorial figure not present in the other passages dealing with the prophet Elijah in *Seder Eliyahu*.

Chapter [8] of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* is to a large extent an exegetical narrative which has Elijah as its main character,[82] and which is supposed to illustrate how Israel reject every prophet's favours and how they persist in the error of idolatry. It begins with a

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78 See Appendix 2 (3.4.2) at the end of this chapter. According to Ulrich Berzbach, "The Textual Witnesses of the Midrash Seder Eliyahu Zuta: An Initial Survey," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 31 (2004): 70, this is a distinctive trait of the Italian manuscript tradition of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.

79 There is still another important issue related to this formula. Neither this phrase nor its Talmudic correlate seem to refer to the whole work we know as *Seder Eliyahu*. However, if we had in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* the same phrase introducing the baraitot in the Talmud it could be a case of auto-referentiality since scholars are persuaded that *tanna debe eliyahu* is an alternative title of the work. Thus, by capitalizing the phrase the Soncino translation of the Babylonian Talmud treats the phrase as a work title.

80 See EZ 199, l. 6–9.

81 E.g. by Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge*, 123: "Demnach ist alles von Cap. 15 an bis zum Ende des Elia sutta eine spätere Compilation, wozu Eliahu rabba, Eliahu sutta, Aboth derabbi Nathan, Boraitha Aboth, ältere Erzählungen, die Talmude und spätere Midraschim die Bestandtheile geliefert haben; das echte Eliahu sutta muss mithin mit dem 14. Capitel geschlossen werden, womit sogar Handschriften übereinzustimmen scheinen." See Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 9th ed. (München: Beck, 2011), 379.

82 EZ 185, l. 21–EZ 186, l. 16. The narrative is based on selected passages from the first part of the Elijah cycle, the verses quoted are 1 Kings 16:29–17:1–2;18:1;19:3–18.

dialogue between Ahab, king of Israel and Elijah, who is referred to for the first time as "the Tishbite," (as in 1 Kings 17:1). Ahab quotes Moses' warning in Deut 11:16–17 – *Take care, or you will be seduced <etc.> [into turning away, serving other gods and worshipping them,] for then the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you and he will shut up the heavens[, so that there will be no rain and the land will yield no fruit; then you will perish quickly from the good land that the Lord is giving you]*, to argue that it is not valid for himself, given that he has had many favours granted by the idols he has worshipped in his life. To confirm this notion he mentions the rebuilding of Jericho by Hiel, quoting 1 Kings 16:34 as a proof-text.[83] The interpretation by Ahab of the rebuilding of Jericho as a praiseworthy achievement of the idols is what leads Elijah to speak out the punishment that is to come upon Ahab, one in accord with the latter's own words (i.e. the words of Moses that he has quoted). The drought announced in 1 Kings 17:1 is therefore seen as the result of Ahab's arrogance in presuming that the warning of Deut 11:16–17 does not apply to him. After some time God asks Elijah to go and see Ahab, on which occasion there would be rain again, and afterwards to go to the places where his ancestors ask God for mercy. Elijah obeys in that he goes to Beer-sheba and to Mount Horeb, as the quoted verses (1 Kings 19:5.8) imply. When asked by God what he is doing there – the quoted verse 1 Kings 19:9 could have been read as "What is in your mouth?" –, he does not reply with the suitable words, namely entreating mercy for Israel, but justifies his jealousy for the Lord by quoting 1 Kings 19:10. God tries to placate Elijah and persuade him that He Himself wants Israel's good. It is now God's to quote verses that relate his revelation to Elijah upon Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:11–12). Elijah persists in his jealousy (1 Kings 19:14 is quoted) for three hours until he is told by the holy spirit with a quotation (1 Kings 19:15–16) to go to Damascus and anoint Jehu as King of Israel and Elisha as his own follower. The story is closed with God's words directed at Elijah stating that He cannot do what Elijah has in mind. Although the story sets out to illustrate Israel's obstinacy, it ends up showing how a major prophet, Elijah, is not willing to forgive their errors according to the will of God. Due to his own obstinacy Elijah is forced to name his own successor.

To sum up: *Seder Eliyahu* contains several exegetical narratives based on or allusions to narratives of the Elijah cycle – the widow of Zarephath, Elijah's triumph over the priests of Baal, Elijah's ascension to heaven etc. – and some narratives of legendary post-biblical subject-matter. With the careful exception of the passages introduced in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* with the formulas משום דבי אליהו הנביא אמרו or אמר אבא אליהו זכור לטוב

[83] The verse is not interpreted as a fulfilment of Joshua's curse in Josh 6:26 as in its biblical context, but rather according to a parallel passage in bSan 113a, which is also transmitted in MS Parma 2785 where Elijah argues as follows: "If Moses' curse was not fulfilled, for it is written, *And ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them*; which is followed by, *and he shut up the heaven that there be no rain*, etc.: yet though that man [i.e. Hiel] set up idols upon every single furrow, the rain did not permit him to go and worship them; shall the curse of Joshua, his disciple have been fulfilled?"

וזכור לברכה, none of the Elijah narratives and non-narrative passages discussed in this section depicts Elijah as authoring a corpus of wisdom nor as engaging in any activity related to the transmission, written or oral, of the work of which these narratives are part. Nevertheless, the work's reception was very probably influenced by its being attributed to Elijah the prophet or the school of a certain Abba Elijahu. Even in scholarly writings of the twentieth century the voice of the midrashist is referred to as "Abba Elia."[84]

3.4 Abba Eliyahu, Elijah, anonymous I: The Governing Voice of *Seder Eliyahu*

Considering that the formulas *mishum eliyahu hanavi* (in the first chapter of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*) and *tanna debe eliyahu* (in several passages of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*) have the same function as the usual rabbinic inquit formula *amar rabbi...*,[85] i.e. they introduce sayings, they cannot be interpreted as hinting at the authorship of the entire work by any of the individuals named in them. The pseudoepigraphy of *Seder Eliyahu* is not an intrinsic characteristic of the work, but rather a paratextual phenomenon, attested by the titles with which it is referred to in the manuscript tradition and later on in print editions, as well as by the baraitot of the Babylonian Talmud introduced with *tanna debe eliyahu*. So the following distinction can be made: Whereas these work ti-

[84] E.g. Friedman, *Seder Eliahu*, passim and Avigdor Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," in *Jewish Studies: In Memory of George A. Kohut, 1874–1933*, ed. S. W. Baron and A. Marx (New York: The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1935), passim.

[85] The formula *amar rabbi...* is incidentally present both in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. The following sages are thus named as tradents, in some cases though the Rabbis' names are found within Mishnah quotations: R. Shimon b. Gamliel (ER 34), R. [Aqiba] (ER 61), R. Shimon (ER 69), R. Eleazar (ER 101) (not in Friedmann's edition but in the manuscript within a Mishnah quote), R. Eleazar b. Mati (?) (ER 109), Rabban Gamliel (ER 122), R. Aqiba (ER 133), R. Natan (ER 147), R. Ishmael b. Eleazar (EZ 179), R. Jose (EZ 199). These few names in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* contrast with the numerous ones in the relatively short Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zutta. These include: R. Shimon (PsEZ 1), R. Shimon ben Yochai (PsEZ 2), R. Eliezer b. Yakob (PsEZ 3), R. Yehoshua (PsEZ 3), R. Aqiba (PsEZ 3), R. Nehemia (PsEZ 3), R. Judah (PsEZ 3), Rabbi (PsEZ 3), R. Eliezer b. Yakov (PsEZ 4), R. Shimon (PsEZ 4), R. Eliezer (PsEZ 7), R. Jose (PsEZ 7), R. Eliezer b. Yakob (PsEZ 8), R. Ishmael b. Elisha (PsEZ 8), R. Yehoshua (PsEZ 8), R. Jose (PsEZ 9), R. Eliezer (PsEZ 10) (2x), R. Eleazar b. Parta (PsEZ 11), R. Judah (PsEZ 11), R. Yannai (PsEZ 11), R. Yochanan (PsEZ 11), R. Nehorai (PsEZ 11), R. Nehemia (PsEZ 12), R. Yochanan (PsEZ 12), R. Eliezer b. Yakob (PsEZ 12), R. Jose b. Qisma (PsEZ 12), Jochanan b. Pinhas (PsEZ 13), R. Aqiba (PsEZ 13) (2x), R. Shimon b. Yochai (PsEZ 14), R. Eliezer oder Eleazar (PsEZ 14), R. Yehoshua b. Levi (PsEZ 15), R. Eliezer (PsEZ 15), R. Yehoshua b. Levi (PsEZ 17), R. Shimon b. Judah (PsEZ 19), R. Shimon b. Mansi (PsEZ 19–20), Yochanan b. Bag Bag (PsEZ 20), R. Hanina b. Akshi (PsEZ 21), R. Eleazar b. Azariah (PsEZ 21), R. Shimon b. Laqish (PsEZ 22), R. Yochanan (PsEZ 22), R. Yochanan b. Zakai (PsEZ 22), R. Yochanan (PsSE 24).

tles do point toward pseudepigrapy or pseudonymity,[86] the text itself consistently opts for anonymity.[87] One of its most recurring forms is the introduction of Mishnah quotations with formulae such as *amru chakhamim* as well as the introduction of alleged rabbinic sayings with the formula *mikan amru*.

The text of *Seder Eliyahu* does not depict the character of the prophet Elijah in any single occasion as authoring the work we read, contrary to what Ginzberg and others have stated regarding the identification of the author of the work with the prophet Elijah. The only instance of an apparent conflation of the author of this work (or of a previous version of it) and the post-biblical prophet Elijah this is only evidenced in the Ketubbot passage discussed previously,[88] which incidentally makes of R. Anan if not an author at least a scribe of Elijah's Seder. In the extant *Seder Eliyahu* Elijah is at the most "author" of those passages in direct speech which he himself utters. The entire work is not presented as written in the name of any Elijah, nor in anyone else's name. Elijah is a "supernatural author" in the *Ketubbot* passage of a text that has not come down to us, and therefore had to be written by someone else.

The main text of *Seder Eliyahu* itself does, however, present a governing voice which is distinguishable in non-narrative and narrative passages, but which is not depicted as authoring the text in oral or written manner, in the sense that Western literatures conceive of authors at work, i.e. as responsible for the original and autonomous work they create. It tells nothing about how the anonymous author (or authors) went about composing his (or their) work.[89]

The text does allow us to describe its *implied author*,[90] i.e. the construction of a

86 See Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash," 151. The pseudepigraphy of the titles could be described with Pokorný and Stemberger, "Pseudepigraphie," 648, as the type of "pseudepigraphy based on attribution to a tradition" ("Pseudepigraphie durch Zuordnung zu einer Tradition"); on how this type of pseudepigraphy operates they point out: "Im Prozeß der Überlieferung hat man mehrere anonym tradierte Texte einem anerkannten traditionellen Bereich zugeordnet, was man als eine Art der 'Kanonisierung betrachten kann.'"

87 Anonymisation of rabbinic traditions in general is also a feature of the *Seder Eliyahu*, and of other late midrashim.

88 See section 3.1.

89 See Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature*, 107–108.

90 The category of the "implied author" has been controversial ever since its introduction by Wayne C. Booth (see *The Rhetoric of Fiction* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961]). As Ansgar Nünning, "Implied Author," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 239, observes, there is "no widespread agreement about what the term actually designates." See also Tom Kindt and Hans-Harald Müller, "Der 'Implizite Autor': Zur Explikation und Verwendung eines umstrittenen Begriffs," in *Rückkehr des Autors: Zur Erneuerung eines umstrittenen Begriffs*, ed. Fotis Jannidis, Gerhard Lauer, Matias Martinez, and Simone Winko (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1999), 273–287; Sandra Heinen, "Überlegungen zum Begriff des "Impliziten Autors" und seines Potentials zur kulturwissenschaftlichen Beschreibung von inszenierter Autorschaft," *Sprachkunst* 33 (2002): 327–377; Susan Lanser, "(Im)Plying the Author," in *Narra-*

persona by the reader during the reading process, based both on the text and on the reader's prior extratextual background information, e.g. in the case of a work such as *Seder Eliyahu*, on how a midrash goes about interpreting Scripture or more in general how rabbinic documents deal with given topics. Rimmon-Kenan on the other hand pleads for a "depersonified" understanding of the implied author (to which she however refers to in terms of "agent of the communicative situation"):

> Thus, while the narrator can only be defined circularly as the 'narrative voice' or 'speaker' of a text, the implied author is – in opposition and by definition – voiceless and silent. In this sense the implied author must be seen as a construct inferred and assembled by the reader from all the components of the text. Indeed, speaking of the implied author as a construct based on the text seems to me far safer that imagining it as a personified consciousness or 'second self.'[91]

Sandra Heinen suggests yet another conceptualisation of what might be termed "the reader's idea of the author":[92] "Aus all diesen Informationen textuellen, paratextuellen und kontextuellen Ursprungs kann in der Vorstellung des Lesers ein Bild des Autors entstehen."[93] Even if the reader of an anonymous work counts with less prior knowledge about the author than the reader of a novel by, say, Thomas Mann, he can still build an image of the author on the basis of the text's characteristics: "Darüber hinaus vermittelt der Text durch seinen Stil, die Thematik und explizite oder implizite Wertungen einen Eindruck vom Autor."[94] In similar manner argues Alexander Samely when he states:

> Every text can be understood as creating some identity for its speaking voice. This identity is a function of the text's surface, not of the author 'behind' it. The text may not have one person responsible for all its features, a single historical 'author'. In fact, this is routinely assumed for the anonymous and pseudepigraphic texts of Jewish antiquity. But even where a text has such a complex genesis, its actual structures will still forge an identity for its speaking voice. For such an identity is merely a function of *reading all its sentences together* (if that is impossible, other kinds of analysis are necessary). The contours of that voice's identity are thus determined by the boundaries of what the reader accepts to be one text.[95]

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tive Theory II: Special Topics, ed. Mieke Bal (London, New York: Routledge, 2004), 11–18.

91 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, 88. See Nünning, "Implied Author," 240: "About the only thing that seems uncontroversial is that the implied author can be distinguished from the narrator and the characters, both of which are identifiable as textual speakers with clearly delimited speech segments. However, the notion of the implied author refers to a 'voiceless' and depersonified phenomenon, which is neither speaker, voice, subject, nor participant in the narrative communication situation."

92 See Nünning, "Implied Author," 240.

93 Heinen, "Überlegungen zum Begriff," 337.

94 Heinen, "Überlegungen zum Begriff," 337.

95 Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature*, 102.

In what follows I attempt to briefly sketch some traits of the persona of the governing voice of *Seder Eliyahu*. To begin with we have to do with a *male* identity. This is keen on letting his audience recognize his work as belonging to the rabbinic tradition by using typically rabbinic exegetical techniques and hermeneutic expressions as well as by explicitly quoting the Mishnah. He also adheres to this tradition in avoiding any mention of his own name,[96] the documents of formative Judaism were not created by single authors but were rather the result of repetition and explanation of what has been revealed long before. In Martin Jaffee's words, the author of Seder Eliyahu adheres to a tradition within which texts "just happened."[97] His inclination towards anonymity is evidenced in the systematic effacing of authorities in the quoted traditions, a tendency which is less evident in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.

On the other hand, it could be argued that he aims at his work being perceived as a consistent unity of style and thought (as can be achieved by a single author). Max Kadushin provided plenty of examples in his two monographies to prove that *Seder Eliyahu* is informed by an organic unity of thought.[98] In a chapter of his *Einleitung* dealing with methodological questions Günter Stemberger points out that the work belongs to those few late rabbinic works that admit to be studied *redaktionsgeschichtlich*, whereby the implied author or the persona of the governing voice is understood as textual counterpart of a single historical authorial personality.[99]

So among the traits that contribute to the text's consistency is a characteristic *phraseology*.[100] A certain phrase used in one passage tends to recur in other contexts, on the highest level of discourse, in the voice of the midrashist, in the narrative passages embedded within this discourse, i.e. in passages in which the midrashist turns into a narrator of his own experiences or of biblical stories, and even in the direct speech of a biblical character in one of the embedded narratives. This is valid for several expressions. To give but an example: Within an exegetical narrative on the covenant between David and God (2 Sam 7) in chapter 18 David addresses God in prayer with the words:

> My Father, who are in heaven, may Your great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever and may You find contentment in Israel Your servants in all the places of their dwellings, *for You magnified us, You exalted us, You*

96 Not even in the first person narratives does the governing voice of *Seder Eliyahu* allow the reader to speculate on a single, historical, identifiable person.

97 Jaffee, "Rabbinic Authorship," 32.

98 See Max Kadushin, *The Theology of Seder Eliahu* (New York: Bloch, 1932) and more systematically in *Organic Thinking*. In several passages of the latter he appears to consider the work as the product of collective authorship, referring to "one of our authors." See also Max Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 22, 45, 55, 67, 84, 95, 137, 207.

99 Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 69.

100 Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 118–129 provides a register of those expressions which appear more than once in the text, which he refers to using an expression of the main text of *Seder Eliyahu*, כפולין.

> *hallowed us, You extolled us, You bound [on] us a crown with the words of Torah from one end of the world to the other.* (ER 89,l. 25–29)

A very similar prayer is spoken by David again in the context of an exegetical narrative on Ahitophel's plot against him (2 Sam 17:23). The order of the words in the tetracolon varies and instead of "crown of the words of Torah" (כתר דברי תורה) it is with "a knot to the words of Torah" (קשר בדברי תורה) that Israel is bound:

> My Father, who are in heaven, may Your great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever and may You find contentment in Israel Your servants in all the places of their dwellings, *for You magnified us, You hallowed us, You extolled us, You exalted us, and from one end of the world to the other You have bound us with a great knot to words of Torah.* (ER 157,l. 27–30)

Now the wording of this second prayer of David is used, with a minor variation – "a *great* knot to the words of Torah" (קשר גדול בדברי תורה) – by the midrashist himself when he addresses God interpreting Song 1:4:

> *We will exult and rejoice in you* (Song 1:4), in that *You magnified us, You hallowed us, You extolled us, You exalted us, and from one end of the world to the other You have bound us with a great knot to words of Torah.* (ER 32, l. 25–29).

This last prayer is in turn spoken by David in ER 157 in the context of an exegetical narrative on Ahitophel's plot against David (2 Sam 17:23).

Another recurring tetracolon is בחכמה בבינה בדעה בהשכל ("with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and insight"): That is how God blesses Abraham (ER 29); the same qualities are predicated of all that is said in the Torah (ER 73),[101] of God as he created the world (ER 91), in hypothetical mode of the nations of the world in the context of a midrash on Song 1:3 (ER 37), of Hezekiah in an exegetical narrative (ER 47). They are assured him who teaches Torah to multitudes, does not favour the rich or the poor and has both read Scripture and recited Mishnah (ER 63); the narrator affirms that they were given to him (ER 70) and to the rest of human beings to distinguish them from cattle (ER 70), the phrase is atomized in a *mashal* and reunited in its *nimshal* as the strength which God provides the righteous with (ER 84). These are but few of the occurrences of this phrase, which like several others contribute to the book's conspicuous style.

The unity of the work's conception is perceived in the way chapters are structured, i.e. generally according to a topic or cluster of topics using single scriptural verses as lemmas or using several consecutive verses of a passage of Scripture, quoting them in their

[101] In this case we have to do with the tricolon בחכמה בבינה ובהשכל. Wisdom, understanding and knowledge form a list that recurs in several scriptural passages (e.g. Prov 3: 19–20, Exod 31:3, 1 Kings 7:14, and Prov 24:3–4) quoted in PRE 3 as evidence that by these three attributes the Tabernacle and the Temple were made.

sequence and interpreting them in distinct hermeneutic operations.[102] Ulrich Berzbach pointed out to another feature which can be regarded as an indicator of compositional unity, namely, the way chapters are grouped in dove-tailing units in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*.[103]

Even though he is not depicted as authoring the work in a modern sense of the term, the first person agent who gives homiletical expositions, interprets biblical verses, narrates his own experiences,[104] quotes sages' traditions, and addresses the audience is probably one of the most tangible indicators of a conceptional unity (and probably also of the historical single authorship) of *Seder Eliyahu*. Precisely this agent might be seen as what brings together in the eyes of the reader the *Rabbah* and *Zuta* parts of the text, and at the same time distinguishes the so-called *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta* as spurious. Here it is no more the anonymous rabbi, but rabbinic authorities who utter sayings and tell stories or interpret scriptural verses.

The apparently contradictory tendencies that have been discussed and which can be subsumed under "anonymisation" and "pervading traces of individual authorship," can help situate the work as the literary product of a time between that of fundamental collective authorship of classical rabbinic literature,*See Stern, "The concept of authorship," passim.* and that when authors brought their self-conception as authors into the text, e.g. by writing a prologue and presenting their motivation for writing, translating or commenting on an existing work.

3.4.1 Appendix 1: Talmud Passages Introduced with the Formula *tanna debe eliyahu*

The text of the nine baraitot introduced with the formula *tanna debe eliyahu* and their English translation is printed below. Friedmann discusses the baraitot and their wider talmudic co-text in the fifth section of his introduction. Three of them, namely 1, 3, and 5 he considers as containing halakhic material, the rest aggadic.[105]

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[102] See Constanza Cordoni, "Biblical Interpretation in *Seder Eliyahu*," in *"Let the Wise Listen and Add to Their Learning" (Prov 1:5): Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of his 75th birthday*, ed. Constanza Cordoni and Gerhard Langer, 413–430 (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2016).

[103] See Ulrich Berzbach, "The varieties of literal devices in a medieval Midrash: Seder Eliyahu Rabba, chapter 18," in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the 6th EAJS Congress, Toledo, July 1998*, vol. 1, *Biblical, rabbinical and medieval studies*, ed. J. Targarona Borrás and A. Sáenz-Badillos (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 384–391.

[104] Although his stories might not always give the impression of being consistent closed units the narrator is given the task of signalizing that they are: As part of his answer to a question posed by his dialogue partner the narrator reminds him of what has been said before, not just by repeating part of an answer, but by explicitly stating that what comes has already been uttered, e.g. "Is this not as in the first answer which I gave you at the beginning?" (ER 73).

[105] Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 47.

1. תנא דבי אליהו: כל השונה הלכות מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא, שנאמר אהליכות עולם לו, אל תקרי הליכות אלא הלכות

It was taught in the Tanna debe Eliyyahu: Whoever repeats halachoth may rest assured that he is destined for the future world, as it says, His goings [halikoth] are to eternity. Read not halikoth but halachoth. (bMeg 28b)

1'. תנא דבי אליהו: כל השונה הלכות בכל יום – מובטח לו שהוא בן העולם הבא, שנאמר ההליכות עולם לו, אל תקרי הליכות אלא הלכות

The Tanna debe Eliyahu [teaches]: Whoever repeats halachahs every day may rest assured that he will be a denizen of the world to come, for it is said, Halikoth – the world is his; read not "halikoth" but "halakoth." (bNid 73a)

2. תנא דבי אליהו: צדיקים שעתיד הקדוש ברוך הוא להחיותן אינן חוזרין לעפרן, שנאמר כטוהיה הנשאר בציון והנותר בירושלים קדוש יאמר לו כל הכתוב לחיים בירושלים, מה קדוש לעולם קיים – אף הם לעולם קיימין

[The] Tanna debe Eliyyahu [states]: The righteous, whom the Holy One, blessed be He, will resurrect, will not revert to dust, for it is said, And it shall come to pass that he that is left in Zion and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: just as the Holy One endures for ever, so shall they endure for ever. (bSan 92a)

3. תנא דבי אליהו: ששת אלפים שנה הוי עלמא, שני אלפים תוהו, שני אלפים תורה, שני אלפים ימות המשיח. ובעונותינו שרבו – יצאו מהם מה שיצאו

The Tanna debe Eliyyahu teaches: The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; two thousand years the Torah flourished; and the next two thousand years is the Messianic era, but through our many iniquities all these years have been lost. (bSan 97a–b)[106]

3'. תנא דבי אליהו: ששת אלפים שנה הוי העולם, שני אלפים תוהו, שני אלפים תורה, שני אלפים ימות המשיח, בעונותינו שרבו יצאו מהן מה שיצאו מהן

[106] The immediate subsequent co-text in the Talmud mentions the prophet Elijah: אמר ליה אליהו לרב יהודה אחוה דרב סלא חסידא: אין העולם פחות משמונים וחמשה יובלות, וביובל האחרון בן דוד בא. אמר ליה: בתחילתו או בסופו? אמר ליה: איני יודע. כלה או אינו כלה? – אמר ליה: איני יודע. רב אשי אמר: הכי אמר ליה: עד הכא – לא תיסתכי ליה, מכאן ואילך – איסתכי ליה. שלח ליה רב חנן בר תחליפא לרב יוסף: מצאתי אדם אחד ובידו מגילה אחת כתובה אשורית ולשון קדש, אמרתי לו: זו מניין לך? אמר לי: לחיילות של רומי נשכרתי, ובין גינזי רומי מצאתיה, וכתוב בה: לאחר ארבעת אלפים ומאתים ותשעים ואחד שנה לבריאתו של עולם – העולם יתום. מהן מלחמות תנינים, מהן מלחמות גוג ומגוג, ושאר ימות המשיח. ואין הקדוש ברוך הוא מחדש את עולמו אלא לאחר שבעת אלפים שנה. רב אחא בריה דרבא אמר: לאחר חמשת אלפים שנה איתמר. ("Elijah said to Rab Judah, the brother of R. Salla the Pious: 'The world shall exist not less than eighty five jubilees, and in the last jubilee the son of David will come.' He asked him, 'At the beginning or at the end?' – He replied, 'I do not know.' 'Shall [this period] be completed or not?' – 'I do not know,' he answered. R. Ashi said: He spoke thus to him, 'Before that, do not expect him; afterwards thou mayest await him.'") This passage has a parallel in ER 6, l. 30–ER 7, l. 2.

The Tanna debe Eliyyahu taught: The world is to exist six thousand years; the first two thousand years are to be void; the next two thousand years are the period of the Torah, and the following two thousand years are the period of the Messiah. Through our many sins a number of these have already passed [and the Messiah is not yet]. (bAZ 9a)

.4. תנא דבי אליהו: לעולם ישים אדם עצמו על דברי תורה כשור לעול וכחמור למשאוי

Tanna debe Eliyyahu thus: In order to study the words of the Torah one must cultivate in oneself the [habit of] the ox for bearing a yoke and of the ass for carrying burdens. (bAZ 5b)[107]

5. תא שמע, דתנא דבי אליהו, רבי נתן אומר: כל הישוב כולו תחת כוכב אחד יושב. תדע, שהרי אדם נותן עינו בכוכב אחד, הולך למזרח – עומד כנגדו, לארבע רוחות העולם – עומד כנגדו. מכלל דכל הישוב כולו תחת כוכב אחד יושב! – תיובתא

Come and hear: Tanna debe Eliyahu [taught]: R. Nathan said: The whole of the inhabited world is situated under one star. The proof is that a man looks at a star, [and] when he goes eastward it is opposites [and when he goes] to the four corners of the world it is opposite him. This proves that the whole of the inhabited world is situated under one star. This is indeed a refutation. (bPes 94a)

6. תנא דבי אליהו: אף על פי שאמר רבי עקיבא עשה שבתך חול ואל תצטרך לבריות, אבל עושה הוא דבר מועט בתוך ביתו. מאי נינהו? – אמר רב פפא: כסא דהרסנא. כדתנן, רבי יהודה בן תימא אומר: הוי עז כנמר וקל כנשר רץ כצבי וגבור כארי לעשות רצון אביך שבשמים

Tanna debe Eliyahu [taught]: Though R. Akiba said, "Treat your Sabbath like a weekday rather than be dependent on men," yet one must prepare something trifling at home. What is it? Said R. Papa: Fish hash. As we learned, R. Judah b. Tema said: Be strong as the leopard and swift as the eagle, fleet as the deer and valiant as a lion to do the will of thy Father in heaven. (bPes 112a)

7. תנא דבי אליהו: הואיל ונשים דעתן קלות /קלה/ עליהן

Tanna debe Eliyahu [states]: Because women are temperamentally light-headed. (bQid 80b)

8. תני דבי אליהו: מעשה בתלמיד אחד ששנה הרבה וקרא הרבה, ושימש תלמידי חכמים הרבה, ומת בחצי ימיו. והיתה אשתו נוטלת תפיליו ומחזרתם בבתי כנסיות ובבתי מדרשות, ואמרה להם: כתיב בתורה גכי הוא חייך ואורך ימיך, בעלי ששנה הרבה וקרא הרבה, ושימש תלמידי חכמים הרבה – מפני מה מת בחצי ימיו? ולא היה אדם מחזירה דבר

[107] This passage has parallels in ER 8, l. 6–7, EZ 198, l. 17f., and l. 22f.

[It is taught in the] Tanna debe Eliyahu: It once happened that a certain scholar who had studied much Bible and Mishnah and had served scholars much, yet died in middle age. His wife took his tefillin and carried them about in the synagogues and schoolhouses and complained to them, It is written in the Torah, for that is thy life, and the length of thy days: my husband, who read [Bible], learned [Mishnah], and served scholars much, why did he die in middle age? and no man could answer her. (bShab 13a–b)[108]

9. תנא דבי אליהו: גיהנם למעלה מן הרקיע, וי״א – לאחורי הרי חשך

The Tanna de-be Eliyahu taught: Gehinnom is above the firmament; some, however, say that is behind the Mountains of Darkness. (bTam 32b)

3.4.2 Appendix 2: Passages in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* introduced with the formula *meshum debe eliyahu hanavi amru*

1. משום דבי אליהו הנביא אמרו, לעולם יהא אדם ערום ביראה, ומענה רך בפיו, ומשיב חמה, ומרבה שלום עם אביו ועם אמו ועם רבו ועם חבירו, בשוק אפילו עם גוי, כדי שיהא אהוב מלמעלה ואהוב מלמטה, כדי שיתקבל על הביריות וכדי שיתמלאו ימיו בטובה.

In the name of the School of Elijah the prophet it is said: A man should always be wise in his fear [of God]; *his answer soft* (Prov 15:1), turning away wrath, he should be on the best of terms (lit. "increase peace") with his father, with his mother, with his master, with his fellow Jew in the street, even with a heathen. Thus he will be loved on high and be well regarded here below; his company will be welcomed by his fellows, and his days will be filled with good. (EZ 167, l. 1–4)

2. משום דבי אליהו הנביא אמרו, לעולם יהא אדם כשור לעול וכחמור למשאוי, כבהמה שהיא חורשת בבקעה, כך יהא אדם עוסק בדברי תורה, שנאמר אשריכם זורעי על כל מים [וגו׳] (שם /ישעיהו/ ל״ב כ׳), אשריהם ישראל, בזמן שעוסקין בתורה ובגמילות חסדים, יצרן מסור בידן ולא הם ביד יצרן אין זריעה אלא צדקה, שנאמר זרעו לכם לצדקה וגו׳ (הושע י׳ י״ב), ואין מים אלא תורה, שנאמר הוי כל צמא לכו למים

It is said in the name of the School of Elijah the prophet, he should with the stubbornness of an ox under the yoke, an ass under its burden, cattle plowing in the furrow – with just such stubbornness should he occupy himself in words of Torah, for it is said, *Happy will you be who sow beside all waters* (Isa 32:20). Blessed are Israel when they occupy themselves with Torah and with loving-kindness: their Impulse [to Evil] is then made surrender to them, not they to the Impulse. By *sow* in the verse cited above is meant the giving of charity, for it is said, *Sow for yourselves charity* (Hos 10:12). And by *waters* is meant Torah, as in the verse *Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters* (Isa 55:1). (EZ 167, l. 14–19)

[108] The *maʿaseh*, of which the quoted passage is only the beginning, has a parallel in ER 76, l. 3–28.

3. משום דבי אליהו הנביא אמרו, גדולה צדקה, שמיום שנברא העולם ועד עכשיו כל הנותנה הרי הוא משתבח, וקולט עצמו מדינה של גיהנם, שנאמר אשרי משכיל אל דל ביום רעה ימלטהו ה' (תהלים מ"א ב'), אין יום רעה, אלא יום דינה של גיהנם, שנאמר הסר כעס מלבך והעבר רעה מבשרך (קהלת י"א י'), ואומר אשרי שומרי משפט עושה צדקה בכל עת (תהלים ק"ו ג')

In the name of the School of Elijah the prophet it is taught: Great is charity, for from the day the world was created until the present, he who gives it is especially favored and spares himself punishment in Gehenna, as it is said, Happy is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the day of evil (Ps 41:2). The day of evil can only mean the day of punishment in Gehenna, as implied in the verse Therefore remove from thy heart that which causes God vexation, and thus put away evil from thy flesh (Eccl 11:10), for Happy are they that keep justice, that do charity at all times (Ps 106:3) (EZ 169, l. 17–22)

Chapter 4

Typology of Narrative Forms of *Seder Eliyahu*

> The presence or absence of a story is what distinguishes narrative from non-narrative texts. However, non-story elements may be found in a narrative text just as story elements may be found a non-narrative text. A novel may well include the description of a cathedral, and the description of a cathedral, say in a guide book, may include the story of its construction.[1]

Rabbinic literature is only passagewise of narrative character. It makes use of narrative, but it is primarily a scholarly discourse concerned with law and with the linguistic meaning of Scripture.[2] Scholarship has in recent times started to focus on the very interaction of legal and narrative discourses so characteristic of rabbinic literature.[3] In the third chapter of his book *Stories of the law*, Moshe Simon-Shoshan provides what he terms a typology of mishnaic forms. These, he argues, can belong to one of three classes: irrealis texts, realis texts, and speech acts. The forms subsumed under these categories are described and analysed with reference to their relative narrativity, dynamism, and specificity, categories with which Simon-Shoshan can determine whether a form is a narrative or a story.[4]

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1 Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction: Contemporary poetics*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 15.

2 For this definition I follow Alexander Samely, *Forms of rabbinic literature and thought: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

3 See Barry Wimpfheimer, *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Moshe Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the law: Narrative Discourse and the Construction of Authority in the Mishnah* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Jane Kanarek, *Biblical Narrative and the Formation of Rabbinic Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014) to name just monographs.

4 See Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the Law*, 22,"The categories and definitions of 'narrativity,' 'dynamism,' 'specificity,' 'narrative,' and 'story' create a precise yet flexible framework in which texts

The irrealis texts comprise apodictic and casuistic formulations, only the latter of which are considered narratives. Among the realis texts and speech acts only ritual narratives, *maʿasim* and so called Beit midrash stories attain such a level of narrativity as to be regarded as narratives or stories; in his terminology a story, as will be seen in his definition, is a narrative with a higher level of specificity.[5] Due to the character of the Mishnah's textuality and structure many of the examples Simon-Shoshan analyses would never be regarded as belonging to narrative discourse at all by conventional narratological standards (that is the case, for example, with apodictic formulations in the form of nonverbal clauses). The table below summarizes the more complex charts Simon-Shoshan represents his classification with:[6]

Table 4.1: Simon-Shoshan's typology of mishnaic forms

Irrealis texts		Realis texts				Speech acts	
Apodictic formulations	Casuistic formulations	Repeated events	Onetime events	Ritual narratives	Stories: *maʿasim*	Attributed statements	Dialogues / Beit midrash-stories

He closes this chapter with what he terms "a case study," in the form of a chart that represents the constitutive forms, both narrative and non-narrative, of the first chapter of Mishnah tractate *Shabbat*. His results he sums up as follows:

> To sum up, the first chapter of Shabbat integrates a wide range of forms with varying levels of narrativity into a flowing exposition of activities forbidden on the eve of the Sabbath. The Mishnah easily moves back and forth between various forms of prescriptive statement, between abstract, stative clauses and detailed narratives, and between prescriptive statements, stories, and repeated events. This practice is representative of the way in which the level of narrativity in the Mishnah can fluctuate widely even within a single chapter."[7]

can be classified and compared in terms of their place within the broader category of narrative discourse. Most importantly for our purposes, they will provide us with the tools to analyze the place of narrative discourse in the Mishnah."

5 Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the Law*, 20, sees stories as belonging to the wider category of narrative which he defines in the following terms: "(1) narratives are representations of events; (2) narratives present two or more events in sequence; (3) these events must be inherently interrelated in such a way as to portray some change in the world represented by the text. Given the centrality of dynamism to the traditional definitions of narrative, I will term any text which displays the above three features a "narrative.""

6 See ibid., 26–27.

7 Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the Law*, 58.

Like the Mishnah and rabbinic literature in general *Seder Eliyahu* is no essentially narrative text, but one in which a non-narrative, at times clearly exegetical or midrashic, at times not explicitly exegetical, but, to use Zunz's wording, an "ethical" discourse makes use of narrative discourse,[8] or rather one in which the former provides an encompassing frame for the latter.[9] Given that the chapters of *Seder Eliyahu* often have the form or style of homilies, this encompassing discourse could be described as "ethical-homiletical."

Whereas the ethical-homiletical is characterized by its intended universal validity, reflected among other things in the consistent use of the present tense (generally expressed with participle and imperfect forms), the apodictic statement form – exhortations, *ashre*-passages, benedictions, etc. –, the narrative discourse in *Seder Eliyahu* is constituted by a wide range of textual forms, for many of which Simon-Shoshan's definition of story appears to be valid: Story is "any representation of a sequence of at least two interrelated events that occurred once and only once in the past."[10] In what follows I will be following the terminology suggested by the narratologist Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan and instead of referring to the textual representations of events as "stories," I will refer to them as "texts" (but also as "narrative texts" or just "narratives"[11]); for Rimmon-Kenan "story" denotes "the narrated events, abstracted from their disposition in the text and reconstructed in their chronological order, together with the participants in those events."[12] Rimmon-

8 There are, however, chapters, which are mainly of narrative character. See chapter (11) 12 which consists of a series of exegetical narratives and has very little of what we term homiletical passages.

9 E.g. the structure of chapter (12) 13 itself illustrates the embeddedness of narrative discourse within the homiletical one: a) a homiletical opening states apodictically how a man is to behave in a given situation; b) a series of narrative forms exemplify the statement; c) a summary closes the chapter with a saying of the sages whose wording is a slightly modified version of the statement at the beginning of the chapter.

10 Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the Law*, 20. Within the field of rabbinics story has also been defined by Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Narrative: A Documentary Perspective*, vol. 4, *The Precedent and the Parable in Diachronic View* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 27, who distinguishes it from the rest of narratives in that they are "accounts of sequences of events, things said or done, things that happen and bear meaning, involving character-development, sequences of actions, a beginning, middle and end." According to the narratologist Gerald Prince, "Narrative," in *A Dictionary of Narratology* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 2003), 58, the story a narrative represents can consists of less than two events: The recounting ... of one or more real or fictitious EVENTS communicated by one, two , or several (more ore less overt) NARRATORS to one, two or several (more or less overt) NARRATEES." For definitions of "story" in narratological literature see Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 3–4; Monika Fludernik, *Introduction to Narratology* (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), 1–2; Matías Martínez and Michael Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*, 9th ed. (Munich: Beck, 2012), 112 i.a.

11 This would be a translation of Genette's *récit*, though it should be noted that Genette distinguishes three meanings of the word: *récit* as *narration* or narrative act (i.e. as process), *récit* as *discours*, i.e. narrative text or utterance (i.e. as product), and *récit* as *histoire* or story told in a narrator's narrative (i.e. the abstracted events or fictional world). See Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, 2.

12 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 3.

Kenan's "story" appears thus to correspond to the "events" whose representation constitutes a story according to Simon-Shoshan's definition. The difference between story and text Rimmon-Kenan explains as follows:

> Whereas 'story' is a succession of events, 'text' is a spoken or written discourse which undertakes their telling. Put more simply, the text is what we read. In it, the events do not necessarily appear in chronological order, the characteristics of the participants are dispersed throughout, and all the items of the narrative content are filtered through some prism or perspective ('focalizer').[13]

Even if refer in the following pages to a number of passages as "narratives," what will be presented, classified, and discussed are narrative *texts* in the sense of the above quoted definition, texts that are found in Friedmann's edition of *Seder Eliyahu*, i.e. primarily in MS Vat. Ebr. 31, as well as in his edition of *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, for which he follows the *editio princeps* Venice 1598 and MS Parma 3111 (de Rossi 1240). Excluded from this analysis is therefore the work's abstractable macro-story or, to put it in Braude's and Kapstein's words, the "drama inherent in the *Tanna*," namely that which begins in chapter 1 with "God's departure from earth after the fall of man out of the Garden of Eden and ends with man's return to the earthly paradise in the time to come" in chapter 31 of the *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*.[14] A graphic at the end of the chapter provides an overview of the five narrative forms that I discuss, though it should be anticipated that not all of the subtypes listed there will be illustrated (see figure 4.2) .

4.1 Non-narrative Texts

Before I turn to the texts themselves a number of other textual forms should be briefly discussed which, even if they do not count as narrative texts proper, do contribute to the textual topography of *Seder Eliyahu*. This is the case with many passages which possess a certain level of narrativity (or story-structure) but are not the textual representation of at least two interrelated events which have already taken place in the past, but are rather, to speak with Suzanne Fleischman, "verbalizations of experience that is unrealized either because it is predicated on taking place in the future or because it is in some sense

[13] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 3.

[14] See Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 21, who point out that the work has yet another dramatic macro-story: "*Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu* is dramatic in a way that a piece of fiction or a play is dramatic: it presents us with a plot, the essence of which is a conflict that rises to a climax and comes to a conclusion. However, here the drama does not develop in a straight line as it usually does in a novel or play, for the work's intention, as we already have reason to understand, is didactic. We are given the drama not for its own sake, as a vicarious experience, entertaining and thrilling, but rather for what it teaches." (22).

hypothetical."[15] To this group belong texts that can be described as prophetic or eschatological, for they deal with the days of the Messiah and the world to come.[16] *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* actually ends with one such outlook on the messianic time:

> And all those who rise to life again in the days of the Messiah will go to the Land of Israel; they will never return to the dust they came from, for it is said, *Whoever is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem* (Isa 4:3). Where will they go? In the hour when the Holy One, blessed be He, receives the righteous in the time to come, they will go before Him like children before the[ir] father and like servants before their master and like disciples before their teacher, for it is said, *And you shall flee by the valley of the Lord's mountain, for the valley between the mountains shall reach unto Azal [and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee].* etc. (Zech 14:5) (ER 164, l. 24–ER 165, l. 3)

It could be argued, however, that in cases such as this we have to do with examples of "anterior narration," a less frequent temporal relation between narration and story than the standard one, i.e. narration after the events. In anterior or predictive narration, the narrative communication precedes the events, as for example in the Bible's prophetical books and in eschatological literature in general.[17]

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15 Suzanne Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity: From Medieval Performance to Modern Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1990), 104.

16 Among others ER 24, l. 25 (on how God will feed Gog's and his allies' flesh to the birds of heaven); ER 81, l. 11 (Israel's pilgrimage in the time-to-come); ER 113, l. 23 (the nations in the days of the Messiah will enrich Israel); ER 120, l. 25 (the nations in the days of the Messiah will melt to dust). Extensive eschatological passages are also found in chapters 20 and 21 of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* (PsEZ 30–33). Further passages with a chronological setting in the time-to-come which are more of a descriptive, i.e. more static nature, deal with God's Beit midrash. The representation of the world to come as a great academy is a recurring motif. Cf. ER 4, l. 3, ER 15, l. 4, ER 20, l. 25, ER 51, l. 26, and ER 68, l. 21, as well as PsEZ 33, l. 1. See Adiel Kadari, "Torah Study, Mysticism and Eschatology: 'God's study hall' in the later midrash," *Tarbiz* 73, no. 2 (2004): 187, and 189–190. Another type of predictive narrative combines an account of man's reproachable conduct in this world and its future consequences: "Transgressors in (lit. "of") Israel. What will their fate be in that hour (of Judgement)? Because they commit transgressions and press on the feet of the Presence, in relation to whom it is said, *The whole earth is full of his glory* (Isa 6:3), because they transgress and desire the destruction of the world, therefore they will be banished from their homes to a land of sojourn and they will not be brought back, but they will be led to a waste land, for it is said, *I will purge out the rebels among you, and those who transgress against me[; I will bring them out of the land where they reside as aliens, but they shall not enter the land of Israel.]* etc. (Ezek 20:38)" (EZ 194, l. 20–24).

17 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, 91, describes this less usual type of temporal relation between narration and story in the following terms: "It is a kind of predictive narration, generally using the future tense, but sometimes the present. Whereas examples abound in Biblical prophecies, complete modern texts written in the predictive vein are rare."

In some other passages the midrashist makes use of forms, some of which would count as narratives according Simon-Shoshan's classification of Mishnaic forms, but which I exclude from the analysis here. These comprise the representation of habitual actions (example 1 below), of what the midrashist holds for exemplary behaviour (example 2), and of hypothetical situations in the form of casuistic formulations (example 3).[18] These passages can be easily identified as non-narrative by their choice of tense:[19] Whereas habitual actions are generally expressed with participial forms, exemplary conduct with imperfect forms, the tense of the narrative sections is preterite or the periphrastic structure *haya* + *qotel*.[20]

> 1. But the King who is King of kings, blessed be He, may His great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever, is not like that [i.e. like the mortal king of a *mashal*]. He sits on His throne of glory, a third of the day he reads

[18] Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the law*, 34, argues that given that the protasis and apodosis of casuistic formulations present two interrelated events, taken together they "are almost always narratives."

[19] This can be seen as a case of what is termed after Paul Grice "conventional implicature." John Lyons, *Linguistic Semantics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 275, points out in this respect: "many fully lexical expressions are descriptively synonymous, but differ in respect of their social and expressive meaning. Most, if not all, of this difference would seem to fall within the scope of Grice's definition of conventional implicature. That is to say, morphological and syntactic distinctions, as well as differences between lexemes and particles may be associated with what many semanticists, following Grice, would classify as conventional implicatures."

[20] There are, however, exceptions to this general rule. In eschatological passages, for example, imperfect and participle forms might be used. A few examples might illustrate that the author of *Seder Eliyahu* works with a certain flexibility at the time of choosing his tenses. In the following passage, a series of hypothetical casuistic formulations is expressed using preterite forms in the protasis and participles in the apodosis: "When a man increases (pret. הירבה) his language of falsehood and his lies with his father and with his mother, with his wife and his children, with his teacher who taught him Scripture and with his teacher who taught him Mishnah and wisdom, and with everyone in the world; when a man behaves (pret. נהג) impertinently toward his father and his mother, toward his wife and his children, toward his teacher who taught him Scripture and toward his teacher who taught him Mishnah and wisdom, and toward everyone in the world; when a man defies (pret. העז) his father and his mother and him who is better than he, leprosy will appear (part. מראין) on his body. If he then repents (pret. חזר ועשה תשובה), they will heal him (part. מרפאין). If he does not, he [will remain] in its hold till the day of his death." (ER 76, l. 28–ER 77, l. 4). Similar cases of use of preterite in the protasis and participle in the apodosis are found in ER 77, l. 7 and ER 122, l. 17. On the other hand, there are cases in which the use of the participle can be understood as referring to an action that took place in the biblical past: "And so David says (part. אומר), *I will not give sleep to my eyes, or slumber to my eyelids*. And it [Scripture]/he [David] says (part. אומר), *Until I find out a place for the Lord* etc. (Ps 132:4–5). Because of this he merited (pret. זכה) great rewards." (ER 113, l. 9–11) This short exegetical narrative explain how David came to merit his reward. As regular citation formulas these instances of *omer* are generally translated in present, even if they can be understood and translated as "David said," i. e. in his psalm.

> Scripture and recites Mishnah, a third of the day he passes judgement, and a third of the day he provides and nourishes the righteous and the disciples of the wise with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and insight, for it is said, *He gives power to the faint[, and strengthens the powerless.]* (Isa 40:29) (ER 84, l. 32–36)[21]
>
> 2. Happy is the man who has plenty of food in his house, so that his servants and the members of his household come and enjoy with him at his table. Of him Scripture says, *You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be happy* (Ps 128:2). (ER 136, l. 3–5)
>
> 3. If a poor man who is himself son of one so poor that he never had a roof over his head, comes to repent of his misdeeds, he is [accounted] a righteous man afflicted with adversity. If he does not [repent], then he is [accounted] a wicked man afflicted with adversity. (EZ 181, l. 12–13)

4.1.1 Reports of Single Events

Passages which narrate a single event, even if their narration occurs within a list of statements each of which narrates a single event that is not causally related to the others do not count as narrative texts; nor is the representation of single events that imply second events, but which remain only alluded to, considered a narrative text. Given that the report of single events is a recurrent phenomenon in *Seder Eliyahu* they are briefly discussed here as a type as non-narrative texts. In the passage quoted below a list of causally unrelated events is contained in the three comparisons uttered by the midrashist:[22]

> He can become like the High Priest Aaron who had the intention of making an abundance of peace between Israel and their Father in heaven. He can become like David who had the intention of fostering an abundance of loving-kindness between Israel and their Father in heaven. He can become like Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai who had the intention of having his pupils rejoice with him in Halakhah. (ER 136, l. 5–8)

In the next example an answer given to a questioner within a first person narrative exemplifies the manner in which the report of single and unrelated events synecdochally

[21] The same events are told in a passage (ER 61, l. 21ff.) that does constitute a first person narrative, whose narrator is God himself.

[22] For a discussion of the form and function of a specific type of list, namely, that of allusions to scriptural passages, see Wayne Sibley Towner, *The rabbinic "enumeration of scriptural examples:" A study of a rabbinic pattern of discourse with special reference to Mekhilta D'R. Ishmael* (Leiden: Brill, 1973). As Alexander Samely points out, *Forms of rabbinic literature and thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 13–15, the list is one of the most characteristic small forms of rabbinic literature. See also Samely, *Profiling Jewish Literature*, 293–294 (8.1.10/11), 312–313 (9.3).

implies a series of biblical narratives. With the vertical line | I mark the beginning of each item in the list of reported single events; narrative texts, i.e. consisting of at least two events, are set in bold face to distinguish them from the rest of the items of the list:

> My master, if what you say is so, then he who carries out a command is given the reward he deserves, and he who commits a transgression is likewise given a reward as though he deserved it. I replied, Not so, my son. | Can you consider the requital of the ancient serpent who proceeded to corrupt the whole world a reward? | Can you consider the requital of Adam and Eve who disobeyed the command a reward? Can you consider the requital of Cain who slew his brother Abel a reward? | Consider what, on the other hand, was the reward of Lamech who mourned the death of his father's father. Consider what was the reward of Shem who honoured his father as compared with the requital of Ham who did not honour his father. | **And consider also what was the reward of Noah who proceeded to upbraid multitudes of men for all of one hundred and twenty years, so that the punishment that had been decreed for them would not befall them. Wherefore Scripture said in praise of him, praise announced to all the generations after him,** ***for I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation.*** **(Gen 7:1) | Consider, too, what was the reward of the great Shem who for four hundred years prophesied to all the peoples of the world who would not, however, heed him. | Consider what was the reward of Abraham who rose up and demolished all the idols in his world. Nevertheless, because he said something improper to God, his children had to go down into [slavery] in Egypt. What he said was,** ***O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?*** **(Gen 15:8), and on account of the doubt implied in his question, his children had to go down into Egypt.** | Consider, also, what was the reward of Ishmael who went and buried his father. | Consider what was the reward of Isaac who said to his father, Bind me well and only lay me upon the altar lest I, who am only thirty-seven, young and full of strength, kick you or strike you and thus incur a double death penalty from Heaven. **Consider what was the reward even of Esau who because he shed two tears before his father was given Mount Seir upon which rains of blessing never cease. And because the sons of Seir received the sons of Esau affably, they, too, were given their reward.** … | Consider the reward of Jacob who, for all of his life, declared the truth [that the Lord is God] and in his heart also acknowledged that truth. | Consider what was the reward of the twelve Tribe-fathers who carried out the will of their father Jacob. Of them it is said, *Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your ancestors* (Hos 9:10). | Consider finally what was the reward of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, men of the one nation out of the nations that speak the seventy languages of the world, who instilled fear of God in

> themselves, in their children and in their children's children to the end of all generations. (EZ 174, l. 6–EZ 175, l. 8)

It could be argued that the items of the list that are not set in bold face also consist of two events, the first being the explicit allusion to a biblical narrative and the second the mention of a reward, which is not the same as the narration of how this happened. In his typology Simon-Shoshan argues that from narrated single events implied related events can be retrieved.[23] As was previously stated and following Rimmon-Kenan I opt in this study for excluding single-event narratives from my working concept of narrative texts in *Seder Eliyahu*.[24] In the example just quoted the first event is told – the serpent corrupted the whole world, Adam and Eve disobeyed etc., though what exactly happened to them afterwards the reader does not know from *this* text of *Seder Eliyahu*.

4.1.2 Speech Acts

When they are not part of a dialogue speech acts constitute another form of narrated single event, a mini-narrative.[25] In *Seder Eliyahu* they belong generally to the direct discourse type, i.e. they consist of a syntactical subject (pronomen or proper name), a reporting verb of saying (*verbum dicendi*), an optional indirect object, e.g. "the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses," and the reported utterance, with a broad variety of form and length:

> Thus said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Israel, My sons, what happiness does man have in this world? Nothing apart from the words of Torah. He who rejoices in silver, gold, precious stones, and pearls, what joy does he have after the hour of his death? After your joy there is death, so what

[23] In his discussion of a onetime event example in mPes 7:2, "One may not roast the Passover offering on either a [metal] spit or grill. R. Zadok said, It once happened that R. Gamliel said to his servant Tevi, 'Go out and roast us the Passover offering on the grill,'" Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the law*, 45, argues that even if the mishnah cannot qualify as a narrative or story, "the student can easily reconstruct the events leading up to and following this event. … On the basis of this account, the student can easily fill in R. Gamliel's activities before and after he tells Tevi to roast the paschal sacrifice." If actions are predicated from a human being, common sense or familiarity with the law might help the reader in his work of reconstruction; if actions are, however, predicated from God, only a reader familiar with a specific corpus of literature might be able to reconstruct the events that precede and follow the event represented in statements such as "the Holy One, blessed be He, divided his world into two manners, that of the righteous and that of the wicked" (ER 87, l. 27–28) or "Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, turned them into a sanctuary of his in the world." (ER 85, l. 19)

[24] Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 3, argues: "Although single-event narratives are theoretically (and perhaps also empirically) possible …, I speak of a succession of events in order to suggest that narratives usually consist of more than one."

[25] This expression is used by Samely, *Forms of rabbinic literature and thought*, 101, who points out that "the format 'speech report + statement' is not usually treated as narrative."

> profit does your whole joy have? You should rather come and rejoice with Me with a perfect joy the way I rejoice in you for ever and ever and ever, for it is said, *But be glad and rejoice* etc. (Isa 65:18) (ER 92, l. 30–34)

The reported utterance itself can be a descriptive or expository proposition,[26] but it can also consist of a report of a single event or of a narrative text. In such cases we have to do with a narrative level other than that on which the governing voice of the midrashist (or his alter ego the first person narrator) operates, for this narrative text is framed within a speech act which is itself framed by the ethical-homiletical discourse of *Seder Eliyahu*.

Speech acts in *Seder Eliyahu* are represented both as taking place in the present and being therefore always valid – such as in the case of scriptural quotations introduced with הוא אומר, – and as having taking place in the past. The speaking agents of the latter vary, though many of them have God as speaker, אמר הקב״ה.[27] His words can be scriptural quotations, or "new," midrashic words attributed to him:

> And God spoke thus to Adam, My son, from the day I put you on earth do good things and learn Torah, but protect yourself from doing wrong, from sin and from vile acts. Therefore it is said, *On the day of prosperity be joyful, and on the day of adversity consider* (Eccles 7:14). Consider what you have done to deserve chastisements come upon you. (ER 67, l. 13–17)[28]

Prayers, benedictions (*berakhot*), and vows[29] constitute a special type of speech act, whose agents can be the midrashist himself but also biblical characters. The following example has the midrashist as speaker, his words include another speech act, attributed to God:

> My Father in heaven, may Your great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever and may You find contentment in Israel Your servants in all the places where they dwell, for you said, I shall receive their transgressors [if they come] in repentance, for even if a man heaps up a hundred transgressions,

[26] Speech acts can fulfil an explicit exegetical function as for example in the following passage, where the speech act is the dictum of a midrashic unit: "*from your own kin do not hide yourself* (Isa 58:7). The Holy One, blessed be He, spoke thus to every man, My son, the days I have given you on earth perform good deeds and engage in study of Torah, keep distant from transgression and unseemly behaviour, hence it is said, *from your own kin do not hide yourself*." (ER 139, l. 5–7) Sayings by named sages do not abound in the *Rabbah* and *Zuta* parts of *Seder Eliyahu*, but instead in *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.

[27] Many others have Scripture itself. These are generally introduced with the formula הכתוב אומר.

[28] It is quite often difficult in *Seder Eliyahu* to tell in what moment exactly the midrashist takes over from the characters he lets speak. In this case it could be argued that God's speech ends at this point and is followed by the words "For chastisement comes upon man (Adam) only for his good, in order to bring out of his hands everything he has done (wrong). And the Sages taught in a mishnah..." If God himself had spoken these words in direct speech to Adam, one would not expect him to refer to Adam in the third person.

[29] The midrashist repeatedly uses the vow formula "I call heaven and earth to witness ..." to introduce statements.

> one above the other, behold, in mercy I receive him [if he comes] in repentance. For even if a man stands up and curses heaven, but then retracts, the Holy One, blessed be He, forgives everything, for it is said, *then the lame shall leap like a deer* etc. (Isa 35:6) The lame man is none other than that lacking in knowledge and lacking in good deeds, *For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert* (ibid.). (ER 121, l. 20–26)

Within another prayer, this time spoken by David, narrated speech-act-like actions such as write or ordain are used to explain the fact that the world still exists and has not been destroyed by God:

> And it [Scripture] says, *A prayer of one afflicted, when faint and pleading before the Lord* (Ps 102:1). In the manner of a lowly man when he is faint, David stood in prayer before the Holy One, saying: Master of the universe, had You not *written* in our behalf that in this world punishment for iniquity is to be put off for three generations, no man would remain alive on the face of the earth, and the entire world – all of it – would be destroyed. But in Your wisdom and Your understanding what did You do in our behalf? You *ordained* that until the very end of time, punishment for iniquity in this world be put off for three or four generations. Certainly, *The Lord is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love* (Num 14:18) (ER 98, l. 5–10)

Mishnaic quotations and mikan amru*-statements*. A subgroup of speech acts those composed of an introductory formula such as "the sages recited" or "the sages said," the name of sages being seldom mentioned,[30] and a Mishnah quotation. The verb form שנו is used in several formulas, which hint at the source being not Scripture, but Mishnah. The formula שנו חכמים במשנה introduces 17 quotations;[31] less frequent are the formulas שנו חכמים,[32] שכך שנו חכמים,[33] שנו רבותינו במשנה,[34] and שנו לנו את המשנה הזה.[35] The second most characteristic verb used to introduce mishnaic quotations is אמר. In this case the syntactic subject might be spelled out as in אמרו חכמים,[36] אמר ר׳ (or its emendation by Friedmann, אמר ר׳ עקיבא,[37] אמר ר׳ שמעון[38] –, or not, as in the very characteristic introductory formula

[30] E.g. R. Simeon, ER 69, l. 16 etc.

[31] I.e. mSan 4:5 (ER 10, ER 53, ER 127), mMen 5:8 (ER 37), mYom 8:9 (ER 38), mAv 4:10 (ER 56), mAv 1:7 (ER 67), mAv 4:4 (ER 68), mAv 3:12 (ER 141), mMak 3:15 (ER 73), mQid 4:1 (ER 100), mQid 4:13 (ER 101), mQid 4:14 (ER 101) (Friedmann's omits in his edition one of the quotations), mAv 4:18 (ER 103), mAv 3:18 (ER 112), mAv 5:20 (ER 116), mAv 3:13 (ER 141), mAv 5:16 (ER 141).

[32] Used to introduce mAv 4:18 (ER 83).

[33] Used to introduce mHul 2:1 (ER 72).

[34] Used to introduce mEd 2:10 (ER 15).

[35] Used to introduce mAv 4:14 (ER 72).

[36] E.g. mEd 5:7 (ER 104).

[37] See mAv 3:14 (ER 61, l. 13).

[38] mMak 3:15 (ER 69, l. 16).

מיכן אמרו ("from here they said").[39] A special case represents the formula שנאמר which introduces mBM 4:10 (ER 106), since this wording is used almost exclusively to introduce scriptural quotations in rabbinic literature in general.

The speech act consisting of the formula מאותה שעה תקנו חכמים אותה הלכה that introduces mKet 13:3 and mBB 9:1 in ER 122, l. 8 appears to be part of an etiological narrative text according to which the quoted *mishnayot* stem from the time of the famine Jeremiah alludes to in "his" verses Lam 5:10–11, whose interpretation precedes the mishnaic quotation.[40]

4.2 Narrative in *Seder Eliyahu*: Preliminary Considerations

The typology and readings that follow can be considered one of the several experiments in so called "post-classical narratology," insofar as we have to do with a texts that lie beyond the corpus that "classical narratology" studies. The toolkit put to use is however one provided by a rather conservative representative of classical narratology, the previously quoted work of Rimmon-Kenan. Unlike Simon-Shoshan, who pleads for "a fundamental reconception of the nature of narrative and narrativity,"[41] I will describe textual forms in *Seder Eliyahu* which do not need to be "justified" as narrative texts, but which could be recognized as such at least by a reader acquainted with the peculiarities of rabbinic literature.

Among the aspects which need to be addressed is the question of the *fictionality* of these narrative texts. Even if it is considered only epigonally related to rabbinic literature, *Seder Eliyahu* decidedly suggests a self-conception according to which the work does belong to the rabbinic corpus, and therefore to the Oral Torah. Seen from this perspective the question of the fictionality of some of its parts (e.g. the narrative texts) is a delicate one.[42] If we, however, understand fiction as an acceptable term for narrative texts which are not based on eyewitness accounts nor on reliable sources and agree with Jan P. Fokkelman when he states that in texts of the Old and New Testaments a disciplined use of imagination predominates, then the narrative texts of the *Seder Eliyahu* can also be

39 mSot 1:7 (ER 59). No mishnaic quotations, however, follow most of the *mikan amru*-formulas which abound in *Seder Eliyahu*. Like a very small subgroup of speech acts whose agents are individual sages, "R. Eleazar ben Matthia said" (ER 109, l. 17), the *mikan amru* speech-act formulas introduce sayings attributed to the collective of the rabbinic movement, but not necessarily attested in other rabbinic documents.

40 See ER 122, l. 5–12.

41 Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the law*, 20.

42 As Gerhard Langer pointed out to me in a personal communication, "Gerade der in der Narratologie so heftig diskutierte Begriff des Fiktiven könnte vor allem in seiner Anwendung auf Texte im religiösen Kontext, selbst wenn diese nicht auf 'Offenbarung' beruhen, auf Probleme stoßen."

considered fictional.[43] The narratives of *Seder Eliyahu* contain textual markers which point to their fictionality, for example, the use of verbs for internal processes for third persons or even for God: e.g. "At that time the Holy One, blessed be He, said in His heart ..." (ER 85, l. 31)[44] Following Käte Hamburger Monika Fludernik observes that one of the aspects which actually distinguishes narrative from non-narrative discourse is precisely this property of narrative: "Narrative is the one and only form of discourse that can portray consciousness, particulary another's consciousness, from the inside, and it is this capacity ... that provides narrative with a niche in the field of competing discourses, historical or otherwise."[45]

Characters. An important part of the description of the forms has to do with the characters who act in the represented world. Who are the characters of the narratives, individuals (unnamed characters, biblical figures, post-biblical, rabbinic authorities, God, other supernatural beings, animals etc.) or collective bodies (Rome, thousands of human beings, myriads of angels)? With regard to their specificity a problem posed by many narrative passages in *Seder Eliyahu* is that they deal not with named or unnamed individuals but with collective bodies, such as Israel and the peoples of the world, the transgressors or the righteous among Israel etc. Although these passages do relate at least two events in the past, they lack the specificity usually expected from narratives. Even if they purport to illustrate the same point – they are both told to illustrate that the

43 See Jan P. Fokkelman, "Fiktion/Fiktionalität. I. Alttestamentlich," in *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik: Begriffe – Methoden – Theorien – Konzepte*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2013), 178: "F[iktion] ist ein akzeptabler Terminus für Erzählungen, die offensichtlich nicht auf Augenzeugenberichten oder verlässlichen Quellen basieren. Der größte Teil, wenn nicht der gesamte Erzählstoff von Gen und Exod ist ein Produkt der Intuition und entspricht den Bedürfnissen (wie der Etablierung einer spirituellen Identität) und religiösen Konzepten des alten Israel als eines sesshaften Volkes. Der Inhalt der Bücher Est und Dan ist F[iktion] im engeren Sinne. Der Großteil des atl. Erzählstoffes ... setzt sich dagegen aus Formen der nationalen Geschichtsschreibung zusammen. Diese Art Historiographie jedoch basiert auf Voraussetzungen, die sich grundlegend von den Ansprüchen und Prinzipien der modernen Geschichtsschreibung unterscheiden. In der Erzählung seiner Vergangenheit bedient sich Israel narrativer Formen und bejaht dichterische Freiheit, anstatt sie abzulehnen; Rhetorik und guter Stil werden favorisiert. Daher muss die Definition von F[iktion] dahingehend ausgeweitet werden, dass extensiver, aber disziplinierter Einsatz von Imagination ein anerkannter Teil der F[iktion] wird. Die hebräischen Erzähler und die Autoren ntl. Erzählungen fühlen sich dazu berechtigt, Lücken auszufüllen, die Innenwelt ihrer Charaktere wiederzugeben und zu interpretieren, und sie bleiben ihrer religiösen Vision treu, was ihnen hilft, den berichteten Geschehensabläufen Form zu verleihen."

44 See Matías Martínez and Michael Scheffel, *Einführung in die Erzähltheorie*, 9th ed. (Munich: Beck, 2012), 18: "Anders als der reale Sprecher einer faktualen Rede ist das fiktive Aussagesubjekt der fiktionalen Rede als eine nicht-empirische Person nicht an 'natürliche' Beschränkungen menschlicher Rede gebunden. So gehören zu den textinternen Fiktionssignalen die Anwendung von Verben innerer Vorgänge auf dritte Personen ... sowie eine Erweiterung des Tempussystems der Sprache."

45 Monika Fludernik, *Towards a natural narratology* (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), 27.

fear of God precedes good deeds – and their structure quite similar, the second's lower narrativity is due to its telling the collective experience of the earliest forefathers, whereas the first deals with Isaac's experience:

> We learnt from Isaac that from the beginning of his deeds he feared the Holy One, blessed be He. Isaac was seventy-five years old when Abraham entered his eternal abode. He said, Woe is me! Perhaps there are not good deeds in me as were in my father. What will happen to me before the Holy One, blessed be He? At once the Holy One's compassion was moved and He spoke to him then, for it is said, *And that very night the Lord appeared to him [and said, I am the God of your father Abraham; do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham's sake.]* etc. (Gen 26:24) (ER 128, l. 35–ER 129, l. 3)

> We learnt from our first forefathers that from the beginning of their deeds they feared the Holy One, blessed be He, for it is said, *Israel saw the great work [that the Lord did against the Egyptians. So the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.]* etc. (Exod 14:31) (ER 129, l. 5–6)

What does characterization look like in the narratives of *Seder Eliyahu*? Characters are predominantly indirectly presented, i.e. through the actions predicated of them or by the representation of their direct speech. The representation of characters' thoughts or feelings is not a common feature. A rare case is the expression "Lest a man think" (כדי שלא יאמר אדם לעצמו, lit. "say to himself"), which introduces the representation of a thought. Among their actions conversing is probably the most usual, which is true not only of sages as narrative characters but also of biblical characters in their rabbinic new clothes.

In her discussion of the problem of the subordination of character to action or of its independence, in other words, the problem of characters doing or being, Rimmon-Kenan claims that it is possible to understand both types of subordination (character to action, and action to character) as predominant in certain kinds of narrative: "There are narratives in which character predominates (so-called psychological narratives) and narratives in which action does (apsychological narratives) … Raskolnikov's actions serve mainly to characterize him, whereas Sinbad's 'character' exists only for the sake of the action. Between the two extremes, there are – of course – different degrees of predominance of one of the other element."[46] If the narratological question does character or action predominate is asked of *Seder Eliyahu*, it can be asserted that characters are there for the sake of their action, which generally consists in saying something (or quoting something or someone).

Time, i.e. "the relations of chronology between story and text,"[47] is an important aspect of a narrative text's constitution, but one on which I will not focus in my reading.

46 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 36.
47 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 44.

Narratology distinguishes story-time (time period covered by the story) and text-time (time period during which the story is told). The relations between story-time and text-time, which are generally of discrepancy, were first systematically discussed by Gérard Genette with respect to the three aspects of order, duration, and frequency.[48] Under duration Genette subsumes the paces, from go from summary to scene, chosen by the narrative to represent a period of story-time. On this Rimmon-Kenan points out:

> Theoretically, between these two poles [or paces, i.e. acceleration and deceleration] there is an infinity of possible paces, but in practice these are conventionally reduced to summary and scene. In summary, the pace is accelerated through a textual 'condensation' or 'compression' of a given story-period into a relatively short statement of its main features. The degree of condensation can, of course, vary from summary to summary, producing multiple degrees of acceleration.[49]

As was previously claimed, conversing is one of the most typical actions characters perform in *Seder Eliyahu*. Therefore, much textual material from these narratives can be considered as examples of scenes, with theoretically no discrepancy between story- and text-time with respect to duration.[50]

Narrative levels. Considering that most of the narratives in *Seder Eliyahu* are told by the same (governing) voice which speaks the entire midrash, the voice that quotes Gen 3:24 at the beginning of the book and some time in the course of the first chapter says "I" for the first time, considering that this anonymous I speaker assumes alternatively non-narrative and narrative modes of communication, it can be claimed that the narratives he tells are situated on the same communicative level as his non-narrative, ethical-homiletical discourse, even if the latter seems to enclose the former. The predominant narrative instance can be described with Genette as extradiegetical narrator, i.e. situated outside the narrated world. There are, however, cases of diegetical narrative instances, in which the narrator is situated within the narrated world.[51] Are the narrators present or absent in the stories they narrate, in other words, those of narratological terminology,

48 See Gérard Genette, "Discours du récit: Essai de méthode," in *Figures III* (Paris: Seuil, 1972), 77–182: a) order (several forms of anachrony), b) duration (the possible paces, ranging from summary to scene (dialogue), which the text can choose to represent a given story-period with), and c) frequency (relation between the number of times an event appears in a story and the number of times it is narrated in the text; this can be singulative, repetitive, or iterative).

49 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, 53,

50 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, 54: "In scene, as was said before, story-duration and text-duration are conventionally considered identical. The purest scenic form is dialogue …"

51 In Genette's terminology, "Discours du récit," 239, such narratives are designated as "metadiegetical": "L'instance narrative d'un récit premier est donc par definition extradiégetique, comme l'instance narrative d'un récit second (métadiégétique) est par definition diégétique, etc."

are they "homodiegetic" or "heterodiegetic narrators"?[52] Who is the narratee, i.e. who is addressed with these narratives? Since most narratives in this midrash are hermeneutic tools with which the midrashist explains his ideas, traditions of the sages, sayings, biblical verses etc., Stern's suggested term "implied interpreter," a modification of Wolfgang Iser's "implied reader," could be considered as an alternative to the usual narratological term "narratee."[53] Certain expressions point to the voice of the midrash addressing someone explicitly external to his narrative discourse (e.g. הא למדת ["here you learned"], צא ולמד ["go and learn"] etc.) Other expressions make use (not only in narrative contexts) of the first person plural למדנו ("we learnt"), אבותינו ("our forebears"), אברהם אבינו ("our father Abraham") suggesting that the implied interpreter is thought of as belonging to the same community as the narrator (or midrashist).

Focalization, or the perspective from which a story is presented,[54] can be a fruitful category of narratology when applied to the description of the narratives in *Seder Eliyahu* (and other works of rabbinic literature as well). Focalization is said to be external or narrator-bound when the narrator tells what he perceives. When he narrates what a character of his story perceives, focalization is said to be internal or character-bound. The subject of the focalization or focalizer is "the agent whose perception orients the presentation, whereas the object (the 'focalized') is what the focalizer perceives".[55] Among the facets of focalization that Rimmon-Kenan distinguishes, the ideological facet is probably especially appropriate for the description of the so called exegetical narratives, in which a rabbinic voice renews the biblical discourse.[56]

A number of questions concerning not so much the narrative theory of these rabbinic narratives, but rather their style need to be addressed in their description: Are scriptural verses verses quoted in them or not? If they are: Are they used as lemmas, as proof-texts, are they linked with verses from other books of scriptures, in the manner of the petichah? What kind of openings of narratives can be distinguished? Is a story told with the same phraseology and/or structure as another or others in the same chapter so that it seems

52 See Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 96–97.

53 See David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 86. He defines the implied interpreter as "a figure in the text, inscribed as part of the fictional or exegetical structure of the *mashal*." (87).

54 There is no real consensus in narratology on whether focalization is something essentially different from "point of view" or "perspective." I use the term practically as a synonym of perspective without emphasizing the visual aspect. The concept was introduced in the narratological discussion by Genette, "Discours du récit," 203–224. It has been reformulated by Mieke Bal, *Narratology*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2009), 145–167, among others. For an overview see Manfred Jahn, "Focalization," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman et al. (London, New York: Routledge, 2005), 173–177; Manfred Jahn, "Focalization," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 94–108. See also Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 72–86, where she applies the concept to the narrative of the Akedah.

55 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, 75.

56 See below 4.4.1.

to constitute a a pair or a series of narratives? Does the narrator interrupt his narration with commentary or rhetorical questions? What kind of endings can be distinguish? Are endings in some cases not so clearly identifiable? Is there an ethical maxim appended to the narrative or does the latter follow an ethical maxim?

Related to this problem is the question of the narratives' relative autonomy and comprehensibility. As already stated, narratives in *Seder Eliyahu* are not told for their own sake, but primarily in order to elucidate an ethical or exegetical point made in the ethical-homiletical context in which they are embedded. Narrative forms vary with regard to their comprehensibility when isolated from their homiletical frame. Whereas the meaning of *meshalim* depends to a high extent on their co-texts, the more complex structures of the *maʿasim*, pseudo-historical, and homiletical-exegetical narratives appear to be more stable in meaning, even if isolated from their co-texts.

In my discussion of representative examples in the following pages I will not be able to focus on every one of these aspects, but on those most relevant to the passage in question.

