THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LITERARY CHARACTER FROM LATE MIDRASH LITERATURE TO MEDIEVAL EXEGESIS, AS EXEMPLIFIED IN THE CHARACTERS OF BALAAM, JEREMIAH AND ESTHER

THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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SUBMITTED TO THE SENATE OF TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
FEBRUARY 2019
This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my grandfather, Michael Held. “And your life will be brighter than the noonday; its darkness will be like the morning” (Job 11:17).

**