4.3 Simple Forms

4.3.1 Narrative *Meshalim*

The expression *narrative mashal* designates in this study a short literary form with a narrative structure[57] generally introduced in *Seder Eliyahu* with the typical opening formula of classical midrash משלו משל למה הדבר דומה משל ל,[58] which can be translated into English

[57] Narrative *meshalim*, both those introduced with a fixed formula and those otherwise introduced, are distinguished from non-narrative, descriptive static *meshalim* or similes, which consist of an image or a series of images, but do not represent a sequence of causally related events. Alexander Deeg, *Predigt und Derascha: Homiletische Textlektüre im Dialog mit dem Judentum* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 372, refers to the narrative *meshalim* in terms of "narratives" ("Erzählungen") and to the non-narrative in terms of "static images" ("Standbilder"); Clemens Thoma and Simon Lauer, *Die Gleichnisse der Rabbinen 1: Pesiqta de Rav Kahana (PesK) : Einleitung, Übersetzung, Parallelen, Kommentar, Texte* (Bern et al.: Lang, 1986), 36, suggest the distinction between "event parables" ("Geschehnis-Gleichnisse") and "dramatic parables" ("Dramatik-Gleichnisse"). Alexander Samely, *Forms of rabbinic literature and thought*, 189, distinguishes the *mashal* proper or *mashal* in the narrow sense with its two-stage structure from the "hermeneutic simile" which "has no 'before and after,' but is static." Examples of non-narrative *meshalim* or comparisons in *Seder Eliyahu* include: "What does he resemble? A threshold upon which all step; a plank over which all pass; a tree into whose shade all come; a lamp which provides light for the eyes of many." (ER 62, l. 31–ER 63, l. 2) and "What is he like? He is like a foot put in a well-fitting shoe and thereby saved from any sort of ache or pain." (ER 84, l. 1–2). There is yet another type, that of meshalim which consist of a single explicitly narrated event, as for example in: "They told a parable. To what is the matter like? To a king of flesh and blood who prepared a banquet for all the notables in his kingdom who came to his palace." (ER 117, l. 8–10).

[58] The order of these first two words is once inverted, משל משלו (ER 128, l 20).

as: "they told a parable. What does the matter resemble? It is like..." Less frequent is the short version of this formula, namely *mashal le-*[59] is a question formula of the type למה הדבר/הוא/בית ישראל דומה ל... ("What does the thing/he/the House of Israel resemble? It is like...")[60]

As has already been explained among others by David Stern in his seminal work on rabbinic parables, *meshalim* or parables consist of two parts: a fictional narrative, the mashal-proper part, and its interpretation or application, the nimshal.[61] The latter is also generally introduced with a formula such as כך, וכך ("so," "likewise," "similarly"), לפיכך ("therefore") etc.[62] In classical midrash the latter usually comes to a close with the quotation of a Bible verse.[63] Between the nimshal and the *mashal* there is seldom a one-to-one correspondence, so that interpretation lies with the reader. With respect to the incongruence or uncertainty that originates between the two parts of the parabolical passages David Stern observes the following:

> By reproducing the message in duplicate, the structure of the *mashal* provides a framework for the interpretive act that its audience must perform. The duplication serves both as a hermeneutical safeguard – since the audience can "check" their interpretation of the narrative against their understanding of exegesis, and vice versa – and as an opening for additional subtleties of meaning, since by inserting discrepancies into the space between the mashal-proper and the nimshal, by introducing differences into the larger pattern of resemblance, the mashal's author can deliberately complicate his audience's act of interpretation as well as the mashal's own message.[64]

Braude and Kapstein sum up the characteristics of the *meshalim* in *Seder Eliyahu* and

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59 Wilhelm Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur*, vol. 1, *Die bibelexegetische Terminologie der Tannaiten* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1899), 121–122, argues that the word *mashal* as introductory formula might be an elliptische form of the original *emshol lekha mashal*, which incidentally is used once in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and twice in *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zutta*. See also Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der jüdischen Traditionsliteratur*, vol. 2, *Die Bibel-und traditionsexegetische Terminologie der Amoräer* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1905), 121.

60 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 214, observes that "[i]n striking contrast to Rabbinic texts, which often seem to have been written in a kind of scribal shorthand, nearly all the *meshalim* in TDE [*Tanna debe Eliyahu*] leisurely begin with the complete form of the standard formula *mashlu* mashal *lemah hadavar domeh le*. In TDE, this formula effectively acquires the meaning of "Once upon a time..."

61 See Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 8. See also Alexander Samely, *Forms of rabbinic literature and thought*, 189. *mashal* has also been described as the surface structure, of which the nimshal is its deep structure. See also Deeg, *Predigt und Derascha*, 371.

62 The nimshal is also introduced in *Seder Eliyahu* with several other expressions such as אבל, אלא ("but"), לכך נמדו ("so they resemble"), שנאמר ("for it is said") etc.

63 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 8.

64 Ibid., 9.

their use as follows:

> Sometimes the point of the parable is given in advance so that the story serves as down-to earth illustration, an acting-out of the point. At other times the parable is given first, with its point held off to the end. In any event, the teacher takes no chance that his audience will miss the point. Most often in *Tanna debe Eliyyahu* the parable serves to dramatize and explain God's actions by analogy with the actions of a mortal king. In this way God is brought down to earth, so to speak, and the awesome, remote Being is made understandable in terms of mortal speech and action. Indeed the opening sentence of many a parable seems to be a familiar folktale formula: "Once there was a king who lived in a city far across the sea" – a formula that suggests not only the sovereignty of Israel's King, but also the mystery of His power, remote and awesome.[65]

On the use of *meshalim* in *Seder Eliyahu*, David Stern observes: "Among the literary-rhetorical forms that TDE[*Tanna debe Eliyahu*]'s author borrowed from classical midrash and altered to suit his own purposes the *mashal* holds a prominent place."[66] Moreover, when comparing the *meshalim* of *Seder Eliyahu* with those of classical midrash he states: "Most of the Greek and Latin loan-words and the imperial terminology so common in Amoraic king-meshalim have disappeared from TDE; so have the rhetorical specifics, the everyday allusions, and the unstudied down-to-earth spontaneity of earlier midrashic parables."[67] In Stern's view *Seder Eliyahu* exemplifies the increasing rhetorical character of meshalim as illustration of abstract ideas or beliefs.[68]

Most of *Seder Eliyahu*'s narrative *meshalim* are so-called king's parables.[69] The *Rabbah* and *Zuta* parts include a total of 70 narrative *meshalim*, 62 of which are king's para-

65 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 23.
66 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 211.
67 Ibid., 214.
68 Ibid., 49.
69 On the type of rabbinic king's parables see Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 19–21; and Alan Appelbaum, *The Rabbis' King-Parables: Midrash from the Third-Century Roman Empire* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010). Surprisingly, Appelbaum states that there are no king parables in *Seder Eliyahu*: "This possibility is reinforced by the fact that there are no parables about kings, but only about 'one' or 'rich men' or 'lords' in the quite late *Tanna debe Eliahu*. If indeed this is by a single author, it may simply mean that he did not share this preference. Or its composition in post-Muslim Iraq, if indeed that was hwere it was composed, resulted in less emphasis on kings or emperors." (60, n. 184). A classical analysis is Ignaz Ziegler, *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrash beleuchtet durch die römische Kaiserzeit* (Breslau: Schottlaender et al., 1903). Ziegler studied the king's parables as a reflection of the historical background of the Roman Empire. The king's parables were, according to Ziegler, not merely constructs imagined by the rabbis, but reflected their real experience – "nicht Phantasiegebilde, sondern reale Wirklichkeit." (xxiii) Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 20, argues against this assumption, though he concedes that "the many references in the *meshalim* to the larger world in which the Rabbis lived certainly show how profoundly familiar the sages were with that world and its culture, and how

bles. The question underlying the different opening formulas quoted above, which can be paraphrased as "to what is the matter comparable?," is in the majority of cases answered with the words למלך בשר ודם ("to a king of flesh and blood…") or just למלך ("to a king...") This is also characteristic of what Stern designates as the regularized form of the rabbinic mashal.[70] The rest of the narrative *meshalim* have other protagonists (or characters mentioned in the first place) as subjects – schoolchildren and teacher[71] or a king's daughter.[72] Apart from the king, who can but need not be the protagonist of the narrative, the other characters include his wife, his servants and/or his children. Characterization in *meshalim* takes place by indirect presentation: The mortal king of the parables is not said to be generous or tolerant, his actions and speech present him as such or otherwise. The same is true of the rest of the characters, none of which is ever named with a proper name. *meshalim* narrate action or represent dialogue in the form of direct speech in order to depict God's relation to Israel. *meshalim*, it has been argued, are not full narratives, in that they do not report a unique sequence of events, but rather hypothetical or typical ones. Therefore, the characters of *meshalim* are not individuals, but types.[73]

meshalim are textual forms found in the non-narrative discourse of *Seder Eliyahu*, they are therefore narrated by the governing voice of the midrashist, i.e. by an extradiegetical narrator. They can also be used in the context of those dialogues here collectively referred to as first person narratives, in which the midrashist turns into a narrator of his own experiences.[74] Whereas in the first case the narrator addresses an extradiegetical audience with the *meshalim* – the reader or listener –, in the second he addresses a diegetical narratee, one of his interlocutors. *meshalim* can also be narrated by a character of an exegetical narrative. An interesting example of the latter is a case where God himself is the narrator of a king parable.[75] In only two cases the midrashist lets rabbinic authorities be the narrating instance of *meshalim* – R. Ishmael[76] and R. Jose the

creatively they were able to turn that knowledge into material for their imaginative narrative compositions." Alexander Deeg, *Predigt und Derascha*, 373, points out that even if we are not to take king's *meshalim* as historical sources as Ignaz Ziegler's study suggested, they do operate on a political discourse: "Die Rabbinen nehmen sich die Freiheit, mit König und Königshof auf der Figurenbühne der Meschalim zu "spielen" und dokumentieren so eine theologisch begründete Überlegenheit entgegen aller realen politischen Machtverhältnisse. Das sicher nicht selten als übermächtig erfahrene Römische Reich lässt sich auf die Tora hin zuordnen und in der Schriftauslegung gebrauchen. – In dieser Hinsicht können Königsgleichnisse auch als politische Demonstration gelesen werden."

70 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 19.

71 See ER 114, l. 3.

72 See ER 149, l. 27.

73 See Samely, *Forms of rabbinic literature and thought*, 189.

74 See in this chapter section and chapter 6.

75 See ER 20, l. 2.

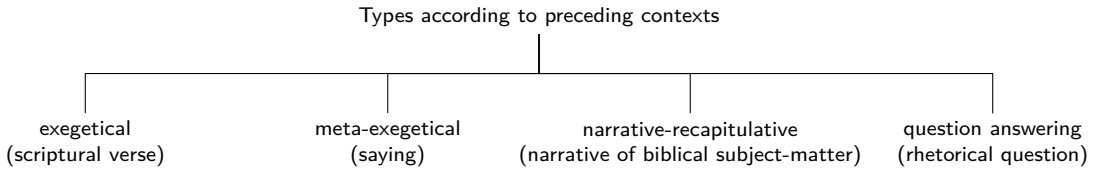
76 See ER 143, l. 18.

Galilean.[77]

The narrator seldom interrupts his narrative, i.e. the mashal-proper, for example with a rhetorical question[78] or a scriptural quotation;[79] his voice comes to the fore at the end of the mashal-proper when he speaks words that connect the two parts of the *mashal*, introducing the application of the narrative.

According to their immediately preceding co-texts, narrative *meshalim* in *Seder Eliyahu* can be classified into the following four groups:

Figure 4.1: Narrative *meshalim* types



The majority belong to the group of the exegetical *mashal* or "exegetical parable," to borrow Jacob Neusner's expression.[80] Their function is the elucidation of the meaning of a word or phrase in a verse. "The task of the exegetical parable or theological parable is to clarify not a law but a statement of Scripture."[81] In the German speaking world Arnold Goldberg's highly influential contribution "Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis" provided a precise delimitation of the exegetical parable:

> Unter den Textsorten der rabbinischen Literatur, die mit „Maschal" bezeichnet werden, kann besonders im Unterschied zum „Vergleich" (aber auch zur Parabel) eine Textsorte als „Gleichnis" bestimmt werden. Gleichnisse sind kurze fiktionale narrative Texteinheiten, die zur Darstellung eines anderen Sachverhaltes, einer „Sache" dienen. Unter den Gleichnissen kann eine Textsorte „Schriftauslegendes Gleichnis" (SG) bestimmt werden. Im Schriftauslegenden Gleichnis ist die „Sache", die der Erklärung bedarf, eine kleine Texteinheit der Offenbarungsschrift, ein Lemma (‚L'), das in seinem Ko- oder Kontext fraglich ist. Die Gleichniserzählung dient dazu, das Lemma zu erklären, auszulegen.[82]

77 See ER 150, l. 13.
78 See ER 69, l. 1.
79 See ER 5, l. 8.
80 I discuss this type of *mashal* in more detail in section 5.2.
81 Neusner, *The Precedent and the Parable in Diachronic View*, 135.
82 Arnold Goldberg, "Das schriftauslegende Gleichnis im Midrasch," in *Rabbinische Texte als Gegenstand der Auslegung: Gesammelte Studien II*, ed. Margarete Schlüter and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 195–196.

On the mashal-proper, which he designates "Relat," Goldberg observes:

> Das Relat, die Gleichniserzählung, hat im SG eine operationale Funktion und hat als Erzählung keinen eigenen propositionalen Gehalt. Es hat und behält immer seine eigene (fiktionale) Referenz.[83]

For an example of this type in *Seder Eliyahu*, the first *mashal* in the work, an exegetical *mashal* can be briefly discussed: It consists of an illustrand[84] (bible verse and interpretation) (1), an introductory formula (2), the mashal-proper (3) and a short nimshal confirming the interpretation (4):

> 1. Another interpretation, *The days were fashioned and one of them belonged to Him* (Ps 139:16). That is Israel's Day of Atonement, a day of great joy before Whom spoke and the world came into being, given in great love to Israel. 2. They told a parable. What does the matter resemble? 3. It is like a king of flesh and blood whose servants and members of his household used to take the refuse and throw it out before the king's doorway. But when he [the king] came out [of the palace] and saw the refuse, he[85] rejoiced with great joy. 4. Therefore (לכך) it is like[86] the Day of Atonement, which the Holy One, blessed be He, gave in great love and joy. (ER 4, l. 24–29)

Even though it lacks the characteristic close of classical *meshalim* with the same biblical verse with which it was occasioned, this *mashal* is the one example Stern singles out among those of *Seder Eliyahu* as "almost perfectly classical in form and function."[87] On the other hand Stern's following observation on the inadequacy of the so-called illustrative model for *meshalim* seems to apply to it as well: "the narratives of most *meshalim*, which according to this view are supposed to facilitate the understanding of their lessons, are actually far more enigmatic and difficult to understand than the nimshalim themselves."[88]

An exceptional case of exegetical *mashal*, indeed the only example in the whole work, is a passage with which the midrashist interprets Hos 5:15, directly addressing his audience in the second person with the words "I shall tell you a parable, and I (shall) tell you what the substance of the matter is." Instead of a king parable what follows is the report of three hypothetical situations depicting the relationship between the addressed reader or listener and a servant or a son of his. The three *meshalim* are closed with a commentary and a proof-text:

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83 Ibid., 197.
84 This is s Stern's terminology.
85 Friedmann emends היה with הוא.
86 Friedmann emends נאמר with נדמה.
87 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 216, n. 63.
88 Ibid., 49.

> By the [Temple] service! Every single day, every single moment I read this verse, *I will go and return to my place* (Hos 5:15), my heart breaks within me. Behold, you have someone replying to <the deeds of> my brother Benjamin. I shall tell you a parable and I will tell you the meaning of its words. A parable: Imagine you have a servant in your house... (ER 110, l. 15–18)

Another rare form of the exegetical *mashal* in *Seder Eliyahu* is an "antithetical mashal," i.e. which represents actions of a mashal's king that do *not* resemble those of God.[89]

Some parables in *Seder Eliyahu* do not interpret a bible verse, but illustrate a saying by the midrashist instead. In want of a better term we call these *meshalim* "meta-exegetical parables."[90] Consider the following parable of this type:

> From here they said: If a man has just right conduct and Scripture, he is given an angel to watch over him, for it is said, *I am going to send an angel [in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.]* etc. (Exod 23:20). If a man reads Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, they give him two angels to watch over him, for it is said, *For he will command his angels concerning you [to guard you in all your ways.]*etc. (Ps 91:11) If a man reads Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, recites Mishnah, Midrash, Halakhot, and Aggadot, and waits upon the sages, the Holy One, Himself, blessed be He, watches over him. They told a parable. What does the matter resemble? It is like king of flesh and blood who walked with his son in the desert. When the sun was high and the heat intense, his father stood in the sun above him and made shade for his son, lest he should come in contact with the sun and the heat, for it is said, *The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your [right] hand* etc. (Ps 121:5) (ER 100, l. 1–9)[91]

What the parable explains is not an aspect of a biblical verse, but the third saying of the midrashist concerning the reward implied in pursuing the ideal rabbinic curriculum. Whereas the first two sayings are solely confirmed with a proof-text, the third is first made clear by means of the parable of the king in the role of a protective father, after which a proof-text is quoted that provides the parable's entire nimshal. Other parables belonging to this group have a more detailed nimshal.

A small number of *meshalim* in *Seder Eliyahu* are of the type that Neusner designates as the "narrative-recapitulative parable."[92] This kind of parable is not told as an explanation of a biblical verse, i.e. immediately following its quotation, or as a confirmation of

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89 See ER 84, l. 30. On the antithetical *mashal* see ibid., 22–23 and Talia Thorion-Vardi, *Das Kontrastgleichnis in der rabbinischen Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main et al.: Lang, 1986).

90 I discuss this type of *mashal* in more detail in section 5.4.

91 A slightly different version of the same parable is found at ER 155, l. 21.

92 See Neusner, *The Precedent and the Parable in Diachronic View*, 217–218, where he illustrate the parable type with two examples from Lamentations Rabbah. I discuss the type in more detail in 5.3 .

an interpretation of a biblical verse. Instead, it rephrases or recapitulates a narrative (exegetical or otherwise) preceding it. In Neusner's terms we have to do with a narrative that is "perfectly clear in its own terms, followed by a metaphor built on the model of the transactions of the story."[93] In the example that follows, the *mashal* retells the last part of an exegetical narrative dealing with how Moses reconciled God to Israel after the episode of the Golden Calf:

> Why did Moses merit in this world the radiance of face that is to be given to the righteous in the time to come? ... I call heaven and earth to witness that the Holy One, blessed be He, did not say to Moses he was to stand *in the gate of the camp* and say *Who is on the Lord's side* (Exod 32:26) and say *Thus says the Lord, the God of Israe'* (Exod 32:27), but that it was Moses who judged himself *a minori ad majus*, saying, If I say to Israel, *each of you kill your brother, your friend, and your neighbour* (ibid.), Israel will reply, Have you not taught us: "A Sanhedrin that puts one man to death in a week of years is called 'destructive'" (mMak 1:10)? Why then do you kill three thousand in a [single] day? Therefore, he attached [these words] to the Glory that is above, for it is said, *Thus says the Lord* etc. (ibid.) What is the subject matter [of the verse] after this one? *The sons of Levi did as [Moses] commanded* etc. (Exod 32:28) Then Moses stood in prayer before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying, Master of the world, you are just and kind, and Your deeds are all [done] in truth. Because of three thousand who worshipped [the calf] with a whole heart should six hundred thousand die, among them twenty-year olds and those younger? Eighteen-year-olds, fifteen-year-olds, two-year-olds and one-year-olds? And many strangers and servants who have attached themselves [to Israel]? There is no end to the matter. At once the mercy of the Holy One, blessed be He, prevailed and He reconciled Himself with them in that moment. They told a parable. What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood whose first-born behaved offensively in his presence. He took him by the hand and turned him over to his servant the steward. He spoke to him, Go and kill this one and give him to the beasts and dogs. What did that servant do? He took him out away from his presence and left him <in his home and ran>[94] back and came to stand before him [the king]. After thirty days, as the king was kindhearted, his servants and members of his household assembled in his presence. When he lifted his eyes and did not see his first-born son he would store up grief and sighing in his heart and no creature except his servant the steward would understand. At once he set off running and brought him and put him in his place. The beautiful crone that was resting in front of him he took in his hand and placed on his servant the steward's head.

93 Ibid., 218.

94 The MS reads here בבית ארץ, which Friedmann emends to בביתו. ורץ.

> <Therefore it is like Moses the righteous>.[95] (ER 17, l. 7–8.19–ER 18, l. 8)

The bracketed expression <Therefore it is like Moses the righteous> following the *mashal* stems from the Yalkut and is all there is to a nimshal after the *mashal* narrative. The actual nimshal precedes the *mashal* in this case, it is an anticipated nimshal.

Characteristic for the last type of *meshalim* is that it does not explicitly resolve an exegetical problem[96] posed by a verse, nor does it provide an interpretation of a rabbinic statement, or retell a narrative,[97] but rather answers a (formulaic) question that replaces the *ha-davar* in the usual *mashlu mashal*-formula with a proper name (Israel, the generation of Manasseh etc.) or with a more specific subject-matter ("When a man honours his father and mother in their old age, whom does he resemble?"). Whereas the *ha-davar* stands for the preceding co-text, i.e. needs a preceding co-text for the reader or listener to know what is being compared, the formula itself in this type of narrative *mashal* which, for want of a better expression, I designate "question answering parables," provides a co-text, so that the *mashal* can therefore be placed even at the opening of a chapter of *Seder Eliyahu*. Generally, however, these *meshalim* open new sections of the ethical- homiletical discourse *within* a chapter. One such *mashal* is found in chapter (24) 22 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, a chapter which deals primarily with the biblical villain Esau:

> What do the wicked Esau, Eliphaz the Temanite, his son Amalek, Jeroboam son of Nebat, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and Haman the Agagite resemble? They are like one who found clothing on a road near a city. He took it in his hand, entered the city, and announced [his find] saying, To whom does this lost object belong? To whom does this lost object belong? All the citizens gathered to join him and said, See, how righteous so-and-so is, how kind, <how honest>. They proceeded to make him chief and magistrate of the city. A year, two years, three years [went by]; [in this time] he laid waste every province, [indeed] the whole country. This is what the wicked Esau, Eliphaz the Temanite, his son Amalek, Jeroboam son of Nebat, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and Haman the Agagite are like. Was it not because of the two tears that Esau shed in his father's presence that he was given Mount Seir upon which the rains of blessing never cease? Was it not because of the honour Eliphaz the Temanite accorded his father that his son Amalek was born? Was it not as a reward to Jeroboam because of the answer he gave the king that he was given the Ten Tribes? Was it not as a reward to Merodach because of the honour he accorded to our Father in heaven that from him Nebuchadnezzar came into the world? Was it as a reward to Agag who wept and felt sorrow for himself at being kept in

95 Friedmann emends the MS reading למה נדמה במשה צדיק with לכך נדמה משה צדיק.

96 It should be pointed out that in this study "exegetical problem" is understood in the sense of an irregularity in the text, a contradiction, a repetition, or redundancy.

97 I discuss this type of *mashal* in more detail in 5.5.

> prison, who said, Woe is me, for my seed might perish for ever!, that from him the wicked Haman came into the world? *the thief breaks in, and the bandits raid outside.* (Hos 7:1) (ER 125, l. 12)

In the nimshal the wording of the opening question is taken up again as affirmative answer, which is in its turn followed by a list of micro-narratives (in question form) dealing with every one of the mentioned villains at whose head is the arch-villain Esau.

Considering the quoted and briefly discussed examples, it can be claimed that whereas the *mashal* narrative is relatively stable, the nimshal is not. The nimshal can take several forms. The shortest ones are composed of an introductory formula – *she-neemar* or *lekhakh neemar* – and a scriptural verse.[98] But the nimshal-proper can also be a sort of parallel narrative (an exegetical narrative[99]) which connects the imagery of the *mashal* with the exegetical, theological, or ethical point being made or, as in the last example, a list of narratives. Occasionally, the language of the nimshal can pervade that of the mashal-proper: The mortal king asks his servants if they had read Scripture and recited Mishnah.[100] In no few cases the nimshal is just missing and has to be supplied by the reader, as Louis Ginzberg suggested.[101]

4.3.2 *Maʿasim*

An evidently higher level of narrativity is to be found in those passages introduced with the formula or marker מעשה ב-. In the fourth volume *Rabbinic Narrative* Jacob Neusner explores the development of the precedent or *maʿaseh* ("deed," "occurrence," "event") from the Mishnah through to the aggadic midrashim *Ekhah Rabbah* and *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah*.[102] The *maʿasim* of *Seder Eliyahu* are more similar to the later than to the early documents Neusner analyzes in that they are neither formally uniform nor used as halakhic precedents. The expression with which they are introduced, termed by Neusner "marker," does precisely *mark* them as belonging to that tradition of *maʿasim* that started with the Mishnah.[103] This is why this apparently minimal formal aspect is taken as an indicator of genre.

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98 A similar case is that of ER 100, l. 13 in which the nimshal consists of the formula *shanu chakhamim be-mishnah* and the quotation of mQid 4:1.

99 E.g. ER 128, l. 20.

100 See ER 93, l. 20.

101 See Max Kadushin, *Organic Thinking: A Study in Rabbinic Thought* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1938), 101, n. 38 on ER 135: "'Attention is to be called to the fact that in several places in the Seder Eliahu only the *mashal* (parable) is given while the application is to be supplied by the reader; cf., for instance, pp. 31–2, 40, 69 *bis*' – (L.G.)"

102 See Jacob Neusner, *The Precedent and the Parable in Diachronic View*, passim.

103 See Arnold Goldberg, "Form und Funktion des Maʿase in der Mischna," in *Rabbinische Texte als Gegenstand der Auslegung: Gesammelte Studien II*, ed. Margarethe Schlüter und Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 22–49.

In an appendix to his study of the rabbinic parables Stern discusses the *maʿaseh* as a form of non-parabolic narrative in rabbinic literature without making special reference to its formal aspects, let alone to introductory formulas.[104] It could be argued, however, that like *meshalim* and other narrative forms whose setting is a homiletical or exegetical discourse, also the *maʿaseh* has a parabolical character insofar as it is an embedded piece of text used to expand, illustrate, emphasize etc. a point made in the text containing them, and therefore pointing, like parables, in a different direction from that of the framing discourse. In this sense every narrative form of *Seder Eliyahu* can be seen as used parabollically within the homiletical discourse.

According to Stern what mainly characterises the *maʿaseh* is its claim to having taken place, it purports to narrate an occurrence of the past.[105] Stern's contrasts the *mashal* as fictional narrative with the *maʿaseh* which purports "to tell a story that actually took place."[106] It is not that the *maʿaseh* and other narrative forms such as the exegetical narrative are not considered as pieces of fictional character, but rather that unlike the *mashal*, which is "the only narrative form in Rabbinic literature to openly acknowledge its fictionality," they make a point of not being fiction.[107] That Stern himself regards *maʿasim* as fictional writing is evident from his observation that "the claim to historicity [does not] entail a claim to naturalism: very frequently, maʿasim contain supernatural or miraculous elements."[108] In fact, among the types of "historical" or "history-like" narratives he regards as belonging to the genre of the *maʿaseh* are miracle-stories and fantastica.[109]

As in the case of *meshalim*, also with *maʿasim* identifying their specific contexts can help with a classification. In the Mishnah Jacob Neusner distinguishes three types of *maʿasim*, but only for the first two identifies the corresponding context or setting – the normative-legal *maʿaseh* or precedent (which has a juridical setting), the domestic-exemplary *maʿaseh* or case (with a household setting), and the story;[110] in the later documents of his corpus a fourth form is identified, that of the exegetical *maʿaseh*.[111] Of a total of fourteen *maʿasim* identified in *Seder Eliyahu* only two fulfil an exegetical task,[112]

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[104] See Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 240–246. *Maʿaseh* is in Stern's view a narrative genre which comprises a number of sub-genres such as sages' stories, villain stories, romances and fulfilment narratives. Common to all of them is their claim to historicity.

[105] Ibid., 240.

[106] Ibid., 13.

[107] See ibid., 237.

[108] Ibid., 242.

[109] Ibid., 244.

[110] See Neusner, *The Precedent and the Parable in Diachronic View*, 8–31.

[111] See Neusner, *The Precedent and the Parable in Diachronic View*, 90–106.

[112] See ER 54, l. 11 and PsEZ 39, l. 5. The first *maʿaseh* follows an "illustrand" consisting of the quotation of Judg 5:11 and a commentary upon this verse; the second's "illustrand" consists of the quotation of Isa 58:1 and an interpretation of it.

two deal with halakhic questions,[113] and the rest can be designated as *ethical exempla*, told after the statement of an ethical maxim, or not evidently illustrating the immediately preceding co-text, but rather illustrating an ethical topic dealt with in the wider co-text of the *maʿaseh* (e.g. the chapter in which the *maʿaseh* is found).

Only some of the *maʿasim* have sages as their characters. In one of them Rabban Jochanan ben Zakkai advises two families on how to prevent their young from dying;[114] another has a disciple of Rabbi Judah the Prince demonstrate in front of a Roman commander God's will concerning the dispersion of Israel as implied in Judg 5:11.[115] There is, furthermore, a number of texts with named or unnamed sages as characters which are not introduced with the marker *maʿaseh be-*, but which could be considered as related to the genre *maʿaseh*: a) two short anecdotes on R. Zadoq and R. Nathan entering the Temple area after the destruction;[116] b) the story of Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel and R. Ishmael about to be slain, a legend which stylises the two sages as martyrs;[117] c) the story of R. Dosa b. Orkinas ruling pertaining the exemption from levirate marriage of a daughter's co-wife;[118] d) a dispute among the sages pertaining to Elijah's origins, with the apparition of the prophet who settles the matter;[119] e) R. Joshua b. Qarcha's demonstration before a Roman emperor of how God is just even when he lets certain people be born blind or deaf;[120] f) R. Jochanan's deathbed conversation with his disciples.[121]

Now these passages hardly differ from those that are introduced with the *maʿaseh* formula in *Seder Eliyahu*, so that they could be considered as forms related to the *maʿaseh* of later rabbinic documents,[122] on which Jacob Neusner observed:

> in the process of adaptation, the form [i.e. *maʿaseh*] lost all precise definition and no longer served to limit expectations to some few functions of narrative. The marker in the later documents thus took on the meaning of the Yiddish *meiseh*, a fable, tale, anecdote, or other generic story, of no exclusive, distinguishing formal characteristics.[123]

In contrast with the "generic" character of meshalim[124] characteristic for these stories

[113] I.e. ER 66, l. 18 and ER 76, l. 3.
[114] See ER 53, l. 5ff.
[115] See ER 54, l. 11. PsEZ 7, l. 11 tells a *maʿaseh* of R. Joshua.
[116] See ER 148, l. 8ff. These are introduced with the words פעם אחת ("once"), a formula which the midrashist primarily uses to narrate alleged episodes of his own life (see below 4.4.2).
[117] See ER 153, l. 16ff.
[118] See EZ 168, l. 13ff. For a discussion of this passage see 7.1.
[119] See EZ 199, l. 6ff. and also here section 3.3.
[120] See PsEZ 41, l. 10ff.
[121] See PsEZ 43, l. 14ff.
[122] David Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 241–244, considers the several types of sages' stories (including miracle stories, pronouncement stories, martyrologies, education narratives, anti-sage stories) as a sub-genre of the *maʿaseh*.
[123] Neusner, *The Precedent and the Parable in Diachronic View*, 106–107.
[124] Ibid., 107.

is their specificity. Characters can be just referred to as "a man," "a young child," or a maiden, but they encounter sages, or a sage with a proper name, the Roman emperor, Ezra the priest etc., so that a more precise space-temporal setting than that characteristic of the *meshalim* is given. Specificity is also achieved by the narrated events, which are attributable to more or less concrete socio-cultural contexts. The passage quoted below may be seen as an example. It is the negative exemplum of a priest, in which a halakhic issue is used to illustrate an ethical message:

> It happened to[125] a priest that a fire befell him, consuming thirty <pillows>, sixty garments, twenty-four jugs of wine, ten jugs of oil, and the rest of his possessions. He went and sat before the sages, saying to them, My masters, a fire has befallen me, consuming thirty <pillows>,[126] sixty garments, twenty-four jugs of wine, ten jugs of oil, and the rest of my possessions. This brought the sages pain and grief equal to his own. They said: They had not moved from there when a man came along who was not totally unfamiliar with Halakhah. He asked him [the priest], To feed an animal with heave offering, what is that [i.e. permitted or forbidden]? He said <to him, It is permitted>.[127] He said, Maybe it is forbidden. He replied, No, it is not. He said further, I am a priest and fed my animal with heave-offering. When the sages heard what he said they answered as one, Blessed be the Omnipresent, blessed be He, who favours no man over another. For heave-offering that is not eaten and consecrated food that is not eaten <should go nowhere but to fire>, but <you did not proceed according to the law>. He said to them, Do we not read: "Heave offering of bitter vetch be given as fodder to domesticated animals and wild animals and to fowl" (mTer 11:9)? <They replied,> They said that only because they feed animals [with bitter vetch] and human beings only eat [it] in years of famine. Therefore David decreed that in years of famine it be permitted to feed an animal [with it].[128] From here they taught: Whoever feeds his animal heave offering, whether heave offering from the Land or heave offering from outside the Land, of him Scripture says, *he who is heedless of his ways will die.* (Prov 19:16) And it [Scripture] says, *you shall not profane the holy gifts of the Israelites, on pain of death.* (Num 18:32). And it [Scripture] says, *Whoever digs a pit will fall into it[; and whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a snake.]* <etc.> (Eccl 10:8). From here they taught: A man should not teach Torah in public unless he has read Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings and recited

[125] Instead of the opening words "A story is told of a priest" which can be interpreted as explicitly pointing to the fictionality of the passage, I prefer to use the more neutral expression "it happened."

[126] Following the Yalkut Friedmann emends the MS reading זכרים ("male children," "the male of the flock") with כרים ("pillows").

[127] The manuscript has a lacuna here which Friedmann fills with the wording between angle brackets.

[128] Friedman emends the MS reading, אדם, with בהמה.

> Mishnah and Midrash, for it is said, *Who can utter the mighty doings of the Lord[, or declare all his praise]?* etc. (Ps 106:2) (ER 66, l. 18–ER 67, l. 12)

An extradiegetical narrator, the governing voice of the midrashist, tells a story that consists basically of two parts, based on two events: the first event is the destruction by fire of a priest's possessions, the second is the discussion of the event between the priest and the sages, followed by an apparently unrelated dispute between the priest and a man mistakenly taken for an ignorant in matters of Halakhah. So the second event is actually a dialogue, in which two individuals and a collective character, the sages, take part. The first event has an explicit spatial setting, the priest's house, the second, probably the house of study, is simply alluded to. The mere presence of the sages could be said to situate the action in rabbinic times, a time when sages' authoritativeness in matters of Oral Torah is evidently higher than that of a priest. Characterisation is both direct and indirect: the priest is indirectly depicted as a rich person by the listing of his burned possessions and, in the course of the dialogue, as not sufficiently familiar with Oral Torah; the apparent ignoramus is directly depicted as such, his direct speech, however, indirectly presents him as better informed than the priest. The sages' inner life is directly represented when the narrator mentions their compassion and indirectly when he lets them speak a blessing for the priest being justly punished.

The question at stake, and this is the reason why the priest seeks the help of the sages in the first place, whether the priest is to be pitied for the fire that has consumed his possessions, is a very specific one. It seems to have its origins in the quoted mishnah, mTer 11:9. The proper understanding of its ruling is clearly not with the priest, which is revealed by the answer he gives to his questioner, but with the sages who can explain the ruling by contextualizing it with a para-biblical etiological narrative: David declared permitted the used of vetch as fodder in times of famine. It should be noted that precisely the fact that he is questioned by someone apparently unversed in Halakhah emphasizes the priest's lack of halakhic competence.

With the two *mikan amru*-statements the relevance of the story for the present of enunciation is made explicit, the voice of the extradiegetic narrator switches into that of the homiletical midrashist. The moral of the counter-exemplum appears to have an ethical rather than a halakhic focus.

4.3.3 Pseudo-historical Narratives

The penultimate chapter of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* contains three narratives that deal with Rome's oppression of the Jewish people in Alexandria (Egypt), Bethar, and in an unspecified place.[129] The historical orientation is found elsewhere in the chapter: The

[129] See ER 151, l. 9–17, ER 151, l. 18–24, and ER 151, l. 24. For a parallel see bGit 57b. The third text, which I discuss in more detail in 7.6, has several other parallels (EkhR 1, PesR 43, YalqShim Ki Tabo, EkhZ 1, and 2 Macc 7).

three narratives of oppression are followed by an account of the martyrdom of R. Simeon and R. Ishmael and by a story on the death of the inhabitants of the towns of the Tribes of Judah and Benjamin brought into exile by Nebuchadnezzar by the waters of the Euphrates.

These narratives of Rome's oppression are not, in contrast with the two following them, told by the midrashist. The first two are told by R. Eliezer, the third by the sages, and all three are hermeneutic tools with which the psalm superscription and first part of the Psalm 79:1 are interpreted. Their function is thus an exegetical one.[130] I propose to consider briefly the first two narratives:

> R. Eliezer the Elder says, *A palm of Asaph. O God, the heathen are come* etc. (Ps 79:1). Hadrian Caesar came and seized Alexandra of Egypt, where there were one hundred twenty myriads of human beings. He deceived them with words, saying to them, Go forth and settle in the valley of Yadaim, so that this people will not prevail over you. They went forth and settled in the valley of Yadaim. But he stationed fifty thousand holding swords at their rear and killed them until not one of them remained, for it is said, *They have poured out their blood like water* etc. (Ps 79:3). The sages said: Three rivers of blood would flow, beginning in the valley of Yadaim and running into the Great Sea [Mediterranean]. The sages evaluated the waters of the Great Sea and found out that it was three parts of blood to one part of water. Some say: For seven years the nations of the world fertilized their vineyards with from the blood of Israel. (ER 151, l. 9–17)
> R. Eliezer says, *A Psalm of Asaph.* (Ps 79:1) The Kingdom of Rome came and slew Bethar. At that time four myriads of human beings were killed there, until blood would run out of doorways and water pipes and it looked as if Bethar were then in the rainy season. They said: They found three hundred baskets of tefillin in Bethar, each containing three measures, if you counted them you would have found nine hundred measures of tefillin. (ER 151, l. 18–24)

The characters in both narratives are mainly collective bodies, Hadrian being a synecdoche of the Roman army he supposedly headed in a campaign against Alexandria. From the oppressed Jewish people no one is named by his or her name, they are referred to as "human beings." Braude and Kapstein point out that the attribution of the killings to Hadrian in the first narrative is an error, for the incident referred to "may have been the Roman devastation of the Jewish quarter in Alexandria in the days of Alexander Tiberius

[130] That is also the case in bGit 57b, where the first two narratives are reduced to the mention of the single hyperbolical events of Hadrian's killing sixty myriads in Alexandria and Vespasian's killing of four hundred thousand myriads in Bethar in an interpretation of the redundant phrase הקול קול יעקב ("The voice is the voice of Jacob") of Gen 27:22, and the lengthier third narrative, told by Rab Judah, interprets Ps 44:23.

(first century C.E.)."[131] The error might be due to the fact that Hadrian was understood to have been substantially involved in the historical events implied in the second narrative. This alludes to the Bar Kochba revolt, which had in Bethar its stronghold. No mention of Bar Kochba is made. Apart from Rome being explicitly named as the historical setting for these stories – both the first and the third narratives have Hadrian as one of its protagonists, the second has the personified Kingdom of Rome as "collective" protagonist – what the three narratives have in common is the hyperbolical character of the crimes reported. The designation "pseudo-historical narrative" hints at the lack of historical accuracy of these texts, partly manifest in their inclination to legend.[132] Exorbitant in the third story is not the number, there are no *myriads* being killed here, but the fact that seven sons of one and the same mother are killed in her presence before she opts for taking her own life.

4.4 Complex Forms

4.4.1 Homiletical-exegetical Narrative

In his appendix on non-parabolical narratives in rabbinic literature[133] David Stern describes what he terms the "homiletical-exegetical narrative" as "stories that elaborate upon the biblical text, either in the form of commentary or as independent, autonomous narratives."[134] Characteristic for these narratives' discourse is their yuxtaposition of narrative and exegesis, the constant interruption of the narration with "homiletical and interpretive asides."[135] For an example Stern quotes a lengthy passage from *Ekhah Rabbah* which begins ("opens") as a homily on charity and interprets an expression of Ps 71:19 by means

[131] Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 370, n. 21.

[132] Also the *maʿaseh* of PsEZ 21, l. 17 can be considered a pseudo-historical narrative with Roman setting.

[133] As already noted before, also this form, as far as *Seder Eliyahu* is concerned, can be held as fulfilling a parabolic function.

[134] Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 237, observes that the genre is often referred to as "extra-biblical legend." The most important contributions to the study of the genre include Dan Ben-Amos, "Generic distinctions in the Aggadah," in *Studies in Jewish Folklore*, ed. Frank Talmage (Cambridge, MA: The Association for Jewish Studies, 1980), 45–72; Yonah Fraenkel, *Darkhe ha-agadah veha-midrash* (*The Hermeneutics of Aggadah and Midrash*) (Givataiim: Yad La-Talmud, 1991) (Hebr.), 1:287–322; Joseph Heinemann, "The nature of aggadah," in *Midrash and Literature*, ed. Geoffrey H. Hartman and Sanford Budick (New Haven, CT, London: Yale University Press, 1986), 41–55; Ofra Meir, *The exegetical narrative in Genesis Rabba* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz Ha-meuchad, 1987) (Hebr.); Shalom Spiegel, introduction to Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Bible* (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1956); Joshua Levinson, "Dialogical reading in the rabbinic exegetical narrative," *Poetics Today* 25, no. 3 (2004): 498–528; Levinson, *The Twice-Told Tale: A Poetics of the Exegetical Narrative in Rabbinic Midrash* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005) (Hebr.).

[135] Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 238.

of a mythical narrative told by multiple narrators and "based" on scriptural passages that are both of narrative and non-narrative character.[136]

More recently Joshua Levinson has attempted to describe the genre of the exegetical narrative as follows:[137]

> The exegetical narrative is composed of a story which simultaneously represents and interprets its biblical counterpart. As a hermeneutical reading of the biblical story presented in narrative form, its defining characteristic lies precisely in this synergy of narrative and exegesis. As exegesis, it creates new meanings from the biblical verses, and as narrative it represents those meanings by means of the biblical world. As exegesis, it is subservient to the biblical narrative, but as a story in its own right, it creates a narrated world which is different from its biblical shadow. It is obvious that the combination of these two elements creates a certain dissonance. Narrative and exegesis are two very different methods of persuasion, based upon divergent, if not opposing, presuppositions of "author-ity." It is specifically this tension between sameness and difference, subservience and creativity, which establishes the genre's identity.[138]

To illustrate what he terms the specific dynamics of reading in the exegetical narrative, Levinson discusses three examples, two of them from *Bereshit Rabbah* and one from the Babylonian Talmud. The biblical texts these exegetical narratives retell stem, unlike those in Stern's example, from contexts of exclusively narrative character.[139]

I use the expression "homiletical-exegetical narrative" to refer not to a homogeneous form, but rather to a group of rabbinic narratives of discernible biblical theme, even if they do not retell a narrative passage of Scripture or are triggered by a quoted scriptural verse (as is the case in the examples adduced by Levinson and Stern).

Unlike *meshalim*, *maʿasim*, or first person narratives,[140] the homiletical-exegetical

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136 The verses quoted are Ps 71:19, Ezek 10:7–9, and Lam 1:13. See ibid., 238–239.

137 To a certain extent Levinson,"Dialogical Reading": 500–501, uses the expression "exegetical narrative" as a synonym for 'rewritten Bible," though he acknowledges that the latter is a Hellenistic genre of its own, which flourished between the early second cent. B.C.E. and the first cent. C.E. The crucial aspects that distinguish the rabbinic exegetical narrative from the Rewritten Bible and by which "rabbinic culture appropriated for its own uses this preexistent literary form" are a) the fact that the text of rewritten Bible not distinguish between the old, biblical text, and the new, that of the rewriting; b) that their exegesis is not explicit, and c) that their authority is anchored in revelation or in a first person narrator.

138 Ibid., 498.

139 The verses are Gen 22:12; 29:12; 33:8. It should be pointed out that neither Stern nor Levinson uses the expression "exegetical narrative" in the functional sense Jacob Neusner ascribes to it, namely, as any narrative even of non-biblical theme used to explain a single biblical verse. Thus for example in his discussion of a *maʿaseh* told to interpret the verse Song 6:12 in *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah*, Neusner, *The precedent and the parable in diachronic view*, 101, observes, for example: "The item qualifies as an exegetical narrative."

140 See below 4.4.2.

narratives of *Seder Eliyahu* are not introduced by any standard formula. The beginning of one such narrative might be the quotation of a scriptural verse, but also phrases with which the midrashist directly addresses his audience, such as צא ולמד מ- ("go and learn from...") or למדנו מ- ("we learn[ed] from..."). A conspicuous feature of homiletical-exegetical narratives (but also of other works of rabbinic literature) is their composite charachter and double-voicedness. They bring together, explicitly or not, two voices – a biblical and a rabbinic one; two discourses – a narrative biblical and a homiletical-exegetical one –, whereby the latter's emphasis can be of theological or of ethical character; and two textual systems, that of the existent, already known, quoted or alluded to biblical text, and that of the midrash, modelling the biblical material (text, legend etc.) according to its own discursive needs. Because the reader of these narratives counts with a relative foreknowledge of the biblical accounts, the narrator's challenge is of a special nature: he has to maintain his reader's interest providing an alternative narrative but in the end he is expected to retell the already known end. As Levinson puts it:

> Since the exegetical narrative is both a new story and an exegetical rewriting of an old one, it is positioned on the fault line between sameness and difference, between received and innovative meanings.[141]

In what follows I briefly discuss a number of examples that are representative for *Seder Eliyahu*'s repertoire of homiletical-exegetical narrative forms. Its corpus consists of a wide range of forms, which go from extensive and elaborate texts to minimalistic ones that tell "just enough to respond to the exegetical difficulty at hand or to the immediate homiletical occasion," as Stern puts it.[142]

Seder Eliyahu contains numerous passages that roughly qualify as exegetical narratives according to Levinson's use of the expression, i.e. they retell a scriptural passage which is itself of inherently narrative character, as the following passage from chapter (11) 12 illustrates, in which a lengthy biblical passage of 1 Sam 2–6 is narrated anew:

> And because of the immoral deeds of Eli's sons Israel went to war and four thousand of them were killed. At that time Israel said, *Why has the Lord put us to rout today before the Philistines?* etc. (1 Sam 4:3). And the Holy One, blessed be He, responded at that time, When the son's of Eli used to provoke me in the court of Israel and the women's court [in the Temple], you would not say, Where is it [the ark of the covenant]? Now when Israel went forth to war, they said, *Let us bring the ark of the covenant of the Lord here from Shiloh[, so that he may come among us and save us from the power of our enemies.]* etc. (ibid.) So they sent and fetched the ark of the covenant of the Lord, for it is said, *So the people sent to Shiloh, and brought [from there the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts]* etc. (1 Sam 4:4). Israel shouted a great

[141] Levinson, "Dialogical Reading": 506.
[142] Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 240.

shout, but it was not true. Of that time that time it [Scripture] says, *she has lifted up her voice against me, therefore I hate her.* (Jer 12:8) The Philistines said, *Woe to us! Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods* etc. *Take courage, and be men* etc. (1 Sam 4:8–9). At once Israel went forth to war and thirty thousand of them were killed and the ark of the covenant was captured and sent to Ashdod to the temple of Dagon, their god, for is said, *When the people of Ashdod rose early the next day[, there was Dagon, fallen on his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord. So they took Dagon and put him back in his place.]* <etc.> (1 Sam 5:3) They saw that this was the requital, for it is said, *So they sent and gathered together all the lords* etc. *and they replied, Let [the ark of the God of Israel] be brought across to Gath.* etc. (1 Sam 5:8) And also there it stroke with a great stroke, for it is said, *But after they had brought it there, the hand of the Lord [was against the city, causing a very great panic; he struck the inhabitants of the city, both young and old, so that tumours broke out on them.]* etc. (1 Sam 5:9) When they saw that this was the requital, they carried it to Ekron, for it is said, *So they sent the ark of the God of Israel to Ekron.* (1 Sam 5:10) But also there it stroke with a great stroke, for it is said, *the people of Ekron cried out[, Why have they brought across to us the ark of the God of Israel to kill us and our people?]* etc. (ibid.) When they saw that this was the requital, they carried it to an open field (בשדה), for it is said, *The ark of the Lord was in the country (בשדה)* etc. (1 Sam 6:1). And also there it stroke with a great a stroke, for it is said, *Then the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners* (1 Sam 6:2). The priests, though idolaters, did have a notion of proper conduct. And which was this their propoer conduct? They told them, *If you send away the ark of the God of Israel, do not send it empty* (1 Sam 6:3).

And what was the plague the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon them? He brought upon them mice, who would slay men,[143] and women, and children among them. From their houses they would go out to the open field and eat from them their wheat, barley, beans, lentils, and every kind of pulse, for it is said, *So you must make images of your tumours [and images of your mice that ravage the land, and give glory to the God of Israel; perhaps he will lighten his hand on you and your gods and your land.]*[144] etc. *Why should you harden [your hearts as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? After he had made fools of them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?]* etc. (1 Sam 6:5–6). At once they filled it [the ark] with silver and put it on the wagon. When they were walking on the way, <the> cows took up a song in their voices, speaking thus, Sing, o sing, acacia tree, soar in all of your glory, lovely in embroidery of gold, you are praised in the innermost of the palace, who are enfolded between the two cherubim, for it is

[143] The MS reading has the proof-text 1 Sam 6:5 here. Friedmann moves it to the end of the sentence following this one.

[144] The text quotes the Qere-reading for this word.

> said, *The cows sang (וישרנה) in the direction of Beth-shemesh* etc. (1 Sam 6:12). When they were at a distance of two thousand cubits by measure from Beth-shemesh, they said, We shall take the vestments and put them in a retired place and we shall see what these do for their god whom we have so honoured and who <has treated us>[145] this way. At once they took the vestments and put them in a retired place. The people of Beth-shemesh should have taken <their clothes> upon seeing the ark and <cover> with them <their faces>,[146] then go and prostrate themselves before the ark an hour, or two, or three until the ark was covered, so that the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, be magnified and sanctified from one end of the world to the other. They did not act like this. Instead, when they saw the ark they laughed and stood up, remained standing and then danced, and spoke too many words, for it is said, *Now the people of Beth-shemesh were reaping [their wheat harvest in the valley. When they looked up and saw the ark, they went with rejoicing to meet it.]* etc. (1 Sam 6:13) And they did not know who had left the ark [there]. They [the Philistines] took <the vestments>[147] and went back, for it is said, *When the five lords of the Philistines saw it[, they returned that day to Ekron.]* etc. (1 Sam 6:16). Therefore fifty thousand from Israel fell and the Great Sanhedrin with them, for it is said, *And he killed some of the people of Beth-shemesh[, because they looked into the ark of the Lord; and he killed seventy men of them.* [etc.] (1 Sam 6:19) And who killed all of them? They said: No one but the people of Beth-shemesh killed them, for they did not behave properly (lit. "did not have the proper conduct"). (ER 57, l. 15–ER 58, l. 30)

The rabbinic exegetical narrative quoted above operates by selecting part of the narrative material presented in 1 Sam 2–6, i.e. it focuses on this selection and leaves the rest of the biblical narrative aside. The focus is determined by the homiletical discourse that frames (or provides a wider co-text to) the narrative. This is how a retold biblical narrative can serve the purpose of eliciting a theological or ethical message in the midrash: in this case, the narrative is the last of a series of narratives[148] that illustrate the notion that "not a penny[149] is taken from Israel but as a form of judgement," a statement that immediately follows the quoted passage. The midrashist selects not only which verses, but also which part of these verses he quotes and which ones he leaves unquoted. It is very often the case that precisely those parts of verses that are left unquoted provide the actual link to the rabbinic interpretive retelling, and sometimes the expression וגו׳ ("etc.") following a

145 Friedmann emends MS reading, עשה, with עשינו.

146 Friedmann emends MS readings, נוטל, בגדיו and פניו, with ליטול, בגדיהם and פניהם, respectively.

147 The MS reads here הארון here, which Friedmann emends with הבגדים.

148 The other narratives are based on passages of the Book of Judges.

149 Friedmann does not emend the MS reading פרומה (which can be either a wrong reading of פרוטה ["cent"] oder a corrupt form of Aramaic פרומא ["a small liquid measure"]), even though a parallel of this statement in *Seder Eliyahu* (ER 55, l. 17) has the reading פרוטה.

scriptural quotation signals this fact.[150] It can be that the unquoted scriptural text helps understand the nature of the hermeneutic operation at hand and, in some cases, what the logic of the narrative is. In the text quoted above this is evident several instances, e.g. in the passages quoting the first parts of 1 Sam 5:3.9;6:1.5.19.

The selection has also to to with the type and number of characters: with the exception of God and the personified ark which is said to cause havoc, the rabbinic narrative, unlike its scriptural hypotext – which has Eli, the man of God, and even Hophni and Phinehas among its characters –, has only collective bodies as its human characters: Israel, the Philistines, their priests and their five lords, the Great Sanhedrin, the cows, and the people of Beth-shemesh.

In a sort of preamble to the narrative reference is made to immoral deeds of Eli's sons. There is neither a narrative account nor a quotation of scriptural material here, but rather this introductory passage presupposes 1 Sam 2:12–17.3:13 and alludes to 1 Sam 4:2,[151] thus suggesting a causality that is not evident in the scriptural account: four thousand men were slain by the Philistines in the first battle as a direct consequence of Hophni's and Phinehas' misdeeds.

The narrative itself begins with a short dialogue between Israel and God, consisting of the quoted question of 1 Sam 4:3 and God's reproachful answer, a first evident expansion by the rabbinic narrator. The new narrative is characterized by certain stylistic features. In God's reproach of Israel the rabbinic expressions for "men's compartment" (lit. "Israel's compartment") and "women's compartment" are metaphorically used to allude to the two types of transgressions the sons of Eli commit as narrated in 1 Sam 2:12–17.3:13 and 1 Sam 2:22. God, therefore, speaks rabbinic Hebrew, and helps the midrashist argue that Israel proceeds differently when they are in trouble. The narrative continues with the account of Israel's next devastating defeat, the fall of thirty thousand (as reported in 1 Sam 4:10) and the abduction of the ark. The latter is mentioned no less than five times in 1 Sam 4 with forms of the verb נלקח ("to be taken away"); in the rabbinic rewriting a different expression is used, נשבה ("to be captured").

The several stations of the ark among the Philistines constitute a next section in the narrative, characterised by the repetition of more or less the same account for each of these stations – the repetition-relation between the story events and their narration is therefore singulative, in the sense that we are told *n* times what happened *n* times.[152]

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150 This is not a specific trait of this type of narrative of *Seder Eliyahu*, but rather a feature to be found in the quotation praxis of rabbinic midrash in general, an allusion to the text that in Scripture is adjacent to the text actually quoted in midrash.

151 No allusion is made to Eli's admonishing his sons in 1 Sam 2:23–25, nor to the passages in Eli's narrative dealing with Samuel (1 Sam 2:18–21) and with the man of God (1 Sam 2:27–36).

152 According to Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, 57, the standard singulative relation consists in telling once what happened once. With regard to the example of *Seder Eliyahu* it must be noted that the little variation in the representation of the single events emphasizes more the repetitive nature than the singularity of the events. This type of representation of frequency is

The ark comes to one of the cities of the Philistines, causes havoc, the Philistines realize that it is a punishment meant for them and have the ark sent to another city, until they eventually return it to Beth-shemesh. What the nature of the havoc caused by the ark in these cities is, the rabbinic narrator does not mention at this point. It suffices him to narrate that they had to move it from Ashdod to Gath, from Gath to Ekron, and from Ekron to an "open field," the last station before the ark is returned to Israel – the latter being an interpretation of *bisdeh* in *bisdeh pelistim* of 1 Sam 6:1, "in the country of the Philistines," in terms of an imprecise"open field." It is at this stage that their own priests suggest the Philistines do not return the ark empty, which shows their *derekh erets* ("proper conduct" and maybe also "common sense"?) in spite of them being idols worshippers.[153]

But before the ark is returned to Beth-shemesh the narrator inserts a short digression on the nature of the plague with which God struck the Philistines during the ark's stay with them focusing on the mice mentioned in 1 Sam 6:5 and leaving the tumours of the biblical account unmentioned.

Following the advice of their priests, the Philistines prepare a guilt offering to accompany the ark on its return. According to the priests in the scriptural account, the return of the cows of their own accord in the direction of Beth-shemesh would be the evidence that the God of Israel had been punishing them all this time (1 Sam 6:9). Now the very expression which refers to this "miraculous" return of the cows, וישרנה, an imperfect form of the verb ישר ("to take the straight way"), read as a form of the verb שיר ("sing"), is used as the appropriate occasion for a miracle narrative, that of the cows singing in praise of the ark.[154]

Still somewhere about two thousand cubits from Beth-shemesh, the Philistines uncover the ark and hide its vestments. This addition to the biblical narrative is followed by a commentary by the rabbinic narrator on how the people of Beth-shemesh should have behaved in the presence of the ark and by the narration of how they actually behaved. All of this serves one purpose: to account for yet another massive loss in Israel, namely of fifty thousand and the seventy members of the Great Sanhedrin, thus alluding to the victims' numbers mentioned in 1 Sam 6:19.[155] Not the Philistines this time, but

probably the most characteristic of *Seder Eliyahu*, not just of homiletical-exegetical narratives.

153 Max Kadushin, *Organic thinking*, 120, points out that the Philistine priests' *derekh erets* is crucial to understand the whole passage: "Derekh Erez here describes the reverence the priests of the Philistines felt for the Ark, and that reverence entitled them to be called priests. In contrast to the action of the priests was the behavior of the men of Beth-Shemesh who, instead of prostrating themselves before the Ark in reverence, laughed and remained upright and even spoke unseemly words, so that as punishment fifty thousand men, including the Great Sanhedrin fell in Israel."

154 This has a parallel in bAZ 24b and in BerR 54:4 (TA). In the latter the parallel is introduced with the words תני אליהו.

155 According the Commentary to the English Standard Version in most Hebrew manuscripts the verse reads "struck of the people seventy men, fifty thousand men."

the very people of Beth-shemesh are made responsible for the punishment God inflicts on them. In contrast to the Philistine priests, they did not behave properly, they did not show proper conduct.

The narrative on the sons of Eli, the Philistines, and the people of Beth-shemesh is followed by the statement: "This is to teach you that even the penny taken from Israel is a form of judgement" –, a series (list) of micro-exegetical narratives, and a closing set of two proof-texts (the first rabbinic, the second scriptural), with which the chapter is closed:

> But God in heaven knows that it was as the reward of Deborah and her prophecy and of Baraq and his prophecy that great deliverance came through them. The reward of Ahab and Jezebel was that they perished from this world and from the world to come and that their children perished with them. The reward of the Tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali who did the will of [their Father in heaven and the will of their father] Jacob was that great deliverance came through them. The reward of Jael, wife of Heber the Kenite, who did the will of her husband, was that great deliverance came through her. The reward of Phinehas was that the children of Ephraim went to war and forty thousand of them were killed. The reward of the Great Sanhedrin, whom Moses left, Joshua and of Phinehas the son of Eleazar were with them, was that Israel gathered and went to war against the children of Benjamin and seventy thousand of them were killed. The reward of the sons of Eli was that Israel went to war and four thousand of them were killed. The reward of the elders was that Israel went to war and thirty thousand of them were killed and that the ark of the covenant was captured. The reward of the men of Beth-shemesh, who did not conduct themselves properly, was that fifty thousand from them, from Israel, fell and the Great Sanhedrin with them. From here they taught: "With what measure a man metes it shall be measured to him again" (mSotah 1:7) Indeed, Master of all the worlds, *Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains[, your judgements are like the great deep; you save humans and animals alike, O Lord.]* (Ps 36:7) (ER 58, l. 30–ER 59, l. 13)

The narratives of the list serve to provide the just retold story of the abduction of the ark (and those that precede it in chapter [11] 12) with a clear context, one that ensures that there is no room for ambiguity in the transmission of the theological message.

The first part of the list contains names of individuals or groups which were actually discussed in the chapter preceding this one, whose reward it was to have brought great deliverance to Israel – Baraq and Deborah (ER 51), the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali (ER 51) and Jael, the wife of Heber (ER 51) – or to be punished because of their deeds – Ahab and Jezebel (ER 49). With the exception of Joshua and Phinehas (ER 55), the second part lists only collective bodies seen as responsible for the killing of many in Israel – the Great Sanhedrin (ER 56), Eli's sons (ER 57), the elders (ER 57) – who were

not even mentioned in the long version of the story –, and the people of Beth-shemesh (ER 58). The list of narratives quoted above consists of narrative texts and the reports of single events in which paradigmatic righteous and wicked play a major role. The list is placed at the end of a chapter, so that it endows it as a whole with its own message, in case there was room for ambiguity in the lengthier exegetical narratives that precede it.[156]

Also elsewhere in *Seder Eliyahu* exegetical narratives, both short and lengthy ones, tend to appear in lists or series. Longer exegetical narratives can be identified as belonging to a series, even if they are not placed adjacently. In the following example of chapter 17 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, the series consists of three adjacent narratives and a fourth told after an interruption in the form of a passage of homiletical discourse. The structure of each narrative within the series is relatively simple and stable, there is recurring phraseology, and even if the theological aspect they illustrate is the same in all four of them, there is a clear variation in the use of scriptural quotation as well as in the alternation between narration (A, B, and C) and commentary (A', B', and C') (see Table 4.2).

None of these narratives can be regarded as successful in maintaining the anticipatory tension of a modern reader – neither read within their co-text, the series, nor in isolation. There are good reasons to doubt that is was otherwise with the work's original audience, for *Seder Eliyahu* itself, and many other works of rabbinic literature bear evidence to a fully-fledged narrative culture, a context in which the above quoted texts appear like poor drafts of good rabbinic stories.

Their structure is basically tripartite, though each of the main parts A, B, and C can be expanded upon with commentary: Of a certain biblical time, identified by the name of a biblical character, it is stated in a first part (A) that Israel acted exemplarily, either by accepting the kingdom of Heaven or, as in the last narrative, by engaging in the study of the rabbinic corpus. The second narrative is the only one to provide a commentary passage on this first part (A'). The second narrative part (B) reports the reward for Israel's exemplary conduct in each of the chronological settings mentioned in A. The midrashist can opt either in the first or second part to do without explicit use of biblical material. All four narratives provide in B' a different kind of commentary on B: An explanation of how the narrator arrived at (i.e. derived) his statement in B in the Joshua-narrative; an exegetical digression on the quoted 1 Sam 7:9 in the Samuel-narrative; a continuation of

[156] On the righteous and wicked being thus "listed" in Midrash Gerhard Langer, *Midrash*, 233, observes: "Oft werden paradigmatische *Schurken* wie Kain, die Enoschgeneration, das Geschlecht der Flut, das Geschlecht des Turmbaus zu Babel, die Sodomiter oder die ägyptischen Sklavenhalter verglichen und in eine Reihe gestellt. Ihnen stehen wiederum paradigmatische *Gerechte* gegenüber, so in BerR 19 die drei Erzväter, Levi, Kehat, Amram, Mose." A list of narratives need not refer back to narratives already told. In answer to a question posed by a disciple in a first person narrative the rabbi replies with a list where the first ten generations are listed in micro-narratives illustrating how God let them live longer so that they could do deeds of kindness toward their forefathers. See ER 80, l. 23.

the Elijah-narrative, marked as distinct from the preceding text by the use of the formula of direct address ...וכי עלתה על דעתך ("and you might wonder"); and a rhetorical question followed by proof-text in the Hezekiah-narrative. The last part (C) follows with slight variation the same pattern in three of the texts, giving an account of God's permanent blessing of Israel.

Table 4.2: Homiletical-exegetical Narratives: A Series

	ER 86, l. 21–34	ER 86, l. 35–ER 87, l. 8	ER 87, l. 9–20	ER 88, l. 18–28
A.	In the days of Joshua Israel took upon themselves the Kingdom of Heaven[157] with love, for it is said, *Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord[, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.]* etc. *Then the people answered, 'Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord [to serve other gods]* etc. (Josh–24:15–16)	In the days of Samuel Israel took upon themselves the Kingdom of Heaven in awe, for it is said, *The people of Israel said to Samuel, Do not cease [to cry out] to the Lord [our God for us, and pray that he may save us from the hand of the Philistines.]* etc. (1 Sam 7:8). And he also replied to them on this subject, for it is said, *Moreover as for me, far be it from me that I [should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you; and I will instruct you in the good and the right way.]* etc. (1 Sam 12:23)	In the days of Elijah Israel were truthfully in awe of Heaven.	In the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, Israel occupied themselves with Scripture, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakhot and, Aggadot.
A'.		From here they said: Whoever has the power to beseech mercy for his fellow man and for the community and does not do it, is called a sinner, for it is said, *sin against the Lord* (1 Sam 12:23).		

[157] Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 7, argues that *Malkhut Shamayim* should be translated not as "the kingdom of God", but as "the sovereignity of God."

Table 4.2: Homiletical-exegetical Narratives: A Series

	ER 86, l. 21–34	ER 86, l. 35–ER 87, l. 8	ER 87, l. 9–20	ER 88, l. 18–28
B.	Israel's reward for having taken upon themselves the Kingdom of Heaven with love was that the Holy One, blessed be He, was forbearing with them for three hundred years in the days of the judges' rule, treating them like small children at their master's house or like children at their father's table.	Israel's reward for having taken upon themselves the Kingdom of Heaven in awe was that also He descended from the uppermost heaven, from the place of His glory and greatness and sovereignty, of His splendour and holiness, and dwelt with them during the war, for it is said, *So Samuel took a sucking lamb and offered it as a whole burnt-offering to the Lord; Samuel cried out to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord answered him.* etc. (1 Sam 7:9)	Israel's reward for being truthfully in awe of Heaven was that also he [Elijah] stood and built an altar and made a place like a container for two measures of seed, for it is said, *with the stones he built [an altar in the name of the Lord. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed.]* etc. (1 Kings 18:32). He said to his disciples, *Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt-offering and on the wood. Then he said, Do it a second time and they did it a second time* (1 Kings 18:33–34).	Israel's reward for occupying themselves with Scripture, Mishnah, Midrash, Halakhot, and Aggadot is that something that was meant to happen in the end, *This shall be the plague [with which the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh shall rot while they are still on their feet; their eyes shall rot in their sockets, and their tongues shall rot in their mouths. this shall be the plague]* etc. (Zech 14:12), was carried out for Hezekiah and his generation.

Table 4.2: Homiletical-exegetical Narratives: A Series

	ER 86, l. 21–34	ER 86, l. 35–ER 87, l. 8	ER 87, l. 9–20	ER 88, l. 18–28
B'.	Whence [do we infer this]? You should know that it is so. Go and learn from Gideon son of Joash, Abdon son of Hillel, and Ibzan of Beth-lehem. What is written of Gideon? *Now Gideon had seventy sons* etc. (Judg 8:30). What is written of Abdon? <*He had forty sons and thirty grandsons* etc. (Judg 12:14). What is written of Ibzan of Beth-lehem?> *He had thirty sons. He gave his thirty daughters in marriage outside [his clan]* (Judg 12:9).	But if it is said *burnt-offering* why is it also said *whole*? To teach that he did not have room to skin the animal, for it is said, *As Samuel was offering up [the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near to attack Israel; but the Lord thundered with a mighty voice that day against the Philistines and threw them into confusion; and they were routed before Israel.]* etc. (1 Sam 7:10)	And you might wonder how twelve jars of water could have filled the whole trench with water, but he said to his disciples, He who has water left in his jar, let him come and pour it over my hands. Elishah said to him, I have water left in my jar. He said to him, Come and pour <it over my hands. And he went and poured it> over his hands.[158] Ten springs gushed from them until the whole place was filled with water, for it is said, *At the time of the offering of the oblation[, the prophet Elijah came near and said, O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding.]* etc. *Answer me, O Lord, answer me[, so that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back.]* etc. *Then the fire of the Lord fell [and consumed the burnt-offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was in the trench.]* etc. (1 Kings 18:36–38). At that time they abandoned the idolatry they had in their hands and became truthful fearers of Heaven, for it is said, *When all the people saw it[, they fell on their faces and said, 'The Lord indeed is God; the Lord indeed is God.]* etc. (1 Kings 18:39)	How so? *[That very night] the angel of the Lord set out [and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the camp of the Assyrians; when morning dawned, they were all dead bodies.]* etc. (2 Kings 19:35)

[158] Singular in MS.

Table 4.2: Homiletical-exegetical Narratives: A Series

	ER 86, l. 21–34	ER 86, l. 35–ER 87, l. 8	ER 87, l. 9–20	ER 88, l. 18–28
[B.]	Israel's reward for having taken upon themselves the Kingdom of Heaven with love was that the Holy One, blessed be He, was forbearing with them during the three hundred years of the judges' rule, treating them like small children at their master's house or like children at their father's table.			
C.	And he made permanent for them a blessing that is a good dispensation forever, for it is said, *So Joshua blessed them and sent them away[, and they went to their tents.]* etc. (Josh 22:6)	And he made permanent for them a blessing that is a good dispensation forever, for it is said, *For the Lord will not cast away his people[, for his great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you a people for himself.]* etc. (1 Sam 12:22)		And he made permanent for them a consolation that is a good dispensation forever, for it is said, *Comfort, O comfort my people* etc. *Speak tenderly* etc. (Isa 40:1–2).
C'.				They told a parable. What does the matter resemble? It is like a mortal king who became angry at his wife. But he had a son by her who was some eighteen months old. Every day, as they brought him before him, he used to take him into arms, embrace him, and kiss him. He would take hold of him with both hands and seat him between his knees and speak to him thus, Were it not for my great mercy for you, I would have already thrown your mother from my house. So, *What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? [What shall I do with you, O Judah? Your love is like a morning cloud, like the dew that goes away early.]* etc. (Hos 6:4) *I will not execute my fierce anger* (Hos 11:9).

The Elijah-narrative, the only one which clearly retells a biblical passage (1 Kings 18:30–40), comes to an end as in its biblical counterpart, with the end of idolatry. The Elijah-narrative is, moreover, the only one with more than one individual as character.

The rest have Israel as collective primary character, the names of Joshua, Samuel, and Hezekiah being there almost exclusively to provide for a varying temporal setting and hinting to biblical textual hypotext. On this last narrative section only the Hezekiah-text expands by means of a mashal, C′.[159]

Homiletical-exegetical narratives can also make use of a biblical theme in order to illustrate ethical maxims of the work, e.g. what constitutes from the midrashist's perspective an ideal rabbinic conduct, as the two following short narratives on Amram and Boaz illustrate. They purport to answer the rhetorical question that precedes them and are followed by a proof-text:

> Whence [do we infer that] when a man marries a woman for the sake of Heaven he will have children who deliver Israel in their time of distress? Go and learn from <Amram who married a woman for the sake of Heaven. From him there issued Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, who caused Torah and commandments to increase in Israel. Go and learn from> Boaz son of Salmon, son of Nahshon, son of Amminadab, who married for the sake of Heaven. Eventually there issued from him David and Solomon his son who caused Torah and commandments to increase in Israel. Of them, of the likes of them, of those who resemble them, and of those who act after their deeds, Scripture says, *For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your descendants and your name remain.* (Isa 66:22) (EZ 177, l. 35–EZ 178, l. 5)

The quoted passage is the last of a series of similar structures, in which the opening question varies little, asking after the reward of marrying for the sake of satisfying one's lust,

[159] Another series of exegetical narratives is introduced with the same formula, בימי... ("in the days of Uzziah," "in the days of Ahaz," "in the days of Manasseh," "in the days of Hoshea," "in the days of Zedekiah") in chapter 9 of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* (EZ 186, l. 16ff.) The bulk of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*'s tenth chapter consists of a series of exegetical narratives opened with the formula בדעתו של הקב״ה ("it was God's intention to…"). Homiletical-exegetical narratives, especially short ones, also tend to be arranged in pairs of opposites, with an example (A) and a counter-example (B), so to speak, as in the following passage: "Another interpretation: *You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people[, and you shall not profit by the blood[b] of your neighbour: I am the Lord.]* (Lev 19:16). There are four measures in this verse. Two are measures of the righteous. Two are measures of the wicked. A. Two measures of the righteous, how so? Go and learn from Moses and Aaron who meant to and made peace between Israel and their Father in heaven, between Israel and the Sages, between a sage and his fellow, between a man and his fellow, between a man and his wife. Because of their ways a good name was established for them, for their children, and their children's children until the end of all generations. *It was Aaron and Moses* etc. (Exod 6:26). B. Two measures of the wicked, how so? Go and learn from Dathan and Abiram who meant to and caused strife between Israel and their Father in heaven, between Israel <and the Sages>, between a sage and his fellow, between a man and his fellow, between a man and his wife. Because of their ways a bad name was established for them, for them and for their children, and their children's children until the end of all generations. For it is said, *That is Dathan and Abiram* (Num 26:9) (ER 106, l. 19–28).

of money, or of social status.[160] The quoted narrative can be seen as a hermeneutic tool for the explanation of the meaning of the expression "to marry for the sake of Heaven," the only *metaphorical* expression in the series of narratives.

With the next short example I wish to point to an aspect of the homiletical-exegetical narrative's composite character, which can be designated as its "multi-directionality." By retelling a biblical story the midrash interprets at the same time a verse (or verse part) that is part of the scriptural account of that story and a verse that is unrelated to that scriptural narrative (which can be in a lemmatic position, as in the example below, but also have a proof-text function). The verses are not just brought in connection but also simultaneously interpreted:

> *When you see the naked, cover them* (Isa 58:7). When the Holy One, may His great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever, saw Adam naked, He did not let an hour pass before He had dressed him, for it is said, *And the Lord God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife[, and clothed them.]*(Gen 3:21) Indeed a man should not see his father and mother standing in shabby clothes and turn his face away, but he should dress them with comely clothes. If a man wears [clothes worth] five minas, then he should dress his father and mother with [clothes worth] ten minas. If a man wears [clothes worth] ten minas, then he should dress his father and mother with [clothes worth] fifteen minas. He should distinguish them in a manner that he is praised. (ER 136, l. 13–19)

The quoted passage links the notion of the lemmatic verse Isa 58:7 that naked are covered to the account of God's having mercy with Adam and his wife and not letting them remain naked, of which verse Gen 3:21 is part. The short exegetical narrative is a preamble to an ethical message concerning the proper attitude toward one's parents, which is in turn part of the midrashist's exposition on the commandment *Honour your father and mother* (Deut 5:16). Read in this light Adam's and Eve's sin appears relativized.

Another example of an exegesis that has not just one target we find in the following "aetiological" narrative dealing with the observance of festivals in exile at the time of enunciation:

> A. Another interpretation: *my children have gone from me, and they are no more* (Jer 10:20). *They are no more*, festivals are not [observed] according to their institution. B. The congregation of Israel spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He, Master of the universe, As long as I was on my soil, I used to observe [the festival] on one day and that was as it was established. But now, behold, I <observe [the festival]> on one day and two days[161] and not on one as was established. Master of the universe, who caused me to come

[160] For a parallel without narrative segments see PsEZ 9, l. 7ff.
[161] MS reading: ושלושה.

> to such a state? For it is said,[162] *My mother's sons caused me this grief*[163] (Song 1:6). Do not read *My mother's sons (בני אמי) brought me to grief* but "my own people (בני אומא שלי) caused me this grief." etc. But who are the sons of my people? Such as Hananiah the son of Azzur, Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who spoke false prophecies to me, therefore it is said, *my mother's sons caused me this grief*. (ER 149, l. 1–7)

The quotation of Jer 10:20 is followed by a midrashic unit that focuses on part of the verse and by an exegetical narrative (B), actually a short dialogue with a spatial setting in the exile which only alluded to. Israel(or the midrashist speaking on their behalf) and God are the only two acting, i.e. speaking, characters. Israel express their displeasure at not observing (or being able to observe) festivals as these were once instituted, and asks God how this could come about. The answer, it can be assumed, is given by God himself, who speaks, however, in the manner of the midrashist, i.e. quoting again an unrelated scriptural verse as a proof-text (Song 1:6) and suggesting, with the rabbinic hermeneutic formula *al tiqrey*, an adequate reading. When Israel in their turn ask who is meant by God with "my own people" as being responsible for their present situation, God names three biblical characters, whose names function as metonyms for the account of their transgressions in narrative passages of the book of Jeremiah. [164]

Some narrative passages retell scriptural passages, sometimes in the form of legends associated with biblical characters or events with little textual basis in Scripture, and make correspondingly scarce use of scriptural quotation. This subgroup of homiletical-exegetical narratives can be designated as para-scriptural narratives. Two examples follow, one from the beginning of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and one from the end *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*:

> And in His wisdom and with His understanding God created His world and set it on its foundation. He then created Adam and had him lie prone before Him. As He scrutinized him till the end of all the generations and foresaw that his descendants would provoke His wrath. Therefore He said, If I keep him the sins of the first ones, the world will not endure; I must therefore have their first sins pass out of mind. And He had them do so. (ER 3, l.8–11)

> It had been the intention of the Holy One not to give the power of speech to animals, but when he gave the power of speech to the serpent, it corrupted the world, all of it. (EZ 190, l. 6–7)

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162 Friedmann sets MS reading שנאמר between brackets as if not correct.

163 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 353, n. 1, suggest reading נחרו as "sought to bring me to grief" instead of "incensed against me" of the Jewish Version (= Jewish Publication Society of America, ed. *The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic text: A New Translation* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 5677 / 1917].)

164 I.e. Hananiah for Jer 28; Ahab and Zedekiah for Jer 29:22–23.

Israel's history of salvation, especially the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, is the subject of recurring para-scriptural narratives, which can be paraphrased using Simon-Shoshan's wording as the "master narrative of exile and redemption of Egypt."[165] Two examples of this type of narrative are found within the *berakhah* quoted below, their beginnings I mark with the vertical line |.

> My Father in heaven, may Your great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever, and may You have contentment <in Israel>,[166] your servants, in all the places of their dwellings. | For [in spite of] all the repulsive things and unworthy things which Israel committed before You, you did not have an ill feeling or vengefulness against them, nor were You overbearing towards them, nor did You keep words of Torah from them. Rather You remembered in their behalf the good things and not the bad things – the good things they did in Your presence and not the bad things they did in Your presence. You said to them what your lips spoke, *[For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth;] the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.* etc. (Isa 65:17) | And when our fathers stood on Mount Sinai to take upon themselves the kingdom of Heaven of their free will (בנדבה), also He came down from the upper heaven of heavens, from the place of His glory, of His greatness, of His splendour, and His holiness, and willingly (בנדבה)had His great name dwell with them. Hence Isaiah said, *But those who are noble (נדיב) plan noble things (נדיבות)[, and by noble things they stand.]* etc. (Isa 32:8) (ER 83, l. 23–32)

As in many other passages, in the example just quoted God is one of the protagonists. He can also be given the role of a homodiegetic narrator that explicitly addresses his narratees, mostly Israel of the present (of enunciation) of *Seder Eliyahu*, as in the following example, where, it could be claimed, he tells a parable of the sages:[167]

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165 Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the Law*, 78. The narrative of Israel's transgressions is told on several occasions in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*. See for example ER 20, l. 5ff. (with God as narrator) and ER 56, l. 26ff. A similar phraseology is applied to other characters in different narrative contexts, e.g. to Egypt in ER 40, l. 10ff., to a group of young men who died in a city in Babylonia, ER 100, l. 29ff. The narrative of Israel's taking upon themselves the kingdom of heaven has several parallels within *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*: ER 6, l. 14ff., ER 85, l. 21ff., ER 101, l. 17ff., ER 119, l. 21ff., ER 122, l. 27ff. Another version of the Exodus narrative begins with the phrasing כשהיו ישראל במצריים. Characteristic for these narratives is the phrase כול דברים מכוערין ודברים שאינן ראויין ("all the repulsive and unworthy things").

166 Friedmann emends the MS reading, ישראל, with מישראל.

167 There is no clear mark of delimitation of the midrashist's discourse and God's speech, neither in the preceding co-text of the narrative, nor in the one following it (ER 20, l. 7ff.), with the midrashist taking over with a rhetorical question. The same type of transition we find in another passage where God is the narrator: "When your fathers did My will in the wilderness, I found contentment in them. What is said of them? *And they came, everyone whose heart was stirred[, and everyone whose spirit was willing, and brought the Lord's offering to be used for*

I made a covenant with you when you went out of Egypt, and I made a covenant with you in the Book of Admonitions. A song I spoke for you when you went out of Egypt, and a song I sang for you in the Book of Admonitions. This has taught you that the words of Torah are everywhere said twice. Not so according to you, though. You that *smear whitewash* (Ezek 13:11). You mock my words[168] as if they had no substance, making out of them a command, even though they are no command, [understanding as] hope what is no hope (קואה).[169] I gave you commands (צויתי) when you went forth out of Egypt, I gave you commands in the Book of Admonitions. For four hundred and eighty years before the Temple was built I had hope (קויתי) in you. Then I had hope in you for four hundred and ten years after the Temple was built,[170] for it is said, *Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line (קו) upon line, line upon line* etc. (Isa 28:13). Neither here did I find in you contentment, nor there did I find in you contentment. What is your wage from me? They told a parable: What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who became angry at his servant and ordered with regard to him that he be bound with a heavy chain, that the chain be pulled from behind so that they would have him fall on his face and they would kick him on his face and bowels, for it is said, *Therefore the word of the Lord will be to them, [Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little; in order that they may go, and fall backwards, and be broken, and snared, and taken.]* (Isa 28:13) And so on a hundred occasions you did repulsive things and unworthy things before Me, but My compassion for you goes first every day, always, for it is said, *You deliver the weak from those too strong for them,*

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the tent of meeting, and for all its service, and for the sacred vestments.] etc. *So they came, both men and women* (Exod 35:21–22). Of this hour Scripture says, *I slept, but my heart was awake.* (Song 5:2) And when I shaped the Torah of the Priests and gave commands to your fathers, in which I disposed of men and women with gonorrhea, women with menstruation and women who have recently given birth, they did not criticize Me, they did not utter a word, but were of a perfect conduct in this regard. And of this hour Scripture says, *Just as you have been a cursing among the nations, O house of Israel and house of Judah, so I will save you [and you shall be a blessing. Do not be afraid, but let your hands be strong.]* etc. (Zech 8:13)" (ER 86, l. 1–8) A series of short exegetical narratives that expound on Ezek 16:8 in chapter (25) 17 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* show a different, more clear transition from the voice of the midrashist to that of the narrator God. Here the midrashist interprets Ezek 16:6 by uttering a hypothetical statement about God, and from then on lets God himself speak in the first person, addressing Israel directly: "When I said to Abraham your father, *Go from your country and your kindred* <etc.> (Gen 12:1), he hearkened to My words immediately. Therefore it is said, *see, you were at the age for love* (Ezek 16:8) (ER 138, l. 21–22).

168 Friedmann emends the MS reading דבר with דבריי.

169 Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, 19, n. 23, points out: "We have commandment (ציווי) and hope (קיווי). The word קואה follows the pattern of צואה, where the waw has a qamats. The passage is defective in the Venice print. My version is in accordance with the subject matter."

170 Friedmann emends the MS reading משבנה with משנבנה.

> *the weak and needy from those who despoil them* (Ps 35:10) (ER 19, l. 30–ER 20, l. 7)

Even if God is represented with anthropomorphic features – reported speech and thought, characterization as a father etc. – many of his actions are of a nature as cannot possibly be predicated from a human being, so that the narrative turns purely metaphorical, or rather non-mimetic.[171] Related to this is the problem in some of the narratives with God as a main character of the representation of "supernatural" time and space, e.g. when the narrated events are God's actions both before the creation and in the world-to-come, i.e. after the time of the present world. Such space-temporal settings, which can be seen as indicators of the narratives' non-mimetic fictionality, we find in the two following passages:

> The sages taught: Nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the world was to be created, the Holy One, blessed be He, sat and inquired into, analyzed, refined, and tested all the words of Torah two hundred and forty-eight times with the same painstaking care He gave to selecting and putting together the two hundred and forty-eight parts of the human body. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, took up the words and set them in His Torah, His very own. (EZ 189, l. 31–)[172]

> She [Gehenna] was trembling. The Holy One, blessed be He, asked her, why are you trembling? She replied, Master of the Universe, I tremble, I am agitated, I shake but because of the wicked among the nations of the world who stand and speak ugly things about Israel, for it is said, *Sheol beneath is stirred up to meet you when you come* etc. (Isa 14:9). But then she began to tremble again. The Holy One, blessed be He, asked her, why are you trembling? She replied, Master of the Universe, give me those who know her [the Torah], yet transgress her. So the Holy One, blessed be He, would argue with her, saying, Maybe you do not have room. But she swore that <she> did have room,[173] for it is said, *Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself [and opened its mouth beyond measure]* etc. (Isa 5:14) (ER 108, l. 9–16)

The first text one narrates God's numerous steps in his meticulous work on the Torah, as many as the parts of the human body, the reader is told, before giving it its final form. In the second, a personification of the supernatural spatial setting, Gehenna or hell (the

[171] E.g. "the Holy One, blessed be he, made them his sanctuary in the world" (ER 85, l. 19) or "and he gave the Day of Atonement for forgiveness" (ER 86, l. 19).

[172] For a parallel see ER 9, l. 2ff. Further parallels of the chronological motif of God resolving upon something nine hundred and seventy-four generations before the creation of the world are found in ER 33, l. 14ff. ER 61, l. 21ff., ER 68, l. 27f., ER 130, l. 7f. See Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 273, n. 95.

[173] Friedmann emends the MS reading, ונשבעת לו שיש בי מקום, with ונשבעת לו שיש בה מקום.

scriptural verses used as proof-texts have the term *sheol*), converses with God on her own emotions:[174]

The texts discussed show that *Seder Eliyahu* makes use of a wide range of forms and styles that can be subsumed under the broad category of the homiletical-exegetical narrative.

4.4.2 First Person Narratives

First person narratives – whose use is a very rare phenomenon in rabbinic literature – are probably the most prominent feature of *Seder Eliyahu* and its most characteristic narrative forms.[175] The corpus comprises twenty-three narratives with the following distribution: sixteen are found in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, four in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, and three in *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. In them the main voice of the midrashist takes on a mode of communication different from the purely discursive homiletical one and entering a narrative mode to give an account of an event in his life. In four of the narratives, however, it is not the anonymous midrashist who functions as first person narrator, but R. Jose,[176] R. Jochanan,[177] and Rabban Jochanan b. Zakkai.[178] Nevertheless, they make use of the characteristic phraseology of the anonymous first person narratives.

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174 The narrative about Gehenna's tremor is preceded by a sort of parallel in the form of a comparison in present tense according to which the wicked in Gehenna are like brine in a cauldron: "The utter wicked, behold, they are like brine (כציר ומוריים) in the cauldron. What cauldron? One at the moment brine is given therein, it is suddenly still. Likewise Gehenna, when the transgressors in Israel are put inside her, is still." (ER 108, l. 7–9). In two passages of *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta* God converses with personifications: in chapter 3 (21) with the light that God created on the first day and in chapter 5 (23) with the measure of judgement.

175 The series of travel accounts by Rabbah bar bar Chana in bBB73a–74a are an important exception. See Günter Stemberger, "Münchhausen und die Apokalyptik: Bavli Bava Batra 73a–75b als literarische Einheit," in *Judaica Minora*, vol. 2, *Geschichte und Literatur des rabbinischen Judentums* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 299–316, and Dina Stein, "The Blind Eye of the Beholder: Tall Tales, Travelogues, and Midrash," Chapter 3 in *Textual Mirrors: Reflexivity, Midrash, and the Rabbinic Self* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012). In tShab 15:8 there is a first person account by R. Nathan on how he applied the ruling based on a case in a similar situation. Lennart Lehmhaus, "Were Not Understanding and Knowledge Given to You from Heaven? Minimal Judaism and the Unlearned Other in Seder Eliyahu Zuta,"*Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19 (2012): 236, n. 18, pointed out that eighteen of forty occurrences of first person narrative in post-Tannaitic texts stem from *Seder Eliyahu*.

176 See EZ 199, l. 6ff.

177 PsEZ 22, l. 11 and PsEZ 22, l. 16. Meir Friedmann, ed., *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta (Derech Ereç und Pirkê R. Eliezer): Nach Editio princeps des Seder Eliahu und einem Manuskripte, hierzu drei Abschnitte der Pirkê d'Rabbi Eliezer Kap. 39–41 nach demselben Manuskripte* (Vienna: Israelitische-Theologische Lehranstalt, 1904, reprint, Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann, 1960), 22, n. 51, suggests that this passage, which is attributed to R. Jochanan, is to be regarded as a *baraita* of R. Jochanan ben Zakkai.

178 See PsEZ 22, l. 22.

The nature of the narrated events is very uniform: They are exclusively conversations, whose variation pertains to the interlocutors – mainly individuals, though collective interlocutors – and the spatial settings – the academy in Jerusalem, the road etc.[179] On the first person narratives Braude and Kapstein pointed out: "The debates are not merely summarized for us: they are reported directly in the words of the speakers and have the dramatic force of living voices."[180] This observation is particularly relevant in connection with an aspect of time representation, namely with duration as a relation between story-time and text-time: Given that the bulk of the first person narratives of *Seder Eliyahu* is dialogue their characteristic duration is comparable to that of scenes, for which story-duration and text-duration are by convention regarded as identical.[181]

Some of the first person narratives are long dialogues in which several questions are dealt with. Most of them though are short passages that address a single topic. It is generally the rabbi's interlocutor who opens the conversation addressing the rabbi with a question or with a statement to which the rabbi responds. Whereas the beginnings are formulaic – with the exception of a narrative in chapter 2,[182] they all begin with the phrase פעם אחת הייתי ("once I was...")[183] –, their endings are frequently not so easily recognizable, and are therefore not perceived as real closures or dénouements. After having addressed a given matter (or series of topics) in direct response to the question he has been confronted with, the rabbi's speech fades into the homiletical discourse of the governing voice, so that the reader does not have the impression that he (or she) is reading a narrative any longer, or rather a dialogue, where the rabbi addresses primarily an intradiegetical interlocutor, and that he (or she) is part of an extradiegetical audience. Instead the reader is once again being addressed directly, i.e. not by means of a narrative, by the governing voice of the midrashist, who has taken up his usual communicative role, thus having the last word in the dialogue and preventing his interlocutor from reacting to the answer he has got. The rabbi's questioners do not get to explicitly acknowledge what they are told, this silence leads the reader to assume that they are persuaded by the

179 EZ 199, l. 6 is an exception to this rule for it is not primarily dialogue but action. This narrative by R. Jose tells how he once saw the emperor humbling himself in front of a young Jewish girl afflicted with leprosy who had been thrown on a dung heap. His role is that of a witness rather than one of a first person narrator involved in the events he narrates.

180 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 21.

181 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative fiction*, 52, argues though that this convention is not without problems: "Even a segment of pure dialogue, which has been considered by some a case of pure coincidence between story-duration and text-duration, cannot manifest complete correspondence. A dialogue can give the impression of reporting everything that was said in fact or fiction, adding nothing to it, but even then it is incapable of rendering the rate at which the sentences were uttered or the length of the silences. It is, therefore, only by convention that one speaks of temporal equivalence of story and text in dialogue."

182 Incidentally the only one which deals with astronomical matters.

183 On the phrase פעם אחת הייתי as marker for a narrative unit in tannaitic literature see Rivka Shemesh, "On the narrative discourse in Tannaitic language: An exploration of the מעשה (maʿaseh) and פעם אחת (paʿam ahat) discourse unit," *Hebrew Studies* 49 (2008): 99–125.

rabbi's explanations.[184]

An example might illustrate how these stories lack a dénouement. In chapter (15) 16 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* the rabbi tells his interlocutor in answer to the last of several questions the *maʿaseh* of a man who died young, despite his diligence in Torah study. This narrative turns out to be another first person narrative, which is itself embedded within the first one: the rabbi narrates how he met the man's widow and discussed with her her husband's behaviour until he (or both of them) could realize why the man had to die so young. The dialogue with the woman has a blurred ending: the rabbi addresses the woman directly a last time before quoting Av 4:2, and then goes on interpreting this mishnah without ever again mentioning or addressing the widow or the interlocutor of the upper narrative level again.[185]

This phenomenon, the fading of the narrative into the homiletical discourse or the "interference" of both discourse types, can also take place within more extensive first person narratives, in which cases the shift in mode and communicative situation can be perceived as an interruption of the narrative in the form of a homiletical digression. To name but an example of "interference" of homiletical and narrative discourses:[186] also in the first person narrative of chapter (15) 16 just mentioned the rabbi's answer to the question whether cheating a non-Jew is permitted (or not) is followed by a digression on the eight reasons why the world has been destroyed, which is introduced with the characteristic with the formula *mikan amru* as a tradition of the sages, before the next question is posed.[187]

First person narratives are, like homiletical-exegetical, though in a different sense, also texts of a double-voiced nature. This manifests itself in the already mentioned interference of homiletical and narrative modes of communication or discourses as well as in the "homiletical endings" to all of the passages that begin as first person *narratives*. Another manner in which the narratives' double-voicedness is made evident is the fact that they combine not an old (biblical) and a new (rabbinic) discourse or textual systems, but rather contemporary, competing discourses or ideologies – the rabbinic and the non-rabbinic.[188] The first person narratives, all of them, put in the rabbi's interlocutors' mouth a "discursive problem" the rabbi successfully solves from a rabbinic point of view. These challengers of rabbinic ideology never get a real chance at being a real prob-

[184] The narrative in EZ 167, l. 23ff. is an exception in that the magistrate speaks a *berakhah* in response to the rabbi's answer. The parallel in ER 95, l. 11ff. has the rabbi himself speak the *berakhah*.

[185] On this passage see pp. 195ff. I focus on the *maʿaseh* in section 7.2.

[186] For the concept of interference in narrative texts see Wolf Schmid, *Narratology: An Introduction*, trans. Alexander Starritt (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2010), 137–174, whose concept of text interference draws on notions by Mikhail Bakhtin and Valentin Voloshinov.

[187] On this passage see pp. 191ff.

[188] To a certain extent it could be argued that this special type of double-voicedness is probably true of the whole of *Seder Eliyahu*, not just of the first person narratives.

lem.[189] It is worth noting that from a narratological point of view the account of what happened (and of what was said) by a first person narrator has to be regarded as less objective than if it is the account by a narrator situated outside the narrated events. As Monika Fludernik argues, unlike heterodiegetic narrators first person (or autodiegetic) narrators "have an agenda when telling their stories, which could come into conflict with a true representation of what happened."[190]

Some of the interlocutors are explicitly depicted as a non-rabbinic "other": They are directly presented as men familiar with Scripture, but not with Mishnah,[191] as a Zoroastrian priest,[192] or a Roman magistrate.[193] In these cases the clash of discourses is more evident than in the narratives where the "otherness" of the interlocutors is not so explicitly emphasized.

Certain narratives deal not with "others" as interlocutors, but with members of the rabbinic system. The *Rabbah* part contains three conversations with the sages, a sort of choir or collective interlocutor,[194] which take the form of an exposition the rabbi delivers after having sought the occasion to do so: He himself presents the problem he wants to discuss and a solution to it. *Ex silentio* the sages are depicted as good listeners. Two passages depict the rabbi's conversations with a disciple.[195] They also follow the usual pattern of question and answer. In the first one the disciple is depicted not just indirectly by his speech acts, but also in the narrative frame he is depicted in a direct manner in his relation to the rabbi when he is compared to a son approaching his father. The disciple of the second narrative is said to be not שאינו בקי בהלכה ("versed in Halakhah"). In four passages of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* the anonymous rabbi converses with "an old man," who is himself indirectly characterized by the questions he poses.[196] Unlike the group of narratives with the men who knew Scripture but no Mishnah, where the questions tend to pertain to halakhic topics, the questions by the old men and by the disciples are of quite varied topics, so that it is not possible to infer from them a probable allusion to a historical counterpart.

One narrative has an angel as the rabbi's interlocutor.[197] Here an inversion of the usual hierarchy of teaching takes place: it is the rabbi who listens to the angel's explana-

189 This, again, holds true not just for issues raised within first person narratives.
190 Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology*, 153.
191 For example, ER 66, l. 9ff., ER 70, l. 7ff., ER 72, l. 9ff., and EZ 171, l. 16ff. Precisely this kind of characterization has been interpreted as a key to the question of whom these first person narratives address or who its intended or implied reader could have been, namely potential followers of the Karaites or of some of their scripturalist predecessors. On this see chapter 6.
192 See ER 5, l. 24ff.
193 See ER 95, l. 11ff. and EZ 167, l. 23ff.
194 See ER 49, l. 15ff., ER 51, l. 8ff., and ER 122, l. 1ff.
195 See ER 80, l. 19ff. and ER 120, l. 24ff. The second is the only case in which the rabbi converses in a first part with one person, an old man, and in the second with another, a disciple.
196 See ER 99, l. 12ff., ER 113, l. 34ff., ER 120, l. 24ff., ER 123, l. 36ff.
197 See ER 100, l. 32ff.

tion for the death of a group of young men and their teacher.

In one of the narratives of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* – which, given its extension shows, with four first person narratives, a relatively high proportion of this form –, the rabbi encounters a man he describes at the beginning as a scorner and a mocker, and who being asked by the rabbi concerning his profession replies that he is a fisherman.[198]

The so called *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, finally, has smaller corpus of first person narratives, all of them told by rabbinic authorities. R. Jochanan relates in the first one what he learned from conversing with an old woman and with a maiden.[199] Both these women are therefore indirectly characterized, both by their speech and by Jochanan's interpretation of their words. The narrative told by R. Jochanan ben Zakkai has "a man gathering fagots" as his interlocutor, thus symbolically presenting him as a punished man. The man's own report on his (previous) life further characterizes him.[200]

Characterization by indirect presentation is, therefore, a conspicuous feature in the first person narratives of *Seder Eliyahu*; characters are constituted as such by them being referred to with a name (or phrase) by the narrator but mostly by their own actions, whereby these are primarily of linguistic nature, they are speech acts. A rare example of indirect presentation where both action other than speaking and speech come into play is found in EZ 199, l. 6ff, the last narrative of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, where the Roman "other" is presented as exemplarily acknowledging the rabbinic world view. Here R. Jose tells how he witnessed the Roman emperor alighting from his horse to prostrate himself before a Jewish girl affected with leprosy. To the ensuing criticism by the Roman notables who, like R. Jose, witness the emperor's peculiar behaviour, the latter replies:

> Let it not grieve you. All the kings of the nations will prostrate themselves before them, for it is said, *Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you* (Isa 49:7). *The Holy One of Israel*, for He chose them. And it [Scripture] says, *Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the Lord has blessed.* (Isa 61:9) (EZ 199, l. 14–19)

A special case of first person narrative is the *maʿaseh* of the man who died young mentioned above.[201] The passage is introduced with the typical formula for a *maʿaseh*, but its narrator alleges to have been not just a silent witness, but one of the dramatis personae of the *maʿaseh*, the one rabbi who lends an ear to the desperate widow and realizes that

[198] On this passage see Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 45–46, who interprets this narrative as illustrating that every man with normal capacities is granted the possibility of studying Torah.

[199] See PsEZ 22, l. 11ff. and l. 16ff.

[200] See PsEZ 22, l. 22ff.

[201] See ER 76, l. 3–24.

her husband was justly punished.[202] The widow is herself indirectly depicted both by her actions and by her speech, both in the *maʿaseh*, and in the first person narrative, for what they basically discuss is how she *acted* during the days of her menstruation and during the so called white days.[203]

This *maʿaseh* is embedded within another first person narrative, which is another narratologically interesting aspect of *Seder Eliyahu*, namely its use of narrative levels. In some other cases too first person narratives make use of more than one narrative level. The extradiegetical first person narrator, who depicts himself in his narratives as a rabbi, is the intradiegetical narrator of some of the previously discussed forms (metadiegetical narratives): of meshalim,[204] of *maʿasim*,[205] and of homiletical-exegetical narratives. In such cases his direct addressee is not the extradiegetical audience but first and foremost a diegetical interlocutor. An example of homiletical-exegetical narrative told within a first person narrative is found in chapter 18: An old man asks the rabbi why some householders in Israel are prevented from having children. The rabbi explains to him that God purifies some "householders in Israel" by withholding from them the joy of having children for many years, not forever. This idea he illustrates with a series of summarized biblical passages (or para-scriptural narratives) that function as exempla on the nature of infertility and on the reward for prayer:

> He said to him, My son, it is because the Holy One, blessed be Him, loves them with a perfect love and rejoices in them, that he purifies them, so that they increase their prayers before Him. He said to me, No. Rather it is because they have lust in their hearts and take women not to be fertile and multiply. I said to him, My son, we have many householders in Israel who are ass-drivers and who have but one wife and are prevented from having children. You should know that it is so. Go and learn from our father Abraham [and Sarah] who were barren for seventy-five years. They increased their prayers before Him until Isaac came and they rejoiced in him. Go and learn from Rebekkah who was barren for twenty years, but she increased her prayers before Him until Jacob was born and they rejoiced in him. Go and learn from Rachel who was barren for fourteen years before her <two> children [were conceived], but she increased her prayers before Him until both came and they rejoiced in them. Go and learn from Hannah who was barren for nineteen years and six months, but she increased her prayers before Him, and her son Samuel came and she rejoiced in him. So you should accept the first explanation I gave you at the beginning, that the Holy One,

202 A similar combination of formal features of the *maʿaseh* and a reporting first person narrator is found in the *maʿaseh* of ER 66, l. 9–17.

203 See section 7.2 for a discussion of this passage.

204 In ER 70, l. 7, for example, the rabbi answers the four questions posed by his interlocutor with four meshalim.

205 In ER 76, l. 3–24 he tells a *maʿaseh* in which he himself is a character

> blessed be He, loves them with a perfect love and rejoices in them and purifies them, so that they increase their prayers before Him. (ER 99, l. 14–25)

It should be noted that not only the rabbi functions as intradiegetical narrator, also his interlocutor can assume this role, as for example when a man with no Mishnah tells the rabbi *maʿaseh* on how he cheated on a gentile, which is used against him by the rabbi.[206]

Thematic variation in the first person narratives is determined by the different topics discussed by the rabbi and his interlocutors, and to a much lesser extent also by the changing spatial settings for the conversations. Many conversations, though, are introduced as taking place while the rabbi (or a named rabbi) was walking – nine among them are introduced with הייתי מהלך ממקום למקום ("walking from one place to another"),[207] three with הייתי מהלך בדרך ("walking on the road"),[208] one with הייתי מהלך בכרך גדול שבעולם ("walking in the greatest city of the world")[209] and finally one with הייתי מהלך בכרך גדול של רומי ("walking in the great city of Rome").[210] Four conversations, those with the sages and one with a disciple, have the academy in Jerusalem (הייתי יושב בבית המדרש [ה]גדול שבירושלים),[211] three the synagogue[212] as setting. The only semi-private space in which we find the rabbi in conversation with someone is the courtyard of the building in which a widow lives.[213]

An example of a first person narrative might better illustrate what these texts look like and how they operate:[214]

> A. One time while journeying among those in exile in Babylonia, I came into a great city which was entirely Jewish – there were no Gentiles at all in it. I found there a teacher of young men who had before him two hundred students, most of whom were between eighteen and twenty years old.[215] B. Because these young people disgraced themselves with immorality, their teacher died, his son died, and his grandson died, as did every one of the students most of whom were between the ages of eighteen and twenty. C. As I was weeping and sighing for them, an angel came to me and asked, Why do you weep and sigh? I replied, Shall I not weep and sigh for those who came to possess knowledge of Scripture and Mishnah and are now gone as

206 See ER 74, l. 25ff. and pp. 191ff. here for a discussion.
207 Seven in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and two in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.
208 One in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* (ER 35, l. 7ff.), one in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* (EZ 171, l. 16ff.), and one in *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta* (PsEZ 22, l. 22ff.)
209 ER 5, l. 24, probably in allusion to Ctesiphon.
210 In EZ 199, l. 10. R. Jochanan ben Zakkai is here the first person narrator.
211 All of them in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*. In three cases the academy is called "the great academy."
212 ER 66, l. 9, and two in PsEZ 22, l. 11, PsEZ 22, l. 16.
213 See ER 76, l. 6.
214 It must be pointed out that this narrative has a number of anomalies when compared to the rest of the corpus, but this does not lessen its relevance for the present purposes.
215 According to the MS this line is followed by: "Their teacher was not among them, there was only a son of his and a grandson."

> if they had never been? The angel said, It is nice of you to weep and sigh. Still, why should these young men have followed filthy ways and committed unworthy deeds and disgraced themselves with immorality discharging their seed for no reason? Did they not know that death would lead them astray? (ER 100, l. 32–ER 101, l. 6)

The narrative does not – at least not obviously – illustrate the statement that immediately precedes it,[216] but rather anticipates statements that come after its narration.[217]

Here the rabbi is not teaching someone else, but is first depicted as an observer anguished at the "sight" of how a certain group of people ruined their lives and that of their teacher. Although there is no indication of time passing by, two story times can be distinguished, almost two scenes (A and B): In the first one the young students and the teacher are said to be there, though there is no dialogue or action of any sort; in the second passage the narrator laments the death of the teacher and his family as of every single young student seen in the first scene. We assume that the narrator is in C still there weeping for the loss when he is approached not by an old man or by a denier of the Oral Tradition as is usually the case in *Seder Eliyahu*, but by a supernatural being – an angel. Only now is there a short dialogue defining the nature of the immorality referred to in B: the students of this teacher were not capable of restraining their sexual appetites, for they would disgrace themselves "discharging their seed in vain." The angel only alludes to how these people were responsible for their own and for their teacher's death.

As was previously noted with respect to the end of narratives in *Seder Eliyahu* in general, also here the reader does not get go know whether the dialogue comes to an end with the end of passage C, whether the angel leaves then the Jewish city in Babylonia or stays to listen to what the midrashist is about to say. So the midrashist turns to his audience and proceeds to draw conclusions from the rather mysterious narrative passage. In the passage immediately following the narrative of the students punished with premature death the voice of the midrashist states:[218]

> D. If this be so, this is measure for which this mishnah that was given to the Sages: "A man may not stay alone with two women." If you, however, say "a woman may be alone with two men" (mQid 4:12, bQid 80b), [bear in mind that] the halakhah is not thus, for if one [of the men] should commit a sexual transgression with her, there would not be enough testimony. On the other hand, a woman may be alone with three men, for, should one of

[216] The midrashist had been dealing on the subject of intermarriage among the ten different classes who came up to the Land of Israel from Babylonia after the exile.

[217] Common to both the passages preceding and following the narrative is the fact, however, that mishnayot of the fourth chapter of tractate *Qiddushin* are quoted.

[218] There is no clear delimitation at the end of the narrative passage, so that it could be argued, that it is the angel the one who goes on addressing the extradiegetical audience. provides a sort of application of this story, an application that points to a wider context than that of the schoolhouse as setting for immoral behaviour

> them commit a sexual transgression with her, then there would be enough testimony. And why is there a difference between two and three [men with whom a woman may stay alone]? Those who taught that [a woman may be alone with] three meant disciples of the wise and great sages. But if they are licentious, she may not be alone even with a hundred of them. The sages taught in a mishnah: "An unmarried man may not tend cattle, nor may two unmarried men sleep together under the same cover" (mQid 4:14, bQid 82a). And also this halakhah is widespread in Israel: One whose business is with women must not be alone with women, for example net makers, carders, [handmill] cleaners, wool dressers, tailors, spice peddlars, barbers, and launderers.[219] E. If you wish to learn and take delight in the words of Torah, go and learn from what happened at the very beginning of it all. When our fathers stood at Mount Sinai to receive upon themselves the Torah from Sinai, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses, *Go to the people and consecrate them [today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes]* etc. (Exod 19:10). Moses went and said to them, *Prepare for the third day[; do not go near a woman.]* etc. (Exod 19:15). But is it really so that he warned them only against women? What he said was, Abstain from transgression, from theft, and from improper acts, so that you are pure when you stand at Mount Sinai. (ER 101, l. 6–22)

Two of the three quotations of Mishnah tractate Qiddushin and the minimal exegetical narrative in E and focus on women as the core of a discussion on how to avoid the immoral behaviour of sexual transgressions. Only by the end of E does the midrashist relativise the role of women in this context, having Moses warn Israel with respect to all sorts of immorality, i.e. not just with respect to restraint in sexual conduct. The two text passages D and E are characteristic of the homiletical discourse of *Seder Eliyahu*. The midrashist addresses his reader (with a masculine personal pronoun *atah* or verbal forms with masculine endings) as if he were a potential questioner, posing question they could have had and answering them himself. The narrative of the students is never explicitly taken up again, or commented, but only indirectly, implicitly, in this passage where a shift of focus toward the two mishnayot can be ascertained.

4.5 Conclusions: homiletical narration

> *For the mighty are ruined!*[220] (Zech 11:2) These are the mighty in Israel whose ruin He hates, for it is said, *By the rivers of Babylon [– there we sat down and there we wept when we remembered Zion.]* etc. (Ps 137:1)

[219] A similar list in bQid 82a contains following professions: "goldsmiths, carders, [handmill] cleaners."

[220] MT reads אֲשֶׁר, MS כאשר.

> It is surely not said, "<There we sat down> and wept,"[221] but *There we sat down and there we wept [when we remembered Zion.]*, which teaches that they wept, they were silent, and then wept again. What does Scripture teach when it says, *when we remembered Zion*. (ibid.) Just that when they[222] remembered Zion, they wept, burst forth in one loud cry of agony, and then they wept again. Therefore it is said, *when we remembered Zion*. (ER 149, l. 20–24)

Is there a narrative in the quoted Psalm verse, or rather a single event consisting of two simultaneous "actions"? Does the meticulous reading of the midrash constitute a narrative? We are told "that they wept, then they were still, and then they wept again." We are told, in yet another interpretation, "that when they remembered Zion, they wept in a loud cry of agony, and (then) they wept." Is this a micro-exegetical narrative about the mighty of Israel? What are the narrated events, is the relation between them of causal nature? The passage just quoted shows that the midrash can be concerned to explicitly name implied events in a scriptural verse, but that the resulting matrix of scriptural text and rabbinic statement need not always constitute a narrative. As has been shown in this chapter, *Seder Eliyahu* contains several narratives that need not be "explained" or "justified" as such, but are probably easily recognizable as such by a reader with little familiarity with rabbinic literature.

Even if to describe them they were generally isolated from their context, narrative texts in *Seder Eliyahu* are never independent, but parts of a non-narrative, homiletical-ethical whole. Narratives not only interact with the non-narrative discourse that encompasses them, but often with other narratives. Short simple forms such as the narrative *mashal* or the *maʿaseh* can be arranged in pairs or series, but they can also be embedded in other narratives, functioning as metadiegetical narratives. So to illustrate the ways narrative and homiletical modes or discourses interact in *Seder Eliyahu* I propose closing the typology presented in this chapter with a "case study":[223] a cursory reading of a chapter in *Seder Eliyahu*, chapter (11) 10. To distinguish them typographically narrative passages are set as block citations.

The chapter opens with a passage of explicit exegesis of Judg 5:1.[224] The quotation of the verse part ותשר דבורה וברק ("Then Deborah and Barak sang"), a biblical formula that introduces the speech in the song of Deborah and Barak, is followed by a brief exegetical narrative. In it the biblical speech act (a poem) is replaced, reformulated with rabbinic discourse. To introduce this the midrashist poses the question "What did Deborah prophesy to Israel?" and answers it, "She just spoke to them as follows..." Deborah's

[221] MT reads גַּם־בָּכִינוּ and the MS גם ובכינו. Friedmann puts the expression גם in brackets, although it appears to be the very word the midrash attempts to interpret in the psalm verse.

[222] Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 367, translate "the Levites."

[223] For this idea, not for the form of exposition, I again follow Simon-Shoshan, *Stories of the law*, 54–58.

[224] See ER 52, l. 17–ER 53, l. 4.

speech itself is yet another pair of question and answer, one that seeks to explain the problematic redundancy in the infinitive absolute construction of Judg 5:2, בפרוע פרעות: "On account of whom does the Holy One deliver (נפרע) Israel from among the peoples of the world?" Both question and answer have a low narrativity since they are formulated in the *qotel*-form[225] and can be regarded as a non-narrative hermeneutic digression within a narrative passage (or as a hermeneutic passage within a narrative frame). The answer consists of three parts. The first part states that those men who go to the synagogue and to the house of study in the morning and in the evening, and answer with Amen are the reason why God saves Israel from among the peoples of the world. As a (connecting) proof-text Ps 55:19 is quoted. The second part explains Ps 55:19 as referring to the man who is one of ten in the synagogue in the morning and in the evening. According to the third the verse also refers to the man who sustains not only the disciple of the wise of whom he knows that he reads Scripture and studies Mishnah, but also his wife and children and all those who read Scripture and study Mishnah with him. This last statement on charity is expanded upon with two further statements followed by proof-texts: the first is an anonymous saying supported by Deut 9:19, the second is a saying of the sages in the Mishnah (mSan 4:5), followed by Prov 21:14.[226] The emphasis on charity in the third and final part of the answer to the question posed by Deborah is also evident in that this statement is followed by a *maʿaseh* which illustrates the importance of charity.

> The formula מעשה בשתי משפחות של כהנים ("It happened to two priestly families") introduces a narrative, an exemplum on the power of charity is told (ER 53, l. 5–11).[227] The passage's narrativity is clearly higher than that of the previous one, it is an account of events that happened once in the past concerning two priestly families that consult R. Jochanan ben Zakkai on the premature death of their sons. He infers that they must be descendants of Eli's family, who were punished with the death of male descendants in their youth (1 Sam 2:33). The families do not comment on this, an embedded para-scriptural narrative, but ask Jochanan for a remedy. He suggests that they estimate the value of their sons once they have reached puberty in goods and give it to charity. This is the only way they can revert the curse on the descendants of Eli's. The idea that charity preserves lives, expressed in the verse Prov 10:2 quoted by Jochanan, connects this *maʿaseh* with the previous narrative segment.

The narrative is followed by a segment of ethical-homiletical discourse dealing with charity and introduced with the connecting formula ולא זו בלבד אלא ("and not only this").[228]

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225 The unvocalized form נפרע could also be a form of the perfect. However, since all the answers are given in the active participle or *qotel*-form, we assume that the question uses the same "tense."

226 Both these verses are used in a passage of bBB 9b that discusses charity.

227 A parallel is found in BerR 59:1.

228 See ER 53, l. 12–24.

The segment consists of five statements: a) A casuistic formulation in the form of a relative construction: "Whoever does X, of him Scripture says Y." b) The report of a speech act which represents God as posing a question and answering it himself; even though this passage uses *qatal*[229] and *qotel* forms, it does not deal with events in the past, but with ever recurring ones. c) Two parallel constructions of the form "Whenever Israel does X, what verse applies to them?" and applying two verses to different ways in which Israel can behave with regard to charity. d) After a *berakhah* God's question in b) is answered again in the form of a rhetorical question suggesting that it is not the charitable man but God himself who redeems not only Israel but all his creatures. e) Words of admonition addressed to the House of David, followed by Jer 21:12, a verse which contains two words that are almost leitmotifs of the narrative and homiletical unit (consisting of *maʿaseh* and homiletical application): משפט and הצילו.

In the next segment[230] the formula אמרה דבורה ("Deborah said") introduces a speech act attributed to Deborah. Its first part, according to Friedmann a sort of petichah,[231] consists of an apodictic statement and a proof-text (Prov 3:18). The second part is an atomizing exegesis of Judg 5:10–11. Each verse is divided into three parts and analyzed.[232] Why is the reader to assume that these words were uttered in the past, i.e. that we have to do with an event that took place in the past? The only indication of this is the verb in the introductory formula, *amrah*, which provides a frame for both the apodictic statement and the exegetical passage. This way of reading the text makes of Deborah the "author" of her song and at the same time her own interpreter. It could be argued that Deborah only spoke (*amrah*) the apodictic statement, but that the exegesis that follows it is spoken by the midrashist himself.[233] The last part of Judg 5:11 is quoted, whereby an expression left unquoted, פרזונו, is interpreted in terms of Israel's dispersion (פיזר) as a merciful plan of God. This notion is illustrated with the exegetical *maʿaseh* that follows.

> The narrative, which is opened with the formula מעשה בהגמון אחד... ("It happened that a Roman leader..."), is the account of an encounter of a Roman leader (*hegemon*) and the Patriarch Jehudah ha-Nasi,[234] After being defied by a statement of the Roman, Rabbi lets a disciple of his, whose name is not mentioned, reply to the Roman and defeat him. His reply takes the form of an hypothetical parable: "Where would the master of the house

229 The phrase באותה שעה is used already in the *Mekhilta* as a temporal marker of the past.

230 See ER 53, l. 25–ER 54, l. 10.

231 See Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, 53, n. 10.

232 Apart from segmenting each verse into three parts, the interpretation of both verses seems to follow the same pattern providing two explanations (*davar acher*) for the second verse part, i.e. יובי על מדין resp. בין משאבים.

233 See the exegesis of the first verse in bEruv 54b.

234 See ER 54, l. 11–27. In the Venice print Rabbi's interlocutor is a כומר, i. e. a non-Jewish or idolatrous priest as interlocutor. A parallel in bPes 87b has following characters instead: a sectarian, R. Chanina and R. Oshaia.

> put his vessels so that these come into the house when the master of the house returns?"[235]
>
> In order to provide an alternative interpretation, *davar acher*, of the verse part of Judg 5:11, שם יתנו צדקות ה' צדקות פרזונו בישראל, an aetiological narrative is told by the midrashist explaining how it came to pass that so many synagogues and houses of study are found in Israel. The narrative is closed with the final part of Judg 5: 11.[236]

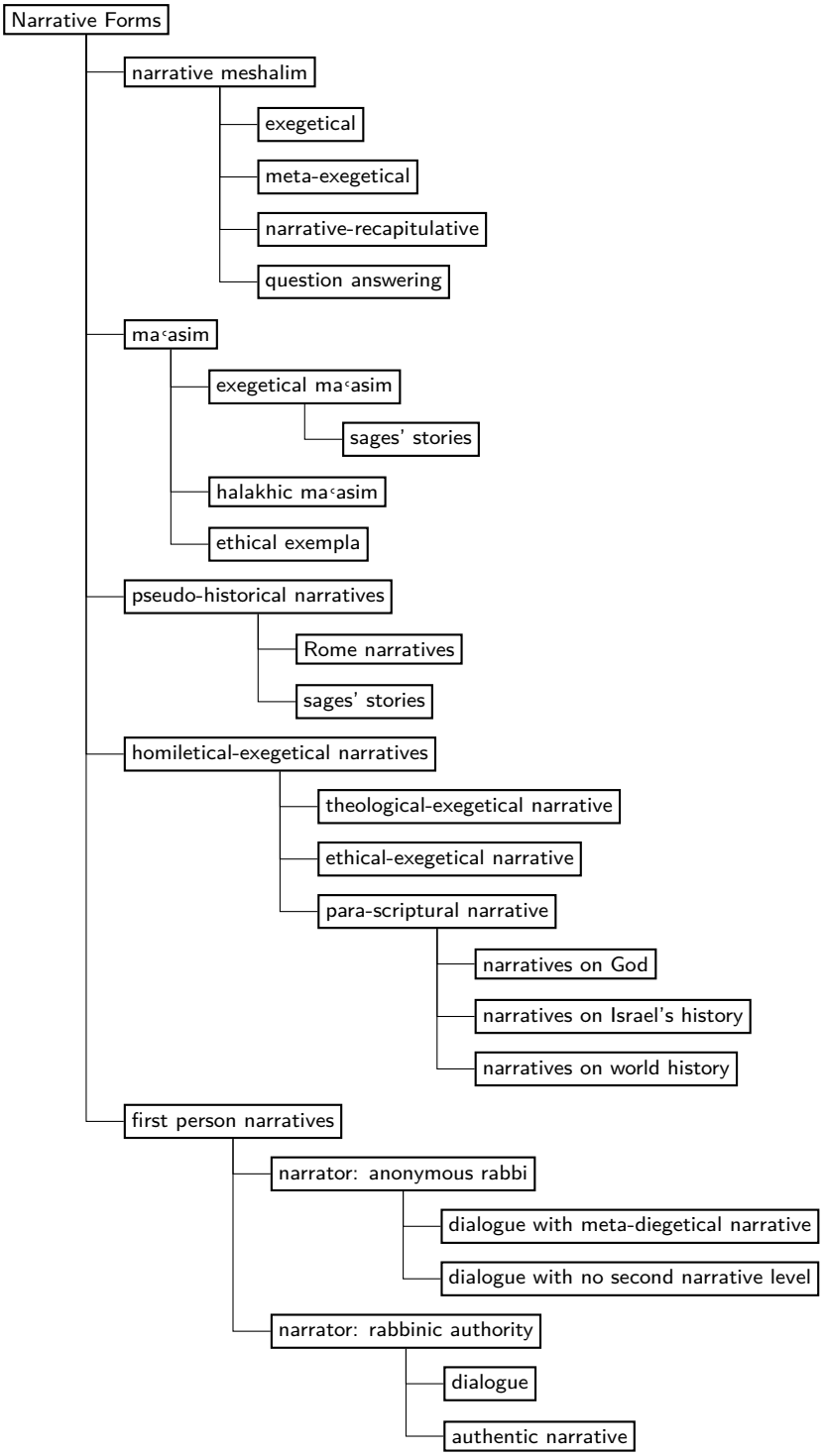
A blessing in the form of an *ashre*-passage reopens the homiletical discourse. He who renews the words of Torah in one of the numerous houses of study in Israel is compared to one who is heard in heaven and who is directly spoken to by God. God's direct speech is represented and confirmed with the quotation of the first part of Judg 5:8.

> The chapter is closed with an anonymous statement by the sages, introduced with *mikan amru*, "derived" from the preceding one (or just associated with it by the author of *Seder Eliyahu*). The statement is itself an hyperbolical narrative, according to which forty-thousand men of Israel went to war but were not in need of a shield – here the last part of Judg 5:8 is interpreted – because two disciples of the wise were with them.

[235] The use of such a hypothetical parable is one of the many differences between this version of the story and its parallel in bPes 87b: "R. Oshaia said: What is meant by the verse, *Even the righteous acts of His Ruler in Israel?* (Judg 5:11) The Holy One, blessed be He, showed righteousness [mercy] unto Israel by scattering them among the nations. And this is what a certain sectarian said to R. Hanina, 'We are better than you. Of you it is written, *For Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom* (1 Kings 11:16); whereas you have been with us many years yet we have not done anything to you!' Said he to him, 'If you agree, a disciple will debate it with you.' [Thereupon] R. Oshaia debated it with him, [and] he said to him,' [The reason is] because you do not know how to act. If you would destroy all, they are not among you. [Should you destroy] those who are among you, then you will be called a murderous kingdom!' Said he to him, 'By the Capitol of Rome! with this [care] we lie down and with this [care] we get up."

[236] ER 54, l. 28–32.

Figure 4.2: Typology of Narrative Forms in *Seder Eliyahu*



Chapter 5

The *Meshalim*: Parabolical Passages on the Disciples of the Wise

5.1 Preliminary Considerations

The following passage in *Songs of Songs Rabbah* is often quoted as containing what could be termed a rabbinic poetology of the rabbinic *mashal*, or with David Stern "a *mashal* about the mashal."[1] Five *meshalim* are told in this passage in order to illustrate how *meshalim* illustrate:

> Another interpretation: *Song of songs*. This is what the verse says, *Besides (ויותר) being wise, the preacher* (Qoh 12:9). Had another man composed them [the books Proverbs, Qohelet, and Song of Songs] you would need to incline your ears (אזניך) and listen to these words, all the more [so] (ויותר) since Solomon composed them; had he composed them from his knowledge, you would need to incline your ears and listen to them, all the more [so] (ויותר) since he composed them in the spirit of holiness. *Besides being wise, the preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing (ואזן) and studying (וחקר) and arranging (תקן) many proverbs.* (ibid.) Weighing the words of Torah and studying the words of Torah, he provided Torah with handles (אזנים). You find out that until Solomon came there was no illustration (דוגמא). Rav Nachman [gave] two [illustrations]. Rav Nachman said: Like a large palace which had many doors and anyone who entered would not find his way to the door. A clever man came and took a coil [of string] and hung it up along the way to the door, so that every one went in and out [following] the way of the coil. So, until Solomon came no one could

[1] David Stern, "Forms of Midrash I: Parables of Interpretation," in *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 41.

> discern the words of Torah, and when Solomon came everyone began to understand the Torah. Rav Nachman [used] another expression (לישנא חורי): Like a thicket of reeds which no one could enter, until a clever man came and cleared [part of it so that] everyone began to go in and out through the cleared area. So [it was with] Solomon. R. Jose said: It is like a big basket full of fruit without handles (אזן) that could not be carried until a clever one came and made handles to it and so began to be carried by the handles. So, until Solomon arose no one could discern the words of Torah, but when Solomon came, everyone began to understand Torah. R. Shila said: It is like a big ladle full of hot water without a handle to carry until one came and made a handle to it so that they began to carry it by its handle. R. Chanina said: Like a deep well full of water, its water being cold, sweet, and good, but no creature could drink from it, until a man came who joined rope with rope, and cord with cord to draw water out of it and drink. So everyone began to draw water and drink. So from word to word and from parable to parable, Solomon stood on the foundation of Torah, for it is written, *The proverbs (משלי) of Solomon son of David, king of Israel* (Prov 1:1), by means of Solomon's parables (משלותיו) he understood the words of Torah. Our rabbis said: Let not the (lit. "this")[2] parable be light[ly esteemed] in your eyes, for by means of the parable a man can understand the words of Torah. It is like a king who [having] lost the gold of his house or a precious pearl, does he not find it by means of a wick of very little worth? So the parable should not be light[ly esteemed] in your eyes, for by means of the parable a man can understand the words of Torah. You should know that it is so, for by means of the parable Solomon understood the subtlety of Torah. R. Judan said: It is to teach you that whoever speaks words of Torah in public merits that the spirit of holiness rest upon him. And from whom do you learn [this]? From Solomon, who, because he spoke words of Torah in public, merited that the spirit of holiness rested upon him and he composed three books: Proverbs (משלי), Qohelet, and Song of Songs. (ShirR 1:1, 8)[3]

According to this rare statement by the rabbis themselves on the role of the *mashal* and, as suggested by Arnold Goldberg, the mashal's task is to illustrate the meaning of the words of Torah.[4] The *mashal* gains its worth not from its inherent value, but rather from the task it fulfills.

Other talmudic passages reflect upon the rabbis' understanding of the parable as belonging to the rabbinic curriculum: in bBB 134a and bSuk 28a, for example, it is re-

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2 Also in the following instances the Hebrew original reads המשל הזה.

3 For the translation I follow the text of ShirR of the Vilna edition, contained in the Bar Ilan University Online Responsa Project.

4 See Arnold Goldberg, "Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis im Midrasch," in *Rabbinische Texte als Gegenstand der Auslegung: Gesammelte Studien*, vol. 2, ed. Margarete Schlüter and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 143.

ported that Jochanan b. Zakkai studied not only Miqra, Mishnah, Gemara, Halakhah and Haggadah, but also parables, which are designated as "washers' proverbs" and "fox fables"(משלות כובסים ומשלות שועלים).[5] According to bSan 38b a third of R. Meir's lectures is said to have consisted of parables. By the times of R. Jochanan, who was lived a hundred years after R. Meir, only three of the numerous fox parables he used to tell were still known.[6]

Rabbinic parables or *meshalim* – the words are used as synonyms in this study – have been at the centre of scholarly attention for a long time. Arnold Goldberg's survey in his seminal article "Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis im Midrasch" (1981) provide a concise overview of what has interested scholarship about these short texts since the nineteenth century. It should be noted that from among the vast material of rabbinic parables it is particularly the subgroup of so called king's parables that has received special attention,[7] and that most of the studies of rabbinic *meshalim* focus on *tannaitic* and *amoraic documents*. To name but few of the most influential ones, apart from the already mentioned article by Goldberg: The first comprehensive study of a rabbinic parable corpus was Ignaz Ziegler's *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrasch beleuchtet durch die römische Kaiserzeit*; Clemens Thoma and Simon Lauer undertook the big scale project of collecting, translating into German, and commenting the parables of *Pesikta de Rav Kahana*, *Bereshit Rabbah*, and *Shemot Rabbah* in the four volumes of *Die Gleichnisse der Rabbinen*; David Stern dedicated his book *Parables in Midrash* to the poetics and rhetoric of the *mashal* with a special focus on the midrash *Ekhah Rabbah*; Alan Appelbaum focuses in his book *The Rabbis' King-Parables: Midrash from the third-century Roman Empire*

5 The complete passage on Jochanan's curriculum reads in bBB 134a: "It was said of R. Jochanan b. Zakkai that his studies included the Scriptures, the Mishnah, the Gemara, the Halachoth, the Aggadoth; the subtle points of the Torah and the minutiae of the Scribes; the inferences from minor to major and the [verbal] analogies; astronomy and geometry; washer's proverbs (ומשלות כובסים) and fox fables (ומשלות שועלים); the language of the demons, the whisper of the palms, the language of the ministering angels and the great matter and the small matter. The 'great matter' is the manifestation of the [divine] chariot and the small matter is the arguments of Abaye and Raba. Thereby is fulfilled the Scriptural text, That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance and that I may fill their treasuries. Now, if the least among them [was] so, how great must have been the greatest among them! It was related of Jonathan b. Uzziel [that] when he sat and studied the Torah, every bird that flew over him was burned."

6 "Whence do you know that? asked he [R. Ishmael]. – I heard it in a public discourse of R. Meir, [he answered]. Even as R. Johanan said: When R. Meir used to deliver his public discourses, a third was Halacha, a third Haggadah, and a third consisted of parables (מתלי). R Jochanan also said: R. Meir had three hundred parables of foxes (משלות שועלים), and we have only three left, [as illustrations to the verses]. [a] The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge; [b] Just balances, just weights, [c] The righteous is delivered out of trouble and the wicked comes in in his stead."

7 Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, "Parable," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: MacMillan Reference, 2007), 15:621–623, even provides a classification of rabbinic king's parables according to their motifs.

on a corpus of 232 king-parables.[8]

In contrast, the parable in documents of the *geonic* times has not received much attention. An exception is a chapter David Stern dedicates to the history of the *mashal* in the Hebrew literature, from Near Eastern literature of antiquity to Agnon. In this context he discusses two texts of *Seder Eliyahu*,[9] and comes to the general conclusion that the *Seder Eliyahu*'s author made use of a literary-rhetorical form from classical midrash, but adapted it to his own (generic) purposes. Stern identifies four distinctive traits of the *mashal* in this post-classical work: First of all, he notices that although the context of a parable appears to be exegetical little in the parable points to the verse at the opening, which leads Stern to posit that unlike classical midrash *Seder Eliyahu* uses the literary form as an illustrative rather than as a rhetorical tool – though it is not clear to me why an "illustrative" use should exclude a "rhetorical" one.[10] Secondly, related to this first aspect is a tendency "to extending the narrative through its own logic rather than concentrating it upon a single rhetorical message,"[11] which Stern also designates as a "tendency to 'novelization.'"[12] When compared to its precedents in classical midrash, Stern argues, the *mashal* narrative in *Seder Eliyahu* is "less concentrated and increasingly romance-like – more of a story, or a miniature novella."[13] The third aspect Stern describes, namely, an inconsistency between co-text preceding the *mashal* and the *nimshal* , is probably present in more *meshalim* than a tendency to novelization. Finally, and somehow related to the previous aspect, is the puzzling and implausible character of the narrative itself, which elicits the reader's question "What was this *mashal* actually about?" The ultimate consequence of such a transformation in the use of the *mashal* is the fact that "narrative and exegesis fail to intersect as they do in classical mashal."[14] It is worth noting at this point that the parables Stern discusses are representative of only part of the parable corpus of *Seder Eliyahu*, namely of the (formally) exegetical parables

In this chapter I will discuss examples out of *Seder Eliyahu*'s corpus of 78 parables,[15] trying to focus both on those characteristic traits described by David Stern and on further aspects that appear to constitute their specificity as contrasting with the parables

8 Ignaz Ziegler's *Die Königsgleichnisse des Midrasch beleuchtet durch die römische Kaiserzeit* (Breslau: S. Schottlaender, 1903); Clemens Thoma and Simon Lauer, eds., *Die Gleichnisse der Rabbinen*, 4 vols. (Bern et al.: Lang, 1986–2000); David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Exegesis in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991); Alan Appelbaum, *The Rabbis' King-Parables: Midrash from the Third-Century Roman Empire* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010).

9 See Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 211–216.

10 See Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 213.

11 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 213.

12 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 213.

13 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 213.

14 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 213.

15 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 216, states that "more than a hundred examples" can be found in *Seder Eliyahu*, which I cannot confirm using Friedmann's edition.

of earlier rabbinic documents. For this purpose I will present examples of every parable type as introduced in chapter 4: 1) exegetical parables; 2) narrative-recapitulative parables – parables with a biblical narrative (or a scriptural verse) as (part of) their preceding co-text, but which are *not explicitly exegetical*, at least not from a formal point of view; 3) meta-exegetical parables – parables brought about not by a scriptural verse, but rather by a rabbinic statement; and, 4) parables that are told to (purportedly) provide an answer to a rhetorical question.

To delimit a parable's co-text is no easy task. For heuristic purposes I propose to consider Friedmann's divisions of the text – for which he follows the manuscript's divisions, i.e. a line break or a point preceded and followed by blank spaces within a line of text –, as units of textual meaning that constitute the co-text of a parable (in some cases of a series parables). With the expression "preamble" I refer to the co-text that precedes a parable. As noted before, the expression "context" denotes a wider textual environment and the text's cultural and historical situation.[16]

5.2 The Exegetical *Mashal*'s New Clothes

Seder Eliyahu contains a total of 42 exegetical parables: 36 in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, two in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, and four in *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. Most of them are king-parables, but there are nine exceptions: the protagonist can be a householder (in two cases), an anonymous man (אדם, אחד), "two/ten men" as "collective" character, "a servant," "a princess," or "a poor girl."

Characteristic for the exegetical parable is the quotation of a scriptural verse (or lemma verse, which is sometimes preceded by the hermeneutic expression דבר אחר), followed by a short comment on it and a narrative that illustrates this comment, though in some cases the comment is not present. After the narrative an application or explanation of how the narrative illustrates is given. In the table below lists the terminology used by three scholars who studied the rabbinic parable, Arnold Goldberg, David Stern, and Alan Appelbaum:[17]

16 On this see page 25, n. 110.

17 Cf. Goldberg, "Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis," 146, Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 24, and Appelbaum, *The Rabbis' King-Parables*, 66–67.

Table 5.1: The structure of the rabbinic exegetical parable

Goldberg	Stern	Appelbaum
Lemma	Illustrand	introductory word/phrase[18]
Formular/ "Konnector des Vergleichs"	Introductory formula *mashal le-*	marker of comparison
Relat	*Mashal*-proper	secular narrative
Entsprechungsformel		marker of applicability
Korrelat/ Sachhälfte	*nimshal*	Nimshal
	Proof-text	

Alan Appelbaum designates the exegetical parable told immediately after the quotation of a scriptural verse as "direct parable," i.e. the parable that is told directly after the verse or part of verse has been quoted.[19] Of this type 21 parables can be identified. The rest of the exegetical parables of *Seder Eliyahu* have a lemma that consists of quotation and explicit interpretation preceding the *mashal* narrative.[20] After the *mashal* narrative (*mashal*-proper or secular narrative), the *nimshal* , "Sachhälfte" or application follows, generally introduced by an introductory formula or "marker of applicability." There are, however, variations to this standard form of the exegetical parable, which lack some of the constituting parts – either there is no *nimshal* , this lacks the characteristic proof-text, or the connecting "marker of applicability."

The *nimshal* of exegetical parables in *Seder Eliyahu* takes very different forms. In some cases only the lemma verse, introduced with the phrase שנאמר, is quoted as a confirmation of the interpretation given. The lemma verse can also be quoted and commented upon with an exegetical narrative or with a statement on the end of times. In many cases, however, the *nimshal* takes the form of a statement followed by a verse other than the lemma verse, a proof-text. The table below shows a possible classification of the *nimshal* forms of the exegetical parable in *Seder Eliyahu*:

18 With "introductory word/phrase" Appelbaum, *The Rabbis' King-Parables*, 66, designates phrases such as "R. Poloni said a parable," or "they said a parable".

19 See Appelbaum, *The Rabbis' King-Parables*, 65.

20 It should be noted that in some cases, e.g. ER 11, l. 25, the lemma verse has been introduced by M. Friedmann.

Table 5.2: The *nimshal* of exegetical parables

Nimshal =	Lemma	ER 6. l. 26ff.,[21] ER 11, l. 25ff., ER 34, l. 3ff., EZ 181, l. 8ff.
Nimshal =	Lemma + Biblical Narrative[22]	ER 34, l. 12ff.
Nimshal =	Lemma + statement	ER 31, l. 27ff., ER 93, l. 20ff.
Nimshal =	Lemma and following verses + interpretation	ER 107, l. 16ff.
Nimshal =	Eschatological narrative	ER 5, l. 8ff.
Nimshal =	Biblical narrative + proof-text(s)	ER 11, l. 5ff., ER 49, l. 7ff., ER 82, l. 27ff., ER 119, l. 5, ER 150, l. 13ff., ER 150, l. 31ff., PsEZ 26, l. 5ff.
Nimshal =	Biblical narrative + Lemma	ER 29, l. 10ff.
Nimshal =	Interpretation of Lemma from the preamble	ER 4, l. 26ff.
Nimshal =	Statement + Proof-text(s)	ER 84, l. 30ff., ER 110, l. 17, ER 120ff., l. 12ff., ER 155, l. 1ff., ER 160, l. 3ff., EZ 193, l. 8ff., PsEZ 28, l. 3ff., PsEZ 29, l. 16ff.
Nimshal =	Statement + Proof-text + Lemma	ER 11, l. 13ff.
Nimshal =	Statement + Lemma	ER 12, l. 15ff., ER 70, l. 23ff., ER 91, l. 7ff., ER 91, l. 20ff., ER 113, l. 29ff.
Nimshal =	Proof-text	ER 12, l. 30ff., ER 20, l. 2ff., ER 100, l. 6ff., ER 125, l. 5ff.[23]
Nimshal =	Mishnah + statement	ER 100, l. 13ff.
Nimshal =	Direct speech + Lemma	ER 143, l. 18ff.
Nimshal =	None	ER 117, l. 8ff., ER 137, l. 1ff.

In order to deal with the question of how the exegetical parable operates in *Seder Eliyahu* it might be useful to have a look at some examples. It can be anticipated though that for most of these parables Stern's claim that *Seder Eliyahu*'s parables have a non-exegetical character in spite of an apparent exegetical intention is valid. The explanation of an unclear aspect of the verse quoted at the beginning is not itself the primary function of the *mashal*.

The following passage contains two consecutive parable examples, both part of the same textual unit within chapter 18, the longest and structurally one of the most complex in the work.[24]

> Happy are the righteous whose faith is such that they trust in their Father who is in heaven, who created the world with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and discernment. Therefore it is said, *They shall be like a tree*

[21] Here and in the following charts the page and line numbers indicate the position of the formula *mashlu mashal*....

[22] Here and in the following charts on the *nimshal* forms the expression "biblical narrative" designates a narrative based on biblical events or in which reference to the history of Israel is made, but in which no scriptural verses are quoted. With "Biblical narrative + proof-text(s)" I designate both a biblical narrative as just described followed by an unrelated biblical verse as well as an exegetical narrative, i.e. a biblical narrative which stands in relation to the verse(s) it quotes.

[23] As transmitted the *nimshal* of this parable consists of a single proof-text. Given that the passage has a lacuna, it could be assumed that it was otherwise originally.

[24] See Ulrich Berzbach, "The Varieties of Literal Devices in a Medieval Midrash: Seder Eliyahu Rabba, Chapter 18," in *Jewish Studies at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: Proceedings of the 6th EAJS Congress, Toledo, July 1998*, vol. 1, *Biblical, rabbinical and medieval studies*, ed. Judit Targarona Borrás and Ángel Sáenz-Badillos (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 384–391.

planted by water, [sending out its roots] by the stream (יובל). [It shall not fear when heat comes, and its leaves shall stay green; in the year of drought it is not anxious, and it does not cease to bear fruit.] etc. (Jer 17:8) And it [Scripture] says, *At that time a gift will be brought (יובל) to the Lord of hosts [from a people tall and smooth, from a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide, to Mount Zion, the place of the name of the Lord of hosts.]* etc. (Isa 18:7) They told a parable: **(ER 91, l. 7)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood, <whose servant> brought him an ephah of wheat as a present (דורון). Had he ground it (טחנה), but not sifted it (בירה), it would have been an ugly thing. Had he sifted it, but not ground it, it would have been an ugly thing (דבר מגונה). Had he sifted and ground it, but not made out of it fine flour, it would have been a mediocre manner [of giving a present]. But if he had sifted it, ground it, and made fine flour out of it, this would have been a perfect manner. So (כך) it is with the disciples of the wise in this world with respect to the words of Torah. If a man reads Scripture, but does not study Mishnah, this is a reprehensible thing (דבר של גניי). If he studies Mishnah, but does not read Scripture, this is a reprehensible thing. If he reads Scripture and studies Mishnah, but does not wait upon the disciples of the wise, this is a mediocre manner. But if a man reads Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, if he studies Mishnah, midrash, halakhot, and aggadot, and waits upon the disciples of the wise, this is the perfect manner. Therefore it is said, *At that time a gift will be brought (יובל) to the Lord of hosts* etc., [that is to say,] to do the will of their Father who is in heaven is like [giving] a gift to a king. |

<And it [Scripture] says>, *On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow [all kinds of trees for food.]* (Ezek 47:12) What is there in this river? There is Torah in it, Scripture, Mishnah, midrash, halakhot, and aggadot, but also good deeds and study (תלמוד), all of which are drawn from and go out from the Divine Majesty, and flow through Israel and through the disciples of the wise from here and from there, and everything is set in order and put down before them. They told a parable: **(ER 91, l. 20)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who had his servants and members of his household assembled before him at table. When he saw that they ate and that the food delighted them, that they drunk and that the drink delighted them, he himself proceeded to bring together piles and piles without end before them. So (כך) it is with the disciples of the wise in this world with respect to the words of Torah. When they read Scripture and study Mishnah and it delights them, the Holy One, blessed be He, shows them mercy rewarding them with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and discernment, as well as good deeds and study (תלמוד). Therefore it is said, *On [the banks, on both sides of] the river, there will grow <all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither*

> *nor their fruit fail*> etc. What is this olive tree (זית) like? It does not drop [its leaves], neither in the days of sun nor in the days of rain, for it is said, *A Song of Ascents. Happy is everyone who fears the Lord[, who walks in his ways.]* (Ps 128:1) You could say that even the strangers and servants who are fearers of heaven are *happy*. If it were <not> so, Scripture should state, Happy the wise, happy their disciples, happy those who teach them, but from the subsequent verse one learns, *You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be happy* (Ps 128:2). I call heaven and earth to witness that every disciple of the wise who eats of what is his own, enjoys the fruits of his own labour, and does not enjoy the fruits of the congregation's labour at all, he is implied by [the expression] *happy*. And any table which a disciple of the wise does not enjoy is not blessed, for it is said, *There is no remnant (שריד) left after they had eaten[; therefore their prosperity will not endure.]* etc. (Job 20:21) And *remnant* means nothing but the disciples of the wise, for it is said, *and among the survivors (שרידים) shall be those whom the Lord calls.* (Joel 3:5) (ER 91, l. 4–36)

The co-text preceding the first parable connects an *ashrei*-statement (a sort of Hebrew beatitude) on the righteous with Jer 17:8, and this verse in its turn with Isa 18:7. The verses contain the homograph יובל, but its different meanings or the way the two forms are related is of no explicit interest to our author in the first place. Instead, he takes the second verse as lemma verse, as the occasion for a narrative *mashal* which provides a sort of extended parallel to the verse, i.e. it retells the verse phrasing it as a *mashal*. Whereas the verse contains a description of a future landscape, the *mashal* narrative consists of a single event in past tense and a series of conditional statements based on this event: A servant brings the king a measure of wheat. The narrator then proceeds to comment on the different manners in which this very present can be given and the implied effect it can have on him who is receiving it. Even though the narrative does not reveal which of the four manners the servant opts for at the time of giving his present for the king, it can be assumed that it was the last, namely the one described as perfect. The *nimshal* is opened by the usual "marker of applicability," כך, identifying the way of the disciples of the wise as the perfect manner of approaching Torah. As in the *mashal* proper also in the *nimshal* four options that go from the least worthy to the perfect one are listed: These are approaches to Torah, the fourth corresponding to the perfect manner of giving a measure of wheat as a present. The perfect way to be in the world is described as consisting of reading the three parts of Scripture, studying the four parts of the rabbinic curriculum, and waiting upon disciples of the wise. The *mashal* is closed with the quotation of the lemma verse which is this time explained again with a comparison: The complete Torah of the disciples of the wise is doing God's will, which is comparable to giving a king a perfect gift.

With respect to the style of the language it should be noted that identical or similar expressions connect not only the two cited verses, but also *mashal* and *nimshal* .In the

former we read, "Had he sifted it, but not ground it, it would have been an ugly thing (דבר מגונה)"; the *nimshal* makes use of another form of the same root when it states: "If a man reads Scripture, but does not study Mishnah, this is a reprehensible thing (דבר של גנויי)." The "perfect manner" has in both parts the same Hebrew wording, מדה שלימה; God is referred to as "Father in heaven" both in the preamble of the parable and in the *nimshal* .There is, on the other hand, variation as well. To denote a "present" the biblical expression שי is used in the quoted verse, the *mashal* and *nimshal* choose two terms usual in rabbinic Hebrew: the expression מנחה and the Greek loanword דורון.

An exegetical intention is more evident in the second parable's preceding co-text: Another verse by a prophet, Ezek 47:12, whose "river" motif refers back to the "stream" motif of Jer 17:8, is – unlike the first lemma – commented upon in an allegorical fashion The question that follows the lemma verse, "What is there in this river?," can be rephrased as "What do this *river* and *all kinds of trees for food* stand for?" The answer is a variation of the previously mentioned "perfect manner" – this time Torah is mentioned not as a part of Scripture, but as an all encompassing term covering "Scripture, Mishnah, midrash, halakhot, and aggadot, but also good deeds and study." The prominence of the disciples of the wise is made clear in this explanation preceding the *mashal*: in them and in Israel the Written and Oral Torah grow like food in trees.

In the *mashal* proper a king's servants and household members rejoice in food and drink and are rewarded with even more victuals. With the same formula used for the first parable – "So it is with the disciples of the wise in this world with respect to the words of Torah" – the *nimshal* again focuses on the centrality of Scripture and Mishnah study in a man's life. The reward for the man who delights in the study of both Scripture and Mishnah is "wisdom, understanding, knowledge and discernment" (a recurrent tetracolon of near synonyms in *Seder Eliyahu*), but also good deeds and study. Delight in Torah study is therefore compared with physical delight in food. For this purpose, also the text following the *nimshal* makes rich use of expressions belonging to the semantic fields of positive emotions and food ("fruit" is mentioned four times, "happy" six times – אשריהם is incidentally the word with which the whole passage is opened), which are linked to the disciples of the wise (who are themselves mentioned four times).

In both cases the *mashal* proper is an extremely short narrative. The first parable is actually an incomplete narrative in that it consists of a single narrated event. The speculations of the narrator as to how the present came into being and the *nimshal* help the reader imagine what the present actually looked like. But he is not told what king thinks or says about the present he gets from his servant or what he does with it. The second *mashal* is more of a regular narrative, consisting of two narrated events: first the king's servants and household members rejoice in eating and drinking, and as a consequence the king generously provides them with more food and drink. In neither narrative is there evidence of the "novelization" to which Stern refers. Instead they present an austere minimal narrative. In both cases the *nimshal* takes a very standard form: it is opened with

the marker of applicability כך, followed by a statement in present tense and the quotation of the lemma verse. In both cases the relation between *mashal* and *nimshal* is one of analogy.[25] There is, however, neither equivalence between lemma and *nimshal* , nor similarity between lemma and *mashal*, and this is due to the fact that these parables are not inherently exegetical. Rather than explaining verses rabbinic ideas are associated with the quoted verse or with a word it contains, so that the *mashal* and *nimshal* together illustrate these ideas, themselves independent from the quoted verse. In both parables the rabbinic class and its way of life are idealized.

A peculiarity of certain parables of *Seder Eliyahu*, not just of those of pseudo-exegetical character, is the fact that their so called secular narratives, the *mashal* proper parts, contain phraseology that stems either from Scripture or that is generally found in other textual rabbinic contexts. The *nimshal* appears to invade the *mashal*, thus producing a sort of *hybridization* of the *mashal* narrative that is very seldom found in the classical rabbinic mashal.[26] A case in point is the following parable of chapter 18, told like the second one above in the exegetical context of Ezek 47:12:

> *Because the water for them flows from the sanctuary.* (Ezek 47:12) Because a light commandment is like the weighty one, and a weighty commandment is like a light one, and both these and those are a remedy (רפואה) for Israel in this world, in the days of the Messiah, and in the world to come. And it [Scripture] says, *Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing (לתרופה).* (ibid.) To loosen (להתיר) their mouth. When Israel does charity and justice, the Holy One, blessed be He, rejoices in them. This shows that the joy with which He rejoices in them is thousand thousand times for good, is twice as great as theirs, for it is said, *I went down to the nut orchard, [to look at the blossoms of the valley, to see whether the vines had budded, whether the pomegranates were in bloom.]* etc. (Song 6:11) What is this garden? There are four houses in it. So every single sage in Israel who truly knows (lit. "has") the words of Torah has wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and discernment. They told a parable: **(ER 93, l. 20)** What does

[25] See "Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis," 166.

[26] Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 89, points out that there are certain parables, e.g. ShirR 7.18 and MidTeh 4.11, which explicitly represent what he calls the interpretive act by identifying it with the *qal wa-chomer*. The two examples he discusses have characters of the narrative utter the phrase *ʿal ʾachat kamah vekhamah*. Among the further examples he adduces, a *mashal* in SifDev 26, for example, mentions in its secular narrative the Sabbatical year. In yet another context, that of the discussion of Jesus' parable of the Wicked Husbandmen (Mk 12:1–12 and parr.), he states: "In the light of Rabbinic practice, the possibility that Jesus would have used Scripture in reciting a *mashal* cannot be ruled out. The Wicked Husbandmen, however, is the sole parable in the gospels to use and interpret a scriptural proof-text in this way; the only other parable even to allude to Scripture is the parable of the Sower (Mark 4:3–20; Matt. 13:3–23; Luke 8:5–15), and there the verses involved, Isa. 6:9-10, are actually part of the so-called theory of parabolic speech that Jesus proceeds to expound to the disciples." (ibid., 197).

> the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who came to his house after a long time (לימים ושנים). When he examined his servants he did not examine them with respect to silver, gold, precious stones, and pearls, but asked, So-and-so, my servant, has he read Scripture and studied Mishnah? They answered, He has read Scripture and studied Mishnah, and has done so more than his fellow. [He asked,] So-and-so, has he repented? They answered, He has repented and done so more than his fellow. At once the king praised [this servant] and left everyone [else].[27] Hence it is said, *I went down to the nut orchard* etc.: these are the good deeds and study (תלמוד), which the wise in Torah look forward to. Whence does everything come? From the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, whose hands are stretched to the repentant. Everything is His and everything is His handiwork. And the Holy One, blessed be He, does not leave anything in the world unrevealed to Israel, for it is said, *The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him[, and he makes his covenant known to them.]* etc. (Ps 25:14) *Surely the Lord God does nothing[, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets.]* etc. (Amos 3:7) (ER 93, l. 12–28)

The king examines his subjects according to their behaviour with respect to Torah study, explicitly *not* according to the "secular" attributes or behaviour a mashal's king would normally make his criterium at the time of testing servants, sons, or members of his household. Not only do servants in this *mashal* study Scripture and Mishnah, they also repent. In a chapter in which he analyses the figure of God, Alan Appelbaum objects to the notion that the king of king parables is not a stand-in for God, that he is rather compared to God. Stern and others, on the other hand, understand the king and God as the same character, as "superimposed on one another."[28] Such a superimposition is more than evident in the above quoted example, where the king is, like God from a rabbinic point of view, concerned with placing Torah study at the centre of every day life.

Such a use of phraseology that can be identified as belonging to the text usually surrounding the *mashal* narrative does not only yield that mortal kings generally are metaphors of God, but that the genre of *mashal* has evolved into a new way of speaking about God and his creatures, which can also be ascertained in the following example:

> *The God of glory thunders[, the Lord, over mighty waters.]* (Ps 29:3) For I poured words of Torah for your sake like milk and oil passed silently from one vessel to another. Therefore it is said, *the God of glory thunders[, the Lord, over mighty waters. The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord*

[27] The expression מודה ועזב, seldom attested in rabbinic literature, but instead in piyyutim, stems from Prov 28:3 – "one who confesses and forsakes them [his transgressions] will obtain mercy." Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 248, who follow an interpretation of Leon Nemoy's, render the text as follows: "Forthwith the king is satisfied [that all his servants are men of high moral worth], and cuts short his inspection."

[28] Appelbaum, *The Rabbis' King-Parables*, 101; see Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 19.

> *is full of majesty*. (Ps 29:4) They told a parable: **(ER 12, l. 15)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who had distinguished sons. Some of them were masters of Torah; some of them masters of Mishnah, [and] some of them masters in the give and take [of trade]. He married another woman who was poor and had sons by her. He sent them [to learn] Scripture, Mishnah, and proper conduct (lit. "the way of the earth"). He would sit and hope, saying to them, When are you to become like my distinguished sons? After some time he went to them. No Scripture was in their hands, no Mishnah was in their hands, no proper conduct was in their hands. So he would sit down before them, clapping his hands [in grief] and saying, The houses I built for these, what for? The fields I bought for these, what for? The vineyards I planted for these, what for? So it is with Israel who resemble them in this world before our Father who is in heaven, whenever there are no words of Torah in them. Hence it is said, *The voice of the Lord is powerful … The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars* (Ps 29:4–5). (ER 12, l. 13–28)

In the passage above God himself and the midrashist appear to take turns in a joint interpretation of verses of Ps 29. God takes the liquid image of "mighty" or "many" waters of Ps 29:3 as departure point for a comparison of the giving of Torah with the gentle movement of passing milk and oil from one vessel to another, an image that obliterates the thunderous aspect of God's voice in the same psalm verse. The subsequent *mashal* seems to follow the same line of thought at the time of providing an explanation of Ps 29:4, where the voice of the Lord is described as בכוח and בהדר. Braude and Kapstein suggest that the author of *Seder Eliyahu* seems to understand הדר, "majesty," as spelt חצר, and therefore with the sense "restorative," hence their suggested translation "gentle." This might be correct, and in fact, the king of the *mashal* does behave "gently." When the author of *Seder Eliyahu* needs to suggest an alternative spelling (and reading) of the Masoretic Text he usually indicates his procedure, for example ante-posing such a reading the formula אל תקרא … אלא ("Do not read X, but Y"). In this case it could be argued that he only implicitly read הדר as חצר, so that God's voice is interpreted as meaning both "dignified, lordly, sublime," and "gentle."

But to return to the problem of discourse interference,[29] in the *mashal* proper the mortal king's sons by his first wife are described as masters of Torah, of Mishnah, and as experienced businessmen – Torah probably stands for Scripture or Written Torah in this context, whereas Mishnah for the Oral Torah. His sons by the second wife, described herself as poor, he sends in vain to learn Scripture, Mishnah, and proper conduct (instead of trade). These are not the usual activities of *mashal* princes, but projections of rabbinic ideals into the atemporal narrative discourse of the *mashal*. In his disappointment the king asks them and himself what all his efforts for their sake have been for, but obtains no

[29] On this concept see p. 109, n. 186.

answer, for the *mashal* comes to an end with the three questions he poses. The *nimshal* explains that it is Israel who resemble the sons that disappoint the king. In spite of all this, the king remains dignified in his speech, just as the voice of God in the Psalm verse that the *mashal* illustrates.[30]

Goldberg points out that rabbinic parables can be classified according to their respective co-texts and functions, and observes:

> Es gibt Gleichnisse, die sind dem Kotext nach in einer bestimmten Situation von einer bestimmten Person vorgetragen, um eine Meinung zu erhellen, einem Argument Gewicht zu geben, um einen Gesprächspartner oder Kontrahenten mit diesen rhetorischen Mitteln zu überführen.[31]

Even though, as he concedes, all parables are in essence rhetorical, it is these ones that are aptly called *rhetorical parables*. Furthermore, he argues that this type of parable is to be distinguished from the exegetical:

> Im Unterschied hierzu sei das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis bestimmt als eines, das allein zum Zweck der Schriftauslegung gebildet und vorgetragen wurde. Der Kotext is in der Regel nicht dialogisch, es gibt ja keinen zu überführenden Gesprächskontrahenten, der namentlich genannt wäre (die Ausnahme kann die Regel bestätigen), zu überzeugende Leser oder ursprüngliche Hörer werden nicht direkt angesprochen, der Ausgangspunkt im Kotext ist keine Gesprächssituation, sondern, sofern überhaupt auszumachen, eine Vortragssituation, der Vortrag der Schriftauslegung. Am Anfang steht ein Schriftvers, den es in irgendeiner Weise zu erklären gilt, und eines der Mittel der Erklärung ist das Gleichnis. Der Kotext, hier der Schriftvers, bestimmt die Form. Die übergeordnete Form des Gleichnisses

30 Further examples of this hybridization include ER 5, l. 8ff. (scriptural verse quoted in the *mashal* narrative), ER 6, l. 26 (expression "angel of death" used in in the *mashal* narrative), ER 9, l. 21ff. (the king is said to act with "wisdom and understanding," a pair of near synonyms the midrashist is wont to use), ER 11, l. 25ff., ER 12, l. 15ff. (just as in the *mashal* discussed above, a king sends his sons to learn Scripture, Mishnah, and proper conduct), ER 25, l. 4ff. (the two protagonists of the *mashal* are disciples of the wise), ER 34, l. 3ff., ER 69, l. 1ff. (the temporal expression for the duration of a feast in "the eight days of the feast" could be an allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles), ER 69, l. 25ff. (a king's sons and servants are described as being smart (or lame!), but also mute, deaf or blind (see Isa 42:18), some others as possessing knowledge of Scripture, of Mishnah, or experience in the give and take of trade), ER 71, l. 2ff. (a king's servant teaches the king's sons "good deeds"), ER 84, l. 30ff. (the king learns from the elders of his kingdom "a word of wisdom, and a word of understanding, a word of knowledge, and a word of discernment"), ER 110, l. 17ff., ER 125, l. 5ff., EZ 181, l. 8ff., EZ 193, l. 8ff. (the king in the parable poses a rhetorical question which he answers quoting Exod 24:17).

31 Goldberg, "Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis," 141 ("There are parables which, in view of their co-text, are delivered by a certain person to illustrate an opinion, to reinforce an argument, to convince an opponent with these rhetorical means.")

> ist hier "Midrasch", die Auslegung des Schriftverses, so wie die übergeordnete Form des rhetorischen Gleichnisses (z. B.) der Dialog oder die Anekdote ist.[32]

A number of parables of *Seder Eliyahu* do appear within dialogues.[33] They are told by the anonymous rabbi to diverse dialogue partners in the so called first person narratives[34] and could therefore be labelled as *rhetorical*. In four cases the co-text of these parables is not only conversational, but at the same time exegetical, or as argued above, pseudo-exegetical.[35] The two consecutive parables quoted below illustrate how in the context of a polemical dialogue a scriptural verse is interpreted by telling a *mashal*, thus combining the two functions which in Goldberg's view are usually coupled with different forms:

> I was once walking through the greatest city of the world, when there was a roundup. They seized me and brought me to the king's palace. On seeing spread couches, silver vessels, and gold vessels set out, I said, *O Lord, you God of vengeance, you God of vengeance, shine forth!* (Ps 94:1) A Parsee priest came to me and asked, Are you scholar (סופר)? I answered, Yes (lit. "what one is"). He said, If you reply to one thing I am going to say <to you>, you will leave in peace. I answered, Speak. … He said, You say fire is not a divinity. Why is then written in your Torah *fire eternal* (Lev 6:6)? I replied to him, My son, When our fathers stood at Mount Sinai to receive upon them the Torah, they did not see the image of a human being nor the image of any creature nor the image of a soul created by the Holy One, blessed be He, on the face of the earth, for it is said, *Take care and watch yourselves closely, for you saw no form on the day [that the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire]* (Deut 4:15), but the one God, *He is God of gods and Lord of lords* (Deut 10:17), whose kingdom endures in heaven and on earth, and in the uppermost heaven of heavens. And [yet] you say fire is a divinity! [Fire] is only like a rod, given to be used on human beings on earth. They told a parable: **(ER 6, l. 20)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who took a lash and hung it up inside his house. He

[32] Goldberg, "Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis," 141 ("Unlike this the exegetical parable should be defined as one which is composed and delivered only for the sake of scriptural interpretation. The co-text is usually not dialogical, there is no named dialogue opponent (the exception confirms the rule), readers to be convinced, or original listeners that are directly addressed, the departure point in the co-text is no dialogue situation, but, if discernible at all, one of exposition, the exposition of scriptural interpretation. At the beginning there is a scriptural verse, which in one way or another is to be explained, and the parable is one of the means used for the explanation. The co-text, here the scriptural verse, determines the form. The superordinate form of the parable is in this case "midrash," the interpretation of the scriptural verse, just as the superordinate form of the rhetorical parable is the dialogue or the anecdote.")

[33] See ER 6, l. 20ff., ER 6, l. 26ff., ER 70, l. 23ff., ER 71, l. 2ff., and ER 82, l. 27ff.

[34] For a discussion of first person narratives see chapter 6.

[35] E.g. the one discussed in this context, ER 6, l. 26ff.

> spoke to his children, to his servants, and members of his household, With this I [may] strike you, I [may] smite you, and I [may] kill you, so that they would then repent. Hence it is said, *fire eternal*. And it [Scripture] says, *For by fire will the Lord execute judgement* (Isa 66:16) You may [think you can] refute me quoting (lit. "say"), *For the Lord your God is a devouring fire* (Deut 4:24). However, they told a parable: **(ER 6, l. 26)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood whose <sons>, servants, and members of his household would not behave properly. He spoke to his sons, to his servants, and to the members of his household, A bear in ambush am I to you, a lion am I to you, the angel of death am I to you because of your ways. Hence it is said, *For the Lord your God is a devouring fire* (ibid.) (ER 5, l. 24–28, ER 6, l. 13–29)

The parables are told to a Zoroastrian priest in the context of a polemical dialogue. He promises to let the rabbi go if he gives a satisfactory answer to certain questions he is about to pose. It is the second and last of these questions which is replied to with the help of rhetorical parables. The priest's question is an implied polemical statement: How can Jews affirm that fire is not a god (or that their God is not fire) when their own Scripture apparently asserts the contrary? The verse the priest quotes, though, refers in its scriptural context to instructions for sacrifices, specifically to those concerning burnt-offerings. Conversely, it is the verses the rabbi himself brings into the dialogue that associate God rather than a sacrifice with fire; Deut 4:24 being the most problematic of all. As in the first parable, fire is taken as a metaphor for God's fearsome nature. Both *mashal* narratives consist basically of the report of a menacing speech by the king addressed to his children, servants, and household members. Both *nimshal* parts consist of quoted scriptural verses.

5.3 Narrative-Recapitulative Parables

A small subgroup of nine parables can be designated with Jacob Neusner's terminology as *narrative-recapitulative parables*.[36] The narrative that is recapitulated can be an extremely concise one, in fact, it can be as compact as "My son, it is their [the nations'] merit that Israel was set apart [by God] from among them" (EZ 174, l. 3), or be more detailed as in the first example below where the *mashal* rephrases an exegetical narrative.[37]

As already explained in chapter 4 the narrative-recapitulative *mashal* is not explicitly exegetical, i.e. it does not explain an expression within a scriptural verse by quoting the verse and having it followed by a comment and a *mashal* narrative. Rather it rephrases or

[36] See Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Narrative: A Documentary Perspective 4: The Precedent and the Parable in Diachronic View* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 217–218.

[37] Other examples include ER 17, l. 31ff., ER 149, l. 27ff., EZ 180, l. 27ff.

recapitulates an entire narrative, which can be completely devoid of scriptural quotation, as is the case in five of this type of parables.[38]

Wherever the rephrased narrative is an exegetical one the exegetical agenda can be even more evident than in those with the form of the classical exegetical parable. Moreover, unlike the exegetical, the narrative-recapitulative parables make sparse use of the conspicuous topics and phraseology of *Seder Eliyahu*'s discourse: the preceding co-text of a parable may include a Mishnah quotation, Moses may reason with a *qal wa-chomer*-inference, a *mikan amru*-statement might be quoted, but the characteristic rabbinic curriculum is not mentioned in any of them, the disciples of the wise are not exalted in these parables, nor do their *mashal* narratives contain external elements of rabbinic discourse. These parables deal primarily with stories of biblical theme – with Moses, but also with Egypt, the peoples of the world, or Israel as collective narrative agents,[39] or with David, as in the following passage:

> *[Pour out your heart like water] before the presence of the Lord!* (Lam 2:19) What does Scripture teach? The mercies of the Holy One, blessed be He, are many for Israel, both for the wicked among them and for the righteous among them. And whence [do we infer this]? You should know that it is so. Go and learn from David, king of Israel. Because of the love with which He loved him and the joy with which He rejoiced in him, He let words be spoken fluently to him by Nathan the prophet. For it is said, *But that same night [the word of the Lord came to Nathan]* etc. *Go and tell my servant David[: Thus says the Lord: Are you the one to build me a house to live in?]* etc. *I have not lived [in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle.]* etc. (2 Sam 7:4–6) From here they said: Whoever supports his friend even with a piece of bread with salt, or even with salad to dip,[40] or even with dates, or even with shrivelled olives, even if he who supports [his friend] had a hundred banquets every day like the banquet of Solomon's times, he [who is supported] should be grateful in his presence. Therefore it is said, *I have not lived in a house* etc. So when David heard [God], he prostrated the whole length of his body on the ground, then went and sat before the Presence, saying, My Father, who are in heaven, may Your great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever and may You find contentment in Israel Your servants in all the places of their dwellings, for You magnified us, You raised us, You hallowed us, You extolled us, You bound [on] us a crown with the

38 See ER 40, l. 15ff., ER 114, l. 3ff., EZ 174, l. 3ff., EZ 178, l. 11ff., and PsEZ 36, l. 13dd.

39 This expression is used by Uri Margolin, "Telling in the Plural: From Grammar to Ideology" *Poetics Today* 21 (2000): 592, who defines "a collective narrative agent" as "a group of two or more individuals represented as a singular higher oder entity or agent, a collective individual so to speak, with global properties or actions"; collective narratives are correspondingly narratives "whose main protagonist is a collectivity of some kind."

40 According to Ma>agarim the phrase טובל ירק is conserved only in *Seder Eliyahu*.

words of Torah from one end of the world to the other. The Torah I did, I only did with what is Yours; the deeds of love I did, I only did with what is Yours; and as a reward for the little Torah I did in Your presence I was given this world, the days of the Messiah, and the world to come, for it is said, *Then King David went in and sat before the Lord[, and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?]* etc. (2 Sam 7:18) They told a parable: (**ER 89, l. 32**) What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who had a servant, whom he loved with a perfect love. Everyday they would bring him into his presence and he would show him his esteem in front of all the [other] servants. The servant returned [once] to the king's presence and said, My lord king, what work have I done and which contentment have you found in me that you show me all this esteem in front of all your servants? Therefore it is said, *Then King David went in [and said, Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far (עד-הלום)?]* etc. And further on it [Scripture] says, *Come here (הלום), all you leaders of the people* etc. (1 Sam 14:38) And it [Scripture] says, *Come no closer (הלום)* (Exod 3:5). Indeed it [Scripture] says, *thus far (עד-הלום)*, [but] what does *thus far* mean (lit. "is")? <It means "kingdom."> And you should know that it is so. Because of all the good deeds which the Holy One, blessed be He, found <in David>, He will sit him to the right of the Presence, for it is said, *The Lord says to my lord[, Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.]* etc. (Ps 110:1) How so? Whenever a man does a little Torah for Your sake, You set aside his reward for him [thus multiplying it] a thousand thousand times for good, but no creature knows [what that reward is]. Whenever a man does a little charity and deeds of love for Your sake, You double his reward a thousand thousand times for good, for it is said, *And yet this was a small thing [in your eyes, O Lord God]* etc. (2 Sam 7:19) This is the world to come, where there is no death ever, ever, and ever; *and this is the instruction of man (תורת האדם)* (ibid.), for he does a little Torah for Your sake, my Lord God. And yet something else he said before Him, <*And what more can David say to you?*>[41] etc. (2 Sam 7:20) Happy is he who knows in his heart who he is with respect to his Father who is in heaven and all his deeds are [done] with faith in his Father who is in heaven. Happy is he who fears heaven privately (lit. "secretly") and relies on Him who holds a shield[42] in His hand, for it is said, *my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge[, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge]* (2 Sam 22:3). For indeed we find in David that although chastisements came over him he relied for his deeds on Him who holds a shield in his hand, for it is said, *my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge* etc. *I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised* etc. *for the waves [of death] encompassed me* etc. *in my distress I*

41 The MS reading מהו ויוסף עוד דוד Friedmann emends with the reading of MT וּמַה־יֹּסִיף דָּוִד עוֹד לְדַבֵּר.

42 This is the only record in Maʾagarim for the hendiadys מגן ותריס.

called upon the Lord etc. (2 Sam 22:3–5.7) (ER 89, l. 18–ER 90, l. 20)

The passage quoted contains a short *mashal* narrative framed by an exegetical narrative whose broad scriptural hypotext is 2 Sam 7, the account of Nathan's prophecy on God's choice of David as the beginning of a royal dynasty and David's prayer following the prophecy. What the exegetical narrative appears to explain is condensed in a *mikan-amru*-statement according to which, following the example set by God, one is to be grateful even toward a small token of generosity by someone else; God's gratitude toward David's minimal good deeds is expressed in His choosing David and his descendants themselves as His house and in a concrete sense as those who were to build God's house in the Land of Israel.

Turning to the *mashal* narrative itself: It relates how a servant is openly singled out by the king as his favourite and how he comes to question the king on the reasons for this choice. The narrative is immediately preceded by a passage of the exegetical narrative in which David addresses God in prayer hinting at the question he poses in 2 Sam 7:18, by quoting only the first part of the verse that contains the question – *Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?* –, but not quoting the question itself. Instead the *mashal* has the king's servant formulate a parallel question to which not the king, but the continuation of the exegetical narrative, which functions as *nimshal* , gives an answer. The *nimshal* is opened with the same verse that preceded the *mashal* narrative and associated with two further verses that contain the expression הלום, an expression which is understood, as M. Friedmann suggests, as meaning "kingdom."[43] Even though what David did can be regarded as "little Torah" or as *a small thing*, which reminds of the piece of bread in the *mikan-amru*-statement, God's reward for David, letting him become king of Israel and his descendant Solomon build His Temple, is ineffably generous, the expression "a thousand thousand times" is only a human attempt at describing it, but as the midrashist explains, "no creature knows" what this reward is like, not even he who was to become king of Israel knows, and this is why he is as baffled in the exegetical narrative as the servant of the *mashal*.

The passage reflects on the incapability of human beings of fathoming mercy as an attribute of God. For this purpose *Seder Eliyahu* resorts to an exegetical narrative on David, at whose exegetical centre is found the adverb הלום. The manuscript of *Seder Eliyahu* does not transmit an explicit interpretation of the word in terms of "kingdom" as is the case with *Bereshit Rabbah*. It is likely, as Friedmann suggests including the answer "It means 'kingdom,'" that this was intended, but also that the author of *Seder Eliyahu* wanted to give his audience the possibility of identification, i.e. of understanding הלום as as a reward for the righteous ordinary man (like the mashal's servant).

Both the text preceding the *mashal* and that following it are, as exegetical narratives

43 This interpretation is transmitted in BerR 65:6 where the expression הלום of Exod 3:5 is interpreted as ואין הלום אלא מלכות, and 2 Sam 7:18 is quoted as proof-text.

in general in *Seder Eliyahu*, not smoothly running texts but due to their very nature composite ones, the language is inhomogeneous, rabbinic alternating with biblical Hebrew, narrative with commentary. In such a textuality the *mashal* narrative can be seen as the sole entire passage of uniform language; even if it does not explain much it clearly narrates that a servant came to be chosen among others and that he reacted with perplexity. Still, even the traditionally plain style of the *mashal* is subverted in *Seder Eliyahu*, as has been shown in parables discussed previously, by letting phraseology from text parts that usually surround the *mashal* narrative nuance it from within. In the next example it is a scriptural quotation that interferes with the *mashal* narrative:

> I was once travelling from one place to another when I came upon an old man. He said to me, Rabbi, why did the Holy One, blessed be He, divide His world between two nations, between two kingdoms? I answered him, My son, had the entire world been in the hand of one [nation], Sennacherib, king of Assyria, and Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, would have proceeded to do their will. The Holy One, blessed be He, divided His world between two nations, between two peoples, but in order to protect Israel. They told a parable: (**ER 114, l. 3**) What does the matter resemble? It is like a schoolteacher's pupils (תינוקות של בית רבן), whose teacher used to take care that they would not go out and drown in the river, – so that they were like those who came up from Egypt (כעולי מצרים), for it is said, *Thus says the Lord: See, waters are rising (עולים) out of the north* etc. (Jer 47:2), that they would not go out and beat each other, that the sun would not smite them.[44] And why all this? In order to sanctify His great name. For it is said, *For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler[, the Lord is our king; he will save us.]* etc. (Isa 33:22) And it [Scripture] says, *You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied[, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously with you. And my people shall never again be put to shame.]* (Joel 2:26). There is no satisfaction apart from the words of Torah, for it is said, *The righteous have enough to satisfy their appetite[, but the belly of the wicked is empty.]* etc. (Prov 13:25) Therefore it is said, *You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who has dealt wondrously (להפליא) with you* (Joel 2:26). To distinguish (להפליא) between the deeds of the righteous and the deeds of the wicked, between the reward (מתן [שכרן]) of the righteous in the Garden of Eden and the reward (מתן פורענות) of the wicked in Gehenna, for each and every man who comes to the world is someone else's reward (לפי שכל אחד ואחד לפי שכרו בא בעולם). The Holy One, blessed be He, did not bring about that Abraham came into the world but as a reward for Shem, for he prophesied for four hundred years about the lands of the world but they would not heed him (lit. "accepted from him"). The Holy One, blessed be He, did not bring about that the

[44] Friedmann puts the phrase ויהיו כעולי מצרים. שנאמר כה אמר ה' הנה מים עולים מצפון וגו' in brackets and moves it after כדי שלא תכה אותן חמה.

> kingdom of Greece came into the world but as a reward for Japheth, for he covered his father's nakedness. The Holy One, blessed be He, did not bring about that the kingdom of Rome came into the world but as a reward for Esau, for he wept and sighed because Isaac had blessed Jacob. The Holy One, blessed be He, did not bring about that the kingdom of Media came into the world but as a reward for Cyrus, for he wept and sighed when the nations destroyed the Temple. The Holy One, blessed be He, did not bring about that Sennacherib came into the world but as a reward for Asshur, for Asshur was a righteous man and was the counsellor (בן עצתו) of Abraham our father. And the Holy One, blessed be He, did not bring about that <Nebuchadnezzar came> into the world but as a reward for Merodach,[45] for he used to honour our Father in heaven. The Holy One, blessed be He, did not bring about that Haman came into the world but as a reward for Agag, for he wept and sighed when he was kept in prison. He said, Woe is me, for my seed might perish for ever! Therefore it is said, *And my people shall never be put to shame (יבושו)* (Joel 2:26). (ER 113, l. 34–ER 115, l. 5)

In this case what the *mashal* recapitulates is not an exegetical narrative, but if a narrative at all one of biblical theme alluded to in a question posed by an old man to the anonymous wandering rabbi and the answer he gives to it. Moreover, it is not a narrative of one single event in the history of Israel but of several events, it is a macro-narrative, the result of an abstraction of several narratives that make up Israel's history, and whose content can be paraphrased as follows: God divided his world between two kingdoms to protect Israel by preventing Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar from taking hold of the entire world.[46] The use in the *mashal* narrative the periphrastic verb form היה משמרן might correspond to the recurrent events of the macro-narrative it reformulates. It should be noted with respect to the succinct *mashal* narrative, that although Friedmann moves the phrase ויהיו כעולי מצרים and the biblical quotation of Jer 47:2 to the close of the *mashal* narrative, the whole sentence, i.e. the biblical interference in the *mashal* narrative, appears to have been intended as found in the MS reading. Furthermore, instead of interpreting ויהיו כעולי מצרים as "those who had come under the yoke of Egypt," as Braude and Kapstein do, a more literal reading makes sense as well – "those who *came up* from Egypt" were protected from the water of the Red Sea as the schoolchildren from the river's water.

If the question "And why all this?" and the answer to it belong to the *mashal* narrative, then the *nimshal* sets with the quotation of two scriptural verses whose *unquoted parts* hint back to the *mashal* narrative: Whereas the first one, Isa 33:22, appears to rephrase propositional content of the of the first part of the *mashal* narrative – *He will save us* = "the teacher protects his pupils" –, the second one, Joel 2:26, confirms with *You shall* …

45 The MS reads שלאויל מרודך, Friedmann puts the first part of the name between brackets.

46 Even though the names of the kings are given here, this is one of several recurring narratives in *Seder Eliyahu* which has *collective* characters instead of individual ones.

praise the name of the Lord your God the wording of the answer "To sanctify His great name."

The text continues by quoting the entire verse Joel 2:26 and focusing on the expression להפליא ("wondrously") – which might be said to refer back to "those who came up from Egypt," given that the crossing of the Red Sea is generally depicted as a wonder. This is explained as meaning "to distinguish," thus opening a digression on the distinction made between the righteous and the wicked. In seven micro-narratives with exactly the same structure but dissimilar characters the statement "each and every man comes into the world as a reward for someone else" is illustrated. Two of them, on Sennacherib and Nebuchadnezzar, refer back to the preamble of the *mashal*.

Both the passages preceding and following the *mashal* narrative are challenging, highly elliptical pieces of literature that rely heavily on other rabbinic sources; only knowing these does the reader, for example, get a notion of which kingdoms are meant with the "two kingdoms" in the preamble, or why Ashur is depicted in a positive light. By contrast and in spite of making use of external elements, the *mashal* narrative's unambitious character is the one soothing moment of a difficult reading task.

Less challenging is the text that precedes the following example from *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. Conversely its *mashal* narrative is a more sophisticated one, or, in Stern words more "romance-like":

> [Concerning] the first forty days that Moses was up on Mount Sinai to bring the Torah to his people [it can be argued:] were it not for [His] kindness, the Torah would not have been given to Israel. They told a parable: **(EZ 178, l. 12)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who married a woman, whom he loved with a perfect love (אהבה גמורה). He sent for and was brought a man who would be a messenger between him and her. He showed him [the messenger] all his bridal chambers, all his rooms, and all his private rooms. He said to him, Go and say to that woman [that I say], I do not need you at all, but make me a small bridal chamber, so that I come and dwell with you and my servants, and the members of my household know that I love you with a perfect love. While the king was occupied with the measures of the bridal chambers and ordering his messenger to send plenty of gifts to his wife, they came and told him, Your wife has been unfaithful with another. At once the king left all he had in his hands, and the messenger was thrust out and went out terrified from the king's presence, for it is said, *While the king was on his couch[, my nard gave forth its fragrance]* (Song 1:12) (EZ 178, l. 11–20)

The parable just quoted is a good example of Stern's claim that the parables of *Seder Eliyahu*'s show a "tendency to extending the narrative through its own logic rather than concentrating it upon a single rhetorical message."[47] The short narrative on the Mosaic

[47] Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 213.

Covenant is retold with much more detail in the *mashal* narrative, which somehow *replaces* the biblical counterpart. The brief *nimshal* , a partially quoted scriptural verse, alludes to the moment in the *mashal* narrative before the crisis, it does not explain what is to be understood by the entire narrative, nor by its parts.

Ever since Zunz pointed this out it has been acknowledged that the text's structure and language of *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta* are clearly different from those of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and *Zuta*. This is also true of its parables. The following passage's context, of which I quote only the immediate co-text preceding the parable, is a petichah by R. Eliezer on the light created by God on the first day, which was hidden on the third day, and put aside for Israel's exclusive use:

> The Holy One, blessed be He, and the righteous will be in the Garden of Eden, [the latter] will bow <there> and they will be seated there. And the Holy One, blessed be He, will be seated at the head of the righteous, and will bring the light that He had hidden for the righteous, increasing its radiance three hundred and forty-five times. They will say before Him, Master of the universe, we have longed for this light, for it is said, *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and behold the face of God?* (Ps 42:3) He will reply, You now see My face. They will say before Him, Master of the universe, You shine for us with Your light, what is this darkness for? He replied to them, It is for the children of Esau and of Ishmael, for it is said, *For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.* (Isa 60:2) And the Holy One, blessed be He, will speak to Israel,[48] My children, accept from Me now the cup of consolation. They will answer, Master of the universe, You were angry at us, and You drew us out of Your house, You banished us to be among the nations of the world<, so that we were like a condemned vessel for the nations of the world.> Now You come to us to be reconciled? He replied to them, I shall tell you a parable: **(PsEZ 36, l. 13)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a man who married his niece (lit. "sister's daughter"). He became angry at her and drew her out of his house. After some days he came to be reconciled with her. She said <to him>, You were angry at me and drew me out of your house. Now you come <to me> to be reconciled with me? He replied <to her>, <You are> my niece, you might have thought (lit. "said in your heart") <that after the day you left my house another woman entered it. By your life>,[49] neither I have entered it [since]. Thus spoke the Holy One, blessed be He, to Israel, My children, from the day that I destroyed My house below, I have not gone up and dwelt in My house above, but have sat<, in dew and in rain>. And if you do not believe Me, put your hands on My head <and you will feel the dew on it. Were it not written in Scripture, it would be

48 Friedmann emends the *editio princeps* reading לך with להן.

49 Friedmann follows here the reading of MS Parma 1240.

> impossible to utter it,> for it is said, *for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night* (Song 5:2). And the Holy One, blessed be He, will clothe Zion in her strength (עוזה) on account of the words *The Lord is my strength (עזי) and my might* (Exod 15:2), which Israel said at the [Red] Sea. <Whence [do we infer that] that the Holy One, blessed be He, will clothe Zion in her strength?> From the verse, *Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion!* (Isa 62:1) (PsEZ 36, l. 3–24)

The text preceding the *mashal* narrative is a sort of eschatological narrative that depicts God conversing with Israel in the garden of Eden and offering them a reconciliation. Israel's reproachful reply to this offer is rephrased by God himself in a *mashal* he introduces with the formula אמשול לך משל, a formula *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* uses on only one occasion.[50] The first part of the *mashal* narrative rephrases this reproach in the niece's speech. The husband's speech anticipates God's argument in his nimshal: Just as the former refrains from entering the house from which he has drawn his wife out, so God refrains from dwelling in His house during Israel's exile. The woman's and Israel's banishment are for her husband and God respectively a time of grief. The relation between *mashal* and *nimshal* is of analogy. Before the midrashist lets the voice of R. Eliezer take over again to close the petichah, God in his role of *mashal* narrator emphasizes one last time his own anthropomorphic depiction by offering Israel to feel God's wet head as evidence of his having dwelt out of doors. As is the case in many other passages of *Seder Eliyahu*, it is also here not possible to determine who it is that actually utters the proof-text *for my head is wet with dew, my locks with the drops of the night*, God or the R. Eliezer as speaker of the petichah.

What does the *nimshal* of the narrative-recapitulative parables look like? As in the types of *mashal* discussed previously, the chart below represents the different types of *nimshal* according to their components:

[50] See ER 110, l. 17, where three consecutive parables are told. As was noticed already in chapter 4, n. 59, these parables are rather anomalous in that they are introduced with typical formulas for parables, but they depict hypothetical situations instead of narrating past events.

Table 5.3: The *nimshal* of narrative-recapitulative parables

Nimshal =	Biblical Narrative	EZ 174, l. 3
Nimshal =	Biblical Narrative + Proof-text(s)	ER 17, l. 31, ER 149, l. 27, EZ 180, l. 27, PsEZ 36, l. 13
Nimshal =	Proof-text	ER 89, l. 32, EZ 178, l. 12
Nimshal =	Proof-texts + Comment	ER 40, l. 15
Nimshal =	Rhetorical question + Statement + Proof-texts	ER 114, l. 3

Five parables have a *nimshal* that is of narrative character; in only two cases is there an evident analogical relation to the *mashal* narrative.[51] In the rest of the parables it consists primarily of proof-texts, either commented upon or following a statement. In his discussion of the origins of the *nimshal* David Stern argues that in the process of regularization of the rabbinic *mashal* the *nimshal* furnished a compensation for a missing narrative with a "real-life setting" that originally explained the *mashal* narrative, i.e. a narrative on how and why the parable came to be told:[52] "For a *mashal* preserved within a narrative context, that narrative supplies the information that makes it possible to understand the mashal's allusive meaning."[53] So Stern claims that "instead of a narrative frame, there is now an exegetical context, which is provided through the invention of the nimshal."[54] The parables discussed in this section have both a narrative frame, albeit not one that reproduces "a real-life setting" and a *nimshal* .Understanding their allusive meaning is thus made possible both by the narrative preceding them and by the *nimshal* .The narratives preceding the *mashal* can be viewed as anticipated nimshal.

5.4 Meta-Exegetical Parables

Parables told to illustrate a statement of rabbinic discourse, instead of a scriptural verse, are here designated as "meta-exegetical parables." Seventeen such parables can be identified in *Seder Eliyahu*, four of them in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.

The statement these parables illustrate can take different forms. It can be stated without any preceding formula,[55] or introduced with a formula *Seder Eliyahu* characteristically employs to quote a tradition understood to go back to the collective authority of the sages, מכאן אמרו ("from this they taught," lit. "said"),[56] as for example in the following passage:

> Another interpretation: *at the beginning of the watches* (לראש אשמורות) (Lam 2:19). Even a small town in Israel where there is Torah is better in the

[51] See ER 149, l. 27ff. and PsEZ 36, l. 13ff.
[52] See Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 6–7, who provides an example from *Bereshit Rabbah*.
[53] Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 16.
[54] Ibid.
[55] See e.g. ER 69, l. 1 and l. 4, ER 69, l. 25, EZ 191, l. 15.
[56] The formula is also spelt מיכן אמרו and מכן אמרו.

> eyes of the Holy One, blessed be He, than Samaria (שמרון), where there is no Torah, for it is said, *I am one of those who perfect (שלימה) [the faithful in Israel; you seek to destroy a city that is a mother in Israel]* (2 Sam 20:19), even a small town where [there is Torah]. From here they taught: Even if a man has only proper behaviour and [knowledge of] Scripture, he is given an angel[57] to watch over him, for it is said, *I am going to send an angel [in front of you, to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have prepared.]* etc. (Exod 23:20) If a man reads Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, he is given two angels to watch over him, for it is said, *For he will command his angels concerning you [to guard you in all your ways.]* (Ps 91:11) But if a man reads Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings, if he studies Mishnah, midrash, halakhot, and aggadot, and waits upon the disciples of the wise, the Holy One, blessed be He, watches Himself over him. They told a parable: **(ER 100, l. 6)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who was walking with his son in the desert. When the sun and the heat of noon came, the (lit. "his") father would stand upon him against the sun (עמד עליו אביו בחמה) to make a shade for his son, so that the sun and the heat of noon would not touch him, for it is said, *The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your [right] hand.* (Ps 121:5) (ER 99, l. 26–ER 100, l. 9)

There is undoubtedly exegesis at work in the preceding co-text of the *mashal*, in the interpretation of אשמורות of Lam 2:19 as implying Samaria, as well as in the application of 2 Sam 20:19 to this interpretation, but what the tripartite statement beginning with "From here they taught" primarily attempts to illustrate is the wording of the *self*-quotation of "Even a small town ...," the notion that God loves a small town with Torah more than an important one where there is no Torah. The statement claims that there is one perfect rabbinic way of life, and this consists of study of Scripture, of Mishnah, and of ministering on the disciples of the wise. Even if the *mikan amru*-statement can itself be understood as explaining שלומי ("perfect") of 2 Sam 20:19, the *mashal* narrative is an image of how God rewards him who dedicates perfectly to Torah, the third and last part of the statement.[58]

In five cases the statement immediately preceding the *mashal* narrative is the answer the rabbi gives to a question posed by his interlocutor in first person narratives. To give but an example:[59]

> He said to me, Rabbi, Israel was exiled twice. Once at the [time of the] First Temple and once at the [time of the] Second Temple. Why was the

57 Friedmann emends the MS reading שני מלאכים with מלאך אחד.

58 The content of the statement reminds of another *mashal* already discussed. See ER 91, l. 7, where the third manner is described as שלימה ("perfect").

59 Further examples of this type of dialogic statement are found in ER 71, l. 2, ER 71, l.13, EZ 173, l. 5.

> duration[60] <for the first [exile]> given [them], but for[61] the second [exile] no duration was given them? I said to him, My son, those living at the time of the First Temple, even if they were idolaters, had a proper behaviour (דרך ארץ). And what did this their proper behaviour consist of? Charity and deeds of love, for it is said ....[62] [They told a parable: What does the matter resemble?] (**ER 71, l. 22**) It is like a king of flesh and blood, who had many sons and servants. Many of them were clever,[63] many of them were mute, many deaf, many blind (סומין). [Because] they acted offensively with their deeds, he swore that he would leave them, and separated from them. Then they would cry and follow him, so he told them, Turn away from me (חיזרו מאחריי)! Look, I shall return to you in thirty days. Thus it is with Israel and the Holy One, blessed be He. Some of them possessed [knowledge of] Scripture, some of them possessed [knowledge of] Mishnah, some possessed [experience in the] give-and-take [of trade]. [Because] they acted offensively with their deeds, He swore that he would leave them and separated from them. Then they would cry and follow him, so he told them, Turn away from me (חזרו מאחרי)! Look, I shall return to you ...[64] How are we, therefore, to behave? We should pour out pleas of mercy and speak supplications and prayer to Him, we should find the one door to the words of Torah among all the doors which were opened for us by His servants the prophets, for so it is written, *Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me [with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning]* (Joel 2:12). Perhaps His many mercies will be moved for our sake and upon us will be fulfilled what His lips said to us, for it is said, *The one who breaks out will go up before them[; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king will pass on before them, the Lord at their head.]* etc. (Micah 2:13) (ER 71, l. 18–32)

In this case the statement is not as explicit as in the first example. The question and answer in the preamble to the *mashal* are part of a dialogue the anonymous rabbi maintains with a non-rabbinic adversary. The question pertains to the different duration of the Babylonian Exile, referred to as the "first exile," and the present one, i.e. the indefinitely long "second exile." While focusing on Israel of the First Exile, the rabbi seizes the occasion to criticise Israel of his own times by praising those exiled in Babylonia, which he does by projecting back on them rabbinic ideals. Whereas the reason for the comparatively short duration of their exile according to the preamble was their proper behaviour, the *nimshal* states that Israel had knowledge of Scripture and of Mishnah at that time, as well as of the give and take of trade – this is one of the characteristic phrases with which

60 The MS reads זיין which Friedmann emends with זצן.
61 The MS reads ובא-אחרון ("but the second [exile] *came* and no duration was given them ...")
62 Lacuna in MS.
63 The MS reads פקחים ("clever"), not פסחים ("lame").
64 Lacuna in MS.

the author of *Seder Eliyahu* designates the rabbinic curriculum.[65] A special feature of the *mashal* narrative itself is the use of the adjectives "smart" (or "lame"?), "mute," "deaf," and "blind" to describe the king's sons and servants.[66] These adjectives the reader might have associated with a number of scriptural verses (some of which are quoted elsewhere in *Seder Eliyahu* itself), in which reference is made to "the lame," "the blind," and "the deaf."[67] The wording is not in all cases the same in biblical and rabbinic Hebrew.[68]

A rather anomalous meta-exegetical parable is told in chapter 5 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* to comment upon the quotation of a statement first made in chapter 3, namely, "The blood and flesh, and the destruction of Gog in the time to come upon the mountains of Israel [has already been] partially [foreshadowed by] the blood and flesh and the destruction of those who oppress us in this world, whom our eyes behold every day without fail."[69] The attentive reader of both chapters in the right order is expected to recognise the text quoted in chapter 5 as such, as an internal quotation of *Seder Eliyahu*, a *self*-quotation[70] – he (in modern times also she) is helped by the fact that the paragraph preceding that in which the *mashal* is told is also opened by a self-quotation from the same statement first made in chapter 3:

> And "partially [foreshadowed by] the blood and flesh and the destruction of <those who oppress us>"[71] in this world, whom our eyes behold every day without fail. How so? **(ER 25, l. 4)** Two young children who studied Scripture at their teacher's house, who grew up and became disciples of the wise. When they used to pass the door of their teacher's house they would see the strap with which he used to flog them with, and they would laugh (משחקין) together and say, With that strap he used to flog us. So (כך) the peoples of the world afflict Israel and oppress them and grind (שוחקין) their bones and flesh until their souls depart them and they do not feel any pain. But later on, see, they will be on the mountains and hills, for it is said, *You have forgotten the Lord, your Maker, who stretched out the heavens* [… *who is bent on destroying (כונן להשחית)*] etc. (Isa 51:13) If Scripture had said, "[the Lord,] who am bent on destroying," I would have interpreted, "who am bent on destroying you (כוננתי בעיניך להשחית)." It follows that it is only of Babylon

65 See also e.g. ER 69, l. 25 (mashal), ER 92, l. 1–16 (exegetical passage on Ps 128:3), etc.

66 The same characterisation is used in ER 69, l. 25ff.

67 E.g. Jer 31:8 (quoted in ER 69, l. 4), Isa 42:18 (quoted in ER 69, l. 25), and Isa 43:8 (quoted in ER 82, l. 7).

68 The scriptural expression for "blind," עיוורים used in verses *Seder Eliyahu* quotes differs from the rabbinic Hebrew סומין he uses to represent rabbinic wording.

69 ER 15, l. 1–2.

70 On this phenomenon of *Seder Eliyahu* having its own a *baraita* (the passage of a previous passage which is quoted) and a commentary that expands on it see p. 14, n. 45 and 47. Other examples of *Seder Eliyahu*'s *baraitot* and commentaries upon them include ER 63, l. 11ff. (*baraita*) and ER 63, l. 20ff. (commentary); ER 123, l. 3 (*baraita*) and ER 123, l. 5 (commentary); ER 128, l. 13 (*baraita*) and ER 139, l. 28ff., ER 143, l. 25ff., ER 156, l. 15ff. (commentary).

71 Friedmann emends MS reading שלו חצים with של לוחצים.

> that Scripture said [the verse], *who is bent on destroying. But where is the fury of the oppressor?* (ibid.) See, they are on the mountains and the hills, and the birds eat their flesh from them. (ER 25, l. 3–12)

Even if there is no marker of comparison that introduces the narrative and even if it is not a narrative about a king and his children and/or servants, or about a householder, but one about disciples of the wise, who are reminded of their former teacher's pedagogical methods – again a case of discourse interference[72] –, the narrative *is* clearly a *mashal*. It is identified as a *mashal* by its being followed by a usual marker of applicability and what is read as a plausible *nimshal* or application, an eschatological account of events which refers back to the Ersatz-lemma, the rabbinic statement with which the passage is opened. The author of *Seder Eliyahu* is wont to make use of repetition but also of a kind of paronomasia[73] in order to provide cohesion to his text: This we can also appreciate in this passage where the *mashal* proper has the disciples laugh (משוחקין) and the nations of the world grind (שוחקין) Israel's bones in the *nimshal* .

In some cases, and as has already been the case in a previous example, the preamble to a meta-exegetical parable does contain a scriptural verse. As Goldberg himself conceded one might have the impression that these are exegetical parables:

> Es gibt allerdings Gleichnisse, die im Zusammenhang eines Midrasch zunächst den Eindruck erwecken, als seien sie textauslegend, wie sich aber dann als Teil thematischer Ausführungen erweisen.[74]

In order to distinguish them from the exegetical parables (and from those designated above as pseudo-exegetical), it could be argued as follows: If the preamble to a parable contains verses that instead of occasioning an "interpretation" by means of a parable rather follow a statement and are used in terms of proof-texts, then these parables can be designated as meta-exegetical for it is not primarily exegesis but the illustration (or explanation) of a rabbinic statement (including the verbatim repetition of a statement made previously in the work, i.e. a self-quotation) which stands at the centre of the mashal's attention. An example of such a preamble that contains a scriptural verse in the function of proof-text we find in the following parable:[75]

> Blessed be the Omnipresent, blessed be He, for He chose the sages, their disciples and their disciples' disciples, for upon them is [the mishnah] fulfilled: "With what measure a man metes it shall be measured to him again." (mSotah 1:7) And when they sit in the synagogues and in the houses of study, and on every free day read Scripture for the sake of heaven and study

72 On this concept see p. 109, n. 186.
73 One based on the partial overlap of consonants.
74 Goldberg, "Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis," 142 ("Yet there are parables that in the context of a midrash first appear to be exegetical, but then turn out to be part of thematic expositions.")
75 Further examples can be found in ER 128, l. 20ff., ER 136, l. 19ff., EZ 173, l. 5ff.

> Mishnah for the sake of heaven and fear [God] in their hearts and engrave the words of Torah on their mouths, it [the verse] is fulfilled upon them, *for the word is very near to you; it is in your mouth [and in your heart for you to observe.]* (Deut 30:14) <And they took upon themselves the yoke of heaven for it is said, *You have put gladness in my heart* (Ps 4:8).> They told a parable: (ER 97, l. 5) What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who had an orchard by his house. And he manured it, cleared it of weeds, and irrigated it from a <water-trough>,[76] and brought it manure at the requested time. [Of] each and every tree in it [the orchard it holds true that] the days of its old age were more beautiful to itself than the days of its youth. So [of] each and every sage of Israel who truly has words of Torah with him [it holds true that] the days of his old age are more beautiful to himself than the days of his youth, for it is said, *they shall not build <and another inhabit; they shall not plant> and another eat[; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.]* <etc.> (Isa 65:22) And it [Scripture] says, *they shall not labour in vain* etc. (Isa 65:23). And it [Scripture] says, *but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength* etc. (Isa 40:31) This word [shows] how it will be at the end and how it is partly today. (ER 96, l. 34–ER 97, l. 12)

The co-text preceding the parable is a berakhah that praises God's choice of the sages or rather the sages themselves, whose exemplary occupation consists of going to the synagogue and to the academy, and of studying both the Written and Oral Torah. Deut 30:14 is quoted as confirming the notion that the sages have the words of Torah in their mouths as if "engraved." The *nimshal* furthers the exaltation of the sages' lifestyle by comparing the beauty of their old age with that of mature trees. To emphasize the analogical relation between the trees of the *mashal* narrative and the sages of the *nimshal* two statements are made with parallel structure and in the second part identical wording according to which both trees and sages are beautified with time and proper nurture.

As a last example of meta-exegetical parable I propose to discuss the following passage of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*:

> From the nature of His ways (מידת דרכיו) one (lit. "he") learns that His compassion for the world is abundant. Why does He say, Give charity to the [average] poor (עניים), to the poor who longs for everything (אביונים), to those diminished in their property (דלים), and to the utterly poor (רשים)?[77] Does He not feed, provide for, and sustain (זן ומכלכל ומפרנס) all the inhabitants of the world, as well as all the work of His hands which He created in His world? Still, He says, Give charity to the [average] poor (עניים), to the

[76] Friedmann emends the uncertain מהשקה with מהשוקת.

[77] The author lists four synonymous terms that express different senses of "poor" and which can be paraphrased in English as different categories of poverty.

poor who longs for everything (אביונים), to those diminished in their property (דלים), and to the utterly poor (רשים). He only means (lit. "says") the man who did something unworthy, decreeing harm over himself (קנסה עליו רעה) for as long as four generations. That is him of whom we say, "He is righteous but has trouble (צדיק ורע לו)." Not only this, but even more: Our teacher Moses himself used to judge with an *a minori ad majus* argument [as follows]: Maybe because Israel do not desire to stand on the ways of the Omnipresent, God forbid, they are sentenced (מתחתם) with the decree of punishment (גזר דין), and see, they are smitten each and every hour. They told a parable: **(EZ 182, l. 18)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who married a woman and used to bring her with him from province to province. Whenever she acted offensively towards him, he would punish <her> with lashes. The king's father-in-law sent a messenger to the king. He said to him, Tell me, what does the king want? I shall tell my daughter [how] to succeed in doing what you want (שתעמוד בצורכך). The king sent him five sorts of fruit, and corresponding to them he wrote five letters, in which the king wrote and sent [message of] what he desired. When the letters and the fruits reached the king's father-in-law, he read in one of the letters, in which was written, These are so-and-so fruits. [In] the second was written, These are so-and-so fruits. [In] the third was written, These are so-and-so fruits. [In] the fourth was written, These are so-and-so fruits. When he realized (lit. "came to") what the king wished, he called for his daughter and said to her, The king loves truth, he loves peace, he loves justice, and charity. This is what Moses resembles (לכך נידמה) at that time, for it is said, *[Moses] said* … etc. *Now if I have found favour in your sight, show me your ways[, so that I may know you and find favour in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.]* (Exod 33:12–13) The Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw Moses' mind until its end, showing him each and every generation with its sages, each and every generation with its prophets, each and every generation with its interpreters of Scripture, each and every generation with its community leaders, each and every community with its men on whose behalf miracles occur. He showed him the dimension of this world (מידת העולם) and the dimension of the world-to-come. Thereupon he said in His presence, Master of the universe, You <have shown me>[78] the dimension of this world (מידה של עולם); show me the manner (מידה) in which the world is to be conducted, for I see the righteous who does well, [but also] the righteous who has trouble, the wicked who does well, [and] the wicked who has trouble; the rich who does well, [but also] the rich who has trouble, the poor who does well, [and] the poor who has trouble. He said, *Show me your glory, I pray.* (Exod 33:18) The Holy One, blessed be He, said, Moses, you cannot understand my ways (מידותיי). However, I will let you know some of my ways. When I look at

78 Friedmann emends the MS reading הראיני with הראיתני.

> human beings, I see that there is no hope in their deeds nor in the deeds of their forefathers. Still, because they proceed to bless me, and supplicate, and multiply their prayers, I respond (נזקק) to them and double their provisions, for it is said, *He will regard the prayer of the destitute[, and will not despise their prayer.]* etc. (Ps 102:18) And it [Scripture] says, *And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before you* (Exod 33:19). These are the thirteen attributes: *The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin* (Exod 34:6–7). If it were said "my goodness" instead of *all my goodness*, I would say that the days of the Messiah are not [included] here. But since it [Scripture] says *all my goodness*, the days of the Messiah are [included] here; *and I will proclaim before you the name, "The Lord"* etc. (Exod 33:19), and it [Scripture] says, *The Lord descended in the cloud [and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name, The Lord.]* etc. *The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed[, The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious]* etc. (Exod 34:5–6) When Moses saw that one [of His] ways (מידה) is loving-kindness and one [of His] ways is compassion, he wrapped himself [with a prayer shawl] and stood in prayer before the Holy One, blessed be He, for it is said, *He said, If now I have found favour in your sight[, O Lord, I pray, let the Lord go with us. Although this is a stiff-necked people, pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance.]* (Exod 34:9) (EZ 182, l. 11–ER 183, l. 20)

The passage opens with a statement concerning God's ways as evidence for His compassion, which is also shown in His urging human beings to be compassionate towards the poor, towards any kind of poor person, and to emphasize this the author of *Seder Eliyahu* uses four adjectives, four near synonyms with the meaning "poor." The last one, רשים, provides the immediate co-text for the parable that follows. רשים is explained metaphorically as those who bring harm over themselves by their own misdeeds. In a second step, רשים is paraphrased using what appears to be a popular saying, probably known to the audience, as can be inferred from the use of the first person plural. The third attempt at interpreting the term is a conjecture put into Moses' mouth, [79] according to which the reason why Israel are רשים, why they are constantly smitten (לוקין), is their own reluctance to get to know God's attributes. The *mashal* narrative has a king beat (מלקה) his wife whenever she acts offensively towards him. At the request of his father-in-law, the king explains his wishes by sending five sorts of fruit together with five letters describing them, but not explicitly naming them. The father-in-law reveals his wisdom in being able to decipher four of the king's five metaphors (or parables within the parable?) of the king's wishes. What the *mashal* does not tell, is whether the king's wife followed the king's principles after having them explained to her by her father.

[79] Despite being introduced as an *a minori ad majus* inference, Moses' argument does not have the characteristic structure and phrasing.

When we turn to the *nimshal* , it is clear that, corresponding to the *mashal* narrative, it turns the reader's attention towards Moses' instead of Israel's behaviour. It is not the reproachable behaviour of the king's wife, but rather the ability of the king's father-in-law to understand the king's will and transmitting it to his daughter that the *mashal* narrative is about. Whereas only four of the five types of fruit were allegorically interpreted within the *mashal* narrative,[80] the *nimshal* provides five classes of men as equivalence for the types of fruit. This *mashal* can be seen as representing that tendency towards novelization which David Stern considered a main feature in *Seder Eliyahu*'s *meshalim*. The *mashal* narrative does much more than merely explain how the metaphorically poor bring harm over themselves by misbehaving. Likewise the *nimshal* provides an extended account in the form of an exegetical narrative of how Moses came to be familiar with some of God's attributes, with those of this world and those of the world to come. The repetitiveness of the passage is manifest in the frequency of the use of the expressions מידה and דרכיו, which are namely used twelfth times in the passage quoted above.[81] This is the subject of this exegetical narrative which takes *show me your ways* (Exod 33:13) as lemma and closes with Moses' prayer in Exod 34:9. This, it is explained, he utters after having realized that one of God's ways is His compassion, thus providing consistency and closure not just to the *nimshal* narrative but to the whole passage that had set out to expound on compassion as one of God's attributes.

The examples discussed so far provide an overview of the various types of statements that in *Seder Eliyahu* are illustrated or explained with a *mashal*. As noted by Stern and observed previously with respect to exegetical parables, also in the case of these parables it holds true that the *nimshal* is more clearly connected to the *mashal* narrative, but only loosely the preamble of the parable. The form of the *nimshal* in this subgroup of parables also varies, as can be seen in the following table:

Table 5.4: The *nimshal* of meta-exegetical parables

Nimshal =	Statement	ER 9, l. 21ff., ER 71, l. 2ff.
Nimshal =	Statement + Proof-text	ER 69, l. 25ff., ER 71, l. 13ff. (lacunae), ER 97, l. 5ff., ER 136, l. 19ff.
Nimshal =	Statement + Proof-text + Biblical Narrative	EZ 182, l. 18ff.
Nimshal =	Statement + Biblical Narrative	ER 71, l. 22ff.
Nimshal =	Biblical narrative	EZ 173, l. 5ff.
Nimshal =	Biblical narrative + Proof-text(s)	ER 128, l. 20ff.
Nimshal =	Biblical narrative + Eschatological account of events + Proof-text	ER 25, l. 4ff.
Nimshal =	Rhetorical question + Speech by the narrator addressing an audience in 1st person plural + Proof-text	ER 69, l. 4ff.
Nimshal =	Proof-text	ER 100, l. 6ff., ER 155, l. 21ff., EZ 191, l. 15ff.

80 Four is incidentally the number of types of "poor" God is at the beginning of the passage said to urge his children to be, charitable with,.

81 The expressions are used in the following phrases: מידת דרכיו, בדרכיו של מקום, דרכיך, מידת העולם ומידת מידה של, מידה של חסד, שלש עשרת מידות, מקצת מידותיי, מידותיי, מידת שהעולם מתנהג בה, מידת של עולם, העולם הבא רחמים.

Nimshal = none ER 69, l. 1ff.

5.5 Rhetorical Questions and Parables that (Do not always) Answer Them

Eleven parables are preceded by a variation of the usual formula *le-mah ha-davar domeh* that replaces the phrase *ha-davar* with a proper name – Israel or "the House of Israel,"[82] Esau, Amalek, Jeroboam etc.,[83] Manasseh's generation[84] –, the noun "man,"[85] or by questions with the structure "What is the difference between X and Y?"[86] In one case the wording of the question is "What does the Holy One, blessed be He, compare the face of the righteous with?"[87] It is worth noting that these mashal-opening are found in five cases at the beginning of either a chapter or a paragraph, functioning together with the parable as a sort of preamble for the subsequent discourse. In what follows I shall discuss three examples of this use of the parable, beginning with the opening text segment of chapter (11) 12 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*:

> What did Israel resemble during the days of the judges' rule? **(ER 55, l. 7)** It is like a king of flesh and blood who had sons[88] and servants. Some of them were six years old. Some five years old. Some four years old. Some three years old. Some two years old. [Some] one year old. All of them he brought up at his table, where they would eat from what he ate and drink from what he drank. So he brought them up and built for them houses, planted vines, trees, and saplings (נטעים). He spoke to them, Do not disregard these saplings (נטיעות), do not disregard these trees, do not disregard these vines. Once they had eaten and drunk, they proceeded to uproot the vines, to fell the trees, and to destroy the houses and the saplings. Still, when he came and found them he took comfort[89] from them. He said, Look, they are like schoolchildren (lit. "children of a master's house"). What am I to do about (lit. "to") these? ...[90] Bring them [to me]! And he hit them once, twice, and

82 E.g. ER 55, l. 7ff., ER 82, l. 7ff., ER 156, l. 7ff., ER 156, l. 10ff. The last parable can be seen as a hybrid case for it is actually preceded by the regular formula, but at the same time it provides an answer to the same question to which the immediately preceding parable (ER 156, l. 7ff.) responds.

83 E.g. ER 125, l. 12ff.

84 E.g. ER 162, l. 20ff.

85 E.g. ER 135, l. 11ff.

86 E.g. between love and awe in ER 140, l. 27ff., between Scripture and Mishnah in EZ 171, l. 19ff. and EZ 194, l. 25ff.

87 ER 164, l. 1ff.

88 Friedmann emends the MS reading בנים with בתים.

89 Friedmann emends the MS reading הרחיבה with הרחיקה.

90 Lacuna in MS.

a third time. This is what Israel resembled in the days of the judges' rule before our Father who is in heaven. They acted offensively with their deeds, so that he delivered them to a kingdom, but as soon as they repented he redeemed them at once, which teaches you that even the penny taken from Israel is a form of judgement and that everything [that happens to them] is nothing but part of [this] judgement. Maybe you ask why the forty-two thousand who were slain in the days of Jephthah the Gileadite were killed. Jephthah the Gileadite made an improper vow at the time when Phinehas son of Eleazar was designated [as High Priest for giving counsel]. Phinehas should have gone to Jephthah to release him from his vow. Jephthah should have gone to Phinehas and have himself released from his vow. But he did not go. This one said, I am High Priest, son of a High Priest, grandson of Aaron the priest, and should go to an ignorant (עם הארץ)? The other said, I am the leader of all Israel, and should go to this one? This one and the other were guided by their self-pride. Woe unto the pride (גדולה) that buries those it possesses! Woe unto the pride that does no good in the world! [When] Jephthah the Gileadite made a vow that was improper – to offer his daughter on an altar –, the children of Ephraim gathered against him and were in serious argument with him over this. Phinehas should [then] have said to them, You did not come to him to release him from his vow. You came to him to engage in an argument. Phinehas neither forewarned the children of Ephraim, nor released Jephthah from his vow. He who sits on the throne, the righteous judge, may His great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever, said, After this one took his life in his hand and came and delivered Israel from the hand of Moab and from the hands of the children of Ammon, they came to engage in a serious argument with him. Therefore they gathered to wage war and he killed forty-two thousand of them, for it is said, *they said to him, Then say Shibboleth, and he said, Sibboleth* (Judg 12:6), this is an expression for idolatry, as when a man says to his fellow (לחבירו) *sʾabul* (שאבול);[91] *for he could not pronounce it right. Then they seized him and killed him at the fords of the Jordan. [Forty-two thousand of the Ephraimites fell at that time.]* (ibid.) And who killed all these? You should say, No one killed them but Phinehas son of Eleazar, who was in a dilemma as to whether to forewarn [them], but did not forewarn [them], as to whether to invalidate Jephthah's vow, but did not release him. And not only Phinehas, but every one who is in doubt whether to forewarn [someone else], but does not forewarn [them] who has the possibility of bringing back (להחזיר) Israel to goodness, but does not do it, the blood spilt by Israel is but spilt on his hands, for it is said, *So you, mortal, I have made [a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning*

91 Amos Geula suggested in a paper delivered at the Xth Congress of the European Association of Jewish Studies Paris 2014 that the expression שאבול might be understood as referring to the Sibylla or to the sibylline books.

> *(הזהרת) from me.]* etc. *If I say to the wicked[, O wicked ones, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand.]* <etc.> *But if you warn the wicked [to turn (לשוב) from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.]* <etc.> (Ezek 33:7–9) Given that all [of] Israel are responsible for one another, what can they be compared with? With a ship one of whose compartments has been torn apart. They do not say, A compartment has been torn apart, but the entire ship has been torn apart, for it is said, *Did not Achan son of Zerah break faith [in the matter of the devoted things, and wrath fell upon all the congregation of Israel? And he did not perish alone for his iniquity!]* etc. (Josh 22:20) (ER 55, l. 7–ER 56, l. 15)

The rhetorical question at the beginning of the quoted passage sets the subject-matter of the chapter of *Seder Eliyahu* it opens: The whole of chapter (11) 12 deals with biblical narratives from the Book of the Judges, and with *rabbinic* narratives associated with the time of the judges.[92] Israel at this time, according to the *mashal* narrative, resembles a king that forgives his sons and servants, even though these act rudely toward him, doing harm to the vines, trees, saplings, and houses they were expected to take care of. The king does, however, reprimand his sons and servants, whom he compares to schoolchildren.

The short *nimshal* does not account for certain details of the *mashal* narrative: Why are the different ages of the children and servants mentioned? What do the vines, trees, and saplings stand for? Is the description of the behaviour of children and servants more effective if they are said to destroy vines, trees, and saplings, than if they only destroy vines? There are no clear answers to these questions. The apparent superfluous detail of the *mashal* narrative might be evidence of the inclination of *Seder Eliyahu* to novelization and in general to an instrumentalization of the *mashal* that differs from that of its predecessors in classical midrash.

The *nimshal* consists of a summarized vague biblical narrative – Israel offends God in the days of the Judges, so that he turns them over to an unspecified kingdom, but then forgives them once they have repented – and a closing maxim according to which every chastisement that comes from God upon Israel is just. This maxim is immediately followed by a question that addresses the reader directly – ושמא תאמר… and connects the message of the *nimshal* with an exegetical narrative.[93] The narrative links the killing "in Jephthah's days" of forty-two thousand Ephraimites with a rabbinic retelling of the bib-

[92] The narratives include a rabbinic account of the reason for the quasi-extinction of the children of Benjamin, a passage on the place of the episode of Gibeah's crime on the Levite's concubine according to Judg 19–21, and a lengthy narrative on the abduction of the Ark by the Philistines. They have in common that they all attempt to explain why so many thousands among Israel fell in wars against their enemies.

[93] The same question ושמא תאמר… is used to introduce the exegetical narrative on the killing in Gibeah of seventy thousand Benjaminites that follows after this narrative.

lical narrative of Jephthah's vow,[94] according to which Phinehas is said to have still lived and held the office of High Priest at the time when Jephthah made his ominous vow, to sacrifice his daughter – according to the biblical account he vowed to sacrifice whatever came out of his house if he could defeat the Ammonites (Judg 11:31). *Seder Eliyahu* explains that neither did Phinehas release Jephthah from his vow, nor did Jephthah ask him to do so. Moreover, Phinehas is made responsible for not intervening and forewarning the Ephraimites who are said to have been in conflict with Jephthah because of his vow. The reason why the Ephraimites fell is, as the midrash concludes, that Phinehas failed to forewarn them. Therefore, Phinehas is understood to have killed them. From the individual case of Phinehas the midrashist extrapolates the general rule that whenever anyone in Israel fails to be responsible for the rest, the whole of Israel is comparable to a ship one of whose parts has been torn apart.

At least part of the message of the parable – the notion during the times of the judges God repeatedly had Israel first oppressed by the nations of the world and then redeemed – is illustrated by the exegetical narrative, or rather the exegetical narrative is expected to be read at least partly in light of the *mashal* that precedes it: God punishes the forty-two thousand Ephraimites for choosing to be conflict with Jephthah by allowing that Phinehas refrain from forewarning them. Phinehas is also insofar punished as the midrash makes him responsible for the killing and for Jephthah's vow being fulfilled.

Instead of being an illustration of something already expounded, the parable functions as a sort of preamble for a number of exegetical narratives, it anticipates in condensed form what is still to be narrated, expounded on, as if the exegetical narratives themselves were the illustrations of the parable.

Most of the parables of this subtype are opened by questions like the one in the previous example. In the next passage the question, placed at the beginning of a paragraph, has a different form. Moreover, it is followed by the usual opening formula *mashlu mashal…* Taken together both parts of the opening could be paraphrased as "What does the difference between love and awe resemble?"

> What is the difference between love and awe? They told a parable: **(ER 140, l. 27)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who had to go away to a province by the sea.[95] He had two servants. The one loved the king and was in awe of him; the other was in awe of him, but did not love him. The one who loved him and was in awe of him planted gardens, and an orchard with all sorts of fine fruit. The

[94] See bTaan 4a, BerR 9:3, TPsJ to Judg 11:39.

[95] Immediately after this sentence the MS reads: "He wanted to hand his son over to a wicked guardian. His courtiers and ministers said in his presence, Our lord, king, do not hand your son over to a wicked guardian. The king ignored (lit. "transgressed") the words of his courtiers and ministers and handed his son over to a bad guardian." The sentence belongs to another passage and is erroneously placed here, which Friedmann indicates by putting it in brackets and smaller typeface.

> one who was in awe of him did nothing at all until a letter was brought to him by a messenger. After some days the king came [back]. When he entered his house [i.e. that of the servant who loved him] and saw the figs and grapes and all sorts of fine fruit, he arranged [it all] corresponding to the understanding of the servant who loved him. When the servant who loved him came into the king's presence and saw all sorts of fine fruit [thus arranged], his mind was set at rest corresponding to the king's pleasure. The one who just feared him, on the other hand, did nothing at all. When the king came into his house and saw all sorts of ruined stuff (כל מיני חרבות כלום), he arranged before him all sorts of ruined stuff. His mind was shaken corresponding to the king's grief, for it is said, *He provides food for those who fear him* (Ps 111:5), this is the measure of judgement; *he is ever mindful of his covenant* (ibid.), this is the world to come and the Torah that is with it; *He has gained renown by his wonderful deeds; the Lord is gracious and merciful* (Ps 111:4), this is this world and the Torah that is with it; *He is mindful of his covenant for ever* (Ps 105:8) and *he is ever mindful of his covenant* (Ps 111:5), this is the reward of the fearful. Whence [do we infer] the reward of the one who loves [Him]? Scripture says, *you shall have no other gods [before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.]* etc. (Exod 20:3–6) From here you learn that the reward of the one who loves [and fears Him consists of] two portions, whereas the reward of the one who [just] fears [Him consists of] one portion. Therefore the peoples of the world have the privilege only to enjoy this world. Israel on the other hand has the privilege to enjoy two worlds, this world and the world to come. (ER 140, l. 27–ER 141, l. 12)

The *mashal* narrative represents the difference between the two feelings love and fear by characterising two servants in different light. Whereas the loving and fearing servant is diligent and pleases the king by cultivating fruit, so that he himself arranges it in a manner that pleases them both, the fearing one is idle and prepares "all sorts of ruined stuff" for the king to see. Why a fearful servant should behave so awkwardly, even though he has received a letter from the king, probably announcing a meeting, remains unclear. The *mashal* narrative just shows that the king was displeased with him. The *nimshal* consists of two parts: The first one deals primarily with the fearful and their reward, quoting for this purpose verses of Ps 111 and Ps 105. Both in the scriptural verses and in their interpretation word-forms for "love" and "fear" are used, linking the *nimshal* to the *mashal* narrative. The second part focuses on the main notion the parable appears to have set out to illustrate: The idea that a double reward consisting in a double portion

of this world and the world to come is foreshadowed by those (among Israel) who have a "double" feeling toward God, fear and love.

A last example can illustrate the apparent textual inconsistency between the parable parts that David Stern refers to when he observes that a nimshal's lesson "is not quite identical to the introductory thesis preceding the *mashal*, which it is supposed to illustrate":[96]

> What is the difference between Scripture and Mishnah? They told a parable: **(EZ 194, l. 25)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who had sons and servants whom he loved with a complete love. He sent them to [study] Scripture and Mishnah, and to learn proper behaviour (דרך ארץ). Then he would sit and look forward to [seeing] them, saying, When will they come so that I may see them? When he saw that they were not coming, he proceeded to go himself to them, and found them reading Scripture and studying Mishnah, and showing a proper behaviour. He seated them on his lap, embraced them, hugged them, and kissed them, some of them [he held] on his shoulders, some of them on his arms, some [he placed] in front of him, some of them behind him, for it is said, *He will feed his flock like a shepherd[; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.]* etc. (Isa 30:11) Maybe you say, Because He humbles Himself like a shepherd, He is an ordinary man. But then is it not written of Him, *Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span[, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance?]* etc. (Isa 30:12)? This refers to someone whose compassion is abundant. And whence [do we infer that] He finds them reading Scripture, studying Mishnah, and showing a proper behaviour? Because it is said, *They shall go after the Lord, who roars like a lion; when he roars, his children shall come trembling from the sea.* (Hos 11:10) And *the sea* is but the words of Torah, for it is said, *All streams run to the sea[, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow.]* (Eccles 1:7) And it [Scripture] says, *They shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria[; and I will return them to their homes, says the Lord.]* etc. (Hos 11:11) (EZ 194, l. 25–ER 195, l. 8)

Unlike Stern's example, the above quoted parable has no "thesis" or lesson preceding the *mashal* narrative, that could be said to be "not quite identical" to what is argued after the *mashal* narrative. The *mashal* narrative is preceded by the notion that there *is* a difference between Scripture and Mishnah in the form of a straightforward question, but neither does the *mashal* narrative nor the *nimshal* deal in any evident manner with this difference. Whereas the former praises the king's subjects all of whom both engage in the study of the Written and the Oral Torah and are distinguished by their proper

96 Stern, *Parables in midrash*, 215.

behaviour – once again the use phraseology usually found in the text surrounding the *mashal* narrative can be ascertained –, the latter focuses on the problem of a far too anthropomorphic understanding of Isa 30:11, i.e. how God rejoices when men outside the *mashal* world study Scripture, Mishnah and in general behave properly. Furthermore, the *nimshal* claims that God, as the king of the *mashal* narrative, finds his children engaged in the three activities mentioned in the *mashal*, providing scriptural evidence with the quotation and interpretation of *the sea* of Hos 11:10 as "words of Torah" and *all streams* of Eccles 1:7 in terms of "[all the] words of Torah."[97] So in this case it cannot be argued that the *mashal* functions as a bridge between not identical, but similar ideas,[98] but rather as a transition between two different, unrelated ideas.

The same question that opened the previous passage precedes another parable of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, where it receives a different kind of answer:

> He said to me, Scripture was given to us from Mount Sinai. Mishnah was not given us from Mount Sinai. And I answered him, My son, were not both Scripture and Mishnah uttered by the mouth of the Lord? What is the difference between Scripture and Mishnah? They told a parable: **(EZ 171, l. 19)** What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who had two servants, whom he used to love with a complete love. He gave one a measure of wheat and the other a measure of wheat. He gave one a bundle of flax and the other a bundle of flax. The clever one of the two, what did he do? He took the flax and wove it into a linen cloth. He took the wheat and made a dish fine flour out of it. He sifted and ground it [the grain], kneaded it [the dough], baked it, set it on the table, and spread the linen cloth over it, but left it [there] until the coming of the king. The foolish one did nothing at all. After some time the king came into his house and spoke to them like this, My sons, bring me what I gave you. One brought out [a loaf of] the dish of fine flour upon the table and the tablecloth spread over it. The other brought out the wheat in a basket and on top of it the bundle of flax. Oh, for such a shame! Oh, for such a disgrace! Alas, tell me, which of the two was dear to him? The one who brought out the table with [a loaf of] the dish of fine flour upon it. (EZ 171, l. 19–28)

In this case there is an answer to the question: The difference between Scripture and Mishnah, or rather, the difference between understanding Torah as consisting of only Scripture or as encompassing both Scripture and Mishnah, is represented as two servants, one of whom is diligent in his processing the raw materials given him by the king

97 Further examples of this apparent textual inconsistency are the parables ER 162, l. 20ff. and ER 164, l. 1ff., which also fail to answer the question that precedes them. The focus of these parables lies clearly elsewhere, e.g. in the elucidation of a scriptural verse quoted in the nimshal.

98 See Stern, *Parables in midrash*, 215.

while the other is idle and leaves the materials he received untouched. The *nimshal* (not quoted above) continues the same line of argumentation.[99]

As in all the preceding subtypes of parables also the *nimshal* of this subtype can have different components. Most of the *nimshal* examples consist either of biblical narratives followed by proof-texts or by proof-texts, as the chart below shows:

Table 5.5: The *nimshal* of rhetorical question-answering parables

Nimshal =	Biblical Narrative(s) + Proof-text(s)	ER 82, l. 7ff., ER 125, l. 12ff., ER 156, l. 10ff.
Nimshal =	Biblical Narrative + Statement	ER 55, l. 12ff.
Nimshal =	Dialogue + Biblical Narrative + Proof-text	EZ 171, l. 19ff.
Nimshal =	Proof-text	ER 135, l. 11ff., ER 162, l. 20ff., ER 164, 1ff., EZ 194, l. 25ff.
Nimshal =	Proof-texts + Comments	ER 140, l. 27ff.
Nimshal =	None	ER 156, l. 7ff.

5.6 Concluding Remarks

According to the passage of *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* quoted at the beginning, the mashal's task is to illustrate the meaning of Torah words. If Torah is understood not in the narrow sense of a part of Scripture, but in terms of both Written and Oral Torah, the latter in turn an umbrella term including even the words of *Seder Eliyahu*, then the message of the *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah*-passage itself does not differ substantially from what the parable does in *Seder Eliyahu*.

However, the parables included in ShirR 1:1, 8 and those of *Seder Eliyahu* are different: The former use images of inanimate objects – a thicket of reeds, a basket, a ladle, a well – that a clever man adapts so that better use can be made of them, to illustrate how Solomon's use of *meshalim*, "proverbs" or "comparisons" rather than "narrative parables," have come to contribute to the understanding of Torah.[100] Conversely, the parables of *Seder Eliyahu* do not deal with inanimate objects and a certain clever man, but generally with a king, and they do not contain an explicit poetology of the *mashal*. They can on the whole be described as belonging to the type of the regularized king-mashal as described by David Stern in *Parables in Midrash*,[101] especially in that their *mashal* narratives make use of highly conventionalized language and of narrative patterns. There are, as will be summarized below, a number of aspects which set the instrumentalization of these parables apart from their predecessors in classical midrash.

Even if Stern concedes in his article "Rhetoric and Midrash" that the rabbinic *mashal* is seldom found in non-exegetical contexts, it is not on this type of rarity that he focuses but on the regularized form, and this is the exegetical *mashal*. The same can be claimed

[99] For a discussion of this parable see chapter 6.1.
[100] For an analysis of this passage in terms of a poetology see Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 65–67.
[101] Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 16–24.

of *mashal* scholarship in general. From what was discussed previously it appears that *Seder Eliyahu* has an important parable corpus many of whose items differ in the way they are put to use from their predecessors in classical midrash from the amoraic period as described by Stern and others. 47% of the parables, namely, are not found in explicitly exegetical contexts, they do not purport to explain a scriptural verse, but either illustrate what has been designated as a statement of rabbinic discourse, rephrase a narrative of biblical subject matter or an exegetical narrative, or they constitute a reply to a rhetorical question.

The *mashal* narratives are clearly fictional narratives on ahistorical events,[102] but in no few cases the fictions include diction not found in what Stern describes as the "thesaurus of thematic, motific, and lexical stereotypes" of the regularized form of the rabbinic mashal.[103] In one case, where the *mashal* narrative has disciples of the wise as characters, it could be asked whether we do not have an approximation to the rhetorical claim of the *maʿaseh*, a literary form that "purports to tell a story that actually took place," as David Stern describes it.[104]

In some cases, as was pointed out when discussing certain parables,[105] Stern's suggestion that there is evidence in *Seder Eliyahu* of a tendency to "novelization" holds true. It cannot, however, be stated that this is a characteristic feature of the entire corpus or even of the majority of its parables. On the contrary, for a considerable number of parables Goldberg's description of the classical parable in terms of "minimal narrative sequence" is more adequate.[106]

Another salient feature of the parables of this late midrash is that, except for two in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* and the ones told in *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, the parables are never attributed to a rabbinic authority. The teller of the remaining 71 parables is the anonymous midrashist who tells them either in his "midrashist voice" or as a narrator in a first person narrative, having thus different direct addressees. Notwithstanding this choice of effacement of the names, much of what is done with the parables in *Seder Eliyahu* is nothing but *self-representation of the rabbinic class*. Even though they remain for the most part nameless it appears that the sages, their mores and values are at the centre of *Seder Eliyahu*'s discourse, and the parables are no exception in this respect. The

[102] See Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik: Eine Grundlegung der Literaturwissenschaft*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1973), Registerbd., s.v. parabolé, who defines the term as "*similitudo*, die aus dem Bereich der Natur und des allgemeinen (nicht historisch fixierten) Menschenlebens genommen ist."

[103] Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 21.

[104] Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 13.

[105] E.g. EZ 178, l. 11 among others.

[106] See Goldberg, "Das Schriftauslegende Gleichnis," 146–147: "Da das narrative Relat eine minimale narrative Sequenz enthält, nämlich eine Ausgangssituation, ein darin enthaltenes oder ein geäußertes Problem und eine Folge, und diese beiden Teile des Relats in der Regel durch eine Relation des Grundes oder der Ursache ('weil': 'deshalb') oder der Bedingung ('wann': 'dann') stehen, seien die beiden Teile des SG "Protasis" und "Apodosis" genannt …"

"disciples of the wise" are in many parables the characters of the *nimshal* , their exaltation the reason why a parable is told. They can even be present *in* the *mashal* narrative, as has been shown. A further rhetorical strategy used by the author of *Seder Eliyahu* to explicitly put the disciples of the wise in focus is the use of the first person plural precisely in parable contexts praising the sages;[107] not only does he identify with the sages he praises, but he also invites his audience to identify with them. The sages are said to be one of two or several classes within Israel; they are contrasted with "the ignorants with proper behaviour,"[108] but also with heartless men with knowledge of Scripture and Mishnah;[109] those disciples of the wise who lose their children in childhood receive corresponding consolation.[110]

Stern also pointed out that the use of the parable as an illustrative tool in *Seder Eliyahu* has the consequence that the narratives themselves "lose their more symbolic features and simultaneously become less plausible as narratives."[111] The reader of such implausible narratives asks baffled, "What is this narrative really about?,"[112] as for example in the first of all the parables of *Seder Eliyahu*, according to which a king is pleased at his servants collecting rubbish and placing it at his door:

> They told a parable: What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood whose servants, and members of his household used to take the refuse and throw it out before the king's doorway. But when he [the king] came out [of the palace] and saw the refuse, he rejoiced with great joy. (ER 4, l. 26)

Yet bafflement is not a reaction that arises exclusively when reading *parables* of *Seder Eliyahu*. *Seder Eliyahu* is a difficult text, the logic with which sentences are concatenated is quite often far from evident, and sometimes it is only after intense reading(s) that the meaning of a passage can be elucidated – or at least the modern reader gets this impression. It is because this chapter attempted to illustrate *Seder Eliyahu*'s arduous textual landscape that parables were quoted not in isolation but within the lengthy units of meaning and textual passages that frame them.

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107 E.g. ER 25, l. 4ff., ER 69, l. 4ff., ER 71, l. 22ff.

108 See ER 69, l. 4ff.

109 See ER 69, l. 25.

110 See EZ 191, l. 15ff. Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 124, counts consolation in case of the death of young children as a recurring theme in *meshalim*: "Sometimes, these *meshalim* attempt to rationalize the death, to explain, almost apologetically, why the tragic loss of a young child or the premature decease of a righteous colleague should not offend their sense of God's justice."

111 Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 215.

112 Ibid.

Chapter 6

The First Person Narratives: Scripture but no Mishnah

> Einen Punkt hat er [Zunz] jedoch nicht hervorgehoben, der freilich etwas überraschend ist und dem Werke einen besonderen Reiz verleiht. Es ist dies der Umstand, daß an zwei Stellen Elija – d. h. der Verfasser – als Vertheidiger der rabbanitischen Lehre gegen die Karäer auftritt.[1]

Ever since Wilhelm Bacher published his article "Anti-Karäisches in einem jüngeren Midrasch" in 1874 *Seder Eliyahu* has been regarded as a rabbinic work that polemically responds to Karaism.[2] In Bacher's view it is not the fact that a late midrash such as *Seder*

[1] Wilhelm Bacher, "Antikaräisches in einem jüngeren Midrasch," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 23 (1874): 266–267 ("One point he [Zunz] did not emphasize, admittedly an astonishing one and one which adds particular zest to the work. It is the fact that in two passages Elijah – i.e. the author – appears as defender of the rabbanite doctrine against the Karaites.")

[2] See also the *Jewish Encyclopedia* (`http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/`), s. v. "Tanna debe Eliyahu." In his discussion of late midrashim Myron B. Lerner, "The works of aggadic Midrash and the Esther Midrashim," in *The Literature of the Sages: Second Part*, ed. Shmuel Safrai, Zeev Safrai, Joshua Schwartz, and Peter J. Tomson (Assen, Minneapolis, MN: Van Gorcum, Fortress, 2006), 153, points out in this regard: "The second phenomenon not dealt with by Elbaum is the anti-Karaite polemics. The Karaite schism begun by Anan b. David during the latter half of the eighth century evoked various forms of response from the leaders of rabbinic Judaism and it was only natural that anti-Karaite polemics would find their way into contemporary midrashic literature. Surprisingly enough, however, this phenomenon is not too widespread and there is only sporadic evidence for such occurrences in midrashic works dating from the eighth to the tenth centuries. Bacher et al. have argued that certain halakhic passages in *Seder Eliyahu* as well as those stressing the importance of Mishnah study, instead of concentrating exclusively on the Bible, reflect the author's staunch opposition to Karaism. However, this conclusion has been challenged by some scholars, or simply ignored by others. J. N. Epstein and M. Zucker have focused on a relatively large number of anti-Karaite polemics in *Mishnat R. Eliezer*, whereas individual attacks are found in *Midrash Tanhuma*, and possi-

Eliyahu which he dates to 970 contains anti-Karaite polemics that is remarkable, but rather that no other midrash does. An explanation for this special feature he sees in what he assumes to be the work's place of composition, i.e. Babylonia.

Some eighty years after Bacher Moshe Zucker would address the issue in more detail.[3] Both Bacher and Zucker were convinced that a number of passages in *Seder Eliyahu* were based on *actual* knowledge of Karaite texts, as evidence of which they refer to texts of late ninth and tenth, but also of the twelfth and even the sixteenth centuries.

The problem of a probable anti-Karaite polemics in the work has been discussed more recently in an article by Lennart Lehmhaus, who provides a reading of the second chapter of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* in terms of depiction of the self and a non-rabbinic other, a semi-learned Jew.[4]

In the following pages I will discuss the first person narratives which led Bacher to conclude that *Seder Eliyahu* can be understood as reacting to Karaism. These are texts that barely inform the reader as to a historical setting they might represent. The rabbi simply explains that while travelling from one place to another he comes upon "a man who has Scripture but no Mishnah," a phrase that Bacher and Zucker interpret as an alternative way of referring to a Karaite.[5] In view of the fact that Karaism appears to have crystallised as a movement only in the second half of the ninth century,[6] i.e. after the accepted time of composition of *Seder Eliyahu* in the first half of the ninth century, I suggest speaking of allusions to a proto-Karaism in my discussion of passages that appear to hint at the following characteristics of early Karaism:

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bly in *Midrash Mishlei* and *Pesikta Rabbati*. Needless to say, the presence of polemical material against Karaite beliefs and practices in a particular midrash most likely attests to a ninth century or even later origin. However, the somewhat surprising paucity of such material in supposed later midrashic works raises some serious doubts as to the date which scholars have attributed to these works."

3 Moshe Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Torah* (New York: Feldheim, 1959) (Hebr.), 116–127, 203–219.

4 Lennart Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?' Minimal Judaism and the Unlearned 'Other' in Seder Eliyahu Zuta," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 19 (2012): 230–258.

5 Although the term קראים in the sense of "champions of Scripture" is already recorded in the ninth century, it is not found in *Seder Eliyahu*. Nor are the self-designations "returnees from sin," "mourners of Zion," or the expressions "peoples of the Scriptures" (בני מקרא or בעלי מקרא) ever mentioned in the work. Max Kadushin, *The Theology of Seder Eliyahu: A Study isn Organic Thinking* (New York: Bloch, 1932), 5–6, argues that the phrase "who know Scripture but not Mishnah" alludes to "stages of learning," not to any particular type of sectarianism, let alone Karaism. Similarly Moulie Vidas, *Tradition and the Formation of the Talmud* (Princeton, Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014), 120, argues that *miqra*, *mishnah* and *talmud* refer to stages or types of Torah study.

6 See Meira Polliack, "Rethinking Karaism: Between Judaism and Islam," *AJS Review* 30, no. 1 (2006): 70.

1. the recognition of Scripture as exclusive legal source, and the rejection of the rabbinic concept of the Oral Tradition, its documents, its tradents, and its authorities in Babylonia;

2. the idea that not only the Torah, but the entire Tanakh can serve as source of law;

3. the insistence on the individual study of Scriptures, i.e. a study that does not rely on "imposed" traditions; and to a lesser extent

4. a praise of an asceticism connected with a general inclination to a "Palestino-centrism" and "messianic nationalism."

6.1 *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, Chapter 2

The first narrative Bacher adduces as evidence for *Seder Eliyahu*'s anti-Karaism is that transmitted in the second chapter of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.[7] This is opened as follows:

> I was once travelling when I met a man who approached me the way heretics do (בדרך מינות).[8] He had [knowledge of] Scripture, but he had no [knowledge of] Mishnah (ויש בו מקרא ואין בו משנה). He said to me, Scripture was given to us from Mount Sinai. Mishnah was not given us from Mount Sinai. And I answered him, My son, were not both Scripture and Mishnah uttered by the mouth of the Lord? What is the difference between Scripture and Mishnah? They told a parable, to what is the matter comparable? To a king of flesh and blood who had two servants, whom he used to love with a complete love. He gave one a measure of wheat and the other a measure of wheat. He gave one a bundle of flax and the other a bundle of flax. The clever one of the two, what did he do? He took the flax and wove it into a linen cloth (מפה). He took the wheat and made a dish of fine flour out of it. He sifted and ground it [the grain], kneaded it [the dough], baked it, set it on the table, and spread the linen cloth over it, but left it [there] until the coming of the king. The foolish one did nothing at all. After some time the king came into his house and spoke to them like this, My sons, bring me what I gave you. One brought out [a loaf of] the dish of fine flour upon the table and the tablecloth spread over it. The other brought out the wheat

7 Unlike the majority of the first person narratives in the work, in this case the whole chapter consists of a first person narrative.

8 The Venice print, which Bacher follows for his reading, reads not בדרך מינות, but בדרך מצות, "polemically." Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 267, n. 2, points out that the expression is to be translated with "in polemischer Weise, Absicht." Nissi ben Noach is said to have called arguing Rabbanites מריבי ונצי and הנצים והמלינים. Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 407, base their translation on both readings: "One time, as I was walking along a road, a man accosted me. He came at me aggressively with the sort of argument that leads to heresy."

> in a basket and on top of it the bundle of flax. Oh, for such a shame! Oh, for such a disgrace! Alas, tell me, which of the two was dear to him? The one who brought out the table with [a loaf of] the dish of fine flour upon it. (EZ 171, l. 16–28)

The first segment or preamble of this narrative, which can be described with Lennart Lehmhaus as "a narrative of 'wandering' and encounter,"[9] consists of what may be inferred as a non-urban spatial setting, the anticipating characterization of the rabbi's interlocutor, and the latter's double statement: "Scripture was given us from Sinai. Mishnah was not given us from Sinai."[10] The second part of this statement could elsewhere have been the invitation to a disputation. Not so in *Seder Eliyahu*, where the rabbi shows himself even towards such a provocation as a calm master of the situation. He replies to the challenge rather informally addressing the man with the words "My son,"[11] putting him, of whom we know neither age nor physical appearance nor anything apart from the words he has just uttered, in the position of one inferior in wisdom, as a son is when compared with his father. Using a rhetorical question in order to begin his exposition, one that stresses the oral nature of the medium of transmission of *both* Torot, the rabbi goes on to illustrate the nature of the difference between Scripture and Mishnah with a parable. The mashal-proper suggests that bread and linen can be made out of wheat and flax provided he who receives them is clever (פיקח) enough. No explicit nimshal *follows* the mashal. Instead we have a short commentary on the very narrative of the *mashal* in the form of a question and an answer both given by the rabbi. The man does not have the chance to give his opinion. As far as the preamble is concerned, the matter is settled: whereas both servants were loved with a complete love by the king before he gave them wheat and flax, after seeing the transformation of these raw materials by the industrious servant, he is the only one loved. Bacher interprets the *mashal* in the following terms:

> Dieses Gleichnis, welches in überraschender Weise an die neutestamentliche Parabel von den beiden Pfunden erinnert, legt witzig und schlagend den Unterschied dar zwischen dem Stabilismus der einerseits auf den Wortlaut der Schrift pochenden, andererseits in unvermittelter Weise überlieferte Satzungen – סבל ההעתקה – annehmenden Karäern und den, Schrift und Überlieferung einheitlich weiter entwickelnden Rabbaniten.[12]

9 Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 236.

10 Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, 171, n. 2, points out that MS Parma 2785 provides an answer to the question "What is [the difference] between Scripture and Mishnah?," namely "This [the former] is text, and this [the latter] is interpretation."

11 For the informal style of address in depicted encounters between Palestinian rabbis and non-rabbis see Richard Lee Kalmin, "Relationships between Rabbis and Non-rabbis," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 5 (1998): 161–168; Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 254.

12 Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 268. ("This parable, which surprisingly enough reminds of the New

The next segment in the dialogue consists of a sort of cross-examination in which the rabbi leads the man to acknowledge that a series of liturgical practices he is evidently familiar with, is not attested in Scripture, and must therefore stem from tradition:

> I said to him, My son, if I test you by the Mishnah (lit. "if I find you in the Mishnah") of the sages, your words will be deemed untrue. He answered, Yes. But … I said to him, My son, when you go down to the chest on the Sabbath how many [benedictions] do you pray? He answered, Seven. I said to him, And on the rest of the days? [He answered,] The whole Tefillah. [I said to him,] How many men read the Torah on the Sabbath? [He answered,] Seven. [I said to him,] And how many on Sabbath afternoon, on the second, and on the fifth [day of the week]? [He answered,] Three on each of the three occasions. [I said to him,] And on the seven products of Palestine how many [benedictions] do you pray? He answered, Two. A blessing before [eating] them and a blessing after [eating] them. [I said to him,] And on all other sorts of food? [He answered,] Just one benediction. [I said to him,] And [for] the grace after meal [how many benedictions do you pray]? [He answered,] Three, but four with "He who is good and does good." I said to him, My son, do we have all these [prescriptions] from Sinai, or are they not rather in the Mishnah of the sages? When the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Israel the Torah, he did not do it but as wheat from which they were to bring forth a dish of fine flour and as flax from which they were to bring forth a garment. He gave it [the Torah] in [hermeneutical rule of] *kelal u-ferat, ferat-u-khelal* [and, *kelal u-ferat u-khelal*].[13] For it is said, *spend the money for whatever you wish* (Deut 14:26): that is a generalization [*kelal*]; *oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink* (ibid.): that is a specification [that follows]; *or whatever you desire* (ibid.): this is yet another generalization. Here a generalization needs a specification and a specification needs [in its turn] a generalization.[14] (EZ 172, l. 1–13)

Testament parable of the talents, is a witty and impressive demonstration of the difference between the stabilism with which Karaites both insisted on the wording of Scripture and accepted the transmitted ordinances just as they were, and the Rabbanites who went on to consistently develop Scripture and tradition.") It could be argued that the similarity of the rabbinic parable to that of the talents (Mt 25:14–30) is limited to the idea that different people achieve different results or no result at all with what is given them, be it money or raw materials. Jesus' parable recounts that before leaving for a journey, a man gives his servants different amounts of money according to their respective abilities. Both the servants who received five and two talents double the amount during their master's absence. On the other hand, the one who receives one talent buries it in the earth. At his return the man is pleased with the way the first two have dealt with his money and very displeased with the behaviour of the third, whom he punishes by having his talent taken away from him and given to the one who has already ten talents.

13 On the fifth of Hillel's seven hermenutic rules, *kelal u-ferat u-ferat u-khelal*, where a general rule followed by specification or specification followed by generalization, see Günter Stemberger, *Einleitung in Talmud und Midrasch*, 9th ed. (Munich: Beck, 2011), 31.

14 The same example is given in the *Baraita de R. Ishmael*.

The man seems to be well acquainted with the liturgy the rabbi outlines with his questions. This familiarity of the questioner with all the mentioned religious and liturgical practices led Bacher to conclude that the Karaite and Rabbanite rites were not as different at the time of composition of *Seder Eliyahu*, which, as has already been mentioned, he traces back to the end of the 10th century, as they would be later on.[15] Scholarship on Karaism, on the other hand, appears to agree on the fact that the development of Karaite liturgy had the opposite direction, i.e. from utter rejection of rabbinic liturgical practices to a relative acceptance of certain aspects in later stages. Leon Nemoy, for example, argued that it was precisely in its early stages that Karaism rejected central aspects of rabbanite liturgy, such as the use of non-biblical prayers:

> On one principal point, however, the early Karaites were unanimous, and that was their conviction that formal prayer should consist exclusively of scriptural quotations, mainly the Psalms of David, and that the Rabbanite practice of composing and introducing into the official liturgy new material in the form of prose prayers and versified hymns was unauthorized and unlawful. It was a logical enough line of thought, from the Karaite point of view, and it led them not only to the rejection of such ancient and basic portions of the Rabbanite liturgy as the so-called Eighteen Benedictions ..., but also to the adoption of different prophetic lessons ..., which are read as appendices to the lessons from the Law.[16]

More recently Robert Brody has suggested that only later Karaism came to accept post-biblical prayers and other general aspects of rabbinic liturgy which had been rejected by earlier authorities.[17] In view of this the dialogue part quoted previously could therefore be evidence either for a later time of composition of *Seder Eliyahu* than the one now generally accepted (first half of ninth century) or for the fact that the questioner is not consistently depicted as a Karaite of the early stages of the movement. If not as a Karaite the rabbi's interlocutor is depicted as combining, to quote Lennart Lehmhaus, a "theoretical skepticism towards the divine Oral Torah, paired with practical conformity

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15 See Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 269: "Aus dieser Stelle läßt sich zugleich schließen, daß der karäische Ritus damals noch keine so durchgreifende Unterschiede von dem rabbanitischen aufzuweisen hatte, als nachher."

16 See Leon Nemoy, *Karaite Anthology: Excerpts from the Early Literature* (New Haven, CT, London: Yale University Press, 1952), 272–273. Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 2, *Karaitica* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1972), 51, also mentions the recitation of piyyutim during the rabbinic synagogue service as a target of Karaite criticism. Another, even more important problem for Karaites mentioned by Mann and not discussed in this section of *Seder Eliyahu* due to its being, as pointed out to me by Prof. Günter Stemberger, a very late development, is the rabbinic idea that the synagogue was a substitute for the Temple, a concept which the rabbis themselves in general oppose to.

17 See Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 95.

regarding rabbinic liturgy."[18]

Not only in relation with the history of Karaite liturgy, but also with respect to the textual and narrative logic of the passage is the list of liturgical practices of interest: It constitutes a nimshal to the parable of the two servants.[19] Given that there is no nimshal marker or introductory formula, this nimshal is only then evident the moment the rabbi explicitly refers back to the two motifs of the *mashal* proper, wheat and flax, which the servants handle differently while the king is away: "When the Holy One, blessed be He, gave Israel the Torah, he didn't do it but as wheat from which they were to bring forth a dish of fine flour and as flax from which they were to bring forth a garment."

In a next step the rabbi proceeds to identify the wheat and flax of the parable with hermeneutic rules given Israel by God that enable the inference of the practices alluded to in the cross-examination, these practices being equal to the products of wheat and flax in the hands of the clever servant. Whence the sages inferred these liturgical practices is not said in the nimshal. It is worth noting that the rabbi's explanation is directed at an audience that is familiar with what can be achieved with rabbinic hermeneutics; an interlocutor such as the one of the narrative, who is not familiar with rabbinic hermeneutics (or with the names of rabbinic hermeneutic rules), would hardly be able to derive a lesson from the example given by the rabbi, other than the fact that the verse Deut 14:26 contains a generalization (*kelal*) that wants a specification (*perat*), which in its turn asks for another generalization, all of which is assumed to be valid for other verses.

As Bacher argues, the questions that follow are per se not specifically characteristic for the representation of anti-Karaite discourse, but can be seen as evidence of which topics were typically brought forth in the representation of disputes at the time of composition of *Seder Eliyahu*. They can be described as variations of one and the same question, namely why there does not seem to be much difference between the way the just and the wicked are rewarded.

The questioner asks first for example whether he who carries out a command and he who commits a transgression are both rewarded as they deserve.[20] After comparing God to an omnipresent king who rules over the whole earth he created and over the seven heavens as well, the rabbi explains that God takes and distributes His reward among the just and unjust of the world he created, i.e. during their lifetime, only to let men know that he who suffers privations while living according to the Torah and carries out commandments, receives his worldly reward, but that the capital (הקרן) of his reward is kept aside for him, i.e. as the essence of his reward in the world to come. So far also the answer of the rabbi can be said to be of a general Jewish theological character, i.e. not one representing exclusively rabbinic ideology or specifically rejecting Karaism.[21] The

[18] Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 249.

[19] It is to be sure a less explicit nimshal than that found following immediately after a *mashal* and generally marked by an opening formula such as *le-khakh* etc.

[20] See EZ 172, l. 14–15.

[21] Louis Ginzberg, as quoted in Max Kadushin, *Organic Thinking: A Study in rabbinic Thought*

text proceeds to connect the notion of the second reward in the world to come with the giving of the Mishnah:

> Because the Holy One, blessed be He, did not find among humanity, men who would suffer affliction (בצער) to do the Torah, suffer affliction to carry out commandments and suffer affliction to build the Second Temple, men who would deny themselves enjoyments (מצערין) for the sake of Torah and for the sake of the commandments, until those men came who suffered affliction to do the Torah and [suffered affliction to] carry out commandments, [and suffered affliction to build the Second Temple] and who endured affliction for the sake of Torah and for the sake of the commandments. Therefore, he gave them the Mishnah, them, and their children, and their children's children until the end of all generations. (EZ 172, l. 22–EZ 173, l. 3)

So this part of the rabbi's answer is more explicit about a rabbinic agenda, suggesting that the Mishnah's etymon is related to God's double reward of those who sacrifice themselves for Torah study. Within this answer, i.e. still in a narrative context, the rabbi appears to switch to the homiletical mode, whereby his speech could be confused with that of the midrashist addressing the (extratextual) audience of the midrash: He asks how God takes his reward from the world he created (EZ 173, l. 3), thus opening a segment concerned with the way God proceeds in his awarding certain spaces and people a special status. For this description the image of the Terumah, the priest's heave-offering, is used. First a parable is told: A king builds a palace and finds it so beautiful as to take it as his residence. According to the nimshal the parable illustrates how the Land of Israel was selected from where God was to create the rest of the lands of the world. In three further steps God's "selections" are described: From among the peoples of the world God selected Israel as heave-offering, from among the children of Israel he selected the Tribe of Levi as heave-offering, and from the Tribe of Levi he selected Aaron. The same selections are then explained in a more systematic manner, repeatedly using forms of the root פרש and the expression תרומה:

> And he brought Israel, who are the heave-offering (תרומה) from among all the peoples [of the world], to the Land of Israel, which is singled out (פרושה)

(New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1938), 287, n. 383, argues against Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, 172, n. 6, "Friedmann put something into the text of which there is not the slightest trace therein. What has the selection of Israel to do with the authority of oral law? Did the Karaites deny the one because they refused to accept the other doctrine? Scripture has in hundreds of passages taught the Selection of Israel. The statement מיום שנברא העולם has nothing to do with the previous argument. The man simply stated that there is justice in this world; and our author agrees, saying that God takes reward (satisfaction) in this world, too. But, adds our author, for the worthy there is a 'double reward', in this world and in the next. It is not a Christian whom our author answers thus, for the former would not have questioned future reward." As will be argued in what follows Friedmann anticipates in this footnote a line of thought that is indeed present in the text of *Seder Eliyahu*.

> from among all the lands. Then he brought the Tribe of Levi, which he set apart (הפריש) from Israel, to Jerusalem, which is the Land of Israel's heave-offering (תרומה). And he brought the children of Aaron, whom he singled out (הפריש) from among the Tribe of Levi, to the Temple, which he set apart (הפריש) from Jerusalem, to stand and do His will with a whole heart, for it is said, *He stood, and measured the land, he looked and made the nations tremble.* (Hab 3:6) And it [Scripture] says, *his ways (הליכות) are everlasting (עולם)* (ibid.). From here they taught: Whoever studies (שונה) the laws (הלכות) can be confident that he is a son of the world to come (העולם הבא). Some say that in the place whence the earth for the first man was taken the altar was built, for it is said, *then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground* (Gen 2:7). And it [Scripture] says, *You need make for me only an altar of earth* (Exod 20:24). From here they taught: As long as the Temple stood, the altar within was [what made] expiation for Israel wherever they dwelt. But outside the Land the sages and the disciples of the sages are [the ones who make] expiation for Israel wherever they dwell. For it is said, *If you bring a grain-offering of the first fruits to the Lord* etc. (Lev 1:14) And it [Scripture] says, *A man came from Baal-shalishah, bringing food from the first fruits to the man of God* etc. (2 Kings 4:42) But was Elishah a priest? There was neither Temple, nor altar, nor Highpriesthood there. Elishah was rather a prophet and disciples of the wise would sit before him, either in Dotan or in Samaria. From here they taught: Whoever is attached to the sages and to their disciples, Scripture credits him as if he were offering first fruits and doing the will of his Father who is in heaven. (EZ 173, l. 11–26)

The rabbi seizes the opportunity given him by a rather neutral question, such as the one posed by the questioner, to exalt the disciples of the wise for their study God's ways (הליכות), read as his laws (הלכות). They are the bearers of that tradition the questioner apparently rejects and function as that expiating instance for Israel which was carried out in Temple times not by the priests but by the Temple itself.

In his next question, the third, the man again poses a topic of discussion of general theological character, namely, why is it granted for the peoples of the world to enjoy the world. With his answer the rabbi continues the line of argumentation he followed in the previous answer, using the idea that God sets someone or something apart giving them the status of Terumah.[22]

> They told a parable. What does the matter resemble? It is like a king of flesh and blood who would not find but a single man among a large family who did his will. He sent numerous presents to the members of the family because of this one man who did his will. So too is it with the nations of the world. Their reward is that God set Israel apart from their midst. Therefore they may enjoy this world. (EZ 174, l. 3–6)

[22] Bacher's analysis of this chapter comes to an end at this point.

The questioner takes up again the problem of the unjust being improperly rewarded in spite of their behaviour, which he brought forth in his second question. It could be argued not only a theological, but also a semantical problem is at stake here, for the questioner states that both the just and the transgressor are given שכרו, i.e. their reward. Now what the rabbi's answer shows is not only that God discriminates with precision those who act according to the Torah from those who transgress it by not giving them the same שכר, but as well that שכר is a polysemous term denoting different kinds of reward, i.e. both positive and negative reward or punishment:

> He said to me, Rabbi, but then everyone who performs a commandment is given his reward, and everyone who commits a transgression is given his reward. I answered him, My son, what was the reward of the ancient serpent who proceeded to corrupt the whole world? What was the reward of Adam and Eve who transgressed a command? What was the reward of Cain who slew Abel, his brother? And what was the reward of Lamech who would observe the mourning ceremonies of his father's brother (אחי אביו)? And what was the reward of Shem, who honoured his father? And what was the reward of Ham who did not honour his father? And what was the reward of Noah who proceeded to forewarn the multitudes during all those hundred and twenty years [of his life], so that it [the punishment] would not befall them? Therefore he [God] caused it to be written about him and announced to the generations, *For I have seen that you alone are righteous before me in this generation* (Gen 7:1). And what was the reward of the great Shem who would prophesy to all the peoples of the world for four hundred years without their heeding him? And what was the reward of our father Abraham who proceeded to destroy all the idols of the world? However, because he said something improper his children went down to Egypt, for it is said, *But he said, O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?* (Gen 15:8) Because of (בשכר) that hesitation his children had to go down to Egypt. And what was the reward of Ishmael who went and buried his father? And what was the reward of Isaac who spoke to his father, Father, bind me well and then put me on the altar, lest I strike and injure you and I am found guilty of two death penalties from heaven. I am a young man, resistant in my strength, thirty-seven years old? What was the reward of Esau who shed two tears before his father? They gave him Mount Seir where the rains of blessing never cease. And also the sons of Seir, who received the sons of Esau amicably, were given their reward. From here they taught: Even if a man has no Scripture and no Mishnah, but sits and reads the whole day [the verse], *Lotan's sister was Timna* (Gen 36:22), the reward of Torah is in his hand. And what was the reward of Jacob who acknowledged the truth and spoke the truth in his heart[23] all the days of his life? And what was the reward of the Twelve Tribes who would do the

[23] This is a clearly an idealisation of Jacob. See Gen 27:24; 33:13–15.

> will of Jacob their father, as is said, *Like grapes in the wilderness, I found Israel. Like the first fruit on the fig tree, in its first season, I saw your ancestors who came* [etc.] (Hos 9:10)? What was the reward of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who conducted themselves with fear in their hearts in the midst of the seventy languages [i.e. all the other nations of the world]? [The reward is] theirs, and their children's, and their children's children until the end of the all generations. (EZ 174, l. 6–EZ 175, l. 7)

The rabbi's answer consists of a list of fourteen questions concerning the deeds of single or collective biblical characters and God's reward for them. The episodes thus alluded to with diverse level of specificity are ordered according to the biblical chronology, though in some cases this is altered. Most of the questions follow the same pattern: What was the reward of X who did X? In some of them the subordinate clause contains more information than in the rest, including direct speech (Isaac's story) or scriptural material or proof-texts (Noah). With the exception of the question concerning Esau, the rest is not followed by what can be formally recognized as an answer, but rather appear to fulfil their function (i.e. alluding to a biblical episode) by just being uttered. Another variation of the standard pattern is provided by the question concerning Abraham which is followed by a short digression. The information contained in the questions and expansions reveals that the understanding of the biblical episodes that the rabbi presents his challenger with relies on *rabbinic traditions*, and not just on the biblical text.

Now with respect to the different types of reward: The first three questions allude to clearly punished biblical characters, the ancient serpent, Adam and Eve, and Cain. From the fourth question onwards most questions are preceded with a *waw* which seems to have an adversative function, thus marking a contrast to the first group of questions and indicating that these deal with people who were positively rewarded by God. The fourth question pertains to Lamech's reward, though it is not evident which Lamech is meant.[24] With the next two questions, dealing respectively with Shem and Ham, the biblical chronology is altered for the first time. The question concerning their differing rewards precedes that dealing with their father Noah. The latter's story in its turn is the first to be expanded with a biblical verse as proof text.

After posing a question on Noah's reward the midrashist turns again to Shem, who is contextualized differently now. Of Shem it is said here and also in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*

[24] I.e. of Gen 4 and Gen 5. As Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, 174, n. 22, points out, no incident with a father's brother (אחי אביו) is known to the biblical text. He suggests that the author relies on Gen 4:19.23, interpreting the man Lamech killed as his father's brother due to the way Lamech parallels himself to Cain in Gen 4:24: if Cain killed his brother, then Lamech must have killed his uncle, who can also be called brother, the way a man's grandchildren are called his children. Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 412, n. 20, follow Ginzberg in reading "father's father" instead of "father's brother." According to Ginzberg: "Cain is meant who was mourned by his grandson (i.e., descendant) Lamech (comp. *Legends*, 1, 116–117); and Lamech's reward was that his daughter Naamah became the mother of mankind by her marriage to Noah; comp. *Legends*, 5, 147, n. 45."

that he prophesied to the peoples of the world for four hundred years.[25] With respect to Abraham the episode of his destroying the idols is mentioned as having won him a reward. Abraham is the first character whose stories are used to illustrate that one and the same person can deserve a positive reward and a punishment according to his deeds. The question concerning his reward is followed by the relation of why Abraham was also punished through his children going down to Egypt for his improper conduct in expressing doubt. Ishmael is said to have been rewarded for burying his father. A question dealing with Isaac's reward follows, the first micro-narrative in the list which makes use of direct speech. A 37-year-old Isaac about to be sacrificed by his father wants to make sure his father succeeds in killing him for God. The episode has parallels in BerR 56:8 and PRE 31 among others.

The next question deals with the reason why Esau was given Mount Seir and its rains of blessing, a trait of the region is mentioned elsewhere in *Seder Eliyahu*. Esau's narrative is expanded with one concerning his sons and those of Seir, as well as by a *mikan amru*-commentary on the reward of whoever persists on the recitation of Gen 36:22. Following Esau and the narratives associated with him, the midrashist turns finally to Jacob, to the Twelve Tribes, before ending his list of narratives with a last vague allusion to the lives of the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with which the dialogue with the man with no Mishnah comes to an end.

Some of the stories alluded to with these narratives in nuce are comprehensible, even without prior knowledge of the rabbinic traditions on which they are based. Some of these traditions were more popular than others, as attested by the number of parallels. In the context of my reading of these micro-narratives within a narrative or polemical dialogue, it is above all important to notice that the stories are only apparently biblical ones. What the rabbi's answer shows is primarily that he operates with arguments found in a tradition other than a *merely scriptural* one.

6.2 *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, Chapter (14) 15

Bacher describes the dialogue between the rabbi and an unnamed man "who had no Mishnah" contained in chapter (14) 15 as devoid of polemics and dealing with purely aggadic matters. Bacher sees this passage simply in terms of a preamble to the more relevant one depicted in chapter (15) 16. He therefore dismisses it promptly after having ascertained that the questioner is a Karaite.[26] For Zucker, conversely, this is a crucial text with respect to *Seder Eliyahu*'s anti-Karaite polemics: According to him all the questions

[25] See ER 114, l. 14ff.

[26] Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 270: "Die zweite Hälfte des vorangehenden Kapitels besteht zwar ebenfalls aus einem ähnlichen Gespräche, enthält aber Fragen von rein agadischem Charakter ohne polemischen Beigeschmack."

the man poses in this chapter are actually Karaite arguments.[27]

A detailed examination of this dialogue, which is preceded by almost the same narrative frame as the one in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* previously discussed, might reveal the subtlety of its polemic character. Its first part reads as follows:

> I was once travelling from one place to another when I found a man who had [knowledge of] Scripture, but no [knowledge of] Mishnah. He said to me, Rabbi, I would say a thing in your presence, but maybe you will be angry with me and this I fear. I replied, If you ask me something concerning the words of Torah, why would I be angry with you? [He said to me,] Rabbi, why does Scripture say, *[God] gives food to all flesh* (Ps 136:25), but also, *[He] gives to the animals their food* etc. (Ps 147:9)? Does not the man prepare it [his food] himself? I replied, My son, is not this the way of the world that a man does something with his hands which is afterwards blessed by the Holy One, blessed be He? For it is said, *the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands* (Deut 14:29). One could think that he is to sit and be idle, but then Scripture says, *that you undertake* (ibid.) He said to me, The answer with which you replied to me is the [same] line of thought I first expressed before you: it is based on tradition (היא מקובלת, lit. "received"). I replied to him, My son, it is My father who is in heaven who gave me wisdom, understanding, and discernment to respond to the question you asked me. Go and learn from the fool wandering about in the marketplace. If he is [utterly] deprived of his wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and discernment, he will probably be able to provide for himself for an hour at the most. And so it is with [the rest of the] human beings. Once they are deprived of their wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and discernment they are regarded as cattle, beasts, and fowl, and [the rest of the] breathing beings the Holy One, blessed be He, created on the face of the earth. I call heaven and earth to witness that the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and distributes nourishment among all the inhabitants of the world and all the work of his hands which He created in the world, that is to say, man, cattle, creeping beings, and birds of heaven. (ER 70, l. 7–22)

The narrative frame of this dialogue depicts the anonymous narrator as travelling from one place to another and coming upon (literally: "finding") a man learned in Scripture but not in Mishnah.[28] Also in this case the spatial setting for the narrative of wandering and encounter is the road between two urban spaces (ממקום למקום). The man addresses the

[27] See Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Torah*, 205.

[28] The immediate context preceding this narrative is the beginning of chapter (14) 15. The opening statement by the midrashist – "Whoever abhors the good life in this world, it is a bad omen for him" – is illustrated by means of two contrasting king's parables. The second illustrates the ungrateful attitude of a servant towards his king. The midrashist urges his audience, whom he addresses in an inclusive manner with the first person plural, to be grateful for what life in this world actually means, which he explains in terms of a foretaste of the world to come and

rabbi in a very cautious manner: He would ask something but does not dare utter it for fear that his interlocutor might be provoked to anger by his words. The rabbi responds stating his conditions: Anything pertaining to the Torah he will willingly answer. He reacts as a kind teacher willing to transmit his wisdom, even to someone he might not appreciate on moral grounds. After this reassuring reply the man states his first query.

The question addresses a contradiction in Scripture, as implied by verse parts from Ps 136:25 and Ps 147:9. While the second psalm (*gives to the animals their food*) is in accordance with the man's understanding that unlike beasts human beings provide for themselves, the first (*God gives food to all flesh*) seems to imply that God gives equally to man and beast. The rabbi explains the apparent contradiction away suggesting that men are supposed to provide for their own nourishment which God will then bless, an argument for which he adduces the evidence of Deut 14:29. The rabbi's questioners seldom react to the answers they get. In this case, however, the questioner does object, with words that represent him as an "other," and probably a specific proto-karaitic one. He argues that the rabbi's answer is based on received knowledge or tradition, i.e. not on Scripture – even though the rabbi does derive his argument from Scripture –, hence, it is not a convincing one. The word he uses to describe the answer is the participle מקובלת ("accepted," "acceptable", but also "received"). The expression is found in fourteen documents in the Maʾagarim database, eight of which are Karaite documents.[29] The rabbi takes up the word again and argues that, in spite of the possible implications of Ps 136:25, God does differentiate between man and beast, providing the former with reason or "wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and discernment" (חכמה ובינה ודיעה והשכל). Nevertheless, even if his generosity is expressed differently with man and beast, he lets every single one of his creatures partake thereof. God, the rabbi goes on to argue, distinguishes between his creatures, some of them he gave special properties which are coupled with certain obligations, but despite these differences all his creatures are considered worthy. The rabbi continues with his exposition in a second segment which he opens with a quotation from Scripture:

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of a time of purification. The choice of the seed of Jacob is further discussed by means of an interpretation of Jer 31:8 – *See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north … among them the blind and the lame*. The rabbi is primarily concerned with the question pertaining to who is implied by the last words of the quoted verse, *the blind and the lame*. He provides a number of alternative answers, all of which identify the *blind* and the *lame* (as well as the *blind* and the *deaf* of Isa 42:16.18) with different types of men according to their knowledge of Torah and their conduct: Men lacking in Torah knowledge but with upright conduct, sages and their disciples who possess the whole spectrum of rabbinic knowledge, men who know Scripture and Mishnah but follow hideous ways, etc. In this context, therefore, the questioner of the narrative should be viewed as yet another type of *the blind and the lame*.

29 These are al-Nahāwandī's *Sefer dinim* (ninth cent.), Tobias b. Moses ha-Avel's *Otsar nechmad* and *Sefer Machkimat Peti* (both eleventh cent.), as well as the anonymous *Meshivat nefesh* (eleventh cent.).

> Scripture says, *The fear of the Lord is his treasure* (Isa 33:6). It is like a king of flesh and blood who had many sons and servants. He wished to reprimand every one of them personally, but he noticed that they did not accept (מקבלין) his reprimands. So he wrote all his words on paper and hanged them in an outer courtyard as an open letter (כאיגרת פתוחה) [addressed] to everyone. The public crier (כרוז) went from the king's presence and announced, Everyone who comes <and reads> this letter will be given bread and different kinds of food from the king. So it is with the house of Israel in this world with respect to words of Torah. When a man comes into the power of Scripture and Mishnah and learns from them the fear of heaven and good deeds, these nourish, provide for, and sustain him until he enters his eternal abode, <for it is said,> *and he will be the stability of your times [abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge]* etc. (ibid.) (ER 70, l. 23–30)

Thus, the rabbi closes his answer with a *mashal* told to interpret a scriptural quotation and to further expound on the notion that though differently, God provides for all the inhabitants of his world. The king of the *mashal* notices that his sons and servants refuse to accept his words of admonition. Therefore, he writes his message down as if in an open letter, not just for his sons and servants but for everyone to read. It is, however, his public crier – the oral aspect of the message's transmission being thus emphasized – who reminds the king's sons and servants of the reward they are to expect in case they care to read the king's admonitions: they will be given food and provisions (לחם ומזונות) – again this food motif points back to the discussion of the contradiction between the Psalm verses. Given the mashal's generic characteristics neither message is given in its entirety: The king's message is just summed up in the word "admonitions" and the crier's message is given in indirect speech. The rabbi's application of the *mashal* in the nimshal interprets it in terms of Israel's relation to the words of Torah. Their reward for learning fear of Heaven, mentioned in the Isaiah verse, both from Scripture (*iggeret*) and Mishnah (*karuz*) is the nourishment that Torah gives them.

The *mashal* is in several ways related to the first part of the answer. The fact that the reward the king offers his subjects is food links the *mashal* to the discussion of the contradiction of the two Psalm verses in the first part of the answer. With the word for the notion that the king's subjects were expected to accept his message, מקבלין, the rabbi links the *mashal* with the expression used by the proto-Karaite himself to refer to rabbinic discourse, היא מקובלת. The nimshal explains the life according to rabbinic ideals as set down in Scripture and Mishnah, i.e. a life in fear of heaven and in which good deeds prevail, a life of *salvation, wisdom, and knowledge* (the words of Isa 33:6 are left unquoted), as being itself the source of nourishment for man, a prerogative of human beings.

The questioner poses several other questions which apparently do not deal with usually controversial issues between rabbinic and non-rabbinic, proto-karaitic Jews. For every question, though, it could be argued that there is a recognizable though very subtle

element of anti-Karaite or anti-proto-Karaite polemics, e.g. the emphasis on God's love of Israel as against the Torah in the second and third questions, as well as the apparent justification of the present exile of Israel in the fourth question. The second question[30] is concerned with words of Torah being more beloved by God than anything else he created. According to the rabbi this is so because they "put Israel on the scale of the balance of merit." God loves the words of Torah, the rabbi explains, more than anything else in this world because they bring about Israel being privileged, they educate them in keeping the commandments and lead them to life in the world-to-come. A king's parable illustrates his argument: A king has his many children educated in proper conduct and the performance of good deeds by a servant of his. When the king is daily visited by the servant and his children he puts all other matters aside and praises the servant for the education of the children in matters of good conduct and the performance of good deeds. To the third question, whether Torah or Israel should come first as man's object of love,[31] the rabbi replies that although Torah is generally regarded according to Prov 8:22 – *The Lord created me at the beginning of his work[, the first of his acts of long ago]* – as coming first, he thinks that it is Israel who come first, and quotes Jer 2:3 as evidence: *Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest*. Further confirmation follows in the form of another king's *mashal*, in which a king with wife and children in his household writes an edict. Were it not for the queen and the children, who used to act according to his will, so the mashal, the edict would not have reached the people. As in the *mashal* of the answer to the first question, the word used to refer to the edict is *iggeret*, which could eventually be interpreted as another allusion to the right "approach" to Torah by Israel, i.e. a rabbinic approach. Aware that the adduced verses rather confirm the chronological priority of Torah over Israel – *The Lord created me at the beginning of his work* (Prov 8:22) vs. *Israel was holy to the Lord* (Jer 2:3) – the Rabbi backs his argument by midrashically producing further proof, i.e. by quoting yet another verse supporting his position: *The Lord appeared to him from far away, [I have loved you with an everlasting love]* etc. (Jer 31:3). Max Kadushin observes that these two passages are the exception in *Seder Eliyahu* placing Israel before Torah:

> Taken together, the two passages, following one another, leave no room for doubt that our author, on this occasion, emphasized Israel as against Torah. It is not unlikely that the occasion was one in which our author felt called upon to implant the love for Israel, so outstanding a characteristic of the Rabbis, in a man to whom Rabbinic teaching – the Mishnah – was unknown. But a similar recognition of the rôle of Torah as dependent upon Israel occurs not in any special pedagogic situation."[32]

30 See ER 70, l. 31ff.
31 See ER 71, l. 9ff.
32 Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 21.

The fourth question,[33] finally, pertains to the indefinite duration of Israel's exile after the destruction of the Second Temple. In this case, unfortunately, the first part of the answer presents a number of lacunae which render its interpretation quite difficult. Once again the rabbi makes use of a king's *mashal* in order to illustrate his point, taking up the motif of the *the blind and the lame* of Jer 31:8 of the homiletical context preceding the narrative:[34] A king's lame, mute, deaf, and blind servants only start weeping and following the king once he has left them, though he has told them he would return to them in thirty days. The rabbi closes his answer stating that during the present second banishment Israel should ask for mercy, just as the servants of the *mashal* and the exiled after the destruction of the First Temple did – the phrase used here, לשפוך רחמים ולבקש תחנונים, "to pour mercies and ask supplications," is found in chapters 6 and 8 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, and though its first part would semantically better suit God than human beings, the whole phrase is predicated of the latter. Israel should also "find another (אחר) doorway in the words of Torah." Friedmann's text has אחר, not אחד as supposed by Braude and Kapstein, which might be understood as in consonance with בית אחרון of the beginning of the segment (ER 71, l. 18–19). Can this *acher* be understood as a reference to a second Torah? To support his application of the parable, the rabbi adduces two proof-texts: *Yet even now, says the Lord, return to me [with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning]* (Joel 2:12) and *The one who breaks out will go up before them[; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it. Their king will pass on before them, the Lord at their head.]* (Mic 2:13)

The end of the dialogue, however, surpasses the polemical tone of the beginning:

> He said to me, Rabbi, may your soul be bent [in distress], for my soul is bent [in distress]. I said to him, My son, a Scripture verse says, *Answer the fool according to his folly* (Prov 26:5). But another Scripture verse says, *Answer not a fool* etc. (Prov 26:4) Now it is written in a mishnah: "Be alert to study the Law and know how to make answer to an unbeliever (אפיקורוס)" (mAv 2:14).[35] He said to me, Rabbi, there were things I had in my heart I would not have discussed in your presence. I answered, By the (Temple) service! The things you asked me no man had ever asked me before. Were it not for you [asking me about them] I would not have taught them. Blessed be the Omnipresent, blessed be He who chose the sages and their disciples, who taught us the mishnah: "Wander afar to a place of the Law; and say not that it will follow after you or that your companions will establish it in your possession; *and lean not upon thine own understanding* (Prov 3:5)" (mAv. 4:14) (ER 71, l. 32–ER 72, l. 8)

The rabbi answers to the dubious words of thank by quoting two apparently contradic-

33 See ER 71, l. 18ff.

34 See n. 28.

35 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 200, give the following translation: "Be eager to teach Torah. At the same time [know] how to deal with a confirmed heretic."

tory verses, Prov 26:5 and 26:4, and a mishnah, Av 2:14, in its original context spoken by R. Eleazar. He lets these authoritative texts speak for him; all of them contain expressions with which the questioner in his probable proto-Karaism is indirectly critiz: He is called a fool (*kesil*) in both Proverbs' verses and an unbeliever or Epicurean in the mishnah. Both the questioner and the rabbi admit that they have only unwillingly discussed these matters. If the words of the rabbi according to which he has never been confronted so far with such questions are taken at face value, i.e. as referring to a contemporary historical reality, this would indicate that the text alludes to a time when proto-karaitic controversies were only starting to be felt.

To bring his answer to a close the rabbi speaks a benediction,[36] which praises God for choosing the sages and their disciples for the task of teaching their followers a mishnah – also from tractate Avot, where it is spoken by R. Nehorai –, which even praises the study of Torah in exile conditions. Bearing in mind that one of the tenets of Karaism was its so-called Palestino-centrism, the explicit approval of exile in the first part can be understood as a polemic statement directed against the (proto-)Karaites' insistence on a return to the Land of Israel. Likewise, the last part of the quoted mishnah, actually a verse part of Prov 3:5, can be seen as containing a last subtle response to two interrelated aspects of Karaism, namely, the assumption that knowledge can be individually acquired without the aid of tradition and the theoretical individualism of karaitic exegesis.[37] With this question, but without closing the opening narrative frame, the dialogue with this anonymous proto-Karaite comes to an end and is followed, in the next chapter, by another one.

6.3 *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, Chapter (15) 16

The rabbi's next conversational partner is more consistently depicted as an opponent. Bacher describes the character as follows: "Er bezeugt in den verschiedensten Punkten seinen Unglauben an die traditionelle Auslegung der Schrift."[38] He and the dialogue in which he is involved, a continuation of the one of the previous chapter, represent a clear

36 This benediction might, however, be understood as a direct address at the audience, i.e. a passage in the homiletical discourse after the narrative has been closed.

37 On the principle of induction or *hekkesh ha-chippus* see Fred Astren, "Islamic contexts of medieval Karaism," in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, ed. Meira Polliack (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 162: "*Chippus*, investigation of scripture on the part of the halakhic researcher, became associated with scripturalism, one of Karaism's primary allegiances." Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia*, 90, comments on this respect: "Lacking any agreed authority – whether in the form of a body of tradition, an individual author or an institution empowered to issue binding rulings – the early Karaites were extremely individualistic in their approach to legal questions."

38 Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 271 ("He demonstrates in each point his distrust for the traditional interpretation of Scripture.")

increase in polemical tone. The dialogue consists of seven sections, each of which deals with a different topic or problem. The first section reads as follows:

> A colleague of his came and sat in front of him (כנגדו). Also this one had [knowledge of] Scripture but no [knowledge of] Mishnah. I said to him, My son, the washing of the hands (רחיצת ידים) [comes] from the Torah. He replied, Rabbi, it was not mentioned to us from Mount Sinai (מהר סיני). I said to him, My son, we have many things, many of them of grave import, which Scripture did not deem necessary to mention. Therefore they were imposed (lit. "thrown") on Israel. It [Scripture][39] said, They will set them [Israel] apart, so that they increase their merit. Whence [do we infer this]? You should know that it is so: When Israel were in the wilderness, wandering around, the Holy One, blessed be He, spoke to Moses, *Go to the people and consecrate them (וקדשתם) [today and tomorrow. Have them wash (וכבסו) their clothes.]* etc. (Exod 19:10) And the sages taught in a mishnah:[40] "And consecrate them with the ritual bath (וקדשתם בטבילה)." And we learn the washing of the hands from the Torah, from Moses, Aaron, and his children, for it is said, *The Lord spoke* etc. *You shall make a bronze basin [with a bronze stand for washing (לרחצה).]* <etc.> *And Moses*[41] *shall wash (ורחצו) with it [their hands and their feet]* etc. *When they go into the tent of meeting [or when they come near the altar to minister, to make an offering by fire to the Lord, they shall wash (ירחצו) with water, so that they may not die.]* etc. (Exod 30:17–20). But of Israel what does it [Scripture] say? *Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy (והתקדשתם והייתם קדושים)* (Lev 11:44). Hence Rabban Gamaliel used to eat common food in a state of levitical purity. They said: Not only were the priests given the sanctification, but the priests, the Levites, and all the Israelites, for it is said, *The Lord spoke* etc. *Speak to the congregation*[42] *of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy* etc. (Lev 19:1–2) From here they taught: Whoever disregards the washing of the hands, it is a bad omen for him. Of him it [Scripture] says, *All who hear the words of this oath* etc. *the Lord will be unwilling to pardon them* etc. (Deut 29:18–19) Here you learn that whoever rebels against the washing of the hands (רחיצת ידים), it is a bad omen for him. (ER 72, l. 9–23)

The questioner of this new narrative or narrative section is identified as a fellow of the questioner of the previous dialogue, i. e. as one knowledgeable about Scripture but not

39 The Hebrew text reads אמר instead of הוא אומר, a phrase that is understood as referring to Scripture and which functions as introductory formula for scriptural quotations. The verb here could therefore be understood as having God as subject.

40 Friedmann puts the expression במשנה in brackets to suggest a mistaken reading of the manuscript.

41 MT reads אַהֲרֹן וּבָנָיו.

42 *Seder Eliyahu* reads דבר אל עדת instead of דַּבֵּר אֶל־כָּל־עֲדַת of MT, i.e. it does not contain the expression "all."

about Mishnah. [43] The spatial setting is the same as in the previous one, for not only is there no mention of change, but we are even told that the new questioner sits in front of his colleague, who remains silent in this second dialogue. The second questioner can as well be thought of as arriving as the rabbi and the first questioner are still talking, listening to the arguments, and taking up the word in order to assist his colleague and reinforce his line of argumentation. Even if the tone of this dialogue is clearly more polemical than that of the previous one, the already used courtesy formulas and the hierarchical relationship are nevertheless kept: the rabbi addresses his questioner repeatedly with the words "my son" and is in turn addressed with "rabbi" or "my master."

The first to speak is the rabbi who states that the washing of the hands is a precept that has its origins in the Torah and is therefore of divine origin. Instead of the usual rabbinic expression נטילת ידים he first speaks of רחיצת ידים. If we assume that this statement is an answer to a question by the rabbi's interlocutor, the fact that the question is missing can be explained as either an ellipsis by the author or an omission by the copyist of the manuscript.[44] The questioner defines himself as a scripturalist (or a proto-Karaite) by arguing that this precept does not come from Sinai, i.e. it is not part of the Torah given Moses on Mount Sinai.[45] The wording used is interesting with respect to his self-depiction: he argues that this command was not said to *us*, thus implying that he regards the rabbi and himself as belonging to one and the same community. Such an

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43 From among the range of meanings of the term, which according to Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (W. Druglin: Leipzig; London: Luzac; New York: Putnam's sons, 1903), s.v. חַבֵּר, include "associate, friend, partner (in sacrifices); colleague, fellow-student; fellow-being; of the same kind," the idea sharing the same kind of knowledge appears to be what brings together the two questioners, therefore the translation "colleague."

44 In any case Friedmann does not emend the text by inserting the missing question as Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 202, do in their translation.

45 The Karaite Elijah Bashyatchi (1420–1490) wrote in his *Adderet Eliyyahu*, the code of Karaite law that came to be regarded as the Karaites' counterpart to the *Shulkhan Arukh*, the following passage concerning the blessing of food and his understanding of the ritual washing of the hands: "The washing of the hands (רחיצת ידים) before the meal, which is called the raising of the hands (נטילת ידים), is actually a ruling (מתקנת) of the sages concerning purity and the prevention of peril, for perhaps a man comes in contact with something impure or indecent and becomes dirty. Indeed he might come with lethally toxic substances such as poisons and if he puts his index fingers in his mouth during the meal, he will be ill. Therefore, the sages opted for the stringency of the raising of the hands before the meals, which for them is an inherited tradition (מסבל הירושה) passed from generation to generation. The Rabbanites (בעלי הקבלה) demand a blessing with the washing of the hands and speak, "He, who sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us." However, this is not found in Scripture; they take it from the accuracy with which Scripture gives you positive commandments. For us this blessing is problematic, for how is one supposed to say "commanded" if the Lord did not command? Therefore, it is appropriate to say "Blessed be you, Lord, our God, sovereign of the universe who created the element of water for purity."" Translated after the Gozleve edition which is available as Google digitized book in the internet. I thank Prof. Daniel Lasker for pointing this out to me.

explicit questioning of a command based on the Oral Torah, one that implies that this command is not as binding as those transmitted in the Written Torah, is a challenge for the rabbi who now proceeds to provide evidence as to the divine origin of the washing of the hands. To do this the midrashist not only makes use of rabbinic sources, as Bacher observes, but also of a combination of scriptural verses that support his argument, and of a micro-narrative which has Scripture as its protagonist: It is the personification Scripture who does not consider it necessary to mention, i.e. in written form, every one of the many important precepts which Israel – the rabbi uses himself the first person in יש לנו – received. Scripture imposed them upon Israel as a means by which they were to distinguish themselves. This short introductory narrative depicts Oral Torah both as an honour and as a responsibility of Israel, who, by making proper use of it can increase their reward.

The rabbi then proceeds to justify this micro-narrative as being the inference of yet another narrative, in this case an exegetical one that consists of a combination of three passages of Scripture, Exod 19:10, Exod 30:17–20, and Lev 11:44 and has Israel's wandering in the wilderness as spatio-temporal setting. First the expression *consecrate them* of Exod 19:10 is interpreted, a verse that in its second part contains the words *have them wash* and which bYev 46b interprets as implying the ritual immersion.[46] Since this would be evidence for the ritual immersion, but not for the washing of the hands, he proceeds to adduce further evidence, which this time consists of another, selectively quoted, scriptural passage (Exod 30:17–20) that deal with the bronze basin with which Aaron and his sons were to wash their hands and feet. This requirement, the rabbi argues, does not concern only priests – as one who only knows Scripture might assume – but the whole of Israel, evidence of which is an anecdote about the habitual actions of an exemplary rabbi based on Lev 11:44: R. Gamaliel is said to have eaten every kind of food, not just consecrated food, in a state of levitical purity. Without mentioning it, the midrashist seems to be using further rabbinic sources – bBer 53b[47] and bChul 106a –,[48] and expanding upon them by again quoting the sages[49] as having stated that not just priests,

[46] Bacher assumes that it is MekhY *Bachodesh* 3 that *Seder Eliyahu* alludes to in this passage. There we read: "*Have them wash (we-khibesu) their clothes* (Exod 19:10). And whence [do we know] that they were required to perform a ritual immersion? See, [I draw] an analogy. If there, where they are not required to wash their clothes, they are required to perform a ritual immersion, here, where they are required to wash their clothes, is it the proper conclusion that they should be required to perform a ritual immersion? There is no washing of clothes in the Torah that does not require also a ritual immersion."

[47] In bBer 53b *Sanctify yourselves* (Lev 11:44) is interpreted as referring to the washing of the hands before meals *and be holy* (ibid.) to the washing of the hands after meals.

[48] In this context the permissibility of washing the hands with water that has been heated with fire is discussed. Whereas according to R. Hezekiah it is not allowed, R. Jochanan states it is permitted for, according to R. Gamaliel the great men of Galilee would do it; considering that R. Gamaliel would eat (only) hallowed food, his opinion must be authoritative on this issue.

[49] The saying is introduced with אמרו, so that it is not Gamaliel himself, as Braude and Kapstein,

but Levites, and all of the Israelites are expected to sanctify themselves by observing the precept of the washing of the hands. Also for the closing statement that condemns those who do not observe the precept, the rabbi relies upon a rabbinic source, bShab 62b,[50] and a scriptural one, Deut 29:18–19.

The second section in this dialogue focuses on the precept of the ritual slaughtering, more precisely with the question why this should be performed at the neck. The passage reads as follows:

> He said to me, Rabbi, there is no [precept stating that] the ritual slaughter [is to be performed] at the neck (אין שחיטה מן הצואר). I answered him, My son, how do you reason? Is not the ritual slaughter integral part of the Torah? For thus taught the sages: "If a man slaughtered a bird by [cutting through] either [the windpipe or the gullet], or a beast by cutting through both, what he slaughters is valid; so, too, [if he cut through] the greater part of each." (mChul 2:1) Whoever cuts in a slanting direction (המגרים) the whole [slaughter] is [the product of] selfishness. Blessed be the Omnipresent, blessed be He, who does not favour one over another, for one who slaughters (הטבח) by dragging (מושך) the flesh [away] from the neck by cutting it in a slanting direction renders it disqualified. So his possessions are taken away (מושכין) from him and given to others. For it is said, *One who augments wealth by exorbitant interest gathers [it for another who is kind to the poor.]* etc. (Prov 28:8) (ER 72, l. 21–ER 73, l. 4)

Unlike the first section, this one has the questioner posing the topic of the dispute. Elliptical though his statement may be, it can be understood as implying that, not being prescribed in the (Written) Torah, the ritual slaughter (or rather a specific aspect of it), is not of divine origin. In reply the rabbi first quotes a mishnah as evidence that the שחיטה מן הצואר, i.e. the Hebrew expression for "slaughter performed by cutting the animal's neck," is indeed part of the Torah[51] and then presents the hypothetical case of one who tries to illegitimately profit by cutting in such a way that a minimum of flesh remains near or on the animal's neck.

Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu, 203, imply with their translation, but the sages' collective interpretation of his conduct that is given in this passage.

50 According to R. Abbahu treating the washing of the hands with disrespect is one of three things which bring man to poverty.

51 Leon Nemoy interprets the rabbi's answer as implying that whenever Scripture uses the expression שחט, i.e. in those contexts dealing with sacrificial slaughtering (e.g. Exod 12:6.21, Exod 29:11, Lev 1:5.11, 4:4.15.24, Exod 29:16, Lev 3:2, Nu 19:3, Lev 4:24.33, 7:2, 9:12, 14:13, Lev 7:2, 4:29, 13:13), the procedure alluded to consisted in cutting the animal's throat with a sharp knife. Therefore שחט is taken to mean "cutting the animal's throat," also in the private sacrificial setting of slaughtering for food. See Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 203, n. 8.

According to Bacher the rabbi uses for his answer two rabbinic intertexts: The first, bChul 27a,[52] deals with the same problem posed by the proto-Karaite, but formulates it differently: Rav Kahana is here concerned with the origins of the precept of שחיטה מן הצואר, which he sees in an the interpretation of ושחט of Lev 1:5 as implying the cleansing of blood from the neck.[53] The second, bChul 19a, deals *in extenso* with the question of the validity of the slaughter depending on where the one in charge of slaughtering cuts as prescribed in mChul 1:3. On close inspection it is evident that the rabbi of *Seder Eliyahu* relies mainly on the second rabbinic source, even though the first would help him give a more adequate answer to the posed question. The rabbi simply does not state *where* in the Torah the שחיטה מן הצואר is derived from, but concentrates on discussing immoral approaches to the practice of slaughtering that aim at getting more profit from the killed animal. Bacher claims that this is due to the fact that among Karaites it was usual to explain שחט, i.e. the root consonants of שחיטה, as related to that of the verb משך ("stretch").[54] Although this may be true, as the later evidence of *Adderet Eliyahu* seems to support,[55] the question of the apparent inconsistency of this dialogue part might be of interest at the time of discussing the intended audience of the text.[56] It could be argued that the

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52 Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 271.

53 The passage reads: "Whence [do we infer] that the slaughtering [must be performed] at the neck? It was said, *And he shall slaughter (ושחט) the bullock* (Lev 1:5), i.e. he shall cleanse (חטהו) it [from blood] in the place where it bends down (ששח). Whence [do you infer] that חטהו is an expression [that means] "to cleanse" (דכויי)? It is written, *And he shall clean (וחטא) the house* (Lev 14:52) or, if you want to say rather from here [this verse]: *Purge me (תחטאני) with hyssop and I shall be clean (ואטהר)* (Ps 51:9)."

54 See Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 271.

55 In the following passage *Adderet Eliyahu* 62b clearly goes back to bChul 27a: "[T]he Rabbanites state that the sense of the expression שחיטה derives from two words, namely "from the place where it bends down" (ששח) [and] "he shall cleanse" (חטהו), that is, from the place where his head is humbled from the verse, *People are bowed down, everyone is brought low* (Isa 5:15). Hence they say, "from the place where it bends down" [and] "he shall cleanse," which means from the place where speech comes out, from the verse, *and speak to the earth and it shall teach you* (Job 12:8). And they said that the slaughtering (הזביחה) [derives] from the place where the man with urethral secretion (זב) cleanses himself (חטהו). Truly the sages, peace be upon them, said that the sense of *shechitah* derives the expression "beaten gold" (זהב שחוט) (1 Kings 10:16). *Their tongue is a deadly arrow (חץ שחוט)* (Jer 9:8), for they are concerned with the drawing. So the precept of slaughtering (שחיטה) is connected with the drawing of the knife (במשיכת הסכין) with movements to and fro (בהולכתו ובהובאתו)." etc.

56 Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Torah*, 210, addresses this issue pointing out that even in the text he uses, a version of *Seder Eliyahu* with the commentary of Joshua ben Jacob, the proto-Karaite's answer to the rabbi's question, "How do you reason?" is missing. He argues: "The Scripturalist argues that the slaughter (of birds) is not to be performed at the neck but by pinching the bird's head at the nape, as in Anan's view; and when the rabbi asks him, How do you reason?, he answers that the slaughter of profane animals according to the Torah is like in the case of burnt, sin, and guilt offerings and of all types of sacrifices, therefore, from this perspective the slaughter of a bird not destined to be sacrificed is like the slaughter of a consecrated bird that is to be sacrificed, i.e. by pinching."

elliptical manner the rabbi of *Seder Eliyahu* uses to argue in this passage suggests that the text was never intended to be addressed to an audience which was not familiar with rabbinic tradition. Without the information contained in bChul 27a such an audience could hardly have been able to understand the passage. The text must therefore be understood as addressed at those who do take for granted that the precept is integral part of the Torah, i.e. a rabbinic audience, but observe it only superficially, giving profit priority in their performance of the *shechitah*.

The third topic the proto-Karaite brings forward pertains to the prohibition of eating human blood:

> He said to me, [The eating of] human blood is not prohibited in the Torah. I answered him, My son, how do you reason? He replied, Rabbi, Scripture says, *You must not eat [any blood whatever, either of bird or of animal]* (Lev 7:26). But no human blood is [mentioned] here. I said to him, It is an argument *a minori ad majus*. If in the case of cattle, beasts, and fowl whose nature is that they are edible, it is prohibited, how much the more forbidden to us is blood in the case of human beings whose nature is not that they are edible. And it [Scripture] says, *Only be sure that you do not eat the blood* <etc.> (Deut 12:23) And furthermore it [Scripture] says, *For the life of every creature [– its blood is its life; therefore I have said to the people of Israel: You shall not eat the blood of any creature]* etc. (Lev 17:14), referring to human blood which is prohibited as food. *You shall not eat the blood of any creature* (ibid.), neither from clean cattle nor from unclean cattle, *for the life of every [creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off.]* etc. (ibid.) By the [Temple] service! Also the blood of a living creature, that which has coagulated or has been drained, collected in its presence, and poured into a vessel, also this [blood] is prohibited, for it is said, *Blood*, wherever it comes from. (ER 73, l. 5–13)

In the case of this question-answer-passage, Bacher argues that the rabbi's words are representative of the usual anti-Karaite position, but that on the contrary the rabbi even appears to take sides with the Karaites, who expanded the prohibition of eating blood to that of fish, grasshoppers, and other insects.[57] Had he taken an expected rabbinic position, he could easily have objected to the proto-Karaite's statement by following the

[57] In *Adderet Eliyyahu* 66 c–d, Elijah Bashiatzy first lists the verses in Scripture which deal with the eating of blood grouping them according to the pericopes in which they appear (*Vayiqra* [Lev 3:17]; *Tsav* [Lev 7:26]; *Achare* [Lev 17:10.12.14]; *Reʾe* [Deut 12:23.24.25, 15:23]) and then states, "The Rabbanites said that the blood that is prohibited in Scripture is the blood of birds and animals, for Scripture specifies in parashah *Tsaw You must not eat any blood whatever, either of bird or of animal* (Lev 7:26). In truth the blood of fish and grasshoppers is not forbidden for if it were we would only have [the commandment of *Vayiqra* which states] explicitly [just] *any blood* (Lev 3:17). But Scripture is otherwise concerned with being specific. Since it appears as if no other blood apart from this would be prohibited, our sages, peace be upon them, said also that we do not have the authority to prohibit any blood from the commandment of *Wa-yiqra*,

argument presented in bKer 20b,[58] but he proceeds to argue for the prohibition of human blood.

Moreover, the passage is insofar problematic as it is the proto-Karaite the one who expresses the rabbinic position as represented by bKer 20b. What we seem to have here is a "castling" of roles: on the basis of practically the same scriptural verses the interlocutors come to contrary conclusions; and, whereas the rabbi speaks out what later on came to crystallize as a Karaite position, namely that every kind of blood is prohibited, the purported scripturalist paraphrases the conclusion the Talmud passage arrived at, i.e. that human blood is excluded from the prohibition. Such an inconsistency in the construction of characters in this passage is related to the fact that the proto-Karaite and the rest of the non-rabbinic "others" with whom the rabbi contends rather than characters are mouthpieces for ideas.

The fourth question in this dialogue focuses on the possible understanding of Lev 7:25 as permitting the consumption of a specific type of fat, namely that of animals to be sacrificed:

> He said to me, Rabbi, the fat of an animal which is offered as a sacrifice to the Lord is prohibited. The fat of an animal which is not offered [as a sacrifice to the Lord] is permitted. I answered him, How do you reason? He said, Rabbi, Scripture says, *If any one of you eats the fat [from an animal of which an offering by fire may be made to the Lord, you who eat it shall be cut off from your kin.]* etc. (Lev 7:25) I replied, My son, observe how strong Torah's power is. [In] all its sayings [is] understanding, and each and every word said in her is said in wisdom, understanding, and discernment: Lest a man think (כדי שלא יאמר אדם לעצמו, lit. "say to himself") the fat of an animal which is offered as a sacrifice to the Lord is prohibited, but the fat of an animal which is not offered as a sacrifice to the Lord is permitted, Scripture then explicitly states elsewhere, *It shall be a perpetual statute* (Lev 3:17), from now and until the end of the world; *throughout your generations* (ibid.), the word is to be practiced for all generations; *in all your settlements* (ibid.), both in the Land [of Israel] and outside the Land; *[you must not eat] any fat or*

after which comes a specification in parashah *Tsav*. Probably the word *kol* is the difficult aspect for them, for in a specification the word *kol* is not in the correct place. And they interpreted the word *kol* as an all-inclusive term for the different types of blood, the blood that comes out from a living creature, like the blood of slaughtering, the blood of limbs, the blood of washing. Indeed from what is said in parashah *Achare*, *You shall not eat the blood of any creature, for the life of every creature is its blood; whoever eats it shall be cut off*, which provides the sense for the word itself and not in relation to another word, we know that it is forbidden in general. And the sense of "any blood" is the blood of fish, of grasshoppers and of their fellow creatures."

58 According to this passage the blood of those who walk on two legs, i.e. of man, is excluded from the prohibition of Lev 7:26. Given that the verse explicitly names fowl and beast, which are subject to both light and weighty uncleanness, the Talmud infers that every creature subject to both types of uncleanness is included in the prohibition. Man is excluded on the grounds of being subject only to weighty uncleanness.

> *any blood* (ibid.), just as the eating of blood is prohibited, so is the eating of fat prohibited. And if this is so why then is it said, *you must not eat any fat or any blood* (ibid.)? To bring [both elements of] the commandment in your hand [under the same category by juxtaposing them], for [the eating of] blood is like [the eating of] fat and [the eating of] fat is like [the eating of] blood. And with regard to either you are punishable with death through excision. Therefore it is said, *any fat* etc. (ibid.) And the sages taught in a mishnah: "if a man keeps apart from blood (which man's soul abhors) he receives a reward, how much more, if he keeps himself apart from robbery and incest (which a man's soul longs after and covets), shall he gain merit for himself and his generations and the generations of his generations to the end of all generations!" (mMak 3:15) (ER 73, l. 14–28)

The questioner claims with his opening statement that only the fat of consecrated animals is prohibited, quoting Lev 7:25 as evidence. The verse, which in a part left unquoted, explains excision as the punishment for consuming this type of fat.[59] To counter this assumption the rabbi adduces Lev 3:17, claiming that it is uttered by Scripture to prevent men from thinking (literally from saying to themselves) what the proto-Karaite has said aloud. The same two scriptural contexts are used in a talmudic passage which could be seen as an unmentioned source of *Seder Eliyahu*, bKer 4b.[60] The rabbi argues for the

[59] In his discussion of the development of Karaite sects in the ninth century, Julius Fürst, *Geschichte des Karäerthums: Eine kurze Darstellung seiner Entwicklung, Lehre und Literatur*, vol. 1, *Bis 900 der gewöhnlichen Zeitrechnung* (Leipzig: Nies'sche Buchdruckerei, 1862), 85, claims that two so called "sect founders" ("Sektenstifter") were known to have supported in the first half of the century the eating of fat of animals which were not sacrificed, Meswi el-Safarani and Ismael Okbari: "Nach Meswi el-Safarani, dessen Anhang sich weithin bis nach Armenien hinein verbreitete, tauchte unter dem Khalifen Mutassim (um 835) ein karäisches Sektenhaupt Ismaël Okbari aus der zehn Parasangen von Bagdad entfernten und zu Irak Arabi gehörigen Stadt Okbara am Tigris auf. Ihm schloss sich Meswi oder Abu-Musa Okbari, sein Landsmann an, der weil er in Bagdad lebte, auch Bagdadi genannt wurde, während die Jünger Beider den Sektennamen Okbarija, d. h. die Okbariten führten. Ueber die Anhänger Beider wird im Allgemeinen von Makrisi berichtet, daß sie in der gesetzlichen Bestimmung über die Sabbatfeier, und überhaupt in Auslegungen des Pentateuch von den in der Stammgemeinde geltenden, abgewichen seien, ohne daß wir aber etwas Besonderes über sie erfahren. Mukammez bei Hadassi nennt sie blos Sektirer, welche dem Meswi el-Safarani sich in Einzelbestimmungen angeschlossen haben. Von Ismaël wird in dunkeln und unverständlichen Worten erzählt, daß er gegen die samaritanische Fälschung gewisser Schriftverse, gegen die Ansicht von der Verwerfung der nicht pentateuchischen Schriften und von dem Rufe nach einem großen Propheten, aufgetreten sei, ohne daß wir jedoch selbst darüber etwas Bestimmtes wissen. Bestimmter hingegen wird bald von Meswi bald von Ismaël behauptet, sie hätten den Genuß des Fettes (Cheleb) von nicht geopferten, reinen Thieren gestattet, weil die Schrift nur den Genuß des Fettes von Opferthieren verboten hätte, und die Tiflisiten haben diese Ansicht zu der ihrigen gemacht. Viele Karäer haben zur Zeit Saadja's dieser Ansicht zugestimmt, wie er ausdrücklich in seinem Widerstreite gegen dieselben bemerkt, und nur erst die spätern Karäer weisen diese Auslegung zurück."

[60] It is argued here that two negative commandments, *It shall be a perpetual statute* etc. (Lev 3:17)

prohibition of eating the fat of unconsecrated animals by atomizing the verse and focusing on the expression *any fat* and emphasizing the analogy between fat and blood. This way he can justify the expansion upon the scriptural text that follows: Just as the transgression of the prohibition to eat blood is punishable with *karet* or excision, so the transgression of the negative commandment that prohibits eating fat is also punishable with excision. In Scripture, however, this punishment is expressed only in connection with the eating of fat of animals that may be consecrated in the context of Lev 7:25: *If any one of you eats the fat from an animal of which an offering by fire may be made to the Lord, you who eat it shall be cut off from your kin*, and with respect to the eating of blood in Lev 17:14, which was quoted in the previous section.

Following his interpretation of Lev 3:17 and unlike the way he proceeded in his previous answers, the rabbi poses here a rhetorical question – "And if this is so why then is it said, *you must not eat any fat or any blood* (ibid.)?" – to prompt the second part of his answer, with a different hermeneutic target.[61] He declares fat equal to blood and argues that both the eating of any type of fat and the eating of any type of blood is punishable with excision. Although for this argument the rabbi could have brought several scriptural proof-texts,[62] the author chooses to have him speak the last part of a mishnah of tractate *Makkot* instead, where it is incidentally spoken by R. Simon after having quoted *Only be sure that you do not eat the blood; for the blood is the life* (Deut 12:23).[63] It is precisely this verse that was previously used in *Seder Eliyahu* in the context of the discussion of the prohibition of eating blood, so the link between these prohibitions goes back to the Mishnah itself, the founding document of rabbinic Judaism.

Also the next topic of dispute is mentioned in the *Makkot* passage, "robbery" or "cheating" (גזל), which, as Bacher points out, is not a typically polemical issue between Rabbanites and Karaites:

> He said to me, Rabbi, maybe the cheating of one's brother (גזל של אח) is permitted? I answered him, How do you reason? He replied, Rabbi, it was not mentioned at Mount Sinai. I said to him, Is this not like the first line of thought, which I presented to you at the beginning? We have many things, many of them of grave import, which Scripture did not deem necessary to mention. Therefore they were imposed on Israel. It [Scripture] said,[64]

and *You shall eat not fat of ox or sheep or goat* (Lev 7:23), prohibit the fat of consecrated and unconsecrated animals respectively.

61 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 205, attribute this question to the proto-Karaite: "'But,' asked the questioner, '[if the primary purpose of the words just cited is absolutely to prohibit the eating of fat], why does Scripture here mention blood as well as fat?' 'In order,' [I replied], 'to stress the parallel: the eating of blood is like the eating of fat and the eating of fat is like the eating of blood.'"

62 E.g. Lev 7:27, 17:10.14.

63 In its original context the mishnah begins with a discussion of the way the punishment of extirpation can be replaced by that of the forty lashes.

64 See n. 39.

> They will set them [Israel] apart, so that they increase their merit. Scripture says, *Honour your father and your mother; you shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal (לא תגנוב); you shall not bear [false witness against your neighbour (ברעך)]; you shall not covet [your neighbour's (רעך) house; you shall not covet your neighbour's (רעך) wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour (לרעך)].* (Exod 20:12–17). Is the oppression of one's brother not [implied] there? I would say that they are chastened by the words of Torah and that they are healed by the words of Torah, for it is said, *My soul yearns for you in the night [my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.]* etc. (Isa 26:9)
>
> From here they taught: For eight reasons the world was laid waste and for four reasons the world is [left] at ease. For eight reasons the world was laid waste: miscarriage of justice (הדינין, lit. "judgements"), idolatry, incest (גילוי עריות, lit. "uncovering of nakedness"), bloodshed, defamation of God's name, hideous words a man finds in his mouth, presumptuousness (גסות הרוח), and slander (לשון רע). (1) The first generations were not rooted out from the world but for [these] eight reasons, for it is said, *They say*[65] *to God, "Leave us alone!* etc. (Job 21:14) And for [these] eight reasons they were rooted out from the world. (2) And the generation of the dispersion was not rooted out from the world but for [these] eight reasons, for it is said, *Now the whole earth had one language* [etc.] (Gen 11:1). And for [these] eight reasons they were rooted out from the world. (3) The people of Sodom were not rooted out from the world but for [these] eight reasons, for it is said, *Now the people of Sodom were wicked, great sinners* [etc.] (Gen 13:13) And for [these] eight reasons they were rooted out from the world. (4) Pharao, king of Egypt, was not rooted out from the world but for [these] eight reasons, for it is said, *But Pharaoh said, Who is the Lord, that I should heed him* (Exod 5:2). And for these eight reasons he was rooted out from the world. (5) Sennacherib, king of Assyria, was not rooted out from the world but for [these] eight reasons, for it is said, *Who among all the gods of the countries* [etc.] (2 Kings 18:35). And for [these] eight reasons he was rooted out from the world. (6) Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, was not rooted out from the world but for [these] eight reasons, for it is said, *You said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven* etc. (Isa 14:13). And for [these] eight reasons he was rooted out from the world. And for four reasons the world is at ease: charity, justice, truth, and peace. (ER 73, l. 29–ER 74, l. 24)

The questioner argues that גזל של אח must be something permitted, for it was not explicitly prohibited at Sinai.[66] Given that he is depicted as familiar with Scripture, it could be

[65] Translated according to MT, which reads וַיֹּאמְרוּ, instead of following ויאמר of *Seder Eliyahu*.

[66] The conduct is condemned elsewhere in Scripture, e.g. in Ezek 18:18: *As for his father, because*

argued that his question points at the fact that the wording of the commandments do not explicitly name a syntactical object of the verb תגנוב (Exod 20:15), *gnv* being a synonym of *gzl*, while they do name the neighbour as object of other prohibitions. After referring back to the explanation he has already given to a previous question, which justified that not all the rulings Israel must follow are explicitly stated in Scripture, the rabbi proceeds to quote the first five commandments of Exod 20. Only the last three appear to be of relevance for the point in question: The fourth, fifth, and sixth commandments contain expressions which the rabbi interprets as implying a prohibition of גזל של אח.

What does the questioner mean with the expression "cheating of one's *brother*" exactly? Braude and Kapstein explain אח in *Seder Eliyahu* as a contraction of אחר ("other" or "non-Jew") and translate גזל של אח accordingly as "cheating a non-Jew."[67] According to the rabbi's answer cheating one's brother is contained in the commandments, even if this is not written out, and they only mention one's "neighbour." That cheating itself rather than the identity of the object of the cheating is what primarily matters can be inferred from the adduced Isaiah verse, which identifies the possible objects of cheating with the collective expression "the inhabitants of the world," that is Jews and non-Jews alike: *My soul yearns for you in the night, my spirit within me earnestly seeks you. For when your judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world (יושבי תבל) learn righteousness.*[68] The digression that follows the quoted scriptural verse contains a number of examples – some of which pertain to non-Jewish characters – with which the rabbi illustrates the notion that for eight certain transgressions the world was (repeteadly) laid waste.[69]

The section is not over with this answer by the rabbi. For the first time it is the questioner who takes up the word not to utter a question, but to tell a story, a *maʿaseh*, in which he himself is involved:

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he practised extortion, robbed his brother (גזל גזל אח), and did what is not good among his people, he dies for his iniquity. Lev 19:13 and Prov 28:24 both contain word-forms of the root *gzl*, but neither is used in the first instance although they could have worked for a more direct refutation of the questioner's implication. Only after the questioner has told a *maʿaseh* on how he betrayed a gentile, does the rabbi quote the first part of Lev 19:13.

67 In the wider co-text of this passage, however, the questioner refers to a "non-Jew" using the expression גוי.

68 Leon Nemoy, quoted by Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 206, n. 18, points out: "The verse Isa 26:9 need not be interpreted as referring to the two Torahs, but rather as JV [*Jewish Version: The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text* (Philadelphia: JPS, 1917)] interprets it: 'Pursuant to the words of the Torah one is chastised (whether one wrongs an Israelite or a Gentile), and pursuant to them one is healed, as it is said … The inhabitants of the world (Israelites and Gentiles both).'"

69 The transgressed principles for which these collective and individual characters were allegedly exterminated are, as Leon Nemoy observes, not all of Scriptural formulation. See Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 206, n. 18. The scriptural quotations adduced to prove that each of these collective or individual characters were rooted out from the world stem, with the exception of the first example, from scriptural contexts dealing with precisely the same characters.

> He said to me, Rabbi, it happened to me [once] that I sold a gentile (גוי) four kor of dates. But I had measured [them] for him in a partially dark house. [He said to me,] You and God in heaven know the measure with which you measure for me. From what I measured for him I left out three seah of dates. Then I took his money and bought a jug of oil with it and placed it where I had sold the dates to the gentile. The jug broke and the oil was poured out and spilt. I replied to him, My son, Scripture says, *You shall not defraud your neighbour[; you shall not steal (ולא תגזל)]* (Lev 19:13). You see, your neighbour is like your brother, and your brother is like your neighbour. From here you learn that the cheating of a non-Jew (גזל הגוי)[70] is cheating, and it is not necessary to [further explicitly state] "of a brother" (*shel ach*). But because God saw that men with their transgressions would defraud, steal, and extort each another, he then explicitly stated in the traditional writings through Ezekiel son of Busi the priest, *As for his father, because he practised extortion, robbed his brother[, and did what is not good among his people, he dies for his iniquity.]* (Ezek 18:18) (ER 74, l. 25–ER 75, l. 7)

What is the purpose of the questioner's telling this *maʿaseh* on how he once cheated on a gentile and was punished for it? Important for the logic of the short narrative is the fact that the cheater placed the jug precisely in the same place where he had cheated the gentile. Even if one could read here a sort of repentance on the side of the cheater, who would have left the jug for the gentile to be paid with oil (in which case the gentile himself would have been punished by the splitting of oil), it seems more probable that the choice of the place is imposed on the cheater by the narrative itself, thus giving him a clue as to the reason why the jug broke and he lost his oil. But then such an interpretation is not brought to the surface. The questioner is depicted as in doubt; his narrative is found on a second narrative level and needs the interpretation of the rabbi of the first narrative level.

The *maʿaseh* provides the basis for the rabbi to bring his argument to a close. Had he explained in the first part of his answer that the "neighbour" of the commandments of Exod 20 implies the "brother," so now he goes a step further and explains that the "neighbour" of the commandment of Lev 19:13 implies one's "brother," and that no oppression whatsoever is tolerated by God. The rabbi begins his answer by quoting the first of three prohibitions contained in Lev 19:13, *You shall not defraud your neighbour*. The second prohibition, which the rabbi does not quote, contains an expression of the root *gzl*, *you shall not steal*, without a direct object – just as Exod 20:15, *lo tignov*, has no object. In a second step he proceeds to equal "neighbour" (or Gentile) to "brother" (Jew), so that both prohibitions in the verse can be read as referring to both Jews and non-Jews. Now that he has clearly explained that *gezel ha-goy* is equal to *gezel*, he finally adduces

70 A more usual expression in rabbinic literature appears to be גזל הגר, which is found in *Kallah Rabbati* 5:6, bBQ 109b, bZev 44b, bMen 73a, SifBem 117, BemR *Naso* 8, LeqT *Bemidbar* 84b, LeqT *Naso* 86a, LeqT *Qorach* 117b, YalqShim *Tsav* 492, YalqShim *Naso* 701, YalqShim *Qorach* 755.

the explicit evidence of Ezek 18:18 which condemns *gezel ach* to round up his argument that *gezel shel ach* understood as the cheating of any other human being is prohibited by the Torah. If the oppression of a non-Jew is like the oppression of a brother, then the unquoted part of Ezek 18:18 is applicable to the questioner himself.

Bearing in mind that one of the main tenets of Karaism was that not just the Pentateuch, but the entire Tanakh, was a source of law,[71] it appears as odd that it is the rabbi, rather than his antagonist, a character *Seder Eliyahu* purportedly depicts as a challenger of rabbinic Judaism, the one who has to eventually argue with the help of a verse of the Writings – Ezek 18:18 –, in order to show that גזל של אח is prohibited *in* לא תגנוב of Exod 20:15.

In Bacher's view the man's question and anecdote are found in this context simply to illustrate the absurdity of a strict scripturalist approach the questioner seems to represent:

> Die Frage des Karäers גזל אח מותר, weil in den zehn Geboten von Raub nicht die Rede sei, sowie seine Klage, daß ein für erlaubt gehaltener Betrug an einem Nichtjuden ihm nur Schaden gebracht habe, scheint nur angeführt zu sein, um das Princip des starren Buchstabenglaubens durch unmoralische Consequenzen ad absurdum zu führen und andererseits die auf der traditionellen Auslegung und Anwendung der Bibelstellen beruhende Toleranz und ethische Anschauungsweise glänzen zu lassen.[72]

The purpose of the question whether to cheat a fellow Jew or a non-Jew can therefore be understood as an exercise in the application of the commandments to more aspects of life than they literally cover, only eventually recurring to other parts of the Tanakh (such as Ezek 18:18) as proof-texts rather than as sources of law.

The answer to the sixth question demonstrates according to Bacher the validity of traditional deduction methods, which Karaites after all did not reject:[73]
Also the last section of the dialogue is related to sexuality; it deals, according to Bacher, with an important and controversial subject between Rabbanites and Karaites:

> He said to me, [What is the] graver [transgression], [sexual intercourse with] a man with gonorrhoea (זב) or [with] a woman who is menstruating (נידה)? I replied, My son, [sexual intercourse with] a woman who is menstruating is graver than [with] a man with gonorrhoea. He asked, Have we

[71] Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia*, 87: "In partial compensation for the unavailability of extra-biblical tradition, the Prophets and Hagiographa are placed on an equal footing with the Pentateuch as legal sources." See Yoram Erder, "The Karaites and the Second Temple sects," in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, ed. Meira Polliack (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003), 127: "The Karaites, who discarded the Oral Law as a source of *halakhah*, expanded the basis for their laws by considering, like the "Zadokites" before them, the entire Bible, not just the Pentateuch, to be a resource for *halakhah*."

[72] Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 272.

[73] Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 272–273.

> not learned the ritual immersion of the menstruating woman from that of the man with gonorrhoea (טבילה לנידה אלא מן הזב)? I replied, My son, it is an argument *a minori ad majus*. If [with regard to] the man with gonorrhoea, who is not fertile and cannot multiply, ten [times the mention of] uncleanness (טומאות) and seven [times] ritual immersions (טבילות) are required in the Torah[, how much more so with regard to the menstruating woman who is fruitful and can multiply]. Whoever says to his wife and sons and members of his household, Touch the vessels and do as you please, for the ritual immersion for the menstruating woman is not in the Torah, will never find contentment. (ER 75, l. 14–ER 76, l. 2)

As in the previous section the questioner demands clarification as to which of two offences is graver, this time regarding sexual intercourse with a *zav* or a *niddah*. According to the rabbi the second transgression is evidently the graver – thus rejecting the Karaite leniency with regard to the *niddah* and stringency concerning the *zavah*.[74] As Friedmann explains, this is due to the fact that sexual intercourse with a *niddah* is punished with excision – the same punishment mentioned previously for eating fat or blood. The questioner objects that it must be the other way round, for he is certain that the ritual bath for the *niddah* has been learned, i.e. inferred, from that prescribed in Leviticus for the *zav*, but is corrected in his exegetical conviction by the rabbi, who once again makes use of the hermeneutical resource of the *qal wa-chomer*. So far it is remarkable neither the questioner nor the rabbi make use of explicit scriptural quotation.

It is otherwise in the subsequent passage. To illustrate his position the rabbi tells his questioner a *maʿaseh* in which he, the narrator, even if indirectly, is also involved:

> It once happened that a man who read much Scripture, recited much Mishnah, that he went into his eternal abode in the middle of his years. His wife, almost driven to madness, went around the doorways of her husband's colleagues saying to them, My masters, my husband read much Scripture, recited much Mishnah, why did he have to go to his eternal abode in the middle of his years? They would not reply to her. I was once going through the marketplace and walked into the courtyard of her dwelling. She came out, sat down in front of me, and wept. I asked her, My daughter, why are you crying? She answered, My husband read much Scripture, recited much Mishnah, why did he have to go to his eternal abode in the middle of his years? I asked her, My daughter, during the time of your impurity (בשעת נידה), how did he conduct himself with you? She replied, O Rabbi, he would say to me, Set aside all the days [of your period] that you see blood and wait [lit. "sit, be inactive") [still] seven clean days, so that you do not have any doubt [about your ritual purity]. <I said to her,>[75] My daughter, he spoke fairly to you. With regard both to men and women with gonorrhoea (בזבים

[74] See Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Torah*, 212–213.

[75] Friedmann emends MS reading, אמרה, with אמרתי.

> וזבות), after menstruation and after having given birth (נידות ויולדות) the sages taught that only after seven days are such considered ritually pure (טהורין for their marital duties, as is said, *If she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count [seven days, and after that she shall be clean.]* etc. (Lev 15:28) During the white days (באותן הימים לבנים), how did he conduct himself with you? Did you perhaps anoint him with oil in your hand? Did he touch <you>[76] even [only] with his little finger? She answered, By your life, I would wash his feet and anoint them with oil. I would sleep with him in a bed but nothing else[77] would enter his head. I said to her, My daughter, blessed be the Omnipresent who does not favour one over another, since it is written in the Torah, *[You shall not approach] a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness.* <etc.> (Lev 18:19) You might think that he [a man] could embrace her [his wife] and kiss her and talk to her about frivolous matters, but then Scripture teaches, *You shall not approach* (Lev 18:19). You might think that she could sleep with him on the same bed with her clothes on, but then Scripture teaches, *You shall not approach* (Lev 18:19). Lest a man think (lit. "say to himself"), [As long as] her flesh is prohibited, so is her bed, [and lest,] when her menstruation has finished, he say (lit. "you say"), Her flesh is <prohibited, but her bed permitted>,[78] Scripture states explicitly in the traditional writings through Ezechiel, son of Buzi the priest, *he does not eat upon*[79] *the mountains or lift up his eyes [to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbour's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual period]* etc. (Ezek 18:6) A *niddah* is comparable to the married woman. <You are warned> with respect to the *niddah* with all the capital punishments mentioned in the Torah. It [Scripture] says, *You only have I known of all the families of the earth* (Amos 3:2), these are Israel among the seventy languages; *therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities* (ibid.), these are the disciples of the wise within the House of Israel. I said to her, My daughter, go and learn from what is written in the Torah: "The reward of a duty [done] is a duty [to be done], and the reward of one transgression is [another] transgression." (mAv 4:2) (ER 76, l. 3–28)

This last passage, the longest in the chapter, addresses an issue of controversy between Karaites and Rabbanites, namely the rejection by the former of the so called seven clean days, evidenced, as pointed out by Bacher, by Jehuda Hadassi's *Eshkol ha-kofer* 111b. Moreover, Bacher notes that according to *Adderet Eliyahu* 73c Karaites held that intercourse with a *zavah* (a woman suffering from gonorrhoea) is a graver offence than that

76 Friedmann emends the MS reading, ונגע בו, with ונגע ביך.

77 According to Friedmann, *Seder Eliahu*, Introduction, 103, n. 1., דבר אחר would be the interpretation by a copyist of the acronym ד״א, which stands also for דרך ארץ, an euphemism for sexual intercourse.

78 Friedmann emends MS reading, מוטר לבשרה ואסור למיטתו, with אסור לבשרה ומותר למיטתה.

79 MS reads על, MT אֶל.

with a woman in her menses.[80]

For my present purposes[81] it is important to point out that in the context of a controversial issue between a scripturalist (or proto-Karaite) and a rabbi, the latter replies to his questioner in the first place with the exemplary story, a *maʿaseh*, of a man who dies young because *in spite of* knowing the Written and Oral Torah he failed to live according to them. It should also be noted that this narrative within a narrative is unlike its parallels in bShab 13a–b and ARN A 2, one in which the rabbi gives the widow the answer concerning the premature death of her husband, thus silencing her repetitive asking.

A third aspect to stress is the clear ethical topical focus of the long monologue the rabbi holds after having told the exemplary story. Here the rabbi takes the quotation of mAv 4:2 as an almost lemmatic starting point for several clusters of statements,[82] though only in the last ones which I quote below does the rabbi return to the topic of conversation with the woman (and with the proto-Karaite):

> If a man sees an involuntary pollution, he is bound according to the Torah to [immerse himself in] a ritual bath. If he says, Who sees me? There is nothing to it! If he disregards the matter three times, transgressing what is written in the Torah, *If a man has an emission of semen[, he shall bathe his whole body in water, and be unclean until the evening.]* etc. (Lev 15:16), in the end he will make a *zav* of himself on account of his ways, for it is said, *The Lord spoke [to Moses and Aaron, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them:] When any man has a discharge from his member[, his discharge makes him ceremonially unclean.]* (Lev 15:1–2) What does Scripture teach with *any man* (איש איש)? Just that both the man with regular discharge and the man who has an involuntary discharge during the night night are meant. If he then repents, he will be healed. If he does not, see, he will remain in its power until the day of his death. For it is said, *[The uncleanness of his discharge is] this* etc. (Lev 15:3). From here they taught: If a woman sees [a fleck of] blood like a grain of mustard and says, Who sees [me]? There is nothing to it! If she disregards the matter three times, and [lies] with a man up to five times [i.e. in every one of the five seasons following intercourse and immersion], transgressing what is written in the Torah, *If a man lies with a woman [and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening]* (Lev 15:18), she will make a *zavah* of herself on account of having been [i.e. had sexual intercourse in the state of] a *zavah*.[83]

80 Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 273. *Adderet Eliyahu* 73c reads זבה טומאתה חמורה מנידה.

81 On this *maʿaseh* see section 7.2.

82 The entire speech is found in an appendix to this chapter. Characteristic for these statements is the use of conditional structures or casuistic formulations. One cluster stems entirely from another work of rabbinic literature, *Derekh Erets Rabbah*, a minor tractate of the Babylonian Talmud.

83 This rather unclear last passage has, according to Friedmann its explanation in R. Akiba's words

> *When a woman has a discharge of blood [that is her regular discharge from her body (בבשרה)]* etc. (Lev 15:19). What does Scripture teach with *from her body*? It teaches that she defiles [both if the flow comes] from inside or from outside. R. Ishmael says, This passage is taken out of the general rule concerning transgression[84] and uttered but to directly teach that the daughters of Israel [when they have an abnormal discharge defile just] like men with an abnormal discharge. R. Meir says, This passage was uttered but for the sake of the command to be fruitful and multiply. For even if a man eats from every kind of food and drinks from every kind of drink, he is not pleased. Therefore it is stated in the Torah, *she shall be in her impurity for seven days* (ibid.). If she then repents, she will be immediately healed. If she does not, behold, she will remain in its power until the day of her death. For it is said, *If a woman has a discharge of blood [for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, for all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean.]* etc. (Lev 15:25).
>
> Blessed be the Omnipresent, blessed be He, who gave Israel the words of Torah so that they learn from the right conduct and they do not multiply their sins in the world. For whoever transgresses what is written in the Torah will be punished, as it is said, *Who has woe? Who has sorrow?* (Prov 23:29). ...
>
> Another interpretation, *Who has woe?* Those with flattering lips and a tongue that slanders (lit. "speaks great words"), those who are rude with everyone, those who are arrogant with everyone, the householders who do not keep away from robbery (*gezel*), and the man who is anguished by the [regulations concerning] the menstrual uncleanness of his wife. (ER 78, l. 12–ER 80, l. 1; ER 80, l. 16–18)

The final passage has a summarising function. It interprets Prov 23:29 in light of other verses as referring to wine abuse. In a closing last interpretation it is claimed that the verse refers to all those types of transgressions the rabbi has been talking about previously – i.e. arrogance, rudeness, cheating, and disregard of laws of family purity – both with the woman and with the proto-Karaite.

The narratological problem of an unclear closure, which has been mentioned previously, has in this case implications at the moment of deciding who is addressed by whom. In the other versions of the *maʿaseh* it clearly ends when the dialogue between the rabbi and the woman comes to an end, once the rabbi has realized why the young disciple of the wise has died. Here, the dialogue with the woman is followed by a what first appears

in mMik 8:3: "If a woman discharged semen on the third day she is clean. So R. Eleazar b. Azariah. R. Ishmael says: Sometimes there are four seasons and sometimes there are five and sometimes six. R. Akiba says: They are always five."

84 Translated not after Friedmann's emended text, חבירתה, but after the MS version, עבירה.

to be a turn taking in the conversation in the voice of the rabbi, but then turns out to be a monologue, a sort of homiletical appendix. This monologue can be understood as a) part of the dialogue with the widow and therefore also as part of the higher level dialogue with the proto-Karaite; as b) coming after the closed dialogue with the widow and addressed just at the proto-Karaite and the extradiegetical audience (at the same time the intended audience of the midrash as a whole), but not at the woman any more; or as c) following a closed dialogue both with the widow and the proto-Karaite and only addressed at the audience of the midrash as a whole. In the first two cases the narrative frame would enclose a homiletical segment, in the third, it would be an example of the usual discursive mode in which the midrashist addresses his audience directly.

Almost the same micro-structure is applied seven times in the chapter to discuss the precepts of a) the washing of the hands and b) the ritual slaughter by cutting an animal's throat; the prohibitions concerning c) the eating human blood or d) the fat of animals, e) the cheating of another human being, f) incestuous relations and g) intercourse with someone who suffers from gonorrhoea or has her period. With the exception of slaughtering, all the issues pertain to domestic or private life. As has been shown, the rabbi does not deal with every topic to an equal extent or with the same rhetorical, narratological, and hermeneutic resources. The order of the topics seems to respond to a scheme, according to which the last question finds with the story of the widow the rabbi met personally a more detailed treatment than the rest of the topics. This would probably have ensured the attention of the intended audience.

6.4 *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, Chapter (13) 14

A special case of first person narrative dealing with a man who has *neither* knowledge of Scripture nor of Mishnah is that found in chapter (13) 14 as one of a series of *maʿasim*:

> Furthermore it happened to a man who regretted not having read Scripture nor recited Mishnah that once, as he and I were standing in the synagogue when the reader before the chest reached the Sanctification of the Name, he raised his voice and answered loudly to the Sanctification of the Name. They said to him, Why do you raise your voice [like this]? He answered, Is it not enough that I did not read Scripture nor recited Mishnah? And now that I am given the chance, should I not raise my voice and let my soul be bent [in distress instead]? They said: Not one year went by, not a second, and not a third before that man went up from Babylonia to the Land of Israel. They made him deputy of the emperor and he was appointed over all the castles in the Land of Israel. They gave him a place and he built for himself a city and dwelt there all of his life and left it his sons and his children's children till the end of all generations. (ER 66, l. 9–17)

This narrative does not belong to the group of standard first person texts, nor does it deal with a strictly scripturalist antagonist, but is a good example of *Seder Eliyahu*'s tolerant attitude towards the unlearned but morally upright, towards those ready to accept what Lennart Lehmhaus calls "minimal Judaism."[85] A man unlearned in Scripture and Mishnah seizes the occasion to give his soul relief, compensating for his ignorance by responding loudly to the Sanctus. His intention, rather than his behaviour, is what the narrative rewards by having him prosper socially. This would be an example of that "sympathetic and inclusive attitude" Lehmhaus observes in certain strategies in *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* for dealing with non-rabbinic others which "may point to a closer engagement with broader Jewish society."[86]

Unlike the *maʿaseh* of the man who dies young, in this case the first person narrator does not interact verbally with anyone, but just *witnesses* events worthy of being told as an exemplary narrative. Compared with the other *maʿasim* of the series of which this one is an item it one could be perceived as more authoritative than the rest precisely due to the fact that he it is told by an eye witness.[87]

6.5 Conversational narratives

As has been shown, apart from the narrative frame – which though short and sparse in content is insofar relevant as it presents the passages previously analysed in terms of first person narratives (or in Genettian terms as autodiegetic narratives[88]) – most of the textual substance of these narratives is made up of dialogue. Moreover, it is not conversations between friends that are depicted, but rather academic disputes on specific matters of law, exegesis, and ethics between unrelated opponents who master a highly specialized (and often elliptical) language. Even though it has been claimed that the scene-like character of the narratives lends them "the dramatic force of living voices"[89] and that they

[85] Also Max Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 26, endorses this idea when he suggests that "[s]ingle verses of the Bible or a single *halakah* are designated as Torah" in *Seder Eliyahu*, adducing as example a passage describing one "who possesses neither Bible nor Mishnah but just reads one verse (Gen 36:22) all day" [EZ 175, l. 1] as having Torah as his reward."

[86] Lehmhaus,"'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 237.

[87] A parallel is found in BemR 4:20, which also contains the *maʿaseh* preceding this one. Since BemR is usually dated to a later period than *Seder Eliyahu* it could be assumed that it used *Seder Eliyahu* as its source for a passage that is not known elsewhere in rabbinic literature, a fact which is also suggested by both *maʿasim* being introduced with the words "Eliyahu says..." Once told the *maʿaseh* of the unlearned man who is rewarded with honour and prosperity, which in BemR is incidentally not told in the first, but in the third person, is interpreted with the words: "From here you learn that a man does not behave proudly before the Omnipresent for whoever is proud humiliates himself, and so it [Scripture] says, *for those who honour me I will honour, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt* etc. (1 Sam 2:30)"

[88] The narrator is at the same time the protagonist of the narrative.

[89] Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 21.

resemble "a dramatic performance on stage,"[90] especially when compared to the monological homiletical context in which they are embedded, an average modern reader would not necessarily derive liveliness and dramatic potential from such schematic and standardised dialogues.

Even if in the dialogues there is no intervention of the first person narrator in the form of a commentary *on* the narrative, the short narrative preamble in the first person endows them with a meaning that would be not there were the dialogues were presented "unframed." The fact that the author of *Seder Eliyahu* chooses to let this narrator persona introduce a debate with a proto-Karaite not in the third but in the first person lends the whole encompassed dispute the air of a personal testimony on an antagonism, even if the clues as to a possible actual historical setting are almost completely effaced and the reader only knows that these conversations took place as the narrating rabbi, explicitly identified as such only by his opponent, was "once travelling from one place to another." These debates tell of a personal encounter, that is necessarily "more" powerful as evidence and therefore a more efficient warning example for the reader than an anecdote on some similar event in someone else's life.[91] These narratives are told from the perspective of the first person narrator, i.e. the point of view is both external and internal with respect to the narrated world or diegesis,[92] whereby the perspective's ideological facet clearly predominates.[93] It is worth noting that in this context perspective or focalization has nothing to do with access to characters' consciousness.[94]

Some observations on aspects concerning speech representation in these texts need to be made. First of all, it can be ascertained that although indirect discourse is occasionally present, as a rule *Seder Eliyahu* opts for direct discourse when it comes to the representation of speech and thought in the discussed narratives. This choice can be viewed as a stylistic option contributing to the narratives' authenticity and authority.[95] Direct discourse is used for the representation of speech by: a) individual human characters of the first and second level narratives (rabbi, proto-Karaite respectively widow in

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90 Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 237.

91 According to Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 237, the first-person perspective "lends to the dialogues the effect of a personal, authentic report."

92 See Monika Fludernik, *An Introduction to Narratology* (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), 36–37.

93 See Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 82–83.

94 On the problem of applying the notion of focalization to the narratives of *Seder Eliyahu* see p. 72 and 253.

95 See Brownen Thomas, "Dialogue," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 80. The explicit naming of the cognitive process behind the hermeneutic resource, e.g. the *qal wa-chomer*-inference ("It is an argument *a minori ad majus*" etc.), could be said to represent what Thomas calls a "fluid boundary between speech and thought." (p. 82).

maʿaseh, public crier in *mashal* etc.), but also for the hypothetical or unspoken thoughts the rabbi attributes to others;[96] b) the sages as collective human characters – alledged sages' words or Mishnah quotations are thus introduced with formulas that contain either verbs of speech or equivalent ones, such as "from here they taught (lit. "said") or "the sages taught (lit. "repeated", "recited") in a mishnah"; and c) the personification "Scripture" and God among the super-natural characters. Scriptural quotations are stylized as speech and introduced with formulas whose subject is the personified text of Scripture ("and it [Scripture] says"), God ("then He explicitly stated in the traditional writings"), and the impersonal "it" ("for it is said").

The embedded meshalim, on the other hand, do make use of indirect discourse (e.g. "When the king is daily visited by the servant and his children he puts all other matters aside and *praises* the servant for the education of the children" etc.) and of what could be designated as "diegetic summary," i.e. "the bare report that a speech act has occurred, without any specification of what was said or how it was said,"[97] for example in the cases where the communication between a king and his children or servants is referred to as taking place by means of an edict or open letter, of whose contents or style the reader is not informed.

Concerning the use of so called "speech tags," text generally preceding the direct discourse which helps the reader identify who is speaking and/or in what manner, context, etc., it appears to be the rule in the discussed narratives that they consist of simple inquit phrases, i.e. a verb-form and a preposition inflected to fulfil an indirect-object function; if literally translated they would always read "he said to me" or "I said to him." In some cases, though, even these short indications are missing, which might have been intended.[98] No indication as to the manner in which the words are spoken is given. An exception to this rule might be the expression בדרך מצות ("polemically") found in the Venice print for EZ 171, l. 16 instead of בדרך מינות ("the way heretics do") of the Vatican MS as qualifying the general manner of approach by the proto-Karaite. Both expres-

96 In these narratives thought is represented less often than speech. However, in the following two cases of casuistic formulations it is probably thoughts that are represented as speech by the text in italics: "If a man sees an involuntary pollution, he is bound according to the Torah to [immerse himself in] a ritual bath. *If he says, Who sees me? There is nothing to it!*" "If a woman sees [a fleck of] blood like a grain of mustard and says, *Who sees [me]? There is nothing to it!*" Also the expression כדי שלא יאמר אדם לעצמו ("lest a man think [lit. "say"] by/within himself") might be understood as referring to a non-verbalized thought, as in: "Lest a man think the fat of an animal which is offered as a sacrifice to the Lord is prohibited, but the fat of an animal which is not offered as a sacrifice to the Lord is permitted, Scripture then again elsewhere explicitly states …"

97 Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 110.

98 For instance the passage in chapter 2 of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* dealing with liturgical practices has only for the first questions explicit speech tags with an introductory verb of speech. In my translation, however, I add the missing speech tags between square brackets, a usual practice at the time of translating not only rabbinic texts which facilitates for the reader the identification of the dialogue partners.

sions would be examples of a collective speech tag, i.e. one that describes all of the man's interventions in the dialogue.

Another interesting aspect of these conversations is the occasional instances of explicit self-reference they contain. The rabbi refers for example to his own words in previous sections of a dialogue, by reminding his partner that he has already expressed an idea but repeating it anyway in the same wording, e.g. "I said to him, Is this not like the first line of thought, which I presented to you at the beginning? We have many things, many of them of grave import, which Scripture did not deem necessary to mention…" Also the opponent reminds the rabbi of what he has already said when he states "The answer with which you replied to me is the [same] line of thought I first expressed before you: it is based on tradition," even though in this case there is no previous mention of this notion in the text.

Apart from the informal forms of address ("rabbi," "my son," "my daughter"), forms which certainly establish hierarchies, the language the interlocutors use in the direct discourse itself is in general terms very similar, both use the same kind of Hebrew reminiscent of biblical Hebrew the narrator and midrashist himself uses, both can quote Scripture, both can tell stories. There are, however, characteristic phrases, so called catchphrases, with which the reader is made aware of who is talking, and which can also emphasize the authenticity of speech representation.[99] For instance, the rabbi addresses the questioner repeatedly with "my son," the woman of the *maʿaseh* with "my daughter," several times his reaction to a statement by the proto-Karaite is condensed in the phrase מה ראיתה ("how do you reason?," lit. "what have you seen?"); while only the voice of the questioner speaks "Mishnah was not given us from Sinai," it is only the rabbi who quotes the Mishnah or an alleged saying of the sages introduced with the phrase *mi-kan amru* or draws an inference introducing it with the hermeneutic expression *qal wa-chomer* .

The way turns at talk are distributed in these dialogues emphasizes the idea that the author did not aim at a realistic depiction of debates between equals, but that his goal was rather to transmit a didactic message stylized as dialogues, which actually conceal short monologues in the voice of the rabbi. Rather than engaging in an authentic debate, the proto-Karaite is given here the role of a prompter, who provides the rabbi with cues for him to deliver short or longer sermons on issues which, from a rabbinic point of view, were crucial tenets of Judaism, but who never (or with very rare exceptions) objects to the answers he gets.[100] As was noted previously, the first person narratives, not just these with a proto-Karaite as interlocutor, but also those with other types of non-rabbinic "others," aim not at depicting "complete," authentic characters, but rather construct the rabbi and those with whom he interacts as mouthpieces for concepts (or

99 Thomas, "Dialogue," 80.

100 In one case the proto-Karaite replies to the answer he gets from the rabbi to his question pertaining to the *gezel shel ach*, telling a *maʿaseh* himself. This second-level narrative is used by the rabbi as yet another prompting cue which he interprets as confirming his own argument.

ideological frameworks), and it is always the rabbi who evidently has the final say.[101]

That the latter is the wiser and probably older of the two can be inferred from the word with which he is always addressed, "rabbi." Otherwise little information on the anonymous characters' life is provided in the narrative frame and the dialogues, no names, details about their physical appearance, situation in life (occupation, family etc.) are given. The reader is primarily acquainted with their opinions on the issues they discuss and their corresponding affiliation to different (opposed) groups within Judaism. The *maʿasim* are the exception: In the one told by the questioner on how he cheated on a gentile the reader learns that the former earns his living at least partly from selling oil. The woman in the *maʿaseh* is also an exception due to the fact that she is precisely questioned regarding her private life. In her case, not only are details about her life as a married woman given. After becoming a widow her emotions are also depicted. She is even represented as almost on the brink of insanity by having her utter litany-wise the same question time and again.

An important aspect of the "conversational style" of these narratives should also be addressed, which has to do with the rabbinic sources that are so frequently alluded to. These sources the author seems to make free use of are generally either not correctly identified or not identified at all. Instead of referring to *Mekhilta* as the source of a certain passage, the rabbi introduces it as a saying of the sages and as having been recorded "in a mishnah." The passages of the Babylonian Talmud alluded to are simply not identified as talmudic traditions, for example by introducing them in the name of the rabbi to whom they are attributed in the Talmud. Concerning this manner of the rabbi of dealing with his (the author's) sources, Bacher observes that it is clear evidence of the oral medium in which the work seems to have emerged:

> übrigens zeigt sich diese Ungenauigkeit im Citiren im ganzen Werke und beweist, daß dasselbe aus wirklichen an verschiedenen Orten ohne Anwendung literarischer Hilfsmittel gehaltenen Vorträgen entstanden ist, wie es auch in der Sprache viel Rhetorisches bekundet.[102]

Bacher's observation might be correct, but it might as well have been an intended stylistic choice of the author, who opted for a rather loose manner of citation of rabbinic sources, on the one hand by adapting them to the needs of the new context of his work, on the

[101] Brownen Thomas, "Dialogue," 85, draws attention to the fact that stylistic approaches to the study of dialogue have demonstrated "the value of analyzing verbal interactions as mini social systems rather than individual sentences thrown together." Lennart Lehmhaus Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 236, suggests that *Seder Eliyahu* constructs "typological figures who serve as a foil to the rabbinic protagonist."

[102] Bacher, "Antikaräisches": 271. ("Incidentally the whole work shows this inaccuracy in the quotation praxis, demonstrating that it was composed out of real expositions delivered in several places without the help of literary resources, which fact the rhetorics of the language amply manifests.")

other by intending to represent a want of precision found rather in conversations than in written sources.

Finally, the problem of narrative levels can at least be briefly discussed. As has already been explained, the first person narratives in *Seder Eliyahu* are always embedded in or framed by a so called homiletical discourse – it could be objected that chapter 2 of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, a case in which the whole chapter consists of a first person narrative, is an exception. A short narrative introduction precedes the core of these narratives which consists of direct speech. Embedded within these direct speech-sections 2nd level (meta-diegetic) narratives such as *maʿasim* or *meshalim* are told by characters of the first level narrative. These meta-diegetic narratives themselves can contain dialogue. The complex interplay of discursive and narrative levels *Seder Eliyahu* makes use of could be outlined as follows (L = level of discourse):

- L 1: homiletical discourse = direct speech at L 1; voice: midrashist; addressee: extra-textual audience

- L 2 (embedded in L 1): 1st level narrative or diegesis = first person narratives (consisting of direct speech by the rabbi and dialogue between rabbi and proto-Karaite); voice: extradiegetical narrator; addressee: extra-textual audience as ex-tradiegetic narratee;

- L 3 (embedded in L 2): 2nd level narrative or metadiegesis: *maʿaseh* etc. (consisting of narrative segment and dialogue between rabbi and interlocutor); voice: intra-diegetic narrator (rabbi or proto-Karaite); addressee: intra-diegetic narratee (rabbi or proto-Karaite) and extra-textual audience

- Level 4 (embedded in L 3): 3rd level narrative or meta-metadiegesis: widow's recollection of previous life (including dialogue between widow and dead husband); voice: intra-intradiegetic narrator (widow); addressee: intra-intradiegetic narratee (rabbi), proto-Karaite questioner, and extra-textual audience

The extra-textual audience is clearly addressed in all levels. As was stated previously it is not always clear when the character of an embedded narrative ceases to be the main addressee of a passage.

6.6 Conclusion

According to the typology presented in chapter 4, the passages discussed in this one constitute, with the exception of the last one, a sub-group among the so characteristic first

person narratives of *Seder Eliyahu*.[103] The main distinctive feature of this sub-group is the presence of an antagonistic interlocutor that has been designated as a "proto-Karaite."

For every narrative both those aspects that appear as indications that the character is constructed as representing proto-karaitic ideas and those that do *not* seem to support this assumption have been discussed. It was also pointed out that even if some of the arguments posed by the rabbi's antagonist do not address typically polemical issues in the later Rabbanite-Karaite debate,[104] they still might contain subtle responses of Rabbinic Judaism to real or potential attacks from anti-rabbinic positions, including an incipient Karaism.

Be this as it may, the utter certainty with which Bacher and even more so Zucker stated that *Seder Eliyahu* responds to Karaism is not consistently supported in the discussed texts.[105] Furthermore, considering the mention of the work and its structure in the *Responsa* of Natronai Gaon (860) as a *terminus ante quem* for the composition of *Seder Eliyahu*, it appears as unlikely that the work could have reacted to a movement scholarship for some time now assumes to have crystallized only in the tenth century.[106]

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[103] Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 236, n. 18, points out that almost half of the first person narratives in post-tannaitic literature (18 out of 40) occur in *Seder Eliyahu*.

[104] E.g. the fifth question on the *gezel shel ach*, or, as Bacher suggested, most of the material in chapter (14) 15.

[105] The rabbi's opponent of chapter (15) 16 was also identified as a Christian by Chanock Albeck in his "Additions and Commentaries" to Leopold Zunz, *Ha-Derashot be-Yisrael: ve-hishtalshelutan ha-historit* (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1974), 56. Against this view Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Torah*, 205, n. 798, observed that it is not possible to interpret the passages concerning the eating of fat of an animal not killed to be sacrificed, the oppression of one's brother, sexual intercourse with a daughter or with a daughter's daughter, or that with a menstruant or a man with gonorrhoea in the context of debates between Jews and Christians. Louis Ginzberg, quoted in Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 275, n. 121, comments on this: "It is extremely unlikely that it refers to Christians, i.e., Judeo-Christians, who differed not only in questions of law from the rest of Israel. Anti-Pharisaic Sectaries never disappeared completely from among the Jews till they finally crystallized in Karaism."

[106] On the context in which Karaism emerged Astren, "Islamic contexts of medieval Karaism," 155, argues: "The new Karaite movement emerged at the end of the ninth and tenth centuries as a non-hybrid alternative to both Islam and rabbinic Judaism. As a revitalization movement within Judaism it offered meaning in a world fractured by the political dissolution of the caliphate, by the economic decline of Iraq and the East and by the demographic decline of Jewry as a consequence of Islamization. By locating itself in opposition to rabbinic institutionalization and halakhic particularity, Karaism was able to attract remnants from Jewish and other sectarian movements as well as those Judeo-Muslim "hybrids" who were unwilling to make the final commitment to Islam. However, this successful gathering together of disparate elements of Jewish Middle Eastern society brought with it a great variety of contradictory law and theology." See also Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia*, 88. Forty years ago Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature*, vol. 2 *Karaitica*, 4, would still argue for an earlier begin of Karaism proper: "As against Poznański's conclusion that only in the 10th century the Karaites began to take up their residence in Jerusalem, I have expressed the opinion (*Jews in*

Among the central tenets of what scholars regard as constitutive for early Karaism (i.e. of the late ninth and tenth centuries), as evidenced by Karaite literature, it is above all *scripturalism* as an aspect of anti-rabbinic ideology[107] that is explicitly emphasized in these passages of *Seder Eliyahu* – an aspect which, as Robert Brody explains, remained a "central source of contention" later on between Karaites and Rabbanites.[108]

Other distinctive features of early Karaism are, if at all, only alluded to in an indirect or subtle manner in scattered passages of *Seder Eliyahu*, not just in the first person narratives: There is reference e.g. to dietary laws prohibiting the consumption of meat in Jerusalem,[109] the return to Palestine and to Jerusalem in particular,[110] ascetiscim,[111]

Egypt, I, 60) that Karaism had found a foothold there in the first half of the 9th century, an opinion that can now be strengthened by further new evidence."

107 See on this issue Astren, "Islamic contexts of medieval Karaism," 145. Following Haggai Ben-Shammai, "The Karaite Controversy: Scripture and Tradition in Early Karaism," in *Religionsgespräche im Mittelalter*, ed. B. Lewis, and F. Niewöhner (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992), 22–23, and Ofra Tirosh-Becker, "The use of rabbinic sources in Karaite Writings," in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to its History and Literary Sources*, ed. Meira Polliack [Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2003], 319–338, Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 247, n. 52, argues that recent scholarship has questioned Karaism's adherence to pure Scripturalism and even suggested the use of rabbinic traditions in Karaite literature. The midrash *Sifre Zuta on Deuteronomy* for example is preserved mainly in quotations in the commentary to Deuteronomy by the Karaite Jeshua ben Jehuda (eleventh cent.). See Menahem I. Kahana, *Sifre Zuta on Deuteronomy: Citations from a New Tannaitic Midrash* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002) (Hebr.).

108 See Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia*, 92. Ben-Shammai, " The Karaite Controversy," 19, refers to a responsum by Natronai Gaon in which the author distinguishes between heretics who reject both the Written and the Oral Torah and those who reject only the Oral Torah, without identifying the latter with followers of ʿAnan. He concludes that Natronai could have been "referring to scripturalists who were active in the middle of the ninth century and may thus be forerunners of the Karaism of Daniel al-Qūmisī."

109 See Zucker, *Rav Saadya Gaon's Translation of the Torah*, 216, whose version of ER 133 reads יטול אדם בשר מעט ויין מעט. According to the sources adduced by Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 65–66, 71–72, Karaites consumed meat in Ramla in the eleventh century and appeared to have permitted it later on (thirteenth century) even in Jerusalem.

110 See Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 5. As previously pointed out (see n. 6.2), the rabbi's apparent justification of the present exile of Israel in answer to the fourth question of chapter (14) 15 might indeed be viewed as a reaction to Karaites' Palestino-centrism and rejection of Diaspora Judaism. Astren, "Islamic contexts of medieval Karaism," 160, claims that "Palestino-centrism situated the Karaites in diametric opposition to the rabbis, by taking hold of the center while objecting to the diaspora, which was characterized as increasingly corrupt and was led by diasporically-committed rabbinic leaders." Moreover, he sees Scripturalism and Palestino-centrism as related phenomena. See ibid., 158.

111 According to Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 55, the "joys of life of the Rabbanites" were repudiated by Karaites. As was observed previously, Moshe Zucker understands the rabbi's reaction to the first question by his interlocutor in chapter (14) 15 as a reaction to the ascetic way of life the Karaites adhered to. See Astren, "Islamic contexts of medieval Karaism," 145.

messianism,[112] as well as the rejection of anthropomorphism of aggadic literature,[113] and of rabbinic prayers and liturgy.[114] Given therefore that a probable response to Karaism can only be reconstructed from scattered passages, which might be allusions, but cannot with certainty be interpreted as actual responses to a challenge from without, the use of the expression *proto-Karaite* throughout this chapter seems justified.[115] An alternative would be to designate this character as an "unlearned other," the way Lennart Lehmhaus does in his contribution on three dialogues of the *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.[116] The interlocutors of the narratives Lehmhaus analyzes and those previously discussed in this chapter are certainly non-rabbinic "others" in the sense that they stand for an anti-rabbinic ideology (or ideologies). But are they actually depicted as unlearned or rather as laconic challengers refusing to accept the position the rabbi represents?

One of the several proto-Karaitic known phenomena which would coalesce into Karaism in the tenth century has been identified as that consisting of anti-traditionalists or anti-rabbinic scripturalists accused by Ben Baboi in the ninth century and designated as *bene miqra* ("biblicists" or "scripturalists").[117] If *Seder Eliyahu* is understood as alluding to a historical counterpart with these dialogues in which men without Mishnah have their say, it could probably be claimed that such a proto-Karaitic group is meant. However, as Lehmhaus points out, recent scholarship not only in the field of Jewish Studies but also in literary studies and history has shown that texts of all ages can be understood as fruitful sources of information on the self-perception of their authors, on other cultural agents involved involved in their production, and on and the cultural context in which they emerged.[118]

Hence, rather than understanding these texts as authentic depictions of historical encounters or challenges from heretical movements (such as Karaism or even proto-karaitic Scripturalism),[119] they can be seen, as has been shown by Lehmhaus with respect to

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112 Astren, "Islamic contexts of medieval Karaism," 145.

113 See Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 50.

114 See Mann, *Texts and Studies*, 51.

115 See Astren, "Islamic contexts of medieval Karaism," 145: "In the Islamic Middle Ages through the late ninth century C.E., the antecedents and origins of medieval Karaism are known from sparse reports in Hebrew and Arabic texts. In this period one can only speak of "proto-Karaitic phenomena," that is, those Jewish individuals and movements that would later contribute to fully articulated Karaism after the late ninth century. The late ninth through the late tenth centuries witness the emergence of classical medieval Karaism in Palestine with its center at Jerusalem, and is marked by a literature that is specifically Karaite."

116 Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 237, designates the interlocutor of the second chapter of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* as "semi-learned."

117 See Astren, "Islamic contexts of medieval Karaism," 165–166; Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia*, 88.

118 See Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 233.

119 What Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 245–246, observes with respect to the terms *minim* and *minut*, the latter used in one of the discussed passages, the fact that they are umbrella-terms the rabbis use "to designate the non-rabbinic

Seder Eliyahu Zuta, as ideal representations from a rabbinic point of view of what such encounters could (i.e. should) look like, i.e. how the rabbinic author of *Seder Eliyahu* wished his readers to conceive of debates with potential non-rabbinic antagonists.[120] The goal these textual strategies pursue would be, again according to Lehmhaus, to address a broader audience within Jewish society by presenting an easygoing version or "condensed form" of rabbinic Judaism, "a less stringent and more appealing "minimal" Judaism."[121] Such a *Sitz im Leben* of the work as one of dissemination and popularization of rabbinic teachings might, however, not be as suitable *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, whose general style and hermeneutics are not in the least "minimalist," as it may be *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*.

6.7 Appendix: End of Chapter (15) 16

If a man makes much use of a vain and false language with his father and mother, with his wife and his children, [he will also do it] with the teacher who taught him Scripture and with the teacher who taught him Mishnah and wisdom, and with everyone else in the world; if a man increases his vain and false oaths with his father and mother, with his wife and his children, [he will also do it] with the teacher who taught him Scripture and with the teacher who taught him Mishnah and wisdom, and with everyone else in the world;[122] if a man behaves presumptuously with his father and mother, with his wife and his children, [he will also do it] with the teacher who taught him Scripture and with the teacher who taught him Mishnah and wisdom, and with everyone else in the world. If a man is rude with his father and mother, and with someone who is better than him, leprosy will appear on his body. If he then repents, it will be cured, if he does not, behold, he will remain in its power until the day of his death. If a man loves to cheat (גזל) and does it everywhere, leprosy will appear <on the warp> [123] and woop of his beautiful clothes. If he then repents, it will be cured, if he doesn't, they will take his clothes and burn them in front of him. If a poor man comes and stands at the doorway of a houselholder and says to him, Lend me a *kav* of wheat, a *kav* of barley or of dates, [and] he answers, By the [Temple] service, I do not have any wheat, barley [or dates], but does have them, leprosy will appear on the walls of his house.[124] If he then repents, it will be healed, if

otherness of a specific behavior or idea," rather than particular heresies, could be applied to the entire corpus of first person narratives, not just to those with men without Mishnah knowledge.

120 Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 233.

121 Lehmhaus, "'Were not understanding and knowledge given to you from Heaven?'": 235.

122 Friedmann omits the second clause in his text. See Maʾagarim.

123 Friedmann emends the MS reading, ושתי, with בשתי .

124 WayR 17:2 contains a parallel version of this last casuistic formulation: "*The possessions of their house will be carried away, dragged off on the day of God's wrath.* (Job 20:28) They will drag it out. When? In the day when the Holy One will stir up His wrath against the man concerned. How is this to happen? A man says to his friend, Lend me a *kav* of wheat, and the other says,

he doesn't his neighbours and the children of the city tear down the walls of his house until they bring it to the ground. As they carry his goods out they [will] say, Was not this the one who said, I do not have wheat, although he had? I do not have barley or dates, although he had? Blessed be the Omnipresent, blessed be He, who openly sanctifies His great name in the world. Therefore it [Scripture] says, *Because you have joined with Ahaziah[, the Lord will destroy what you have made.]* (2 Chron 20:37)

Concerning the fear-inspiring,[125] the proud, and the rude, it [Scripture] says, *For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous.* (Ps 37:17) Concerning those who devise evil, who devise plans, who spurn with their lips, and who make smooth their tongue, it [Scripture] says, *Let their way be dark and slippery* etc. (Ps 35:6) They who smite in secret, who openly profane the Name, who perverse [others] with their words, who create dissension, are destined to become like Qorach and his assembly, and concerning these it [Scripture] says, *[So they with all that belonged to them went down alive into Sheol;] the earth closed over them[, and they perished from the midst of the assembly]* etc. (Num 16:33). Concerning those who store up fruit, who lend on interest, who make the *ephah* small, and who unsettle the market, it [Scripture] says, *The Lord has sworn by the pride[of Jacob: Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.]* etc. (Amos 8:7)

The following do not leave (their possessions) to their children and if they leave (them) they will not leave (them) to their grandchildren: dice gamblers, those who lend on interest, raisers of small cattle, [those who make business out] of money that comes from overseas, and priests and Levites who borrow (in advance) on their portions. Concerning the heretics, the informers, the apostates, those who profane the Name, and the hypocrites, it [Scripture] says, *What is crooked cannot be made straight* (Eccl 1:15).

I have none; [or one asks for the loan of] a *kav* of barley, [and the other says,] I have none; [or one asks for] a *kav* of dates, and the other says, I have none; [or] a woman says to her friend, Lend me a sieve, and the other says, I have none; [or one says, Lend me] a sifter, and the other says, I have none. What does the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He causes leprosy to light on his house, and as he takes out his household effects, people see and say, Did he not say, I have none? They see how much wheat is here, how much barley and how many dates! Cursed is the house with such inmates. R. Isaac b. R. Eliezer comes to this from the interpretation of the following passage, *[if the disease is in the walls of the house is] with hollow streaks (שקערורות)* (Lev 14:37), a house sinks (שקע) on account of such cursed people. Therefore, Moses warned Israel saying to them, *When you come into the land of Canaan[, which I give you for a possession, and I put a leprous disease in a house in the land of your possession.]* (Lev 14:34). Quoted slightly modified after J. Israelstam, Slotki, J. J. , trans. *The Midrash Rabbah*, vol. 4, *Leviticus* (London: Soncino Press, 1951), 214–215.

[125] This passage (ER 77, l. 15–ER 78, l. 11) presents, with slight variants of word order and spelling, material from the second chapter of the talmudic minor tractate *Derekh Erets Rabbah*, entitled *Pereq Ha-Minim*, halakhot 2–7, 13–17. My translation of the passage of *Seder Eliyahu* is based on Marcus van Loopik, ed., *The Ways of the Sages and the Way of the World: The Minor Tractates of the Babylonian Talmud; Derekh ʾEretz Rabbah, Derekh ʾEretz Zuta, Pereq ha-Shalom* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991).

Concerning those who are insulted and do not insult, who hear themselves reviled and do not answer, who perform [the commandments] out of love, and who rejoice about their sufferings, it [Scripture] says, *But may your friends be like the sun as it rises in its might* (Judg 5:31). Concerning those who are despicable in their own eyes and contemptible to themselves, who humble their spirit, and who subdue their inclination, it [Scripture] says, *Thus says the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One[, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.]* (Isa 49:7) Concerning trustworthy men, who return things entrusted to their care, who return a lost article to its owner, and who keep hidden a secret, it [Scripture] says, *I will look with favour on the faithful in the land[, so that they may live with me; whoever walks in the way that is blameless shall minister to me]* (Ps 101:6). Concerning him who does the desires of his wife, who leads his children on the right path, who marries his young son before puberty, before he comes in the power of sin, it [Scripture] says, *You shall know that your tent is safe* etc. *You shall know that your descendants will be many* etc. (Job 5:24–25). Concerning one who marries the daughter of his sister, who loves his neighbours, who displays attachment to his relatives, and who lends a *selaʿ* to a poor man in the time of his need, it [Scripture] says, *Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer[; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.]* etc. (Isa 58:9)

If a man sees an involuntary pollution, he is bound according to the Torah to [immerse himself in] a ritual bath. If he says, Who sees me? There is nothing to it! If he disregards the matter three times, transgressing what is written in the Torah, *If a man has an emission of semen[, he shall bathe his whole body in water, and be unclean until the evening.]* etc. (Lev 15:16), in the end he will make a *zav* of himself on account of his ways, for it is said, *The Lord spoke [to Moses and Aaron, saying: Speak to the people of Israel and say to them:]* <etc.> *When any man has a discharge from his member[, his discharge makes him ceremonially unclean.]* (Lev 15:1–2) What does Scripture teach with *any man* (איש איש)? Just that both the man with regular discharge and the man who has an involuntary discharge during the night night are meant. If he then repents, he will be healed. If he does not, see, he will remain in its power until the day of his death. For it is said, *[The uncleanness of his discharge is] this* etc. (Lev 15:3). From here they taught: If a woman sees [a fleck of] blood like a grain of mustard and says, Who sees <me>? There is nothing to it! If she disregards the matter three times, and [lies] with a man up to five times [i.e. in every one of the five seasons following intercourse and immersion], transgressing what is written in the Torah, *If a man lies with a woman [and has an emission of semen, both of them shall bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening]* (Lev 15:18), she will make a *zavah* of herself on account of having been [i.e. had sexual intercourse in the state of] a *zavah*.[126] *When a woman has a discharge of*

[126] This rather unclear last passage has, according to Friedmann its explanation in R. Akiba's words

blood [that is her regular discharge from her body (בבשרה)] etc. (Lev 15:19). What does Scripture teach with *from her body?* It teaches that she defiles [both if the flow comes] from inside or from outside. R. Ishmael says, This passage is taken out of the general rule concerning transgression[127] and uttered but to directly teach that the daughters of Israel [when they have an abnormal discharge defile just] like men with an abnormal discharge. R. Meir says, This passage was uttered but for the sake of the command to be fruitful and multiply. For although a man eats from every kind of food and drinks from every kind of drink, he is not pleased. Therefore it is stated in the Torah, *she shall be in her impurity for seven days* (ibid.). If she then repents, she will be immediately healed. If she does not, see, she will remain in its power until the day of her death. For it is said, *If a woman has a discharge of blood [for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, for all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean.]* etc. (Lev 15:25)

Blessed be the Omnipresent, blessed be He, who gave Israel the words of Torah so that they learn from them right conduct and they do not multiply their sins in the world. For whoever transgresses what is written in the Torah will be punished, for it is said, *Who has woe? Who has sorrow?* (Prov 23:29). From here they taught: Whoever rises early and <stays up late[128]> over wine, it is a bad omen for him, for he uproots himself from the world with his own hand. Of him it [Scripture] says, *Moreover, wine is treacherous like the proud (יהיר) man* (Hab 2:5) But *yahir* means nothing but scrupulous and quick (מהירות), for it is said, *Do you see the man who is skilful (מהיר) in his work* etc. (Prov 22:29) From here they taught: A worker who receives a task from the householder is under the obligation to perform it as he [i.e. the houselholder] expects him to; if he does not do his will, it [Scripture] says of him, *Accursed is the one who is slack in doing the work of the Lord* etc. (Jer 48:10)

See, Scripture says, *The proud man is never at rest,*[129] *he enlarges his desire as the Sheol* etc. (Hab 2:5), for he eats and drinks <as if> the world had only been created for man to do in his view is good; *and like death he has never enough* (ibid.), like the angel of death, it is not in the nature of this one, even if he is given everything in the world, to be satisfied. Neither is it in the nature of whoever rises early and stays up late over wine to be satisfied. Of him it [Scripture] says, *The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked* (Prov 3:33). *He gathers for himself all nations and collects for himself all*

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in mMiq 8:3: "If a woman discharged semen on the third day she is clean. So R. Eleazar b. Azariah. R. Ishmael says: Sometimes there are four seasons and sometimes there are five and sometimes six. R. Akiba says: They are always five."

127 Translated not after Friedmann's emended text (חבירתה), but after the MS version, עבירה.

128 The MS reads ומשחיר, "to blacken, to become black," which Friedmann emends to ומעריב, "to be late, to do late in the day."

129 The MS conserves at this point a superfluous abbreviation וגו׳, which Friedmann puts in brackets.

peoples (Hab 2:5). Not all the nations and all the peoples themselves really, but rather because [of the way] he eats and drinks he adds his own problems to all the transgressions the peoples of the world do and does them himself. Therefore it is said, *He gathers for himself* (ibid.) And what is the subject of the following verse, *Shall not all these take up their taunt against him* etc. (Hab 2:6)? And not only this, but even more: he sits and destroys every work the hands of the Holy One, blessed be He, created from the moment the world was created up to this hour. Therefore it is said, *Who has woe? Who has sorrow?* (Prov 23:29) Another interpretation, *Who has woe?* Those with flattering lips and a tongue that slanders (lit. "speaks big words"), those who are rude with everyone, those who are arrogant with everyone, the householders who do not keep away from cheating, and the man who is anguished by the [regulations concerning] the menstrual uncleanness [of his wife] (lit. "her period of unclenness"). (ER 76, l. 3–ER 80, l. 18)

Chapter 7

Seder Eliyahu: Selected Late-Midrashic Women Stories

Feminist narratology has been defined as the branch of post-structural narratology that "systematically studies story and discourse with an eye to differences of gender."[1] Concerning its agenda Robyn Warhol stated that "[d]epending on the approach, the feminist narratologist may focus on the gender of authors, authorial (intended) audiences, actual readers, characters, narrators, and/or narratees."[2] The readings of women stories in this chapter will not be dealing with the gender of author or intended audience – we have to do with an androcentric textual system –, but primarily with characters and narrators; the readings could be said to be only partially guided by the principles of this theoretical framework with the aim of "producing gender-conscious readings of individual narrative texts"[3] in *Seder Eliyahu*.

Feminist or gendered readings of rabbinic texts have been increasingly *en vogue* since the 1970s.[4] This chapter does not intend to recover a specific female history or the silenced voice of women out of the texts, but rather to reflect on the narrative construction

1 Robyn Warhol , "Feminist narratology," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of narrative theory*, ed. David Hermann, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 161.

2 Warhol, "Feminist narratology," 161.

3 Warhol, "Feminist narratology," 161. On feminist and gendered narratology see the seminal article by Susan Lanser, "Toward a Feminist Narratology," *Style* 20, nr. 3 (1986): 341–363, as well as Lanser, "Sexing the Narrative: Propriety, Desire, and the Engendering of Narratology," *Narrative* 3 (1995): 85–94; Monika Fludernik, "The Genderization of Narrative," *Graat* 21 (1999): 153–175; Gaby Allrath and Marion Gymnich, "Gendered Narratology," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, ed. David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan (London: Routledge, 2005), 197–198; and Ruth Page, "Gender," in *The Cambridge companion to narrative*, ed. David Hermann (Cambrigde: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 189–191.

4 See the work of Judith Hauptman, Judith Baskin or Tal Ilan, to name but a few of the most prominent authors in the field. For an overview see Frederick Greenspahn, ed., *Women and Judaism: New Insights and Scholarship* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 41–87.

of a series of women in short narratives, on the textual contexts in which they appear, on their status as characters, on how or whether their speech is represented, and what their actions are, to reflect not only on what is narrated, but also on how it is narrated.[5]

Women are certainly not one of the main subjects in *Seder Eliyahu*, but time and again they seem to be the focus of the homiletical and narrative discourse. In this chapter I shall discuss narrative passages in which women are either the subject of the main narrator's (or other rabbinic male narrative voices), or in which it is women who at least apparently act and speak for themselves, in order to describe part of the narratological gender agenda of *Seder Eliyahu*. The result of these readings could be a preliminary typology of the work's women characters, subject matters, and contexts related to their gender, sexuality, and sex as narratologically meaningful elements.[6]

Before I turn to the readings themselves it can be anticipated that the women stories of *Seder Eliyahu* fall into two main groups which can be designated as "exegetical narratives" and "rabbinic narratives." The first ones are narratives about named biblical women, that is to say, they deal with passages of Scripture in which a woman plays a role (Deborah, Rachel); the second group comprises stories about nameless post-biblical characters acting in rabbinic times. The stories of the first group are, to a certain extent, known to everyone nowadays, those of the second not necessarily. A further usual distinction in rabbinic literature is that between married women and maidens; accordingly, the contexts in which they act or are discussed vary.

The expressions "exegetical" and "halakhic contexts" in what follows are simply designations used for descriptive purposes, loosely based on the co-text of the narrative (e.g. exegetical contexts consist of biblical quotations and their new narrativization) or on the issue the narrative in question purports to illustrate or expound on (halakhic contexts). The boundaries between these contexts are often more fluid than this working taxonomy might suggest. For all the narratives discussed in the following pages it holds true that, as in rabbinic literature in general, they are told not for their own sake, but to teach or edify, to interpret, or to illustrate, etc. Following the readings of the texts in *Seder Eliyahu*, in selected cases parallels from rabbinic literature will be discussed in order to highlight the specificity of *Seder Eliyahu*'s versions.

7.1 Halakhic Contexts I: The Daughter's Rival

The first chapter of Mishnah tractate *Yevamot* lists, following Lev 18:6–17, those women relatives whose marriage to the brother of a man that has died childless is prohibited

5 See Allrath and Gymnich, "Gendered Narratology," 197: "Rejecting a supposedly gender-neutral approach, feminist narratology emphasises that gender is a decisive aspect not only of the story but also of the discourse; that is to say, gender is important not only for the 'what' but also for the 'how' of narration."

6 See Lanser, "Sexing the Narrative," 90.

due to the degree of kinship. Women within these forbidden degrees exempt in their turn their co-wives (lit. "rivals"), i.e. the second wives, from the Levirate marriage and from the ceremony of the chalitsah.[7] Among these is the daughter, both the legitimate and the illegitimate, of the surviving brother, as the following *mishnah* states: "If a man's daughter, or any women within the forbidden degrees, was married to his brother, who had yet another wife, and [this brother] died, then as his daughter is exempt is her co-wife exempt." (mYev 1:2) The passage below, found in chapter 1 of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta* reports how in the days of R. Dosa b. Orkinas the prohibition regarding the daughter's rival came to be lifted, allegedly in his own name:[8]

> In the days of R. Dosa b. Orkinas, the daughter's rival (צרת הבת) <came to be permitted>[9] to the brothers. The ruling (lit. "the word," "the thing") was [a] very difficult [issue] for the sages because R. Dosa was a great sage and a great scholar, but then his eyes had grown dim, which prevented him from attending the academy. They said, Who will go and inform him? R. Joshua b. Chananiah answered them, I shall go. And who after him? R. Eleazar b. Azariah. And who after him? R. Aqiba. They went and sat before the house entrance. His maid entered [the house] and said to him, Rabbi, the sages of Israel have come to you. He answered her, Let them come in. When they had come in he took hold of R. Joshua b. chananiah and had him sit on a golden couch. He said to him, Rabbi, if you ask (lit. "speak to") another disciple he will [also] sit. He asked, Who is he? He answered: R. Eleazar b. Azariah. And he said, Does our colleague Azariah have a son? Concerning him he read the following verse, *I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken [or their children begging bread.]* etc. (Ps 37:25) He said to him, Rabbi, if you ask (lit. "speak to") your other disciple he will [also] sit. [He asked,] And who is this? He answered, R. Aqiba. He said to him, Are you Aqiba the interpreter [of Scripture] whose name has gone over the entire world? Sit, my son, sit. Let there be many like you in Israel. Concerning him he read the following verse, *The young lions suffer want and hunger, but those who seek the Lord (ודורשי ה׳) lack no good thing.* (Ps 34:11) They began to consult him with respect to (lit. "surround him with") halakhot until they came to the [issue of the] daughter's rival. When they came to the daughter's rival, they said to him, Our master, what [ruling applies to] the daughter's rival? He said to them, With respect to this issue there is a controversy between the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel. [They said,] But the Halakhah is according to whose words? [He answered,] According to the School of Hillel. [They replied,] Has it not been said in your name that the daughter's rival is permitted [to marry the

7 For an overview on the institution of levirate in Judaism see Dvora E. Weisberg, *Levirate marriage and the family in ancient Judaism* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2009), 23–44.

8 The same story is told with minimal variants in bYev 16a.

9 Friedmann emends the MS reading הותרו with הותרה.

> brothers]?[10] He said to them, My teachers, have you heard [this in the name of] "Dosa" or [of] "ben Horkinos"? They answered him, By the life of our teacher, we heard it anonymously. He said to them, I have a younger brother, first-born of Satan [though], whose name is Jonathan and who is one of the disciples of the School of Shammai. Be careful, or else he will overwhelm you on questions of Halakhah, telling you that the daughter's rival is permitted. But I call heaven and earth to witness that upon this mortar[-shaped seat] the prophet Haggai sat and uttered [the following] three rulings: the daughter's rival is forbidden; Ammon and Moab give the tithe of the poor in the seventh year; and we may accept proselytes from the Cordyenians and the Tadmorites. When they came in they did it through one door. When they went out they did it through three doors. R. Aqiba met him [Jonathan]. He said to him, Are you Aqiba b. Joseph whose name has gone over the entire world? By the [Temple] service, you are not even an oxherd. He replied, I beg of you, not even a shepherd [am I]. (ER 168, l. 13–ER 169, l. 12)

The alleged attribution of a ruling pertaining to the "daughter's rival" to R. Dosa ben Orkinas, a Tanna who lived by the end of the first and the beginning of the second century C.E.,[11] poses a serious problem for the sages; out of their respect for the old master, prevented as he is from attending the Academy due to his failing eyes,[12] they see the need to inform him of the situation (or confront him with it). They discuss who is to approach him, R. Joshua b. Chananiah being the first sage to declare his willingness to attempt to tackle such a delicate task. The sages think it necessary for him to have a companion to back him up and name R. Eleazar b. Azariah, who is in turn to be backed by R. Aqiba. The three Tannaim go to R. Dosa b. Orkinas' house and sit at his door. His maid announces the three sages as "the sages of Israel" and R. Dosa b. Orkinas lets them come inside. Once in his presence the old sage takes hold of R. Joshua and seats him on a golden couch, while the other two are left standing. Joshua suggests that R. Dosa ask another disciple to sit, to which the old sage asks who this should be. Joshua names R. Eleazar b. Azariah. R. Dosa comments on the fact that "our colleague Azariah" has a son, quoting Ps 37:25 as referring to father and son. R. Joshua suggests yet again that R. Dosa invites another disciple to sit, R. Dosa asks after the disciple's name and R. Aqiba is introduced. R. Dosa addresses Aqiba directly asking him if he is the very Aqiba whose name is known in the entire world; this rhetorical question is left unanswered. R. Dosa

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10 The parallel in bYev 16a reads at this point: "It has been stated in your name that the halachah is in accordance with the ruling of the School of Shammai!"

11 See Shmuel Safrai, "Dosa ben Harkinas," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: MacMillan Reference, 2007), 5:760–761.

12 Dosa's blindness could be seen as a metaphor for his presumed misunderstanding of Halakhah, though blindness in rabbis appears to be a usual motif in rabbinic literature. Prof. Günter Stemberger in personal communication.

invites R. Aqiba to sit down, calling him "my son" and praising him, the like of whom may be plenty in Israel. As in the case of Eleazar, R. Dosa quotes a Bible verse as referring to Aqiba (Ps 34:11).

After this introductory preamble, the three sages are described as "surrounding" R. Dosa with questions of legal practice until they come to the issue that brings them to the old sage in the first place, the daughter's rival. The question as posed by the sages – it is not specified who speaks the words – reads simply: "what is [the ruling that applies regarding] the daughter's rival?" R. Dosa replies that it is a matter in dispute between the Schools of Shammai and Hillel, but that the Halakhah goes with the School of Hillel – whose ruling is, however, left unsaid. The younger sages argue that it has been said in R. Dosa's name that a man must marry his widowed daughter's rival or co-wife – even if his daughter herself is prohibited. The dialogue consists of short questions and answers in direct speech with few introductory formulae. The old sage asks if the others have heard this ruling quoted in the name of "Dosa" or of "ben Orkinas", to which the sages emphatically reply that they have heard the law anonymously quoted (סתם שמענו). R. Dosa explains that he has a younger brother, whose given name is Jonathan, whom he characterizes as the son of Satan and who is said to be a disciple of the School of Shammai. R. Dosa's language shows him playing with the rhyming words *katán*, *satán*, *yonatán*; he is keen nonetheless on warning the young sages from being misled by his brother in questions of Halakhah. To close his answer authoritatively R. Dosa states that the very prophet Haggai, sitting on the mortar-shaped seat they have now in front of them, delivered three rulings, the first of which is that the marriage between a man's widow and his brother is prohibited if the latter is the father of the dead man's other wife. Once they have heard this explanation the sages leave R. Dosa's house not together as they had entered it, but separately, and it is the R. Aqiba, the last to be addressed by R. Dosa, the one who happens to meet Jonathan while leaving. Also Jonathan identifies Aqiba as *the* famous Aqiba whose name is known all over the world, but then belittles him saying that he is not even an oxherd, to which Aqiba nonchalantly replies that he is not even a shepherd.

The immediate preceding co-text to the story of R. Dosa's brother Jonathan's perpetuation of a ruling not in accord with the Halakhah, but instead with the School of Shammai, is a short first person narrative in which the anonymous narrator argues that all the troubles that befall Israel are the result of their neglect of Torah study, a form of which the narrative on R. Dosa and his brother, an outsider, could be said to illustrate. In view of the fact that a brother of R. Dosa is known only in this passage and its parallel in bYev 16a, it could be argued that a fiction was created to cleanse the name of R. Dosa, a name that somehow, erroneously as this narrative argues, appears to have been stained.

Though not quite explicitly, what is discussed in the quoted passage is the invalidity of a practice "based on" Deut 25:5–10 which obliges a man (*levir*) to marry the wife of his deceased brother (*yevama*) if the latter dies childless in those cases where the widow is a

close relative of the brother and therefore forbidden to him.[13] According to mYev 1:1–2 also co-wives (or "rivals") of women in fifteen types of relationship to their late husband's brother[14] are exempted both from the levirate marriage and chalitsah ceremony. In *Seder Eliyahu* this is indeed only alluded to, the Mishnah is not quoted. The narrative continues a tendency already present in tractate *Yevamot* which can be seen with Dvora Weisberg as an attempt to "normalize" levirate marriage and alleviate the situation of the levirate widow as this is prescribed in Scripture.[15] This narrative has to do with Torah study, with renowned rabbis who discuss questions of legal practice and act for the sake of established practices, and with the idea that certain women should be regarded as regular widows (*almanot*, i.e. free to decide whom to marry) instead of as levirate widows (*yevamot*, i.e. bound to their brothers-in-law). Except for R. Dosa's maidservant, women themselves do not have a voice in the story, nor an active role on the diegetic or discursive levels. Women, wives, and co-wives, remain silent, powerless, nameless legal subjects.

The text does in a way reflect on the institution of the levirate, opting for the lenient position found in mYev 1 – the rabbis' intention appears to have been to reduce levirate marriage to a minimum of possible cases –, but it does not dwell on benefits or drawbacks of the institution for man or woman, nor on him or her as a social anomaly,[16] nor on specific cases of exempted widowed rivals.

7.2 Halakhic Contexts II: The Story of the White Days

In chapter (15) 16, within a first person narrative, the nameless rabbi of *Seder Eliyahu* tells his questioner a *maʿaseh*, to which I will refer in what follows as the story of the white days. The rabbi is himself a protagonist of this intradiegetical story in which he finds himself in a dialogue situation with a woman he briefly depicts as almost half-witted since the early death of her husband, a disciple of the wise.

The narration of the story of the white days is preceded by a series of questions the questioner poses to the rabbi:

> He said to me, [What is the] graver [transgression], [sexual intercourse

[13] See Weisberg, *Levirate marriage*, 61.

[14] These go back to the incest prohibitions in Lev 18 and 20.

[15] Weisberg, *Levirate marriage*, 123–166. Commenting on this passage Max Kadushin, *Organic Thinking: A Study in Rabbinic Thought* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1938), 103–104, points out that "[w]ith polygamy legitimate under rabbinic law – actually, however, not practiced – laws forbidding a man to marry two sisters and to marry *tsarat ha-bat*, prohibitions perhaps originating in "taboos," made for an improvement in the institution of the family."

[16] The levirate widow or *yevama* is, in the words of Dvora Weisberg, *Levirate marriage*, 123, "an anomaly, no longer married but not yet independent." She argues further, 125, "This irregular status may explain the anomalous position of the levirate widow, a woman who can be forced into a levirate union against her will but who dominates the ritual of halitza."

> with] a man with an abnormal discharge (זב) or [with] a woman who is menstruating (נידה)? I replied, My son, [sexual intercourse with] a woman who is menstruating is graver than [with] a man with an abnormal. He asked, Have we not learned the ritual immersion of the menstruating woman from that of the man with an abnormal discharge (טבילה לנידה אלא מן הזב)? I replied, My son, it is an argument *a minori ad majus*. If [with regard to] the man with an abnormal discharge, who is not fertile and cannot multiply, ten [times the mention of] uncleanness (טומאות) and seven [times] ritual immersions (טבילות) are required in the Torah[, how much more so with regard to the menstruating woman who is fruitful and can multiply]. Whoever says to his wife and sons and members of his household, Touch the vessels and do as you please, for the ritual immersion for the menstruating woman is not in the Torah, will never find contentment. (ER 75, l. 14–ER 76, l. 2)

The elliptical character of this dialogue presupposes a reader familiar with a number of rabbinic concepts: What is the meaning of זב (*zav*)? Of נידה (*niddah*)? By which hermeneutic rule is the ritual bath "learned," i.e. derived from the first and applied to the second?[17] What is meant by stating that ten times impurity requires seven baths in the Torah? Regarding what exactly should a man be warned who, convinced that the ritual bath for the *niddah* is not prescribed in the Torah, tells his wife and family that they might do as they please ? The rabbi states that sexual intercourse with a *zav*, i.e. with a man who has an abnormal, i.e. pathological, discharge from his member, is less grave an offense than sexual intercourse with a woman during her menstruation. This first answer poses itself further questions. With his next question the narrator's interlocutor argues that the ritual bath for the *niddah* is of secondary nature, stating that this is only learned, i.e. hermeneutically derived from that of the *zav*, the only one mentioned in Scripture (Lev 15). Therefore the latter must be considered the graver offence. With a *qal-wa-chomer* the rabbi brings his final answer to the posed query: if the word "impure" is used ten times in Lev 15:1–11 to refer to a man who because of his discharge cannot be fruitful and multiply, and seven times we read in Lev 15:5–12 that he should immerse himself to become pure again, the ritual bath for the woman, who can after (the impurity of) her menstruation be fruitful and multiply, is not only logical but has its origins in the Torah.

To illustrate this point the narrator tells his partner the story of the white days. Men with discharges are not even mentioned, the focus of the narrative is set on the punishment to be expected by those who fail to observe the *niddah* laws.

> It once happened that a man who read much Scripture, recited much Mishnah, that he went into his eternal abode in the middle of his years. His

[17] See Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 208, n. 28: "The question, according to Friedmann's n. 21, is whether the requirement that a woman at the end of her menses immerse is based on analogy with a man who suffers discharge from his member, or is based on an argument a fortiori."

wife, almost driven to madness, went around the doorways of her husband's colleagues saying to them, My masters, my husband read much Scripture, recited much Mishnah, why did he have to go to his eternal abode in the middle of his years? They would not reply to her. I was once going through the marketplace and walked into the courtyard of her dwelling. She came out, sat down in front of me, and wept. I asked her, My daughter, why are you crying? She answered, My husband read much Scripture, recited much Mishnah, why did he have to go to his eternal abode in the middle of his years? I asked her, My daughter, during the time of your impurity (בשעת נידה), how did he conduct himself with you? She replied, O Rabbi, he would say to me, Set aside all the days [of your period] that you see blood and wait [lit. "sit, be inactive") [still] seven clean days, so that you do not have any doubt [about your ritual purity]. <I said to her,>[18] My daughter, he spoke fairly to you. With regard both to men with an abnormal discharge and to women after a bleeding [other than menstruation] (בזבים וזבות), [with respect to women] after menstruation and after having given birth (נידות ויולדות) the sages taught that only after seven days are they considered ritually pure (טהורין) for their marital duties, for is said, *If she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count [seven days, and after that she shall be clean.]* etc. (Lev 15:28) During the white days (באותן הימים לבנים), how did he conduct himself with you? Did you perhaps anoint him with oil in your hand? Did he touch <you>[19] even [only] with his little finger? She answered, By your life, I would wash his feet and anoint them with oil. I would sleep with him in a bed but nothing else[20] would enter his head. I said to her, My daughter, blessed be the Omnipresent who does not favour one over another, since it is written in the Torah, *[You shall not approach] a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness.* <etc.> (Lev 18:19). You might think that he [a man] could embrace her [his wife] and kiss her and talk to her about frivolous matters, but then Scripture teaches, *You shall not approach* (Lev 18:19). You might think that she could sleep with him on the same bed with her clothes on, but then Scripture teaches, *You shall not approach* (Lev 18:19). Lest a man think (lit. "say to himself"), [As long as] her flesh is prohibited, so is her bed, [and lest,] when her menstruation has finished, he say (lit. "you say"), Her flesh is <prohibited, but her bed permitted>,[21] Scripture states explicitly in the traditional writings through Ezechiel, son of Buzi the priest, *he does not eat upon*[22] *the mountains or lift up his eyes [to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbour's wife or approach a woman during her menstrual pe-*

18 Friedmann emends MS reading, אמרה, with אמרתי.
19 Friedmann emends the MS reading ונגע בו with ונגע ביך.
20 On the phrase דבר אחר in this context see p. 77, n. 77.
21 Friedmann emends MS reading מוטר לבשרה ואסור למיטתו, with אסור לבשרה ומותר למיטתה.
22 MS reads על, MT אֶל.

> *riod]* etc. (Ezek 18:6) A *niddah* is comparable to the married woman. <You are warned> with respect to the *niddah* with all the capital punishments mentioned in the Torah. (ER 76, l. 3–24)

The story illustrates the dangers of not observing the white days as part of the time of separation between husband and wife, but it fails to prove that the ritual bath for the *niddah* is found in the Torah: the story does not mention the ritual bath but rather focuses on the concept of the seven additional days of physical distance a couple is to observe after the bleeding has stopped.

7.2.1 Parallel I: bShab 13a–b

The reading of our story can be complemented and enhanced from a comparative perspective by considering two parallels conserved in other rabbinic documents. bShab 13a–b expounds on the following mishnah:

> A tailor must not go out with his needle near nightfall, lest he forget and go out, nor a scribe with his quill; and one may not search his garments [for vermin, nor read by the light of a lamp]. In truth it was said, the hazzan may see where the children read, but he himself must not read. Similarly it was said, a zab must not dine together with a zabah, as it may lead to sin. (mShab 1:3)

Part of the last clause provides the context for the narration of the *maʿaseh* of *Seder Eliyahu*, which is quoted as source, although it is questionable whether the Talmud refers to a "work," as Harry Freedman's (Soncino) translation seems to suggest:

> [It is taught in the] Tanna debe Eliyahu: It once happened that a certain scholar who had studied much Bible and Mishnah and had served scholars much, yet died in middle age. His wife took his tefillin and carried them about in synagogues and complained to them, It is written in the Torah, *for that is thy life, and the length of thy days* (Deut 30:20): my husband, who read [Bible], learned [Mishnah], and served scholars much, why did he die in middle age? And no man could answer her. On one occasion I was a guest at her house, and she related the whole story to me. Said I to her, 'My daughter! How was he to thee in thy days of menstruation?' 'God forbid!' she rejoined; 'he did not touch me even with his little finger.' 'And how was he to thee in thy days of white [garments]?' 'He ate with me, drank with me and slept with me in bodily contact, and it did not occur to him to do other.' Said I to her, 'Blessed be the Omnipresent for slaying him, that He did not condone on account of the Torah! For lo! The Torah hath said, *And thou shalt not approach unto a woman as long as she is impure by her uncleanness.* (Lev 18:19) When R. Dimmi came, he said, It was a broad bed. In the West [Palestine] they said, R. Isaac b. Joseph said: An apron interposed between them. (bShab 13a–b)

When compared with the version of *Seder Eliyahu* several aspects of narrative in the Gemara stand out. First of all, the woman goes to synagogues and academies, i.e. the central institutions of rabbinic Judaism, to address her deceased husband colleagues. These settings are not mentioned in *Seder Eliyahu*. Moreover, she describes her husband's exemplarity not just mentioning that he studied Scripture and Mishnah, but also that he would wait on the sages, which elsewhere in *Seder Eliyahu* is very frequently mentioned practically as a constitutive element of rabbinic learning. Her complaint has another detail not present in *Seder Eliyahu*: she quotes a verse of Deuteronomy which refers to the hundred and twenty years Moses lived, which are seen as the ideal (today proverbial) age a man can reach. The dialogue itself is comparatively brief. The anonymous first person narrator who is a guest at the woman's house and is not addressed by her as rabbi[23] does not mention any examples of forbidden conduct such as the anointment with oil, but instead the woman herself describes the couple's habits during the days in question, eating and drinking being activities "required" by the talmudic context.

Within the discussion in bShab 13a of the prohibition of a *zav* and a *zavah* eating together on the Shabbat the question is posed whether a *niddah* may sleep with her husband if both are dressed. The answer consists of a series of statements by R. Joseph and R. Simeon b. Gamaliel which deal with food and with how impurity can be transmitted therewith. The situation of a couple sleeping in the same bed is in several steps compared to that of a single diner or companions at table where a dish of fowl and cheese have been served together:

> The scholars propounded: May a *niddah* sleep together with her husband, she in her garment and he in his? Said R. Joseph, Come and hear: A fowl may be served together with cheese at the [same] table, but not eaten [with it]: this is Beth Shammai's view. Beth Hillel rule: It may neither be served nor eaten [together]! There it is different, because there are no [separate] minds. It is reasonable too that where there are [separate] minds it is different, because the second clause teaches, R. Simeon b. Gamaliel said: Two boarders eating at the same table, one may eat meat and the other cheese, and we have no fear. But was it not stated thereon, R. Hanin b. Ammi said in Samuel's name: This was taught only when they do not know each other; but if they do, they are forbidden? And here too they know each other! How compare! There we have [separate] minds but no unusual feature; but here there are [separate] minds and an unusual feature.

Further on we read that to sleep next to a *niddah*, even if both she and the man lying next to her are in their clothes, is comparable to sleeping with the neighbour's wife, a situation which might lead to sin. In both the Talmud and *Seder Eliyahu* (in a passage following the story itself)[24] this comparison makes use of (different parts of) Ezek 18:6

[23] At least according to one MS version the rabbi is called Abba Eliah.
[24] See ER 76, l. 22–24.

as a proof-text:

> Come and hear: *And hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hat lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, neither hat defiled his neighbour's wife, neither hath come near to a woman who is a niddah* (Ezek 18:6): thus a woman who is a *niddah* is assimilated to his neighbour's wife: just as his neighbour's wife, he in his garment and she in hers is forbidden, so if his wife is a *niddah*, he in his garment and she in hers is forbidden. This proves it. (bShab 13a)

Only after the short segment with Ezek 18:6 does the Talmud turn to the story of the white days. Given its context the story deals with a double transgression of purity laws, that of Lev 18:19 in its extended rabbinic view and that of the commented mishnah.[25] The prohibition of sleeping in the same bed with a *niddah* is valid according to bShab 13 even in the case of a broad bed or if an object such as an apron is placed between man and woman, as suggested by the opinions of the two quoted rabbis, Rab Dimi und R. Isaak b. Joseph, which only apparently mitigate the transgression, do nothing but emphasize the warning.

7.2.2 Parallel II: ARN A, Chapter 2

The second chapter of *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A, an extra-canonical Talmud tractate which consists of a Gemara to Mishnah tractate *Avot*, applies the story of the white days to part of its interpretation of the fence around the words of Torah mentioned in mAv 1:1: "make a fence around the Torah," which "fence" is explained in terms of the time of separation to be observed by couples during the days of *niddah*.[26]

> There was once a certain man who had studied much Scripture and had studied much Mishnah and attended upon many scholars, who died in mid-

[25] In this context Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 15, points out: "Stories embedded in the BT should be considered in relation to talmudic halakha in general, as well as to the particular halakhot with which they are juxtaposed – which brings us back to the immediate literary context."

[26] See Jonathan Wyn Schofer, "Rabbinical Ethical Formation and the Formation of Rabbinic Ethical Compilations," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 319–323, and Schofer, "Protest or Pedagogy? Trivial Sin and Divine Justice in Rabbinic Narrative," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 74 (2003): 243–278. Schofer, (*The Making of a Sage: A Study in Rabbinic Ethics* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 74–81, esp. 76–78, argues that the rabbis interpret "the Torah" in "make a fence about the Torah" as "your words." The first chapters of *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* contain a discussion of "make a fence about your words" in which God, Adam, the Torah itself, Moses, Job, the prophets, the Writings, and finally the rabbis are represented as creators of fences.

> dle age. His wife took his tefillin and kept making the rounds of the synagogues and study houses, crying aloud and weeping. 'Masters,' she said to the sages, 'it is written in the[27] Torah, *For it is thy life and the length of thy days* (Deut 30:20). My husband studied much Scripture and studied much Mishnah and attended upon many scholars. Why did he die in middle age?' There was not a person who could answer her. One time she encountered Elijah, of blessed memory. 'My child,' he asked her, 'why art thou weeping and crying?' 'Master,' she answered him, 'my husband studied much Scripture and studied much Mishnah and attended upon many scholars, yet he died in middle age.' Said Elijah to her, 'During the first three days of thine impurity[28] how did he conduct himself in thy company?' 'Master,' she replied, 'he did not touch me, God forbid! even with his little finger. On the contrary, this is how he spoke to me: "'Touch nothing lest it become of doubtful purity."' 'During the last days [of thine impurity], how did he conduct himself in thy company?' 'Master,' she replied, 'I ate with him and drank with him and in my clothes slept with him in bed; his flesh touched mine but he had not thought of anything.' 'Blessed be God who killed him,' Elijah exclaimed; 'for thus it is written in the Torah, *Also thou shalt not approach unto a woman as long as she is impure by her uncleanness.*' (Lev 18:19)[29]

Each of the three versions of the story distinguishes between the first days, during which the woman menstruates, and the last days of rabbinically prescribed separation. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* uses a different, probably more explicit wording, stating a number of days of impurity: It is the very prophet Elijah who interrogates the widow distinguishing between "the first *three* days of your impurity" and "the last days."[30] During the first days her husband used to warn her not to touch anything to prevent objects from becoming of doubtful purity. During the last days – no further adjective modifies this noun – the woman would eat and drink with her husband ("I ate with him" etc.),[31] and even sleep on the same bed with *his* body touching hers (an explicit detail not present in the other versions). She argues that even if this was the case, her husband would not think of anything else.

This version is otherwise quite similar to that transmitted in bShab 13a, though it contains certain details not present there. Instead of a nameless rabbi the woman encounters the prophet Elijah, the setting of this encounter is not mentioned.[32] Moreover,

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27 According to another MS reading: "in your Torah."

28 MSS readings vary at this point.

29 Quoted after Judah Goldin, trans., *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1956), 16–17. For the Hebrew text see Hans-Jürgen Becker, ed., *Avot de-Rabbi Natan: Synoptische Edition beider Versionen* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 30–32.

30 A gloss on MS New York Rab. 1305 adds "white days."

31 See the Talmud passage where the grammatical subject is the husband.

32 *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A identifies the first person of the narrative in bShab 13a–b (or that of

the woman mentions that her husband's warning not to touch any object (*keli*), a motif that reminds both the warning that precedes the story in *Seder Eliyahu* and several verses of Lev 15, which describe the transmission of cultic impurity by means of objects or vessels.

7.2.3 The Scriptural Roots of the Rabbinic *Niddah*-Laws

The rabbi supports his argumentation with two scriptural verses from the context of the laws of *niddah* in Leviticus, where the passages in question deal with several aspects of the conduct with a woman during her menses. The first of these contexts, Leviticus 15, lists the ways a man can be rendered impure by being in contact with a woman whenever she has a bleeding or with objects she touches during this time:

> When a woman has a discharge of blood that is her regular discharge from her body, she shall be in her impurity for seven days, and whoever touches her shall be unclean until the evening. 20 Everything upon which she lies during her impurity shall be unclean; everything also upon which she sits shall be unclean. 21 Whoever touches her bed shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 22 Whoever touches anything upon which she sits shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening; 23 whether it is the bed or anything upon which she sits, when he touches it he shall be unclean until the evening. 24 If any man lies with her, and her impurity falls on him, he shall be unclean for seven days; and every bed on which he lies shall be unclean. 25 If a woman has a discharge of blood for many days, not at the time of her impurity, or if she has a discharge beyond the time of her impurity, for all the days of the discharge she shall continue in uncleanness; as in the days of her impurity, she shall be unclean. 26 Every bed on which she lies during all the days of her discharge shall be treated as the bed of her impurity; and everything on which she sits shall be unclean, as in the uncleanness of her impurity. 27 Whoever touches these things shall be unclean, and shall wash his clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening. 28 If she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count seven days, and after that she shall be clean. 29 On the eighth day she shall take two turtle-doves or two pigeons and bring them to the priest at the entrance of the tent of meeting. 30 The priest shall offer one for a sin-offering and the other for a burnt-offering; and the priest shall make atonement on her behalf before the Lord for her unclean discharge. (Lev 15:19–30)

This passage, as scholars have indicated, does not contain prohibitions, but it just describes how women and men become impure and regain their purity.

Seder Eliyahu) with the prophet Elijah, who was believed to appear to people and talk to them.

A clear prohibition is that of the verse from the second context, Lev 18:19, *You shall not approach a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness*, which is only partially quoted in *Seder Eliyahu*.

In her study on the conception and representation of menstruation in rabbinic and early Christian literature Charlotte Fonrobert lucidly explains a problem manifest in the text of *Seder Eliyahu*:

> The two *conceptual* contexts for biblical menstruation are, on the one hand, the priestly system of purity and impurity and, on the other, the lists of prohibited sexual relationships. Both contexts are conceptually independent from each other ... Lev. 15 is contingent on a specific social-institutional structure, the existence of the central Sanctuary, whereas Lev. 18 and 20, the lists of sexual taboos, are not.[33]

The *niddah*-contexts described by Fonrobert, that of the laws of ritual purity prescribed for the Temple cult found in Lev 15 and the sexual prohibitions of Lev 18 are not clearly distinguished in rabbinic literature. After the destruction of the Second Temple the purity laws became partly obsolete[34] given that the physical context itself was cancelled.[35] Conversely, the sexual prohibitions were as valid then as they had been before.[36] The Mishnah and both Talmudim – both post-Destruction collections – contain a tractate *Niddah* in the order *Toharot*, i.e. "purities."[37]

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33 Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 20.

34 Purity laws were still observed in part, for example, but not exclusively for consumption of the terumah. Prof. Stemberger in personal communication.

35 In this context Evyatar Marienberg, *Niddah: Lorsque les Juifs Conceptualisent la Menstruation* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2003), 132, points out: "Même si les lois directement liées au Temple ou à la terre sont par our la plupart considérées dans le judaisme médiéval comme non applicables pour le moment, elles restent valables et seront, selon les rabbins, réappliquées à l'époque messianique."

36 See Shaye Cohen, "Menstruants and the Sacred," in *Women's History and Ancient History*, ed. Sarah B. Pomeroy (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 276, "The prohibition of 'drawing near' to a menstruant for sexual purposes (Lev.18:19 and 20:18) is part of a list of prohibited sexual unions and has nothing to do with ritual purity. Even when the purity system would lapse after the destruction of the second temple in 70 C.E., the prohibition of union with a menstruant would not."

37 Regarding the transmission of Mishnah tractate *Niddah* in the Order *Toharot* Moses Auerbach, trans., *Nidda*, in *Mischnajot: Die sechs Ordnungen der Mischna; Hebräischer Text mit Punktation, deutscher Übersetzung und Erklärung,* 3rd ed., vol. 6, *Ordnung Toharot* (Basel: Goldschmidt, 1968), 503, points out: "Der Traktat behandelt als eigentliches Thema die Bestimmungen für die Menstruation (vgl. Levit. XV, 19–24) und die Geburt (vgl. Levit. XII, 1–5). Hauptsächlich beschäftigt sich der Traktat mit den hierbei in Betracht kommenden Reinheitsgesetzen. Deshalb hat er seinen Platz im Seder Tohorot. Außerdem werden die Bestimmungen hinsichtlich des ehelichen Verkehrs erwähnt." Michael Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics*

7.2.4 The Allegorization of *Niddah*

Some Talmudic passages illustrate the way the language of purity of the first scriptural context wandered towards the second, that of the sexual tabu.[38] The expressions used to designate "pure" (טהור and טהורה) or "impure" (טמא and טמאה), which belong to the language of cult, of the purity laws, and which have no moral or aesthetic implications,[39] became metaphors for "sexually permitted" or "prohibited," as Charlotte Fonrobert points out: "אני טמאה [i.e. I am impure] comes to mean 'I have my menstrual period.'"[40]

The subject is studied in detail in two monographic works published recently: Evyatar Marienberg's *Lorsque les Juives Conceptualisent la Menstruation* and Charlotte E. Fonrobert's already referred to and quoted *Menstrual purity*. Both elucidate how the meanings of *niddah* contextually vary.[41] According to Fonrobert the meaning of the term is not a stable one:

> The term *niddah* does not have an inherent meaning, in and by itself, of "the ostracized woman" or "abhorrence and repulsion," nor can we reconstruct its original meaning. Rather, it acquires different meanings and connotations in different contexts.[42]

The story of the white days can be seen as a good example of the shift of meaning or allegorization of impurity. Returning to the narrative in *Seder Eliyahu*, the nameless woman is asked how her husband conducted himself towards her during the days of her impurity. She answers reproducing his own words in direct speech: "Set aside all the days of

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of Sexuality (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 296, argues that paradoxically the *Niddah* tractate in the Babylonian Talmud deals with very specific aspects of the purity laws, but the basic question "why should anyone follow the laws of menstrual purity" receives almost no treatment at all. The rest of the tractates dealing with aspects of women's life are found in the order *Nashim* or "(married) women."

38 See yKet 2.5 (26c), discussed in Fonrobert, *Menstrual purity*, 26.

39 See Miriam Berkowitz, "Reshaping the laws of family purity." Paper of the year 2006 on Yoreh Deah 183 published on the website of the Rabbinical Assembly: `http://www.rabbinicalassembly.org/sites/default/files/public/halakhah/teshuvot/20052010/berkowitz_niddah.pdf`, 5, "Firstly, we should insist that there is nothing inherently horrible or appalling with being טמא – it simply marks a legalistic category with no moral or aesthetic implications. The laws of ritual purity have no real relevance in our days (though they can still be learned – *daresh vekabel schar* or appreciated for their educational or metaphoric significance). These laws were fully consequential only within the domain of the Temple and its hallowed services and priests."

40 Fonrobert, *Menstrual purity*, 27.

41 On the etymology of niddah see Moshe Greenberg, "The etymology of niddah: (Menstrual) impurity," in *Solving Riddles and Untying Knots: Biblical, Epigraphic and Semitic Studies in Honor of Jonas C. Greenfield*, ed. Ziony Zevit et al. (Winona Lake, IN.: Eisenbrauns, 1995), 69–77 and Jacob Milgrom et al., "Nidda," in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, vol. 9 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdsmans, 1998), 232–235.

42 Fonrobert, *Menstrual purity*, 17–18.

your period that you see blood and add still seven clean days, so as not to have any doubt about your ritual purity." The rabbi shows himself pleased with this answer, which he confirms and expands quoting a tradition of the sages, introduced with the characteristic formula *mikan amru*: "With regard both to men with an abnormal discharge and to women after a bleeding [other than menstruation], [with respect to women] after menstruation and after having given birth the sages taught that only after seven days are they considered ritually pure for their marital duties."[43] After this anonymous rabbinic tradition he quotes Lev 15:28 as a proof-text, in which reference only of the woman is made: *If she is cleansed of her discharge, she shall count [seven days, and after that she shall be clean.]* etc.

With his next question the rabbi seeks to find out how the deceased husband behaved during the so called white days.[44] This time, however, he gives two examples of conduct between husband and wife without revealing that both are illicit ways during the days in question: Both her anointing him with oil and his or her touching the other even if only with the little finger are prohibited contact situations. The woman replies with an interjection and emphatically denies that anything of the sort could ever have happened between his husband and her. Nevertheless, when she comes to describe how they lived these white days she concedes that she would wash his feet and anoint oil thereafter, that they would sleep in the same bed, but that nothing else would enter her late husband's mind. The woman admits that she was the one who touched her husband, probably in an attempt to free him from blame. These words, her last ones before her story comes to an end, are in the rabbi's perception a confession and a clear answer to the woman's repeatedly posed question regarding the premature death of her husband. After blessing God's impartiality, for even the disciples of the wise are justly judged, the rabbi explains that whoever does not observe the Torah must die, and quotes Lev 18:19, a verse whose scriptural context is one of sexual tabus, as a proof-text: *a woman to uncover her nakedness while she is in her menstrual uncleanness [You shall not approach.]* etc.

Having the disciple of the wise die, *Seder Eliyahu* seems to be silently alluding to a third passage in Leviticus, which does not deal with prohibitions but with the punishment for their transgression:

> If a man lies with a woman having her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has laid bare her flow and she has laid bare her flow of blood; both of them shall be cut off from their people. (Lev 20:18)[45]

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43 The narrator probably alludes in a very general way to the Mishnah tractates *Zavim* and *Niddah*, not to a precise rabbinic authority or tradition. As is often the case in *Seder Eliyahu* the first person narrator (or in other contexts the midrashist) refers to traditions of the sages without quoting any mishnah or talmudic passage.

44 These are elsewhere designated as clean days.

45 So too in Lev 18:29 we read of extirpation (*karet*): *For whoever commits any of these abominations shall be cut off from their people.*

This passage is, as noted, not quoted in *Seder Eliyahu* but transformed in narrative, a more vivid manner of exegesis. The husband dies and the woman is from this moment onwards the widow of an extirpated disciple of the wise, a punishment that shows a clear gender distinction. The transgression punished with *karet* or extirpation consists in failing to observe the white or clean days after the menstruation has stopped. It appears that *Seder Eliyahu*, even if it does not exonerate the woman, punishes in the first place the one held responsible, i.e. her husband, with premature death.

7.2.5 The Emergence of the White Days

Judith Baskin pointed out with respect to the separation of a menstruant during biblical times:

> The seriousness with which separation from a *niddah* was taken in biblical times is evident in the fact that sexual contact with a *niddah* is also forbidden in Leviticus 18:19 as among those sinful acts punished severely by *karet*, or extirpation from the community.[46]

The story of the white days does not focus on the days of bleeding, but on those (seven) additional days, which follow after the bleeding has come to an end, the so called white or clean days. Where do these come from? Not just the phraseology,[47] which is not of scriptural origins,[48] but above all the idea, the concept of the white days?[49] In Baskin's view they constitute a stringency of the sexual prohibition of Lev 18, which has its origins in the rabbinic period:

> During the rabbinic era, the prohibition of sexual relations with a menstruating wife was expanded. At some point after the codification of the Mishnah, seven further "white" days of separation were added, following the end of the menstrual period itself. It is impossible to know to what degree these prohibitions were observed at any point during the various

46 Judith Baskin, *Midrashic Women: Formations of the Feminine in Rabbinic Literature* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2002), 24. For the development of the imposition of *niddah* regulations on marital sexuality pp. 22–29 and 105–109.

47 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 170, n. 32, comment on the white days: "When the discharge of a menstruating woman ceased, she put on white garments and examined herself for seven days in succession, which had to pass without any further discharge of blood before she could be considered ritually clean." Similarly Harry Freedman, trans., *Shabbath*, in *The Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Isidore Epstein, *Seder Moed*, vol. 1 (London: Soncino, 1938), 53, n. 7, on bShab 13.

48 No adjective qualifies in Lev 15:28 the days of waiting after the bleeding. The prohibitions in Lev 18 and 20 pertain to the *niddah* days as period of actual bleeding.

49 Bernhard Maier, "Reinheit," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, ed. G. Müller et al., vol. 28 (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter, 1997), 474, observes that in Ancient Egypt wearing white clothes was one of the rites which could reinstate or keep purity.

> eras or in the various locales of rabbinic Judaism. These strictures became normative only in post-talmudic Jewish societies. Still, they probably encountered considerable resistance when they were first promulgated, as indicated by the threatening tone of much of the discussion exhorting their observance.[50]

The following passage in the Babylonian Gemara to tractate *Niddah*, helps to understand how this expansion of the prohibition works, how it is legitimated by the rabbis:

> R. Joseph citing Rab Judah who had it from Rab stated: Rabbi ordained at Sadoth, If a woman observed a discharge on one day she must wait six days in addition to it. If she observed discharges on two days she must wait six days in addition to these. If she observed a discharge on three days she must wait seven clean days. R. Zera stated: The daughters of Israel have imposed upon themselves the restriction that even if they observe a drop of blood of the size of a mustard seed they wait on account of it seven clean days. (bNid 66a)[51]

The immediate context of this passage, which is a possible etiological narrative on the white days, is not, however, the discussion of the *niddah*, but of the *zavah*, i.e. the woman who has an irregular bleeding apart from the menstruation. This distinction is found in tractate *Niddah*, therefore it was probably valid already in the tannaitic period. The author of *Seder Eliyahu* appears to be writing his work in a time, during which the distinction between *niddah* and *zavah gedolah* (3 days of extraordinary bleeding) or *zavah qetanah* (1–2 days) was not any more valid: after any kind of bleeding seven additional clean or white days of separation were to be observed.[52] A woman is sexually permitted only after a ritual immersion following these additional days of separation.

Interestingly enough the Babylonian Talmud attributes this expansion of the prohibition to the daughters of Israel themselves, a legitimation strategy which read from a gendered perspective can be described as more invasive of the bodily autonomy of women than the blurring of a distinction between *niddah*, *zavah*, as Evyatar Marienberg appropriately observes:

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50 Baskin, *Midrashic women*, 25.

51 Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis: A Woman's Voice* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998), 158, argues that the context of this passage is not the discussion of the *niddah*, i.e. of the woman during her menstruation, but of the *zavah*, i.e. the woman who has a vaginal bleeding at times other than that of her usual menstrual bleeding: "The days that Rebbe requires her to observe are the seven clean days of the *zavah*, not the seven days of menstrual impurity, and certainly not seven clean days after the seven days of menstrual impurity. In fact, the term "seven clean days," as it appears in the Talmud, refers in all instances to the days following *zivah*, not *niddah*."

52 See Baskin, *Midrashic Women*, 25.

> Édictées sur la base de l'idée rabbinique qui veut qu'elles constituent une 'barrière' supplémentaire, ces restrictions aident, espèrent les rabbins, à réduire le risque que les fidèles transgressent par inadvertance les lois de base. L'exemple le plus représentatif de cette démarche est l'amalgame de deux types d'écoulement mentionnés dans la Bible: les rabbins ou, d'après eux, les femmes elles-mêmes, ont instauré un système selon lequel tout écoulement de sang, même très court, et sans tenir compte du moment où cet écoulement apparaît, est considéré comme un « vrai » sang menstruel et comme un écoulement prolongé, de sorte que les femmes respectent toujours sept jours d'impureté supplémentaires après la fin de tout écoulement. Ainsi, un nouveau concept important, celui des « sept jours propres » (ou « blancs ») est né.[53]

To return to the narrative in *Seder Eliyahu*: What is the point of this story being told there? The questioner is not familiar with the Mishnah, but with Scripture, he knows that the regulation of the ritual immersion for women after their menses is not stated in Lev 15. His implicit question might be paraphrased as follows: How is it possible to rabbinically justify the immersion of the woman after menstruation, if this is not prescribed in Lev 15. Does the story of the white days answer this question? It rather gives an example of what happens to those like him who question the authority of the ritual bath and regard this institution as not prescribed by the Torah: they die. The story is a negative exemplum, a warning, as Judith Baskin suggests:

> Warnings of the dire consequences that will result to men from even the most accidental contact with a niddah and to women who do not observe their period of *niddah* strictly, ...reflect rabbinic efforts to enforce by fear a most unpopular series of stipulations.[54]

The versions of the story in *Seder Eliyahu*, in the Babylonian Talmud, and in *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A is part of a developing discourse that seeks to regulate sexuality. It is a discourse that focuses above all, as Marienberg suggests, on ensuring the observation of the basic regulations of family purity (*tohorot mischpachat*)[55]

All three versions distinguish between the first days (of menstruation), and the last days, which constitute the stringency. Although they are designated as "clean" or "white" in *Seder Eliyahu* and in the Talmud passage, they do belong to the *niddah*-time, the time of impurity, during which sexual contact is prohibited.

The story in *Seder Eliyahu* is one of many passages in rabbinic literature which illustrate how two distinct biblical concepts such as the purity laws and the sexual tabus

53 Marienberg, *Lorsque les juives*, 31.

54 Baskin, *Midrashic women*, 105–106. Not only are the transgressors themselves punished with extirpation, but the children they conceive are also punished, for example with leprosy. See Marienberg, *Lorsque les juives*, 103–113.

55 On this expression see Marienberg, *Lorsque les Juives*, 40–41.

were not distinguished any longer after the destruction of the Second Temple. The language of purity, in its origins pertaining to the Temple cult, became a way of metaphorically referring to the regulations concerning sexual life. Depending on the co-text of the narrative, *Seder Eliyahu*, bShab 13a–b, or ARN A 2, different aspects of the plot are emphasized.[56] The purity laws as dealt with in the versions of the story considered previously can be seen as part of a highly gendered discourse based on male dominated conceptions.[57]

With this story *Seder Eliyahu* attempts to illustrate several points: a) that sexual intercourse with a *niddah* is a graver offense than sexual intercourse with a *zav*;[58] b) that the ritual bath for the *niddah* has its origins in the Torah – although the narrative itself does not mention the immersion; and c) that whoever objects to this, as the questioner seems to do and the disciple of the wise in the embedded narrative did, will never find contentment, but rather extirpation as his or her retribution.

The agenda of the passage in bShab 13a–b is less comprehensive. Here the story proves d) that on the Shabbat a *zav* should not eat with a *zavah* – a term which in this context seems to include both the woman with menstrual bleeding and the woman with an irregular bleeding. The prohibition, however, does not apply only on the Shabbat.

Finally, *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* A 2 interprets the fence of mAv 1:1 as separation between husband and wife during the time of the woman's impurity, thus confirming e) that those who observe the Torah in the everyday life of marriage keep the fence about the Torah upright.

Although Lev 20:18 mentions the punishment of extirpation of both man and woman who have intercourse during the *niddah* days, the previously discussed versions of the story do make a gender-specific distinction. The man dies young and his widow is left with questions and no answers. Moreover, *Seder Eliyahu* depicts her as gone mad. In all three versions, it could be argued, she remains "impure" since the ritual bath which should have put an end to the *niddah* time never took place.

7.3 Exegetical Contexts I: The Street of the Harlots

> ...Therefore it is said, *Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.* (Isa 58:1) Who are <these>? They are the common people [among Israel]. It happened once that a disciple of R. Aqiba, the head of

[56] Jeffrey Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, 14, observed in this regard, "not only are text, context, and interpretation interrelated, but the redactors tailored the texts of stories to suit the literary contexts in which they placed them. Redactors were as much authors or storytellers as compilers, so the interpretation of a story should not be pursued independently of the literary context they chose."

[57] See Maier et al., "Reinheit," 477.

[58] The *zav* is practically of no interest for the narrator who turns to the *niddah* and does not mention the *zav* again.

> twenty-four thousand of his disciples, went to the street of the harlots and saw there a prostitute and fell in love with her. He would send his messenger back and forth between him and her until the evening time. In the evening she went up to the roof and saw him sitting before his disciples like a prince of hosts, Gabriel standing at his right. She said <to herself>, Woe unto that very woman to whom all kinds of Gehenna punishments are attached.[59] A man so grandiose as this one, who resembles a king – should such a woman respond to him, when she dies and ceases to exist for this world she shall inherit Gehenna. On the other hand, if he accepts her [refusal] she will save him and herself from the judgement of Gehenna. When he came to her she spoke to him thus, My son, why do you lose a life in the world to come for the sake of an hour in this world? His mind was not cooled down until she said to him, My son, the place you love is the dirtiest and filthiest of all the parts of the body, <a gourd full of ordure (צואה) and refuse> whose odour no creature can endure to smell. Still, his mind was not cooled down until she took his nose and placed it in that grave. When he smelled the odour it repelled him so much that he never married a woman. A divine voice went forth proclaiming, Such-and-such a woman and such-and-such a man are destined to life in the world to come. (PsEZ 39, l. 5–PsEZ 40, l. 3)[60]

One of R. Aqiba's disciples falls in love with a harlot he sees in an urban area identified by the narrator as one of prostitution. In this setting, the street of the harlots, the two communicate with the aid of a messenger until evening comes and she goes up to the roof where she reflects on their apparently radically opposed moral qualities. She speaks of herself in the third person as worthy of all the punishments of Gehenna and as a vehicle for these punishments to be inherited by whom enjoys her favours. When R. Aqiba's disciple and the prostitute eventually meet, she succeeds in persuading him to give up his intentions. The language she uses, put in her mouth by a male mind and quoted by the male voice of R. Joshua b. Qarcha to whom the entire passage is attributed,[61] is especially abusive of her own person.[62] The tanna refers not to an aspect of women

59 On the verbal form used, צואת, which has an aleph that is not part of the root of the three verbs that may come in question (צוי, צות, and צבת) see Friedmann, *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, 39, n. 29. Rather than looking for an explanation of this form in similar forms present in *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* (ER 19), it might be more reasonable to understand the term in its own context, where a few lines later on the woman herself compares a part of her body with a gourd full of excrement – צואה.

60 The translation is based on Friedmann's edition of the "spurious" chapters of *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. For the seven chapters titled Pirkê R. Eliezer the fourth of which contais the translated passage, Friedmann uses the Venice print and MS Parma 3122 (De Rossi 1240) as textual basis.

61 See PsEZ 38, l. 11ff.

62 A similar way of referring to women in general is found in bShab 152a, תנא: אשה חמת מלא צואה, ופיה מלא דם – והכל רצין אחריה ("A Tanna taught: Though a woman be as a pitcher full of filth and her mouth be full of blood, yet all speed after her.")

or to a specific female organ but to the whole (idea of) woman – the passage is one of those attempts of rabbinic literature Judith Baskin describes as "motivated by a desire to circumscribe, defuse, and control the female not only as potential polluter but also as sexual temptress."[63] Furthermore, according to Friedmann's text, for which he uses the reading of the MS, it is the prostitute who places the sage's nose in her vagina, which is referred to with a figurative expression,[64] In this case it is not only the rabbinic male mind of the copyist at work, but also that of the work's editor in the early 20th century. On one aspect the narrator chooses to be not explicit, namely on how the man's "heated mind" manifests itself so that it can be perceived by the prostitute before she proceeds to appease him.

The story of the prostitute is told in an exegetical context, one dealing with Isa 58:1. The midrashist poses a rhetorical question concerning the reference of the verse, i.e. who is meant by the expressions "my people" resp. "the house of Jacob," and answers it suggesting they are the common people among Israel, the ignorants or עמי הארץ.

In view of the thematic orientation of the wider co-text of the narrative – the chapter in which this narrative is found deals primarily with repentance[65] –, it can be claimed that it functions as an exemplum of repentance. But then, who is here the exemplary character? The opening of the story, a *maʿaseh* formula, seems to imply that it is the sage who mainly functions as an example of repentance. After all, *he* goes to a place where he is not supposed to be, *he* repeatedly needs proof that the harlot speaks the truth, and it

63 Baskin, *Midrashic women*, 30. On the theme of woman as source of sexual temptation see ibid., 29–36, and the literature cited therein.

64 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 471, insert the phrase "the female organ" in the text of their translation without any commentary. The reading of the Venice print, i.e. Friedmann's main textual witness, suggests that the sage himself places his own nose to prove the harlot's words – the verb forms used are תפשו and הניחו. Friedmann prefers in this case the readings of the MS, namely תפשתו and הניחתו.

65 I.e. chapter 4 in Friedmann's edition of *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*, which according to the Venice print, where it is transmitted, is chapter 22 of the *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*. In a passage preceding the story of the prostitute, repentance is said to be greater than prayer since Moses' prayers were not as effective as the harlot Rachab's repentance! See PsEZ 37. According to Jos 2 the prostitute Rachab hid and assisted two men Joshua had sent to spy upon Jericho before the city was taken and destroyed. Rachab is depicted as a clever strategist who negotiates her freedom and that of her whole family for the assistance she provides Joshua's men. Even her name is interpreted as etymologically founded on her ample (רחובה) repentance, for which she was rewarded with a progeny that included seven kings and eight prophets: "R. Eliezer b. Jacob said: Why was she called by the name Rahab? Because her merit was ample: due to the repentance she did, she was rewarded with seven kings and eight prophets going forth from her." (PsEZ 37, l. 19–21). SifBem *Behaʿalotkha* 78b reads "eight priests and eight prophets," while bMeg 14a "eight prophets who were also priests." For a discussion of Rachab's gender duality and the manner in which the sages appropriated her story in terms of a conversion narrative see Inbar Raveh,"Open to conquest: Prostitution – Temptation and Responses," in *Feminist Rereadings of Rabbinic Literature* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2014), 100–115.

is *his* "heated mind" that is cooled down after verifying the harlot's arguments with his own senses. Even though he remains nameless, he is depicted as a renowned disciple of R. Aqiba, judging from the number of disciples among whom he is the first, from the words the prostitute uses to depict him, who compares him with a prince, and from the fact that the Archangel Gabriel appears in sort of guardian angel role.

Conversely, it could be argued that the protagonist, the main repentant, of this narrative told by a heterodiegetic narrator is the prostitute. She is characterized only by the phrase אשה זונה in the narrator's voice and indirectly by her own speech (and lack of action). Hence, it could be argued that the narrative expands upon the lemma by showing how a prostitute can behave and speak with the "common sense" wisdom of the illiterate, [66] and open the eyes of *the house of Israel*. Some questions remain open: Taking for granted that she is the main repentant of the narrative, could she ever have repented and had access to salvation or to a place in a rabbinic story, had she not been desired by a sage? Or is she rather exemplary, in spite of speaking of herself in terms of such self-hatred, only she leads a man worthy of a better life to the right path of repentance?

7.4 Exegetical Contexts II: Deborah

Two consecutive chapters in *Seder Eliyahu* have the biblical character of Deborah as the protagonist of exegetical narratives for which verses of the book of Judges function as point of departure or midrashic lemmas, but which clearly have rabbinic concepts as their main agenda.[67]

> *And Deborah, a prophetess* etc. (Judg 4:4) What was Deborah's nature that she judged over Israel and prophesied to them. Was not Phinehas b. Eleazar still serving [in these offices]? I call heaven and earth to witness that the Spirit of Holiness dwells upon everyone – whether they be non-Jew or Israelite, man or woman, manservant or maidservant – according to the deeds they perform. They said: Deborah's husband was an illiterate (עם הארץ). His wife spoke to him thus, Go and make wicks and go to the Holy Place in Shiloh, so that your portion may be with the righteous men and you will come to a life in the world-to-come. And he would make thick wicks (פתילות) so that their light was ample (מרובה). Hence he is called by the name Lappidoth (לפידות). They said: He has three names: Baraq, Lappidoth, and Michael. Baraq (ברק) because his face resembled a lightning (ברק). Lappidoth because he made wicks and went to the Holy Place in Shiloh. Michael

[66] A recurring motif in *Seder Eliyahu*.

[67] As R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, "A note on the text of Seder Eliyahu," *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 6 (1955): 201–211, pointed out, the over-all theme of this and the following chapter is divine justice. See Max Kadushin, *The Theology of Seder Eliyahu* (New York: Bloch, 1932), who dedicates the last chapter of his book to the justice of God.

> because of [the angel] Michael. The Holy One, blessed be He, who *tests the minds and hearts* (Ps 7:10), said to her, Deborah, you suggested and did[68] broad wicks so that their light was ample (מרובה). I will enhance (ארבה) you in Israel and Judah and among the twelve Tribes of Israel. But who caused Lappidoth to belong to the righteous human beings and come to the world to come? They said: Deborah, his wife. Of her, of those like her and those who resemble her, and those who perform acts like hers, it [Scripture] says, *The wise woman builds her house[, but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.]* etc. (Prov 14:1) (ER 48, l. 18–ER 49, l.2)

The first chapter dealing with Deborah, chapter (9) 10 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, begins quoting Judg 4:4 to expound on the exceptional character of Deborah,[69] who was both a prophetess and a judge, as stated in the second part of the verse – *was judging Israel at that time*, which is not quoted but rather implied with the *we-gomer* –, although Phinehas was still serving Israel as judge and prophet. Anticipating the exegetical narratives that will follow, and using the recurrent vow formula מעיד אני עלי את השמים ואת הארץ[70] the midrashist claims that everyone is rewarded according to his or her deeds. The midrashist first refers to an anonymous tradition by the sages about Deborah and her husband, introduced by the briefest introductory formula "They said"(אמרו).[71] For this narrative it is not the midrashist himself who assumes the role of a narrator, but of

68 The passage presents the following problem: Deborah is addressed but the masculine pronominal form אתה is used in combination with the verb forms נתכוונתה (which corresponds neither to the masculine nor to the feminine perfect forms, but is closer to the former) and עשית, which can be both masculine or feminine. With the same words God addresses Aaron in ER 157. One might assume that that it is Lappidoth instead of Deborah who is addressed here. Or that the merit praised in Deborah is due to what her husband did.

69 Among the women characters of the book of Judges Deborah is a special case due to her offices as a religious functionary and political leader. Susan Ackerman, *Warrior, dancer, seductress, queen: Women in Judges and biblical Israel* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 5, observes "[t]hat elsewhere in biblical tradition, these offices are occupied almost exclusively by men." See also pages 27–47 for a discussion of the Deborah narrative, especially in Judg 5. Her analysis of women in Judges is based on a history-of-religions approach which seeks to "describe the place of Judges' "types" of women characters within the ancient Israelite religious imagination and, even more generally, to discuss the place these "types" of women occupied within the actual practice of ancient Israelite religion." (9–10). What singles Deborah out is according to Ackerman the fact that her depiction defies "Israelite paradigms of gender-appropriate behavior that she can be presented as assuming a leadership role in Israel's military affairs." (28). See also Sigrid Eder, *Wie Frauen und Männer Macht ausüben: Eine feministisch-narratologische Analyse von Ri 4* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2008), 98–129, for a feministic narratological reading of Judg 4, especially pages 200–202 for an analysis of Deborah's characterization there.

70 This formula, in the words of Werblowsky, "A note on the text," 203, an "explosive interjection … of which our author is particularly fond," in his opinion "rather interrupts the plain and smooth course of the exposition, though it anticipates the answer." It can also be argued that this is the author's way of leaving his unequivocal mark even in stories originally authored by others.

71 Deborah's marital status in Judg 4 is ambiguous. Even if אשת לפידות is usually translated as "the

a reteller of a narrative already told by the sages. According to the latter Deborah's husband was an ignorant, an illiterate – an אם הארץ. Deborah is said to have commanded her husband to make wicks and take them to the sanctuary in Shiloh. This midrashic expansion on an episode of their scriptural lives which remains untold in Scripture has an etymological function, it explains how Deborah's husband came to be called by the name of "Lappidoth," a name which can be translated as "bright torches." The midrash thus operates with a pun connecting לפידות with פתילות, two words with a partial overlap of consonants in different sequence, five out of six consonants are the same.[72] Deborah's husband, who in the scriptural account has no narrative function whatsoever apart from being named in a genitive construction as being related to *her* by marriage, is made into a narrative agent in the tradition the midrashist narrates, one which depicts him as an obeying ignorant whose deeds earn him and the one in charge, Deborah, an illustrious reputation.

The midrashist interrupts the narrative flow to adduce yet another tradition of the sages, likewise introduced with *amru*, regarding the multiple names of Deborah's husband: He was called by no less than three names – Baraq, Lappidoth, and Michael. The first two go back to his appearance – his face was, i.e. shone, as bright as a lightning (ברק) – or to his deeds – his having made wicks (פתילות) and brought them to Shiloh. The third was given to him because of Michael.[73]

Back to Deborah's narrative, God, of whom words of Ps 7:10 are predicated, addresses her in direct speech and promises to enhance (ארבה) her precisely because of *her husband's* making of thick wicks that produce ample light (מרובה). As noted previously, the text of this passage might be defective: Even though Deborah is addressed by God, the pronominal (and verbal) forms used are masculine ones.[74] It is, however, interesting, that this grammatical "indeterminacy" can be interpreted as constitutive of the story of Deborah as a female leader.

The claim by the midrashist concerning the just reward for everyone is confirmed in this exegetical narrative that sees a correspondence between the dimension of Deborah's reward and her deed, i.e.having her husband perform an exemplary deed. Her reward is manifest in her genealogy: Deborah's progeny will persist in Israel and Judah, i.e. in all of the Twelve Tribes. This is actually the end of this Deborah exegetical narrative, but the midrashist sees that precisely this end leaves a question unanswered: if the reward

wife of Lappidoth", it can also be translated as Ackerman, *Warrior, dancer*, 38, suggests, as "a fiery woman," which is in turn in accord with the rabbis' interpretation of the name of her husband and of their righteousness.

72 See on this particular midrashic passage Werblowsky, "A note on the text," 202–205. On the hermeneutic step see Alexander Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretations of Scripture in the Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 378, "Grapheme3."

73 See YalqShim *Shofetim* 32 where Michael is the name given to him because he lowered himself (מנמיך) or because he was an angel (מלאך).

74 See n. 68.

of Deborah is long-lasting progeny then Lappidoth's reward must necessarily be emphasized, even if this takes the form, again, of a clear praise of Deborah. The midrashist asks who *caused* Lappidoth to be one of the worthy men and to enter the world to come. To answer this question the sages are quoted a third time. According to them it is Deborah, his wife, who caused him to be worthy, and praises her and those who take after her with the Proverbs verse *The wise woman builds her house*.

Werblowsky compared this version to its parallels in bMeg 14a[75] and *Yalqut*, where Deborah herself makes the wicks, and suggests that there might have been two versions of the story of the wicks which got conflated in *Seder Eliyahu*.[76]

A counter-example to Deborah follows, introduced this time not as a narrative of the sages, but as an expansion of our midrashist himself, who introduces it with a formula addressing the reader:

> Likewise you read (lit. "say") [of] *Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Zidonians* (1 Kings 16:31), wife of *Ahab, son of Omri* (1 Kings 16:29.30) [that] she said [to him] from the very first year since she was married, Learn[77] the ways of idolatry! And through her Ahab sold himself to idolatry, for it is said, *Indeed, there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the Lord[, urged on by his wife Jezebel.]* (1 Kings 21:25) And because of her deeds and her husband's deeds they perished from this world and from the world to come and their children perished with them. A p a r a b l e : It is like a king of flesh and blood whose servant brought him a present of seven jugs of oil. When he [the servant] spoke too much, he smashed them [the jugs] in front of him. And who caused Ahab to perish from this world and from the world to come, so that his sons perish with him? They said: Jezebel his wife. Of her and of those like her, of those who resemble her, and perform deeds such as hers, it [Scripture] says, *but the foolish tears it down with her own hands* (Prov 14:11). Of them it [Scripture] says, *Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more* etc. (Ps 37:10), *I have seen the wicked oppressing[, and towering like a cedar of Lebanon.]* (Ps 37:35) *Again I passed by, and they were no more[; though I sought them, they could not be found.]* etc. (Ps 37:36); *[t]he wicked watch [for the righteous, and seek*

75 "'Deborah,' as it is written, *Now Deborah a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth*. What is meant by a 'woman of flames'? [She was so called] because she used to make wicks for the Sanctuary. *And she sat under a palm tree*. Why just a palm tree? – R. Simeon b. Abishalom said: [To avoid] privacy. Another explanation is: Just as a palm tree has only one heart, so Israel in that generation had only one heart devoted to their Father in heaven."

76 Werblowsky, "A note on the text," 204: "The text of SE would then appear to be a conflation of two versions." He argues further (206): "Friedmann takes it for granted that the passage b. Megillah 14a depends on our SE or a 'similar text.' It seems to me that in the light of the foregoing analysis everything will depend on what we mean by a 'similar' text. The text of SE reveals such a composite and complicated structure that it is hardly possible to regard it as a primary source *tout court*."

77 Friedmann emends the MS reading, למדן, with the imperative form למדו.

> *to kill them.]* etc. (Ps 37:32) And after this [verse] what does it [Scripture] say? *but the Lord laughs at him [the wicked]* etc. (Ps 37:13) (ER 49, l. 3–14)

The narrative has Jezebel, a female villain, as its protagonist. Unlike Deborah she is defined by her male relations as the daughter of Ethbaal, and the wife of Ahab.[78] It was her who brought her husband to idolatry and caused him and their sons to perish in this world and in the world to come. In contrast to the narrative on Deborah this brief exegetical narrative does not expand upon its scriptural hypotext by quoting it (e.g. the second part of 1 Kings 21:25). Propositionally it is still in accord with the scriptural narrative insofar as both depict her as the instigator of the sins of her husband.

The couple's conduct is illustrated with the parable of a mortal king whose servant brought him seventy jars of oil but in doing so addressed the king in such a manner that the king smashed the jars in front of the servant. How this parable applies is not explicitly stated, there is no explicit nimshal to this mashal narrative. According to 2 Kings 10:1 Ahab had seventy sons, who unlike the descendants of Deborah (and Lappidoth) did not enhance light but were killed as oil in broken jars is spilled.[79] The apparently enigmatic mashal is thus linked to the figural language of the Deborah narrative. Furthermore, the mashal is a material textual counterpart to God's active participation in the text of Deborah's narrative.

"Behind every great man there's a great woman" – had both Lappidoth and Ahab been "great" biblical men, the concluding passages of the narratives on Deborah and Jezebel could be viewed as an illustration in narrative form of the quoted feminist slogan. The narratives' parallelism is stressed by the concluding rhetorical question of the midrashist and the collective answer of the sages classifying women into wise and foolish and selecting Deborah and Jezebel as their archetypes:

> And who caused Ahab to perish from this world and from the world to come and that his sons perish with him? They said: Jezebel, his wife. Of her, of those like her, of those who resemble her, and those who perform deeds like hers Scripture says, *[The wise woman builds her house,] but the foolish tears it down with her own hands.* (Prov 14:1) (ER 49, l. 9–12)

The narratives on the pair Deborah-Jezebel are crowned with a series of proof-texts from Psalm 37 reaffirming the notion that the wicked are lost for this world and from the world to come as Jezebel, Ahab, and his children.[80]

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78 Her father is introduced as king of the Zidonians, her husband as son of Omri (ER 49, l. 3–4).

79 See 2 Kings 10:7.11.17.

80 Ps 37:10.35.36.32.13. The fact that Jezebel is held at least in part responsible for Ahab's transgression and his house's fate is implied in the words of the young prophet to Jehu in 2 Kings 9:7–10. Before returning to Deborah (ER 50), his main thread in this chapter, the midrashist deals with Omri, Ahab's father making use, among other literary forms, of a first person narrative, and with the episode of the sacrifice of Mesha's first-born (2 Kings 3:27) as illustrative of God's justice.

The midrashist proceeds with his exposition on Deborah based on a second lemma-verse, Judg 4:5: To return to his starting point, namely that Deborah illustrates how God rewards every one according to his or her deeds, the midrashist's voice speaks a blessing which ends with Judg 4:4 followed by Judg 4:5, summing up his previous exposition and proceeding to the biblical text to be interpreted.

> Blessed be the Omnipresent, blessed be He, for He rewards human beings, [each] man according to his ways, each and every man according to his deeds, and upon them is [the mishnah] fulfilled: "With what measure a man metes it shall be measured to him again." (mSotah 1:7) Therefore, it is said, <*And Deborah,*> *a prophetess* <etc.> *She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel [in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgement.]* etc. (Judg 4:4–5) They said: Just as Samuel [sat] in Ramah, so Deborah [sat] in Ramah. Therefore it is said, *She used to sit under the palm* <etc.> They said: There were as few disciples of the wise in Israel as those who fill half the shadow of a palm tree. Hence it is said, *She used to sit under the palm.*[81] Another interpretation: *She used to sit* <etc.> Since it is not the [proper] way for a woman to meet with others within the house, Deborah would go [outside] and sit under the palm tree and taught Torah to multitudes. Therefore it is said, *She used to sit [under the palm of Deborah] between Ramah and Bethel* <etc.> (ER 50, l. 9–17)

The verse Judg 4:5 is first interpreted by citing a tradition (*amru*) which takes the form of a short analogy: Just as Samuel sat in Ramah, so Deborah sat in Ramah. A second interpretation of the sages (*amru*), this time explicitly projecting rabbinic ideals onto the scriptural narrative, follows: In the days of Deborah there were so few *disciples of the wise* in Israel that there was room for all of them under half of the palm tree. Thus, Deborah appears to be conceived of as the head of an outdoor academy in biblical times, a female forerunner of the rabbis as it were. A third interpretation introduced with the formula *davar acher*, but which does not explicitly stem from the sages, follows. According to this new interpretation, the sitting of Deborah under the palm tree has to do with it being improper for a woman to sit within a house with a man other than her husband or brother. Outdoors, under the palm tree, she could instruct multitudes unhindered. Hence, it could be argued that Deborah's exceptionality is not only manifest in her role as prophetess, in her encouraging her husband to be pious, but even more so in her teaching of Torah. This passage of *Seder Eliyahu* achieves a gendering of instruction: The ethical midrash conveys the idea that while men can teach men anywhere, it is the otherness of women that precludes them from even being even imagined as teaching men indoors.[82]

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81 Friedmann emends the MS reading at this point, by placing the sages' statement where it appears in the Venice print.

82 Contrary to the claim by Dvora E. Weisberg, "Women and Torah Study in Aggadah," in *Women and Judaism. New insights and scholarship*, ed. Frederick Greenspahn (New York: New York

After quoting Judg 4:5 as a confirmation of what has been expounded, the midrash proceeds on to Judg 4:6, thus bridging exegetical passages on the consecutive verses:

> *She sent and summoned Baraq son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, Has not [the Lord, the God of Israel,] commanded [you, Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun]?* <etc.> (Judg 4:6) What does Scripture teach when it says *has not commanded?* Just that she spoke to him thus, Is it not written in the Torah, *and the judges shall make a thorough inquiry* etc. (Deut 19:18) And what is the subject matter [of the verse] after this? *When you go out to war* (Deut 20:1). And what is the nature of Deborah['s relation] to Baraq and Baraq['s] to Deborah? Was Deborah not at her place and Baraq at his? However, they said: Baraq ministered to the elders during the lifetime of Joshua and went on ministering to them after his death. Therefore they brought him and placed him near Deborah. At that time Deborah was shown the means by which the Holy One, blessed be He, delivers Israel from among the peoples, [namely] by [the agency of] human beings who go to the synagogue and to the academy early in the morning and <in the evening (משכימין ומעריבין)[83]> and occupy themselves every day without fail with the words of Torah, by them or by [the agency of] those who minister to them. And what distinguished Zebulun and Naphtali from among all the Tribes that a great deliverance came to Israel through them? They said: Naphtali ministered to our father Jacob and found contentment in doing it; Zebulun ministered to Issachar and showed him hospitality. Because Baraq trusted the God of Israel and believed in the prophecy of Deborah he has a portion with her in her song, for it is said, *Then Deborah and Baraq son of Abinoam sang on that day* (Judg 5:1); *and he said to her, If you will go with me, I will go[; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.]* <etc.> *And she said, I will surely go with you[; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. Then Deborah got up and went with Baraq to Kedesh.]* etc. (Judg 4:8–9) (ER 50, l. 18–ER 51, l. 5)

The passage deals primarily with the manner in which Deborah persuades Baraq to wage war against Sisera, the commander of the Canaanites, to whom she speaks in Judg 4:6 on God's behalf. The first concern of the midrash after quoting Judg 4:6 is to interpret the phrase *has not commanded* of Deborah's prophecy. To achieve this interpretive task the

University Press, 2009), 51, "Biblical women, whether praised of criticized, are never portrayed in *aggadah* as students or teachers of Torah," Deborah is in this passage explicitly depicted in the teacher role.

83 Friedmann emends the MS reading, משחרין ("to be early in doing; to get up early"), with מעריבין ("do late in the evening"), which contrasts with the first verb, משכימין ("to rise early, do a thing early"). Also in the following chapter (ER 52, l. 22) Friedmann emends the MS reading ומשחיר with ומעריב.

midrash links the quoted verse with two Deuteronomy verses from different contexts: first, with Deut 19:18, a verse that describes the central role of judges in a scriptural passage concerning witnesses, and which Deborah herself speaks as if the words were her own, i.e. without any introductory formula; secondly, with Deut 20:1, a verse from a scriptural context that pertains to rules of war, and which the midrashist speaks on her behalf. With the words of her prophecy, the midrashist explains, Deborah implies two partially quoted verses with which she reminds Baraq that God has previously commanded that judges are in charge of sending others to war. According to the rabbinic text Deborah is a self-confident leader figure and this leadership has its legitimation in legal portions of the Torah, with which she is herself familiar.[84] Once again, the reader cannot be certain on who actually speaks the question and the answer to it following the first quoted verse, Deborah or the midrashist. Now in case of the second Deuteronomy verse, if the one quoting it is Deborah, she is depicted as not only familiar with Scripture, but also with rabbinic hermeneutics, as the use of the phrase "What is the subject matter of [the verse] after this?," used to to connect scriptural verses would indicate. The passage would thus suggest that her persuading Baraq to go to wage war against the Canaanite forces under Sisera is based on her own cognitive process of contextualizing her own situation in the scriptural narrative within the broader context of Scripture by linking her own narrative with Deuteronomy verses. The rabbinic text thus reorients the nature of Deborah's military heroism from what is depicted in Scripture in the direction of Deborah performing hermeneutic tasks.

Another aspect of the lemma in the quoted passage which interests the midrashist pertains to the nature of the relationship of Deborah and Baraq, who in the rabbinic corpus are assumed to have lived in different places, i.e. Deborah on Mount Ephraim and Baraq in Kedeshnaphtali. The answer is provided, once again, by a tradition of the sages (*amru*), which projects back the rabbinic ideal of ministry to elders on to the biblical past. Baraq is said to have ministered to the elders during the lifetime of Joshua and even after his death. The idea that Baraq was brought to Deborah appears to suggest in the reading of the sages that he ministered to Deborah the way he had ministered to the elders. The text does not insinuate at this point a marriage as Braude and Kapstein suggest with their translation.[85] Marriage might be implied in the selective quotation and combination of verses at the end of the passage. That Baraq and Deborah were husband and wife is, however, implied in the previously mentioned tradition of the sages according to which Baraq was one of Lappidoth's names. Another rabbinic ideal projected back onto the scriptural narrative is the claim by the midrash that during the time when Baraq minis-

[84] Ackerman, *Warrior, dancer*, 1–3, points out that although wartime and battle field constitute an "arena traditionally reserved for the affairs of men" (1) not only Deborah's story but those of a number of women in the book of Judges – Achsah (1:11–15), Jael (4:17–22; 5:24–27), Sisera's mother (4:17–22; 5:24–27), the woman of Thebez (9:50–57), and Jephthah's daughter (11:29–40) – have such a setting.

[85] See Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 156.

tered to her, Deborah came to realize shown who is responsible for Israel's selection from among the peoples of the world, namely men who go to the synagogue or the academy in the morning and in the afternoon, who constantly occupy themselves with the words of Torah as well as those other men who minister upon them. These tasks can only be predicated from men, so Deborah only indirectly contributes to Israel's being saved, for as a woman she is excluded from the house of study, from complete participation in the synagogue service, and not suitable for the ministry to sages. The motif of ministry leads in its turn to what appears to be short digression on the reasons for the exceptionality of the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. In fact, the midrash just continues its interpretation of the scriptural narrative of Judg 4. There, Deborah's prophetic words single out *ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun*, a verse part which has been left unquoted.

The tendency observed previously, which consisted in depicting Deborah with traits of a rabbi such as having disciples or her quoting passages from Scripture to explain others, is accentuated in this passage where she is said to have had at least a ministrant and where the synagogue and the house of study, paramount rabbinic institutions, are introduced as the spaces of salvation of Israel.

Returning to Baraq the midrashist argues that his faith in God and in his prophetess was justly rewarded in his being named in Deborah's song, whose first verse (Judg 5:1) is now quoted, but also by having him sing it together with her and with a single voice – as suggested by the singular of ותשר. This is the first verse of the so-called Deborah Song, a poetic rendition of the war story of Judg 4 generally regarded as one of the oldest texts of the Hebrew Bible. The notion that Deborah and Baraq belong together, even if they are not understood as husband and wife, is reinforced by two further quoted verses from the dialogue between Baraq and Deborah in Judg 4.

In a final text segment the midrashist shifts his focus from Deborah and turns to Jael, asking in his characteristic phraseology what made Jael, who remains unnamed and is defined by her relation to Heber,[86] so exceptional that great salvation came through her to Israel:

> And what distinguished Heber the Kenite's wife from the rest of women that deliverance came to Israel through her? They said: She was a righteous woman. And she used to do the will of her husband. From here they taught: No woman is righteous unless she does the will of her husband. (ER 51, l. 5–7)

The answer is a tradition of the sages (*amru*), according to which she was eligible due to her being a righteous, worthy, zealous woman (*kesherah*) who did the will of her husband. It could be argued that Jael is left unnamed and identified as Heber's wife because the focus of this passage is a wife's conduct towards her husband.[87] Braude and Kap-

[86] A parallel in ER 59 does name her.

[87] However, the parallel in ER 59 has the same focus *and* names Jael.

stein suggest that *Seder Eliyahu* hints at Jael's doing Heber's will "in consenting to leave fertile Jericho and follow him to arid Arad where, together with other Kenites, he was determined to study Torah with Jabez."[88]

Focusing on the scriptural narrative, Susan Ackerman characterizes Jael as "a woman who savagely pierces Sisera's head in what Robert Alter ... has called 'a phallic aggressive act.'"[89] In her reading of Judg 4, Sigrid Eder points out that Jael and Judith are the only named women in the Old Testament who kill a person representing Israel's enemy with their own hands.[90] But then *Seder Eliyahu* does not even hint at Jael's deed in the scriptural hypotext, her killing of Sisera in Judg 4:17–21, which is discussed elsewhere in rabbinic literature in contexts dealing with the Deborah narrative. Instead *Seder Eliyhu* focuses on why she was chosen for fulfilling this task, thus attempting at giving an answer to a question left unanswered by the scriptural narrative. Whereas the exegetical narrative on Deborah departs from scriptural lemmas and the one on Jezebel makes use of proof-texts, that on the unnamed Jael does not make explicit use of scriptural material.

From the tradition according to which Jael was righteous *and* did the will of her husband the maxim is derived that the condition for a woman to be called righteous is that she does the will of her husband.

The midrashic exposition on Deborah continues beyond the boundaries of chapter (9) 10. Chapter (10) 11, however, focuses on a number of isolated verses of the Song of Deborah (Judg 5), but its result is not an exegetical retelling of Deborah's deeds or a a radical reinvention of some of them as was the case with the previous chapter. Instead, the midrashic commentary in this chapter primarily discusses difficult words actually spoken by Deborah in Scripture in an attempt to explain them. It is therefore the poetic language of her song, which builds the basis for a number of midrashic expansions.

> *Then Deborah and Baraq [son of Abinoam] sang [on that day, saying]* etc. (Judg 5:1) And what exactly did Deborah prophesy to Israel? She spoke to them thus, Through whom does the Holy One, blessed be He, requite (נפרע) Israel among the peoples of the world? By means of those children of men who go to the synagogue and to the academy early in the morning and in the evening and who answer [saying] "Amen," who bless the Holy One, blessed be He by [saying] "Amen," for it is said, *when leaders led (בפרוע פרעות) in Israel[, when the people offer themselves willingly – bless the Lord!]* <etc.> (Judg 5:2) (ER 52, l. 17–20)

88 Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 157, n. 14: "The fact that she is identified as Heber's wife, ER construes as signifying that she did his will, specifically in consenting to leave fertile Jericho and follow him to arid Arad where, together with other Kenites, he was determined to study Torah with Jabez."

89 Ackerman, *Warrior, dancer*, 6. See also 93–102.

90 Eder, *Wie Frauen und Männer Macht ausüben*, 152. See 208–210 for an analysis of Jael's characterization.

Judg 5:1, the beginning of Deborah's song, is quoted and followed by the midrashist question concerning the exact content of Deborah's prophecy to Israel. Her direct speech is then quoted: She asks rhetorically through whose agency God requites Israel (or "collects them from"?) among the peoples of the world, answering herself that it is through pious men who go to the synagogue or the academy in the morning and in the evening answering "Amen" and praising (מברכין) the Lord with this Amen; they are the reason why Israel is chosen to be a prince or leader (פרע) among the nations. Deborah uses a variation of a statement brought forward in the previous chapter by the midrashist himself – "At that time Deborah was shown (הראוה) the means by which the Holy One, blessed be He, delivers Israel from among the peoples" etc. – that suits her own interpretive task which consists in deciphering her own words in Judg 5:2 – *when leaders led in Israel.*[91] The verb form מושיע used previously (ER 50) is supplanted in this context by נפרע, a verb of the same root of בפרוע and פרעות of the scriptural verse, so that the interpretation engages a paronomastic play with the interpreted verse. This play is based both on the root פרע and on the verb ברך, present in the interpretation and in the second half of the cited verse – *bless (ברכו) the Lord!* The verse seems to be understood thus: "Israel is redeemed through those who willingly praise the Lord." Deborah's voice clearly uses (again) tools of the (male) rabbinical hermeneutics.

A last segment on Deborah is found in chapter (10) 11 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*:

> Deborah said, Since [Torah is] contentment on high and contentment here below, *She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her* (Prov 3:18). *You who ride on white (צחורות) donkeys* (Judg 5:10): *white* is but an expression for being clean of theft; *you who sit on rich carpets*: these are the children of men who cause to stand in judgement. Another interpretation: *you who sit on rich carpets (מדין)*: מדין is just "judgement" (דין), for it is said, *to turn aside the needy from justice (מדין)* (Isa 10:2) – just as there the expression מדין [means] judgement so here [מדין means] judgement; *and you who walk by the way<, speak in praise (שיחו)!>* (Judg 5:10): the Sanhedrin is meant by them, for upon them the world leans. Why do you sit? *Sing* about her! Do not ever be idle with regard to her, for it is said, *Hear, O kings[; give ear, O princes; to the Lord I will sing (אשירה), I will make melody to the Lord, the God of Israel.]* <etc.> (Judg 5:3) *From the voice that divides (מקול מחצצים)* (Judg 5:11): these are those who determine that the unclean is unclean and that the clean is clean, the clean where it should be<, the unclean where it should be>, who <make distinctions with respect to> laws pertaining to the Sabbath, to festive offerings (חגיגות), to the improper use of sacred property (מעילות), and to cases <of dispute> that divide (מחצצים) men. *At the places of drawing water (משאבים)* (Judg 5:11): this is just <but> a [literal] expression for "drawn water," for it is said, *and she drew (ותשאב) for all his*

[91] The verse can be and has been translated in very different ways. See Ackerman, *Warrior, dancer*, 32–34, who opts for taking פרעות as meaning "hair locks."

> *camels.* (Gen 24:20) And it [Scripture] says, *With joy you will draw water (ושבאתם) from the wells of salvation* (Isa 12:3), <for thence they [the Sanhedrin] teach and draw out words of Torah.> Another interpretation: *At the places of drawing water (משאבים)* (Judg 5:11): out of their disagreements they draw out (שאובים) words of Torah, and out of their indignation with each other words of Torah increase. Therefore, it is said, *At the places of drawing water, there they repeat the triumphs [of the Lord, the triumphs of his peasantry (פירזונו) in Israel.]* <etc.> (Judg 5:11) The Holy One, blessed be He, showed great mercy in dispersing (פיזר) Israel among the peoples of the world.(ER 53, l. 25–ER 54, l. 10)

I shall not attempt to analyze the passage above in detail, but rather to highlight the idea that the whole of it appears to be introduced with the phrase "Deborah said" and that in no moment does the midrashist indicate that he takes up the word again. It is rather as if the exegesis that follows the words of Deborah after the inquit formula are also interpretations of her own, quite similar in style to be sure to those of the midrashist.

So viewing the passage as uttered by Deborah, it can be claimed that she first quotes a Proverbs verse and provides an interpretation for it.[92] Then she proceeds with an atomizing exegesis of Judg 5:10. The first expression that is explained, צחורות, which is usually translated as "white," Deborah understands as meaning "the purity of those who do not rob." The expression מדין of the next clause of the verse, usually translated as "rich cloth" or "carpets," is interpreted as referring both to "those who cause to stand in judgement" and to idea of justice itself.[93] In a second interpretation, introduced with the hermeneutic formula דבר אחר, Deborah draws an analogy between the meaning of the homographs מדין in Judg 5:10 and Isa 10:2, a hermeneutic mechanism that is made explicit by the use of the phrase מה ... האמור להלן ... אף כאן ...[94] Deborah's interpretation of Judg 5:10 of her song culminates by her identification of those "who walk" (והולכי) with the Sanhedrin – i.e. the court of law responsible for judging according to rabbinic legislation (הלכה). Her direct address of the Sanhedrin[95] and the extra-textual audience is an admonition to engage in Torah study. To close this interpretive passage, Deborah links Judg 5:10 to Judg 5:3 understanding the verb שיחו of the former not as meaning "meditate," but rather as "praisingly speak," a synonym of אשירה of the latter.

Deborah's exegesis continues with an atomizing exegesis of Judg 5:11 reading the expression מחצצים as referring to those who distinguish, חצץ ("cut off, divide")[96] between

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92 The same verse Prov 3:18 is quoted by the midrashist at the opening passage of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* (ER 3), where he identifies the tree of life with Torah, to which the Proverbs verse is said to refer.

93 This idea is also expressed in bEruv 54b by the school of R. Anan.

94 This expression is a variation of the much more usual construction כשם ש ... כך ...

95 As suggested by the context and Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 163.

96 See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Babli, Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrashic Literature* (W. Druglin: Leipzig; London: Luzac; New York: Putnam's sons, 1903),

ritually pure and impure, who also have a differentiated approach in matters pertaining to laws and to conflicts which divide men (דיני חצצים). She continues with the expression משאבים in *the places of drawing water*, interpreting it first literally, i.e. as referring to "drawing water," and in a second step as metaphorically meaning the way Torah wisdom is gained. For this second interpretation the Isaiah verse provides a transition, for there "draw water" is used figuratively. Deborah claims that it is the conflicts among the sages over interpretation are the very sources of words of Torah. It is worth noting that the focus of this second interpretation also includes the preposition בין, not just the word משאבים.

In her interpretation of the last part of the verse Judg 5:11 Deborah connects the form פירזונו ("his peasantry") with the notion that God was merciful even when he "dispersed" (פיזר) Israel, thus demonstrating her familiarity with yet another hermeneutic practice, one that explains a word by adducing another with the same consonants, though in a different sequence, in this case a word-form of the root פרז is explained by adducing a word-form of the root פזר.[97] The narrative-exegetical segment beginning with "Deborah said" seems to come to a sort of conclusion at this point, assuming that the *maʿaseh* which follows belongs already to the governing voice of the midrashist of *Seder Eliyahu*.[98]

Most of the expressions the rabbinic Deborah seeks to clarify are of uncertain meaning in the scriptural context. Her interpretation is easily comparable to that provided by famous rabbis elsewhere in rabbinic literature. The fact that the author of *Seder Eliyahu* chooses to put them in Deborah's mouth and let her, who already in the scriptural context was exceptional because of her offices as judge and prophetess, be exegete of her own words can be viewed as evidence a sort of a masculinization or empowerment of the feminine voice (mediated by male textual agents) in late midrash as a genre of post-talmudic rabbinic literature. If Judith Baskin's claim that women were known to have undertaken important public roles in the Jewish communities in the Greek-speaking Diaspora of the Roman Empire and that their exclusion of women from the participation in worship, study, and leadership was not the only option, but a male "deliberate choice"[99] holds true after the period she discusses, it could be argued that with such an empowerment in *Seder Eliyahu* there is evidence of an alternative to that choice of rabbinic Judaism.

7.5 Exegetical Contexts III: Rachel

Still most instances of explicit interpretation in *Seder Eliyahu* stem from men. Either the midrashist, named rabbis, God, or male scriptural characters explain how an expression in a scriptural verse is to be understood or retell a passage of Scripture. Rare are the

s.v. חָצַץ II.

97 A case of metathesis. See Samely, *Rabbinic Interpretation*, 378, "Grapheme1."

98 For the concept of governing voice see p. 37, n. 48 .

99 Baskin, *Midrashic women*, 42.

cases where this interpretive act is depicted as originating in a woman, as in the last of the passages on Deborah previously discussed.

In the passage below, found in chapter (30) 28 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, a midrash of Jer 10:20 is partially handed over to the voice of another biblical woman, the matriarch Rachel, as the following passage illustrates:

> *My children have gone from me, and they are no more* (Jer 10:20). Even though Israel was exiled among the peoples of the world, because they engaged in Torah study it was as if they had not been exiled at all. Another interpretation: *My children have gone from me, and they are no more* (Jer 10:20). When Israel were exiled among the peoples of the world, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not intend to return them to their place until the hour in which Rachel stood up in prayer before the Holy One, blessed be He. <She spoke before Him, Master of the universe, let it be remembered that I did not mind my rival. Not only that, but even after my husband had worked for my sake during seven years,>[100] at the time of my [supposed] entrance into the bridal chamber, they substituted (החליפו) Leah, my sister, for me. But I would not speak to Jacob so that he would not tell my voice from my sister's voice. It is an argument *a minori ad majus*: If I, a mortal, did not lose my temper with my rival, will You mind the rivality of idolatry, of them of whom it is said, *They have eyes, but do not see. They have ears, but do not hear* (Ps 115:5–6)? At once His mercies were moved and He swore to Rachel that he would return them to their place, for it is said, *Thus says the Lord: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children[; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.]* etc. (Jer 31:15) You should not read: *Rachel is weeping for her children*, but rather: "The spirit of God is weeping for its children." *She refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more. Thus says the Lord: Keep your voice from weeping[, and your eyes from tears; for there is a reward for your work, says the Lord: they shall come back from the land of the enemy;]* etc. *there is hope for your future, says the Lord: your children shall come back to their own country.* (Jer 31:15–17) (ER 148, l. 22–35)

The chapter in which this passage is found is opened with the quotation of Ps 79:1–2,[101] which are interpreted in the light of Jer 10:20, a verse which God speaks in the scriptural co-text to lament the destruction and which in *Seder Eliyahu* introduced with the formula "Indeed He then explicitly stated in the traditional writings through the prophet Jeremiah."

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100 Friedmann's addition to the text. Not indicated.

101 The verses are selectively quoted as follows: *A Psalm of Asaph. O God, the nations have come into your inheritance[; they have defiled your holy temple; they have laid Jerusalem in ruins.]* etc. *They have given the bodies of your servants [to the birds of the air for food, the flesh of your faithful to the wild animals of the earth.]* etc.

After discussing the first two clauses of the verse,[102] the midrashist turns to the next part of the verse, *My children have gone from me, and they are no more*. According to the first interpretation, because of Israel's study of Torah during their exile among the peoples of the world it is as though they have not gone into exile. As a second interpretation of this verse part we find the narrative about Rachel quoted above.

The midrashist explains the verse as referring to Israel being exiled and to the fact that it was Rachel who changed God's intentions with regard to the question whether Israel should return to their land. The rabbinic Rachel is thus given a powerful voice with which she addresses God and reminds Him of her own predicament on her wedding night, setting an example for God follow – using a *qal-wa-chomer*-argument and quoting a proof-text. The reason why of all the matriarchs Rachel is chosen to fulfil this narrative and hermeneutic task is made explicit when he quotes Jer 31:15 to close the passage, revealing the association of the *children* of Jer 10:20 with Rachel's children of Jer 31:15, of whom both verses predicate that *they are no more*.

Whereas no spatial setting is specified in the narrative, the chronological is, and in a rather problematic way. Then, Rachel who clearly belongs to the biblical times of the patriarchs, and to a textual context in which idolatry plays no significant role (Gen 29), addresses God during the exile. Does such a story time suggest a conflation of disparate biblical and post-biblical times, as seems to be implied in the verse Jer 31:15? Or is the midrashist describing a supernatural phenomenon, a sort of incorporeal apparition of Rachel?[103]

In this midrashic story time, when God does not intend to let Israel return, Rachel addresses God using wording frequently used in *Seder Eliyahu* by the midrashist-narrator himself, namely, "Master of the universe"[104] – and retells in the first person, and as a preamble to her point, her version of the biblical story of Jacob and his two wives. This story she introduces by first pointing out what it will illustrate: that she did not mind Jacob's second wife, her rival, her own sister. Rachel appears to argue that she is worthy of merit because she tolerated that after her husband had worked for seven years in order to deserve her (Gen 29:18), and as she was supposed to enter the bridal chamber, it was her sister Leah who took her place (Gen 29:23). Rachel argues that chose not to expose her sister (or her own humiliation). Rachel's contribution to the interpretation of Jer 10:20 consists in having her own story culminate in a *qal wa-chomer*, with which she argues that if she, as a mere mortal, did not care about the rivalry of her sister, it is expected of God that He should not mind the rivalry of idolatry. Rachel appears to be hinting at the double meaning of *tsarah*, namely "rival" and "distress." Rachel is familiar with rabbinic hermeneutics, making use not only of rules such as the *qal wa-chomer* but also being able to adduce proof-texts, e.g. when she quotes Ps 115:5–6. Rachel's rhetorics and

[102] He focuses in several interpretive instances on the expressions *My tent* (being *destroyed*), and *my cords* of Jer 10:20.

[103] Only her speech, not her physical appearance, is represented.

[104] The address formula is not transmitted in the MS.

hermeneutic strategies causes God to change his mind and have compassion for Israel.

After Rachel's *qal wa-chomer* the midrashist's voice takes over, quoting a later Jeremiah passage (31:15–17) and proposing to read *weeping for her children* as referring not to Rachel, but to the spirit of God. In the scriptural co-text of this Jeremiah text, as in the exegetical narrative of *Seder Eliyahu*, God addresses Rachel promising her that her children *shall come back from the land of the enemy*.

A parallel in Proem 24 of *Ekhah Rabbah* has a more detailed account of what happened on Rachel's wedding night, which answers some of the questions left open in the version in *Seder Eliyahu*. Rachel's story appears in *Ekhah Rabbah* in a more complex narrative context:[105] As part of an Isa 22:12 that consists of a first introductory part by an anonymous voice and a second by R. Samuel b. Nachman, Rachel addresses God after Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses have already pleaded with him for mercy for Israel. Proem 24 of EkhR attests a similar hybridization of biblical and post-biblical times to that of *Seder Eliyahu*. Here, however, both the spatial and the chronological settings of the narrative are spelt out.

The segment in the voice of R. Samuel b. Nachman relates that after the destruction of the Temple God requests the prophet Jeremiah to summon Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and Moses from their sepulchres; these come to the gates of the Temple. The longest dialogue segment is that in which Abraham converses with God, with the Torah, and with its letters before turning again to God and pleading with Him for mercy with his children. Isaac, Jacob, and Moses argue similarly, i.e. retelling a paradigmatically significant moments of their biblical existences before imploring God to have mercy with Israel who are in the exile. The geographical setting changes when Moses asks Jeremiah to lead him to Babylon in order to address the children of Israel and assure them that they will return to their land. When he himself returns to the gates of the Temple he reports to the Patriarchs how Israel is treated in their exile. Moses addresses the sun and the Temple in lamentation, and finally the oppressors imploring them not to kill with cruel death, which he paraphrases as not killing a son in the presence of his father or a daughter in the presence of her mother. The narrator reports how the Chaldeans disregarded his request and had a father kill his son. A last time Moses reproaches God's silence at the killing of many mothers and sons, in spite of Lev 22:28 prohibiting the killing of a cow or a ewe and its young on the same day.[106] The mention of mothers and daughters seems to motivate ultimately the appearance of the matriarch Rachel who addresses God retelling her biblical story:

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[105] This narrative is analyzed by Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 127–128, and Dvora E. Weisberg, "Men imagining Women imagining God: Gender Issues in Classical Midrash," in *Agendas for the Study of Midrash in the twenty-first century*, ed. Marc Lee Raphael (Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary, 1999), 74–77. A shorter parallel is found in bMeg 13b.

[106] The same verse is quoted in another narrative context to be analysed later on, that of Miriam and her seven sons killed in her presence. See section Ethical contexts I.

> Sovereign of the Universe, it is revealed [and known[107]] before Thee that Thy servant Jacob loved me exceedingly and toiled for my father on my behalf seven years. When those seven years were completed and the time arrived for my marriage with my husband, my father planned to substitute my sister[108] for me to wed my husband for the sake of my sister. It was very hard for me, because the plot was known to me, so I disclosed it to my husband. I gave him a sign whereby he could distinguish between me and my sister, so that my father should not be able to make the substitution. After that I relented, suppressed my desire, and had pity upon my sister that she should not be exposed to shame. In the evening they substituted my sister for me with my husband, and I delivered over to my sister all the signs which I had arranged with my husband so that he should think that she was Rachel. More than that, I went beneath the bed upon which he lay with my sister; and when he spoke to her she remained silent and I made all the replies in order that he should not recognise my sister's voice. I did her a kindness, was not jealous of her, and did not expose her to shame.

This version of Rachel's story clearly contains essential information for the understanding of the plot which is not available in its concise parallel in *Seder Eliyahu*.[109] EkhR follows the scriptural hypotext more closely in depicting Laban as the mastermind of the sisters' swap, and mentions the fact that both women were in the same room in the wedding night and that only one was heard, namely Rachel. The sisters together design how to deceive Jacob in order to protect Leah. This is not the case in *Seder Eliyahu*: Neither is Laban mentioned here, nor is the reader informed as to where Rachel is during the wedding night, i.e. where is it that she remains silent, or what her intention is in not letting Jacob tell the difference between her and her sister. The change in *Seder Eliyahu* is not minor: Rachel's remaining silent is clearly less humiliating than her replying to her husband from beneath the bed where he lies with her sister. Whereas in EkhR the sisters explicitly conspire to have Jacob in darkness over the situation, in *Seder Eliyahu* he is equally ignorant, but without any secret signs or off-voice playing any role.

Although the character of Rachel is in both versions empowered by the male rabbinic voice who lets "her" tell her story in the first person, address God in direct speech, and compare herself with God with a hermeneutic move which is usually reserved for male voices, to say, however, that Rachel speaks for herself can be an oversimplified view of how these texts operate.

Narratology provides the category of focalization which might be helpful not only for a discussion of Modernist texts, but eventually also for ancient storytelling.[110] The concept, according to Genette, is said to support the distinction between the questions

[107] According to MS Munich 229.
[108] Instead of Cohen's "another" the Hebrew reading אחותי is preferred.
[109] It is worth noting that Friedmann follows the *editio princeps* for this passage.
[110] On the concept see chapter 4, especially p. 72.

'who speaks?' (narrator) and 'who sees?' (focalizer),[111] but has also to do with how information conveyed by a narrative is selected and restricted, i.e. focalization can also be regarded as "a selection of or a focusing *on* a particular region of the storyworld."[112] Whereas such a distinction between narrator and focalizer might be more evident in heterodiegetic texts,[113] when it comes to first-person narratives such as Rachel's retrospective account of her wedding night it is appears as pertinent to ask how this distinction is to be made. In other words: is the perspective (or point of view or focalization)[114] in homodiegetic (first-person) texts necessarily that of the character who is the narrator or is it possible to distinguish different perceiving subjects – the character of the story time and the character beyond the story time, once he or she has assumed the role of narrator? Mieke Bal provides a plausible answer:

> In a so-called 'first-person narrative' too an external focalizor, usually the 'I' grown older, gives its vision of a fabula in which it participated earlier as an actor, from the outside. At some moments it can present the vision of its younger alter ego, so that a CF [character-bound focalizer] is focalizing on the second level.[115]

Since we have to do with a record of what the *biblical* Rachel saw, felt, and (according to the narrator Rachel) let happen, it can be assumed that the narrative conveys her point of view. It could be argued the Rachel of Gen 29 is focalizer as far as the events and involved people (focalized object[116]) are concerned – it is her perspective, not that of Leah, nor that of Jacob, from which their story is told. The texts certainly do not give

[111] See Genette, "Discours du récit," 203.

[112] Burkhard Niederhoff, "Focalization," in *the living handbook of narratology*, ed. Peter Hühn et al. (Hamburg: Hamburg University Press, 2009–), paragraph 13, `http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/article/focalization`.

[113] In this type of texts both internal, i.e. character-bound, or an external focalization, i.e. narrator-bound, are possible. Bal, *Narratology*, 152, points out: "When focalization lies with one character which participates in the fabula as an actor, we could refer to internal focalization. We can indicate by means of the term external focalization that an anonymous agent, situated outside the fabula, is functioning as focalizor."

[114] On the debate concerning the proper methodological use of these terms see Burkhard Niederhoff, "Fokalisation und Perspektive: Ein Plädoyer für friedliche Koexistenz," *Poetica* 33 (2001): 1–21.

[115] See Bal, *Narratology*, 112. "Focalization and the First-Person Narrator: A Revision of the Theory," *Poetics Today* 10 (1989): 729, pointed out that during the first decade of the debate, "[l]ittle attention has been paid to the problem of focalization in texts in which narrator and character are the same individual." Manfred Jahn, "Focalization," in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 100, observes: "Indeed, in many first-person (homodiegetic) texts ... the point of perceptual origin hovers between two co-ordinate systems because first-person narrator and protagonist – also called the "narrating I" and the "experiencing I," respectively – are separated in time and space but linked through a biographical identity relation."

[116] See Bal, *Narratology*, 153–160. Characters and narrators focalize "objects, landscapes, events"

the point of view of a disappointed young bride (the experiencing I), but rather that of a distant, wise woman (the remembering, narrating I). Furthermore, the language she uses in *Seder Eliyahu* and in EkhR is that of a *rabbinic* female narrator, able to use her narrative as a hermeneutic tool.[117] *This* Rachel is given a voice she does not have in the scriptural account and is capable of objectively regarding her own conduct and using it as term of a comparison with God in a speech with which she addresses him. This narrating remembering self, separated in time (and probably also space) from the experiencing I, connects her own story with the content and rhetorics of that other, nameless male narrator of the narrative in which her own one is framed. With Bal we could speak, even in the case of a first person narrative, of a general external focalization, since we have to do with a "narrator-focalizer." [118] As Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan has suggested the perceptual facet of the Genettean focalization concept can be complemented by a psychological and an ideological facet. The latter is probably a suitable tool for describing the transformation of scriptural accounts by rabbinic narrative agents, as in the type of narratives discussed here.[119]

Rachel's brief first person narrative in *Seder Eliyahu* is framed an the exegetical narrative in the voice of the midrashist. This male rabbinic voice seems to pervade Rachel's vision of the events, it determines where her speech and narrative begins and ends, before taking up his own narrative to link Rachel's account with the Jeremiah verse which name Rachel as weeping for her children (Jer 31:15) and this in turn with Jer 10:20.

To sum up, Rachel is the narrator and external focalizer of her biblical story as this is seen and selected out of the more extensive scriptural account by the midrashist-narrator, in whose narrative the one told by Rachel is embedded. However, it is the voice not of a scriptural disappointed bride, but of a midrashic woman to which God responds. The fact that it is a woman who closes the petichah is specially highlighted in the parallel passage in EkhR where Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses plead with God for mercy before Rachel succeeds with her speech in having God change his mind.[120]

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and characters, but they also exclude elements in their selection. Laban, the architect of that wedding night, is not even mentioned in Rachel's account in *Seder Eliyahu*.

117 Rachel's familiarity with rabbinic language is ascertained in her use of expressions found elsewhere in *Seder Eliyahu* and in the rabbinic corpus, e.g. "Master of the universe," *al achat kama we-khama*, *qal wa-chomer* etc.

118 See Bal, *Narratology*, 152–153. See also Edmiston, "Focalization and the First-Person Narrator": 730, "Since most theorists define internal focalization as the presentation of events by a character within the fictional world, they all locate personal narration in this category, presumably because an FPN is a fictional character. This definition seems most unsatisfactory because it equates, for purposes of focalization, an FPN with a focal character who perceives but does not narrate."

119 See Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd. ed. (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 82–83.

120 With regard to the analysis of the EkhR passage by Hasan-Rokem, *Web of life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 127–128, Dvorah Weisberg, "Women and Torah Study," 50, re-

7.6 Exegetical Contexts IV: Suicidal Women

Further on in chapter (30) 28 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* we find three narratives on how Rome oppressed and killed myriads of Jews are told as midrashim on Ps 79:1. The first two are brief narratives told by R. Eliezer. The third, quoted below, told in the collective anonymous voice of the sages,[121] is of a more complex structure and considerably longer:[122]

> And the sages said, *A psalm of Asaph* (Ps 79:1). Hadrian Caesar came and seized a widow<, named Miriam daughter of Tanchum>, and her seven sons. He asked her, Who are you? She answered, I am a widow, a mother.[123] <He said,> And these children, whose are they? Yours? Given that they are standing with you? She answered, They are my sons. <He took them and imprisoned them separately.> He brought the first one, the eldest, and said to him, Bow down to this divinity <as your brothers bowed down>. He replied, God forbid <that my brothers should have so bowed down! Neither will I;> I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written, *So acknowledge today and take to heart [that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.]* etc. (Deut 4:39) At once they took a sword and cut off his head. He brought the second and said to him, Bow down to this divinity <as your brothers bowed down>. He replied, God forbid <that my brothers should have so bowed down! Neither will I;> I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords[, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe]* (Deut 10:17). At once they took a sword and cut off his head. He brought the third and spoke to him, Bow down to this divinity <and likewise to the rest>. He replied, God forbid! I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *you shall have no other gods besides me.* (Exod 20:3) At once they

marks: "As Hasan-Rokem points out, Rachel's presentation differs on several levels from those of the patriarchs and Moses. They are summoned; she comes of her own accord. They speak of momentous events in the history of the Jewish people; she speaks of her personal struggle. They speak of justice; she speaks of love, loyalty, and empathy. This story highlights a woman speaking with a woman's voice about women's concerns, and it is that voice that impels God, frequently portrayed as an angry, violent father-figure, to relent and show compassion to Israel."

121 The same three stories are told in bGit 57a. The first two anonymously, the third, the one discussed here by Rab Judah.

122 This story has many parallels – bGit 57b, EkhR 1, PesR 43, YalqShim *Ki Tabo*, EkhZ 1, as well as 2 Macc 7, with a different historical setting, i.e. as part of the account of the persecution in the times of Antiochus Epiphanes. See on this version Paul Volz, *Die Eschatologie der jüdischen Gemeinde* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934), 237, who sees in it an example of the development of the resurrection doctrine to include martyrs of the recent past. Only some of these versions will be taken into account for a comparative reading in this chapter.

123 Friedmann puts the word אם in brackets.

took a sword and cut off his head. He brought the fourth and said to him, Go and bow down to this. He replied, God forbid! I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *for you shall worship no other god* (Exod 34:14). At once they took a sword and cut off his head. He brought the fifth. He said to him, Go and bow down to this. He replied, God forbid! I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *Whoever sacrifices to any god[, other than the Lord alone,] shall be devoted to destruction.* (Exod 22:19) At once they took a sword and cut off his head. He brought the sixth. He said to him, Go and bow down to this. He replied, God forbid! I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *The Lord will reign for ever and ever.* (Exod 15:18) He brought the seventh, the youngest. He said to him, Go and bow down to this. He replied, God forbid! I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for we swore to the Holy One, blessed be He, that we would not worship any other god, and the Holy One, blessed be He, swore to us that He would not exchange us for another people, for it is said, *Today you have obtained the Lord's agreement[: to be your God; and for you to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, and his ordinances, and to obey him.]* <etc.> *Today the Lord has obtained your agreement[: to be his treasured people, as he promised you, and to keep his commandments]* <etc.> (Deut 26:17–18) He said to him, If you do not bow down to this divinity, see, I will throw this ring for you and and you will pick[124] it up from in front of it [the divinity], so that everyone standing before it will say, He has listened to Caesar's words and has bowed down to it. He answered, Woe unto you, Caesar, and unto the words you speak to me. Even if you, a carnal being are being put to shame by another carnal being such as me, I will not be put to shame before the King of kings. He asked him, Is there really a God for the world? He answered, Do you think the world is ownerless? [He asked him,] Does your God really have a head? He answered him, It has already been said, *His head is the finest gold* (Song 5:11). He asked him, Does your God really have ears? He answered him, It has already been said: *The Lord took note and listened* (Mal 3:16). He asked him, Does your God really have eyes? He answered him, Has it not already been said, *the eyes of the Lord, which range through [the whole earth]* (Zech 4:10)? He asked him, Does your God really have a nose? He answered, See, it has already been said, *And the Lord smelt the pleasing odour* (Gen 8:21). He asked him, Does your God really have a mouth? He answered, Has it not already been said, *and all their host by the breath of his mouth* (Ps 33:6)? He asked him, Does your God really have a palate (חיך)? He answered, Has it not already been said, *His speech (חכו) is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable* (Song 5:16)? He asked him, Does your God really have hands? He answered, Has it not already been said, *My hand laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand*

124 Friedmann emends MS reading, ובא, with ושא.

> *spread out the heavens* (Isa 48:13)? He asked him, Does your God really have feet? He answered, Has it not already been said, *On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives* (Zech 14:4)? He asked him, Does your God really have power? He answered, Has it not already been said, *See, the Lord's hand is not too short to save* (Isa 59:1)? He said to him, Since your God has power and his eyes see and his ears hear, why has He not revealed himself and rescued you all from my hands? He answered, Fool in the world! You are not worthy of having miracles performed on your account. Given that we are doomed to death, even if you do not kill us, the Omnipresent has many killers, the Omnipresent has many bears, the Omnipresent has many leopards, many serpents, many scorpions, many lions, who could attack us. At once he ordered that they killed him. At that moment the mother said to him [Caesar], By your life, Caesar! By your life, Caesar! Give me my son that I might kiss him. He gave him to her. She would embrace him, hug him, and kiss him. She would take her nipple and put it into his mouth, honey and milk would overflow and fall to the ground, to fulfill what is said, *honey and milk are under your tongue* (Song 4:11). She spoke to him again, By your life, Caesar! By your life, Caesar! Put the sword to my neck and to the neck of my son <at the same time (lit. "together")>. Caesar said to her, God forbid! I shall not do such a thing, for so it is written in the Torah, *[But you shall not slaughter, from] the herd or the flock, an animal [with its young on the same day.]* etc. (Lev 22:28) The boy said to him, Fool in the world! Do you [think you] fulfil the whole Torah beyond this verse? At once they took the sword and cut off his head. The sages estimated the boy's age and he was found to be two years, six months, and seven and a half hours old. At that time the peoples of the world tore their hair and beards, and weeping with great lamentation said, What has their Father done that they were thus killed for His sake? Of that time it [Scripture] says, *What is your beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women?* (Song 5:9) At that time their mother spoke to them, My sons, go and speak to Abraham, your father, Do not be proud because you could say, I built an altar and offered my son upon it. I built seven altars and offered upon them my seven sons. Their mother spoke to them again, Happy are you in that you did the will of your Father in heaven and were in the world only to sanctify His great name <with your hands>, for it is said, *Through those who are near me I will show myself holy* (Lev 10:3). Thereupon she prostrated herself and then went up to the roof, threw herself off and died. A divine voice went forth addressing her, Of you Scripture says, *joyous mother of children.* (Ps 113:9) (ER 151, l. 24–ER 153, l. 15)

The passage contains a narrative account on how Hadrian seizes a widow and her seven sons, and forces the children to worship an idol. Friedmann adds the wording of an interlinear gloss in the Vatican manuscript according to which the woman's name is Miriam and she is further identified as the daughter of (a certain) Tanchum. When asked by the

emperor after her identity with the question מה טיביך, literally "what is your nature?", she identifies herself as a widow, and as a mother. This last word, אם, is put in brackets by Friedmann the way he usually does when he wants to indicate a deficient reading. Now the fact that the woman sees herself as a widow *and* as a mother does not appear to be a superficial piece of information. Thereupon, the emperor inquires whose the children standing next to her are, to which she responds that they are her sons. Hadrian imprisons the children separately and has them brought to him, one after the other, to force them to idolatry. The first three he commands to bow down to an idol which is not further characterized. Friedmann's additions to Hadrian's speech, actually interlinear glosses of the MS[125] – "as your brothers bowed down" – imply a cunning strategy on the side of the emperor, who tries to persuade the boys by telling each of them that his brothers before him has worshipped an idol. Nonetheless, each of Miriam's sons refuses to obey, assuming that his brothers are not capable of such an action. The wording of the commands to the following four sons is a shorter one which does not even refer to the divinity with the noun *eloha* but just with the deictic *zeh*. After each of the first six sons has refused to worship the idol and quoted a proof-text legitimating his behaviour, he is without further ado beheaded by the emperor's (unnamed) guards.[126] The dialogues with the first six boys show little variance, each of the boys differs from the others only in the verse he quotes, not in their characterization, which is minimal and consists only in their speech acts – in fact, all the boys do is refuse from following the emperor's order and quote a verse before being beheaded. Rather than actual martyrs, they appear to be mere mouthpieces for a composite scriptural argument for monotheism. The table below illustrates the schematic character of the first six dialogues between the emperor and the boys:

Table 7.1: Dialogues between emperor and the woman's sons: Words of children who die for God

Emperor's words	*Sons' answers*
Bow down to this divinity [as your brothers bowed down]	God forbid [that my brothers should have so bowed down! Neither will I:] I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written, *So acknowledge today and take to heart [that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.]* etc. (Deut 4:39)
Bow down to this divinity [as your brothers bowed down]	God forbid [that my brothers should have so bowed down! Neither will I:] I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords[, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe]* (Deut 10:17).
Bow down to this divinity [like this, this way to the rest]	God forbid! I don't bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *you shall have no other gods besides me.* (Exod 20:3)

125 As Friedmann acknowledges in ER 151, n. 17.
126 The plural verb forms suggest this.

Go and bow down to this	God forbid! I don't bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *for you shall worship no other god* (Exod 34:14).
Go and bow down to this	God forbid! I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *Whoever sacrifices to any god[, other than the Lord alone,] shall be devoted to destruction.* (Exod 22:19)
Go and bow down to this	God forbid! I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for it is written in the Torah, *The Lord will reign for ever and ever.* (Exod 15:18)
Come, bow down to this	God forbid! I do not bow down to the work of man's hands, for we swore to the Holy One, blessed be He, that we would not worship any other god, and the Holy One, blessed be He, swore to us that He would not exchange us for another people, for it is said, *Today you have obtained the Lord's agreement[: to be your God; and for you to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, and his ordinances, and to obey him.]* <etc.> *Today the Lord has obtained your agreement[: to be his treasured people, as he promised you, and to keep his commandments]* <etc.> (Deut 26:17–18).

The seventh son is the only one who explains in more detail why he refuses and repeatedly defies the emperor. Instead of having him immediately beheaded the emperor seems keen on persuading him. He comes up with an idea with which he attempts to trick, not the boy, but rather whoever has been witnessing the killing of the children. He explains to the boy that he will throw a ring before the idol, so that the child bends over to pick it up giving the impression that he has actually bowed down. The child criticizes the emperor for stooping to such tricks and putting another mortal to shame, when he himself, a child, would never put God to shame. The next part of the dialogue focuses on God's anthropomorphic attributes. To each question the emperor poses the child responds with just a scriptural quotation confirming an attribute,[127] which the emperor in turn uses to mock the child. He argues that although God has power, eyes and ears, he has not saved the child and his brothers from the emperor's hands. The child defies the emperor one last time by replying to this question and explaining that the emperor is no more than one of the many tools God can make use of to have human beings die. At this cue Hadrian orders the boy to be killed.

Only at this moment does the mother regain her voice in the narrative. The reader can assume that she has silently witnessed the execution of each of the six sons without reacting or being able to make her feelings manifest. In any case, before her seventh son is killed she begs the emperor to allow her to hold her son and is granted her request. She embraces, hugs and kisses her son, after which she breastfeeds the child with spurting "milk and honey" – to depict Miriam's hyperbolic motherly gesture the passage

[127] The emperor asks whether God has a head, ears, eyes, nose, mouth, palate, hands, feet, power, to which the child responds quoting respectively Song 5:11, Mal 3:16, Zech 4:10, Gen 8:21, Ps 33:6, Song 5:16, Isa 48:13, Zech 14:4 and Isa 59:1. See table below for a comparison with the parallel in EkhR 1.

chooses a phrase used in Scripture to describe the Land of Israel.[128] The woman pleads with Hadrian, addressing him as Caesar, that he kill her together with her son, to which Hadrian replies that the Torah prohibits killing a cow or a ewe and its young both on one day, quoting Lev 22:28. The child calls Hadrian a fool for a second time – either for his foolishness or for his insincerity, since, so he argues, by fulfilling one verse of Torah one does not fulfil the whole Torah. These are his last words before the unnamed guards behead him.

Two digressions interrupt the narrative. First, the narrator-midrashist relates how the sages calculated[129] the age of the last child and came to the conclusion that he was two years, six months and seven and a half hours old.[130] What brings the sages to ask after the age of this last child, while leaving the ages of the rest of his brothers unmentioned? It could be argued that it is the contradictory image of a brave and wise child who confronts the emperor while still depending on his mother to be breastfed. But the interpretive process by which they arrive at this very precise age is not revealed.

The second short digression relates how, at the time of their death, these children were especially wept for by the peoples of the world who do not comprehend what is so special about their God that they are willing to die for his sake. The midrashist paraphrases the question of the peoples of the world by quoting Song 5:9.

In the final segment of the story, to which the narrators of the whole passage, i.e. the sages, return after these narrative digressions, Miriam is the centre of attention. This episode consists of two speeches by Miriam. The first she addresses at her dead children asking them to deliver in her name another speech in Abraham's presence. In it she argues that her loss of seven children surpasses the patriarch's attempted sacrifice of his son Isaac. She tells Abraham not to pride himself because he built an altar and offered his son upon it, for she herself has built seven altars and offered her seven children. The second speech is a blessing which exalts her children's piety, their dying to sanctify the great name of God, as Lev 10:3 attests. These are her last words, before going up to the roof, jumping and dying as the eighth martyr of her family.

A likewise elaborate version is anonymously told in EkhR 1.[131] Miriam is not introduced as a widow, but her seven children are one after the other executed for not obeying the nameless governor's (שלטון) command to bow down to an image. Unlike the opening of the story in the *Seder Eliyahu* the governor seems to identify the children as belonging to Miriam since there is no questioning her in this regard. As in *Seder Eliyahu*, also in

[128] The phrase is used in 21 verses, most of them in the Pentateuch, some in the Prophets, and one in Song of Songs. 20 of them are used to refer to the Land of Israel, Song 4:11 being the exception in that it is used to refer to a human being, to describe the lover's mouth.

[129] The phrase חכמים שיערו ("the sages estimated, calculated") is very frequent in rabbinic texts. The measure seven and a half is a common one (e.g. bQid 12a etc).

[130] Two and a half years, roughly the age of the boy, is the traditional length of the Bar Kochba revolt, see e.g. SOR 30.

[131] For the following reading I follow Buber's version of EkhR.

EkhR 1 Miriam is not imprisoned but only her children, so that she silently witnesses the killing of her sons. These refuse to revere the image in front of them justifying their behaviour with scriptural quotations which are only in three cases the same used in *Seder Eliyahu* (see table 7.2). The repetitive character of the questioning of the first six boys is accentuated by the governor speaking every time exactly the same words, השתחוה לצלם כשם שהשתחוו אחיך ("Bow down to the image as your brothers prostrated themselves"). The seventh child, introduced as the youngest as in *Seder Eliyahu*, refuses also here to accept the governor's trick and bow down to pick up a ring so that onlookers think he has given up resistance. The child refuses to act as the governor wishes, whom he addresses as emperor, due to his fear[132] of the "God of the world." This way of referring to God leads to a next section on the attributes of God which is structured by the questions of the emperor, as in the parallel version in *Seder Eliyahu*.

Whereas the child in *Seder Eliyahu* only responds with quotations dealing with God, in the EkhR version the child first states that the emperor's idols are referred to as having these attributes but not the function attached to them, and only then reaffirms these attributes as true only of his God: Thus, for each of the emperor's questions, the child responds with two scriptural quotations. The order and number of the attributes – mouth, eyes, ears, nose, hands, feet, and throat – is not the same as in *Seder Eliyahu* and seems to be given by their order in Ps 115, which the child uses for the first part of his answers, as illustrated in the table below, where the verses set in italics indicate that they appear in both versions, even if the scriptural wording actually quoted is not in both cases identical.

Table 7.2: Scriptural verses used in EkhR 1 and ER 151–ER 153: God's anthropomorphic attributes

EkhR 1		*ER 151–ER 153*	
mouth	Ps 115:5; *Ps 33:6*	head	Song 5:11
eyes	Ps 115:5; Deut 11:12	ears	*Mal 3:16*
ears	Ps 115:6; *Mal 3:16*	eyes	Zech 4:10
nose	Ps 115:6; *Gen 8:21*	nose	*Gen 8:21*
hands	Ps 115:7; *Isa 48:13*	mouth	*Ps 33:6*
feet	Ps 115: 7; *Zech 14:4*, Mic 1:3	palate	*Song 5:16*
throat	Ps 115:7; *Song 5:16*	hands	*Isa 48:13*
		feet	*Zech 14:4*
		power	Isa 59:1

Both versions coincide in having the emperor eventually argue against the evidence of Scripture that a God with such attributes would have been expected to rescue the child and its brothers, as he did rescue Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, in an allusion to Dan 3.[133] The boy replies that these three were righteous men who fell into the hands

[132] Notice that the verb used in this version is אתיירא ("fear"), whereas *Seder Eliyahu* has אתבייש ("humiliate, put to shame").

[133] The emperor alludes to the narrative of Dan 3 where Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (i.e. the Chaldean names for Hebrew ones Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah) were condemned to

of a righteous king, worthy of having miracles performed on his account, whereas he and his brothers are sinners and fall therefore into the hands of a wicked and merciless king. The boy argues that God has handed them over to the emperor to avenge their lives on him in the future. The emperor does not reply to the boy, but just orders his death.

The mother, of whom the reader also here gains the impression that she has been present during all the questionings, raises her voice at this moment. Her direct speech is barely introduced with the abbreviated formula א״ל. Her request to be able to hold her child is granted her, after which she embraces her son, bares her breast and suckles the *puer senex* with milk and honey, a sort of proof-text of this is Song 4:11. To the mother's plea that she be killed together with her son, the emperor refers to the prohibition in Lev 22:28. At this moment the narrator for the first time qualifies the seventh son as תינוק רשע ("a wicked child"), as if anticipating its imminent execution. Taken away from her embrace and probably seized by the guards, he is a last time addressed by his mother who gives him a message for him to deliver in her name to Abraham, in whose bosom she assumes her child should be:

> You built an altar but did not sacrifice your son. I, on the other hand, built seven altars and sacrificed on them my sons. Not only that, yours was a trial, mine were deeds.

At the time of the child's death (כיון) the sages calculate his age, coming also to the conclusion that he was six and a half years and two hours old[134] – a detail which would accentuate Miriam's extraordinary motherliness in being able to breastfeed the child.

The end of the story in EkhR 1 differs from that in *Seder Eliyahu* in letting Miriam get demented (אמרו לאחר ימים נשתטית האשה ההיא). Her death is therefore less of a voluntary act than in *Seder Eliyahu*, since her will is not any more in her hands. The narrative comes to an end with the Spirit of Holiness' own words on these events as being referred to by Lam 1:16: *For these things I weep*. While Miriam was depicted as especially resilient, able to endure the death of her children and defy the male biblical paradigma of willingness of sacrifice of the Akedah, this ending lets her become a more human mother of seven.[135]

The woman is nameless in the version of the story contained in bGit 57b, a less elaborate one than its counterpart in the *Seder Eliyahu*.[136] The story is told by a named narrator, Rab Judah, as referring to the verse *Because of you we are being killed all day long, and accounted as sheep for the slaughter.* (Ps 44:22) The emperor, who remains

death in a fiery furnace for refusing to worship the golden image Nebuchadnezzar made but were rescued by God.

[134] According to Buber's reading. The Vilna edition (= MS Munich 229 in Maagarim) reads two years, six months and six and a half hours, as *Seder Eliyahu*.

[135] The parallel in 2 Macc 7 does not even mention the death of the mother.

[136] The story appears in the Gemara to mGit 5:6 (on the Sicaricon) which forms part of a long appendix on the wars against Rome, starting with bGit 55b.

nameless, does not use any stratagem such as imprisoning the brothers separately and trying to persuade each of them to worship an idol by arguing that their brothers have done so. Moreover, it is not evident that he himself addresses the children. Every child is treated and addressed by an impersonal "they": "They brought the first before the Emperor and said to him, Serve the idol. He said to them: It is written in the Law ..." The children's answers consist only of an introductory formula and a quotation, with the exception of the last boy's speech. Every child quotes a different scriptural verse (the same used in EkhR 1), three of which (italics) are those quoted in the *Seder Eliyahu*:

Table 7.3: Scriptural verses used in *Seder Eliyahu*, EkhR 1, and bGit 57a: A composite scriptural argument for monotheism

ER 151–ER 153	*EkhR 1*	*bGit 57a*
Deut 4:39	Exod 20:2	Exod 20:2
Deut 10:17	*Exod 20:3*	*Exod 20:3*
Exod 20:3	Exod 22:19	Exod 22:19
Exod 34:14	Exod 20:5	Exod 20:5
Exod 22:19	*Deut 4:39*	Deut 6:4
Exod 15:18	Deut 6:4	*Deut 4:39*
Deut 26:17–18	*Deut 26:17–18*	Deut 26:17–18

As a variation of the versions of *Seder Eliyahu* and EkhR the emperor suggests in this version throwing down a seal (with his image) before the boy so that when he bows down to pick it up he gives the impression of having worshipped the idol. The boy reprimands the emperor using a *qal wa-chomer* arguing that if the Emperor's honour is important, how much more important is the honour of the Holy One. The conversation between the emperor and the boy comes here to an end. There is no segment on God's attributes and no further provocation on the part of the emperor. As the boy is being led to be killed his mother pleads with the Emperor to be able to kiss her son, whom she asks to tell Abraham that he bound one son to an altar, whereas she has bound seven. These are her last words before she goes to the roof and jumps to take her life. A *bat qol* approves of her action as in *Seder Eliyahu* quoting Ps 113:9.

An even shorter version is found in PesR 43,[137] a piska which deals for the most part with barrenness – not with childlessness as the result of a mother's children being killed. Both forms of childlessness are explained as periods of trial for women such as Hannah, Sarah, and Jochebed who are eventually rewarded with the birth of central biblical characters. Miriam's story is told as part of a midrash on Ps 113:9, a verse that R. Tanchuma bar Abba brings in connection with the petichah verse 1 Sam 2:21.[138]

Miriam's narrative is introduced with the quotation of the first part of this verse and a brief anticipatory interpretation by God himself who claims to have made Miriam child-

[137] I follow the text of Meir Friedmann, ed., *Pesiqta Rabbati: Midrasch für den Fest-Cyclus und die ausgezeichneten Sabbathe* (Vienna: Selbsverlag des Herausgebers, 1880; repr. Tel Aviv, 1963).

[138] Ps 113:9 is spoken in *Seder Eliyahu*, EkhR 1, and bGit 57a by a *bat qol*.

less to let her rejoice in her children in the world-to-come. The narrative itself is told by the sages: Miriam, the daughter of Tanchum, is not herself arrested but her seven children. Who forces every one of them to bow before the idol is not explicitly stated, but the chronological setting, the times of persecution (בימי השמד), allow us to suppose that the same agents as in the previously discussed versions are implied.

The short dialogues with the first and the second sons are represented in direct speech. To the command to pay reverence to an idol they both reply that they will not deny their God. The children are not decapitated but bound to a grid iron (הטיגן) and roasted to death.[139] The trials and deaths of the third till the sixth child are only briefly mentioned as having taken place following the same pattern of the first executions. Only when the narrators, "Our masters," come to the seventh boy do they return to a more detailed narrative style, using direct speech again. The boy threatens the same torture his brothers have endured before should he refuse to worship the idol. He requests to speak to his mother, before giving an answer to his oppressors. Once in front of her he asks whether he should or not obey them, to which his mother replies suggesting that he follow the example of his brothers, so as to be with them in Abraham's bosom, a figurative expression with probably a meaning close to the eschatological one "the world to come." The child follows his mother's suggestion, suffering the same death his brothers suffered before him. After killing the widow's seventh child they also kill her – though how, the narrators do not specify. God's interpretation of Miriam's story as referring to her childlessness is mentioned again at the end of the episode, reminding the reader that she will rejoice in her children in the world-to-come, fulfilling the second part of the psalm verse, *a joyful mother of children*.

Miriam is not the only woman who ends her life in *Seder Eliyahu*, as we see in the following narrative of maiden who would not marry a non-Jew:

> It happened to maiden (ברתא) whose father was on very friendly terms with a heathen that [once] while they were eating and drinking, doing their hearts good, the heathen said to her father, Give your daughter to my son for a wife. She remained still before him (החרישה לו) until the time of her wedding came. When the time of her wedding came, she went up to a roof, jumped off, and died. A divine voice (*bat qol*) went forth proclaiming, Of such as her Scripture says, *[Who can] describe Israel's manner of lying down?* (Num 23:10) When Balaam, the son of Beor, prophesied all those comforts and consolations to Israel, he wept in his heart, saying, *Let me die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his!'* (ibid.) This teaches that the wicked Balaam wished for the death that Moses and Aaron would have, saying, If I die on my bed, see, it will be like Moses' and Aaron['s death]. If not, it will not be like Moses' and Aaron['s death]. (ER 116, l. 15–22)

[139] This is also the end of the torture of the first son in 2 Macc 7:5.

This *maʿaseh* is told as part of a midrash on Num 23:10 in Chapter (21) 19 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*.[140] Contrary to Braude and Kapstein who translate החרישה לו as "he [the father] said nothing to her,"[141] a literal reading is preferred here, since it is not the father who chooses not to tell the daughter of the marriage arrangements, but she the one who by remaining still only apparently acquiesces to give a decisive answer at the very time of the wedding. Although both women, Miriam and the unnamed maiden in this short narrative decide to take their lives in what could be termed voluntary martyrdom[142] and their conduct is in both cases praised by a divine voice, the context in which the maiden's story is told is not one of oppression from the outside but from the very family which neglects the maiden's religious convictions. Unlike Miriam, the young maiden remains silent during her whole story and only expresses her will regarding her ethics and her sexuality by killing herself.[143]

The immediate preceding co-text of the *maʿaseh* makes clear that the story is told to exemplify how the young in Israel are masters over their sexual inclinations until they marry. The scriptural confirmation for this notion is found in a reading of the expression רובע in the first part of Num 23:10,[144] *Who can count the dust of Jacob*, where עפר ("dust") is read as עופר, i.e. as referring to the many "fawns" or "young deers" within Israel who do not occupy themselves with matters related to weapons, i.e. they do not fight. In a further hermeneutic operation, the verse is more explicitly taken to allude to the innumerable young boys in Israel who remain enclosed in their purity till they enter the bridal chamber. Not only young boys, the midrash goes on to argue, but also young girls, thus introducing the *maʿaseh* of the suicidal girl.

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140 A similar motif is present in the Aggadah of Herod in bBB 3b, in the story of the Hasmonean girl who commits suicide by throwing herself from the roof of her house to prevent Herod marrying her and becoming king. See Yonatan Feintuch, "External appearance versus internal truth: The Aggadah of Herod in Bavli Bava Batra," *AJS Review* 35 (2011): 85–104.

141 See Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 293.

142 The story of Miriam is followed by another which depicts Rabban Simeon ben Gamaliel and R. Ishmael as martyrs (ER 153).

143 The Hasmonean girl of bBB 3b speaks aloud the reason for her suicide: She wants to prevent Herod from using her to "become" a Hasmonean king. Incidentally, a total of three stories in *Seder Eliyahu* depict a woman going up to the roof as if we were dealing with a gender-specific conduct. See Avigdor Aptowitzer, "Seder Elia," in *Jewish Studies: In Memory of George A. Kohut, 1874–1933*, edited by S. W. Baron and A. Marx (New York: The Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation, 1935), 9, who discusses this passage as an example of the manner in which *Seder Eliyahu* warns its readers of intermarriage, which has a counterpart in the way the patriarch Jeschu bar Nun polemicizes on intermarriage between Jews and Christians.

144 Chapter (21) 19 of *Seder Eliyahu* is a midrash on a verse part of Lam 2:19 – *Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street* – and can be seen as an appendix to or a continuation of chapter 18 which deals extensively (ER 89–115) with this verse. The Lamentations verse is read here in light of the Balaam episode of Num 22–24.

According to the wider context of the chapter, especially in view of its opening lines, however, the girl's death is far from exemplary: She belongs namely to those children who remain silent (ויחריש) when their parents speak superfluous words and whose punishment is that they will not live out their days. The girl's conduct differs from these other silent children in her apparently not fearing her father. Nevertheless, the midrashist sees this behaviour as being in accordance with his exegesis of the first part of Num 23:10, thus closing the girl's narrative with the quotation of the second part of the verse.[145] The girl's conduct demonstrates resoluteness not to marry a non-Jew and abstinence, her story is a single example of the innumerable exemplarily chaste lives led by the young in Israel.

7.7 Exegetical Contexts V: A Wife, *a Fruitful Vine*

The midrashist of *Seder Eliyahu* discusses the role of women in the family context not only in narrative, but also in several *non*-narrative passages which deal not with narrative characters but rather with types. It is precisely because they are less specific than narrative characters that types, e.g. the wife, have a more ample validity. The following midrash on Ps 128:3 in chapter 18 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*, for example, reflects on the qualities of the good wife and the bad wife:[146]

> *Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house (בירכתי ביתך)* (Ps 128:3). Your wife will be like a vine that brings forth fruit, not like a vine that does not bring forth fruit. *Your wife will be like a fruitful vine* etc. As long as your wife stays in the innermost part of your house (בירכתי ביתך), *your children will be like olive shoots* (ibid.) What is [the meaning of] this olive [tree]? It bears olive[s] to be eaten, olives for drying, olives for oil, olives for preserving, and [an olive] whose oil is burnt in all kinds of lamps. So, as long as your wife stays in the innermost part of your house <and> resembles but this vine which is not moved from its place, some of her children will come be masters of Scripture, some masters of Mishnah, and some masters in the give and take [of trade]; some of them [shall be] sages (חכמים), some of them [shall be] wise (נבונים), some men who know [what is to be done] at the right moment (יודעי דבר בעיתו). Therefore it is said, *Your wife will be like a fruitful vine*. Different from her is she who spins in the market and speaks with

[145] In a footnote to their translation of רובע as "couchings," i.e. sexual couplings, Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 293, n. 9, refer to R. Abbahu's interpretation of the verse in bNid 31a.

[146] Judith Baskin dedicates chapter 4, "Fruitful vines and silent partners: Women as wives in rabbinic literature," of her book *Midrashic women* to women as wives in rabbinic literature. Within a section on "Bad wives tales" (112–113) she discusses a parallel to the passage below conserved in Tan *Vayishlah* 36, f. 55.

> every man and sets her eyes on every man. She[147] brings evil upon herself and is responsible for herself and her children. From here they taught: If a woman brings evil upon herself and her children, her children will have imperfections. How so? If a woman is arrogant with her husband, she brings evil upon herself, so that her children have imperfections. If she curses his parents in his presence, she brings evil upon herself, so that <her children> have imperfections. If she is once outside the house, once on the streets, she brings evil upon herself, so that <her children> have imperfections. If she does not set aside the dough offering[148] while being in ritual cleanness, or if <she makes vows, but does not> keep them,[149] she[150] brings evil upon herself, so that <her children> have imperfections. And she will never find contentment, and because of her mischievous deeds, one of her children will be lame (חיגר) and blind, and the other an idiot and a wicked person. (ER 92, l. 1–16)

The quoted passage expands first upon the metaphor of a *fruitful vine* of Ps 128:3, interpreting it in terms of the rabbinically ideal wife as fruitful bearer of children. Just as in the psalm verse also in the wording of the rabbinic interpretation the possessive pronoun inflected in the second person is used, so that the impression of a direct address is given. In a second step the midrash interprets this fruitfulness as intrinsically linked to the (reader's) wife being at the right place, i.e. as within doors as possible. This ensures that her children resemble with respect to the variety of their exemplary occupations the *olive shoots* of the second part of Ps 128:3.

In contrast with the type of the ideal wife who enacts with her way of life the comparisons of Ps 128:3, stands the brazen woman, the midrashist argues, i.e. the sort of wife who leaves the house, spins in the marketplace, speaks with and sets her eyes on any man as deserving the punishment she brings upon herself and upon her children.[151] This idea is reinforced in a next step which consists in a tradition of the sages: They are said to have derived from this very notion (*mikan amru*) that "A woman can herself be liable for the physical blemish she brings upon herself and her children." Another list of reproachable sorts of conduct follows which can render a woman liable for the imperfection brought upon her children. As Judith Baskin suggests, commenting on a *Tanchuma* passage that makes use of the same Psalms verse as the passage of *Seder Eliyahu*, "This insistence that a woman should remain at home also reveals the rabbinic conviction that a wife's behaviour reflects not only on her husband's status and piety, but also on the future fates of her sons."[152]

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147 Friedmann puts ש before גורמת in brackets.
148 Friedmann emends MS reading, להלה, with לה חלה.
149 For these two conditional clauses Friedmann follows mKet 7:6.
150 Friedmann puts ש before היא in brackets.
151 See Cynthia Baker, "Bodies, Boundaries, and Domestic Politics in a Late Ancient Marketplace," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 26, no. 3 (1996): 391–418.
152 Baskin, *Midrashic Women*, 113.

After this counter-example the midrashist leaves the household sphere to focus on the disciples of the wise, who, like the ideal wife, are to stay in the innermost parts of a house of study. God rewards them with wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and insight. At the end of this segment on the wife, it is finally Torah, in Max Kadushin's terminology a fundamental principle of *Seder Eliyahu*,[153] which is now compared to a good wife, a comparison that is seen as confirmed in several scriptural passages quoted as proof-texts (Mal 2:14, Prov 18:22, Isa 54:6).

7.8 Exegetical Contexts VI: *It is not Good that the Man should be Alone*

> I sat once in the great academy of Jerusalem before the sages. I spoke to them, My masters, May I, who am but dust under the soles of your feet, speak a word in your presence? They answered, Speak. I said, My father who are in heaven, may Your great name be blessed for ever and ever and ever, and may You have contentment in Israel your servants in all the places of their dwellings. For all the comforts and consolations which You spoke to Israel Your servants You uttered only in wisdom and understanding, knowledge, and discernment, for it is said, *Then the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone[; I will make him a helper as his partner.]* etc. (Gen 2:18) *A helper as his partner* is a helpmate who helps him stand on his feet and helps him open his eyes. They said, Justify your words. I said, I shall. I said to them, My masters, as long as wheat and barley are not prepared and ground in a mill they are nothing but tinder. They answered, True. [I said,] Adam gave them to his wife who prepared them sifting and grinding them in a mill, and she produced bread from them. What is finer? Bread or fat meat or fat milk or any other kind of good edible things in the world? They said to me, Bread is finer than fat meat or fat milk or any other kind of good edible things in the world. [I said,] Flax is no more than grass. They said <to me>, True. [I said,] Adam gave it to his wife and she wove a garment out of it. <Not only that> but <out of her>[154] he brought increase of mankind in the world; <moreover,> he refrained from going from one place to another committing adultery. These are the four things that a wife does for her husband.[155] <...> And He provides [man] already with food to eat. Does He not provide food to cattle, beasts, and fowl? <...> [Said the] Master of all the worlds, *I will make him a helper as*

[153] See Kadushin, *Organic Thinking*, 16–30.

[154] Friedmann emends the MS reading, ממנו, with ממנה.

[155] This sentence is followed in the MS by the expression והוא and a lacuna. Braude and Kapstein, *Tanna dĕbe Eliyyahu*, 158, include in their translation, the following passage: "She prepares his food, weaves his garments, gives him children, and keeps him from sexual transgression."

> *his partner*, a helpmate who helps him stand on his feet and helps open his eyes. (ER 51, l. 8–26)

In chapter (9) 10 of *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah* exegetical narratives based Deborah of Judg 4 are combined with others dealing with Jezebel and Jael but also with first-person narratives told by the anonymous narrator. One such narrative is told after Jael, referred to as Heber's wife, has been mentioned as an exemplary wife. The anonymous narrator relates how he once sat in the great academy of Jerusalem conversing with the sages to whom he proposes to say a word which turns out to be a midrash of *a helper as his partner* of (Gen 2:18). With the first part of his interpretation of the verse – "would help open (להאיר) his eyes" – the midrashist clearly takes up metaphorical language used in the first of the exegetical narratives on Deborah, who is said to have caused her husband to prepare thick wicks whose ample "light" (אוא) caused him to be worthy of the world to come in spite of being an ignorant. The sages request the rabbi to explain his metaphorical language, to provide sound arguments for his statement. The sages' wording, תן טעם לדבריך, is here translated as "provide a sound reasoning." Given that טעם also means "taste," the request appears to contain a word play that anticipates the first part of the explanation that follows: Woman has the merit of transforming wheat and barley into bread (which is judged as better than fat meat and milk) and of weaving garments with the fibre of flax. Adam's wife herself is said to have transformed grains into bread. Women have thus a creative role in the household; her creations are of more esteem than the rest of edible things available to men in the world. Adam's wife likewise made a garment out flax.[156] Adam's wife stands as a metonymy for wives in general who ensure that mankind increases, which in turn, the midrash argues, leads men to avoid committing adultery. As a conclusion to his argumentation the narrator recapitulates that the aforementioned are the four tasks a wife performs for her husband, tasks which define her as a wife: she cooks, she weaves his clothes, bears his children, and keeps him from sexual transgression.[157]

Following the passage quoted above a second part of the rabbi's speech before the sages takes the form of a brief (intradiegetic) eschatological narrative that has the great academy of the future as spatio-temporal setting. According to the rabbi God, presiding over this academy, will address the righteous in praise for their conduct using a comparison that resumes the subject matter of the preceding passage: Whereas a man takes a beautiful wife but is ready to take another as soon as the first one's beauty has faded, God takes only the righteous and is faithful from the beginning and for ever and ever, since

[156] for a parallel on the description of a wife's roles with respect to providing for food and clothes see bYev 63a: "R. Jose met Elijah and asked him: It is written, *I will make him a help* (Gen 2:18); how does a woman help a man? The other replied: If a man brings wheat, does he chew the wheat? If flax, does he put on the flax? Does she not, then, bring light to his eyes and put him on his feet!"

[157] The manuscript does not name the four tasks but leaves a gap between "these are the four things" etc. and the next statement.

their beauty does not change. This praise of the righteous uttered by God himself is supported with two verses of prophetical books – Hos 3:1 and Jer 3:1 –, in both of which God himself is in dialogue with the respective prophet and compares the love between an adulteress and her lovers to the love of the children of Israel to God and to other Gods.

The midrash has God use an image of the empirical realm, a wife's fading beauty in the course of time, one which the original audience would have been familiar with, to deal with a theological argument, but at the same time to criticize the behaviour of a man leaves his once young wife once her physical beauty has left her. The midrash has God and his "impersonating" unconditional faithfulness set himself as an example to follow.

7.9 Conclusion

The narratives found in contexts here designated as halakhic are quite dissimilar. The passage on the sages who discuss with R. Dosa b. Orkinas whether a daughter's co-wife (7.1) is exempt from levirate marriage or not has not a specific named or unnamed woman as its theme, but rather hypothetical legal situations in which a woman might find herself. Daughters and their co-wives are in this story objectified and silenced as legal personae, they are discussed by named rabbinic authorities who purportedly decide for a lenient position. The story can also be seen as one in which a "legal mystery," one pertaining to the (male) origins of a regulation that affects (primarily) women, is solved by young sages with the aid of an old one. The story of the white days in its several versions (7.2) does depict a concrete, though nameless woman on the brink of lunacy due to the death of her husband's premature death and her inability to grasp the reason behind it. She is even given direct speech, with which she is allowed to tell her story in the first person. In this case, the story – framed within someone else's first person narrative in which several halakhic issues are discussed – is used as exemplum for a stringent position pertaining to *niddah* laws.

The narratives and non-narrative passages discussed as belonging to "exegetical contexts" cover a wide range of topics. The narrative of the prostitute and R. Aqiba's disciple (in 7.3) constructs woman as a sexual temptress. However, it depicts the unnamed woman that attracts the sexual attention of a renowned though likewise unnamed sage in relatively positive terms. She is said to belong to the common people with some sort of common sense, of street wisdom. It is worth pointing out that the spiteful language the prostitute uses to depict her own genitals (and metonymically mean her entire self) does not only convey misogynistic notions, but rather expresses the "rabbinic conviction of the potentially dangerous power of women's sexuality," as Judith Baskin puts it.[158]

For his expositions the midrashist also makes use of scriptural narrative material in which biblical women play a central role. The exegetical narratives on Deborah (7.4),

[158] Baskin, *Midrashic Women*, 34.

which interpret selected verses (words and phrases) of passages that in Scripture focus on her, for example, serve to explain that she was an exceptional woman not because she was a prophetess, but rather because as a wife she helped her husband obtain the reward of the righteous, because she had disciples of the wise of her own, whom she taught, to be sure, out of doors, and because she was capable of explaining her own prophetic words with the aid of (male) rabbinic hermeneutics. Rachel's narrative (7.5), told to explain a verse from another scriptural context other than her own in in Genesis, shows her in the role of a midrashic woman narrator who (re-)tells in the first person her own biblical story. Even if her first person account is set within an exegetical passage spoken by the midrashist's governing voice, it is a case of an empowered feminine voice: Her words according to the parallel version in EkhR achieve what a whole pedigree of rabbinic constructions of central male biblical characters does not, namely change God's mind so that he has mercy with Israel. The last of the so called exegetical passages deals with a post-biblical character, Miriam daughter of Tanchum, who is defined first as a widow, but more emphatically as the mother of seven boys who are executed by Hadrian one after the other for refusing to worship an idol. The story is somehow the collective hagiography of a family, the proud mother of seven children approves of the death their children die which she conceptualizes as *her* own sacrifice, a sacrifice that surpasses Abraham's binding of Isaac. Both Miriam and the unnamed maiden who commits suicide to avoid being married to a non-Jew appear to link piety with the decision of women to take their lives. The last two discussed passages focus on the role par excellence women assume in rabbinic society, that of the wife. The brief midrash on Ps 128:3 (7.7) attempts to explain the comparison of a wife to a fruitful vine in the first part of the verse by arguing that the comparison is valid, i.e. a woman will be fruitful and enable her husband to fulfil the commandment to procreate, if she, like a vine, is rooted to her place, the home. The last narrative (7.8) takes the expression *helper* of Gen 2:18 to expound once again on the role of woman as ideal wife. The corpus can be seen as a choice of representative narrative passages, not as exhausting the entire corpus of "women stories" transmitted in *Seder Eliyahu*.

Even if, as Judith Baskin suggested for the stories she analyzes in *Midrashic Women*, we should be aware that these women's "voices" are mediated through male agents[159] and their "sensibilities and assumptions about women," as Weisberg puts it,[160] even bearing this important notions in mind, it can be claimed that at least in some of the stories considered in this chapter women are not *only* on the margins, fenced off, but very much in the centre of narrative. It is not marginalized or silenced voices that we are able to recover when reading their stories in *Seder Eliyahu*, but rabbinically tuned voices that are to a certain extent empowered through a masculinization. In what might be described as

[159] Baskin, *Midrashic Women*, 3.
[160] Weisberg, "Women and Torah Study," 51.

a counter-hegemonic voice,[161] *Seder Eliyahu* lets certain of its women characters assume roles traditionally reserved for men. There is, on the other hand, enough evidence in the work for conceptualizations of the feminine that belong to classical rabbinic Judaism, according to which women constitute a category of creation that must be controlled, regulated, taken care of, fenced off, at best in the confines of the home. Women for *Seder Eliyahu* are still in Judith Baskin's words "as fundamentally untrustworthy, they represented constant sources of enticement and societal disorder that had to be maintained under male control in the safety of the domenstic realm."[162] Not even a biblical heroine as Jael escapes this fate: she is constructed as righteous woman because she did the will of her husband, not because she killed Sisera with her own hands![163]

[161] Baskin, *Midrashic Women*, 83, quoting Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 183, points out: "These literary constructions may also attest to the existence of 'counter-hegemonic voices that recognize the reality of *some* women's intellectual and spiritual accomplishment.'"

[162] Baskin, *Midrashic women*, 43.

[163] See p. 245.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

This study seeks to participate of the trend in the approach to rabbinic literature in general and of the recent research on *Seder Eliyahu* in particular for which texts are read as potential sources not of a factual history but rather of a literary and cultural history.

An attempt to read a work of non-narrative character, an ethical midrashic tractate as *Seder Eliyahu, narratologically* is justified due to the pervasive use of narrative that can be ascertained in it. The tools of classical narratology must however be adapted, i.e. the questions asked must be selected according to the text types that are being discussed. The linguistic co-texts in which narratives are transmitted, texts of non-narrative character, and the wider discursive contexts of which they participate cannot be left out. In my attempt to read *Seder Eliyahu* narratologically I proceeded in chapter 3 by first discussing the problem of the anonymous voice(s) of the text (and some of its paratexts) to assert the centrality of a rabbinic first person singular, not just in narrative but also in non-narrative passages of the work. After a preliminary classification of narrative forms or types (chapter 4), I proceeded by selecting examples of the most characteristic narrative forms (chapters 5 and 6) as well as narrative passages in which women and gender issues play a special role (chapter 7) – in most cases passages in which a certain level of evident narrativity could be ascertained –, and discussing them with regard to their structure, style, characterization, function, and topical agenda etc.

Several aspects related to the work's narrative art remain to be studied. In very few cases for example I drew on parallels from other documents of classical rabbinic literature or from the reception of *Seder Eliyahu* in later medieval documents. Both the contrast between classical and late midrashic or between a late midrashic and a later medieval version of a story can contribute to shed light on the cultural differences the texts are evidence of. Another narratologically relevant problem of *Seder Eliyahu* (as well as of the works of the rabbinic corpus in general) is the fictionality of midrashic narrative, i.e. a narrative that is fictional and at the same time part of a scholarly (and religious) discourse. These are but some of the topics related to *Seder Eliyahu* which could be dealt with in another study.

Chapter 9

Literature

9.1 List of Abbreviations: Talmudic Tractates and Rabbinic Documents

Av = *Avot*
ARN = *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*
AZ = *Avodah Zarah*
BB = *Bava Batra*
BM = *Bava Metsia*
BemR = *Bemidbar Rabbah*
BerR = *Bereshit Rabbah*
Ed = *ʿEduyot*
EkhR = *Ekhah Rabbah*
EkhZ = *Ekhah Zuta*
ER = *Seder Eliyahu Rabbah*
EZ = *Seder Eliyahu Zuta*
Hul = *Chullin*
Ker = *Keritot*
Ket = *Ketubbot*
LeqT = *Leqach Tov*
Mak = *Makkot*
Meg = *Megillah*
MekhY = *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishmael*
MekhSh = *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimʿon b. Yochai*
Men = *Menachot*
MidTeh = *Midrash Tehillim*
Miq = *Miqwaot*
Nid = *Niddah*
Pes = *Pesachim*
PesRab = *Pesiqta Rabbati*
PRE = *Pirqe Rabbi Eliezer*
PsEZ = *Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu*
Qid = *Qiddushin*
San = *Sanhedrin*
Shab = *Shabbat*
ShirR = *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah*
SifBem = *Sifre Bemidbar*
SifDev = *Sifre Devarim*
SOR = *Seder ʿOlam Rabbah*
Sot = *Sotah*
Suk = *Sukkah*
Tam = *Tamid*
Tan = *Tanchuma*
Ter = *Terumah*
TPsJ = *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*
WayR = *Wayiqra Rabbah*
YalqShim = *Yalqut Shimoni*
Yev = *Yevamot*
Yom = *Yoma*

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Chapter 10

English and German Abstracts

Abstract: This study is concerned with a so called ethical midrash, a post-talmudic work that was probably composed in the ninth century, *Seder Eliyahu* (also known as *Tanna debe Eliyahu*). The first chapter provides a survey of the research on this late midrash, discussing the main contributions and seeking to identify the aspects scholarship has focused on. The six chapters that follow this *Forschungsbericht* deal with issues pertaining to *Seder Eliyahu*'s narratology. Thus, the second chapter focuses on the problem of the apparent pseudepigraphy of the work and of the voice(s) of the text (who speaks?, an author?, a narrator?, an implied author?). Chapter 3 proposes a typology of the simple and complex narrative forms, which the work, itself as a whole of non-narrative character, makes use of. The next two chapters provide a detailed treatment of the more conspicuous among these forms, in either case of a simple and a complex one. Chapter 4 discusses the *meshalim*, a pre-eminent short form, paying special attention to the interaction between the narrative and its immediate non-narrative linguistic context. Chapter 5 looks at a corpus of four first person narratives to reconsider the question concerning the work's alleged polemics against the scripturalist movement of the Karaites. To a certain extent following notions of feminist narratology, the readings of the last chapter focus on selected women stories of *Seder Eliyahu*. For this corpus I propose a classification that is based both on the narratives' linguistic contexts and on their topics. As it emerges from the survey in chapter 1 a narratologically informed study of *Seder Eliyahu* represents a new approach in the research on this late rabbinic work.

Zusammenfassung: In meiner Dissertation befasse ich mich mit einem so genannten ethischen Midrasch, einem Werk, das in nach-talmudischer Zeit, vermutlich im neunten Jahrhundert entstanden sein soll, *Seder Eliyahu* (auch *Tanna debe Eliyahu* genannt). In einem ersten Kapitel werden die wichtigsten Forschungsbeiträge zu diesem Werk besprochen und die Hauptakzente dabei identifiziert. Diesem Forschungsbericht folgen sechs Kapitel, in denen es um Aspekte der Narratologie von *Seder Eliyahu* geht. Kapitel 2 befasst sich mit dem Problem der angeblichen Pseudepigraphie und mit der Stimme des Textes (wer spricht?, ein Autor?, ein Erzähler?, ein impliziter Autor?). In Kapitel 3 wird eine Typologie der einfachen und komplexen Erzählformen geboten, denen sich das Werk – als Ganzes durch einen nicht-narrativen Diskurs gekennzeichnet – bedient. Auf jene für *Seder Eliyahu* charakteristischeren Formen, jeweils eine einfache und eine komplexe, gehen die nächsten zwei Kapitel ausführlicher ein. Die erste zentrale Form, jene der *meshalim* oder Parabeln, wird im 4. Kapitel untersucht, wobei sich das Augenmerk besonders auf den Wechselspiel zwischen der kleinen Form und ihrem unmittelbaren linguistischen Kontext richtet. Kapitel 5 nimmt vier der Erzählungen in der ersten Person in den Blick und geht der Frage nach, inwiefern sie von einer Polemik gegen die skripturalistische Bewegung der Karäer zeugen. Das letzte Kapitel analysiert, gewissermaßen in Anlehnung an einer feministischen Narratologie, diverse Erzählungen von *Seder Eliyahu*, in deren Mittelpunkt biblische oder rabbinische Frauen stehen. Auch für dieses Korpus wird eine Klassifikation nahegelegt, welche nicht nur auf dem linguistischen Kontext, sondern auch auf den Themen der Erzählungen beruht. Wie dem Bericht (Kap. 1) am Anfang der Arbeit zu entnehmen ist, stellt eine narratologisch orientierte Untersuchung von *Seder Eliyahu* einen neuen Ansatz in der Erforschung des spätrabbinischen Werks dar.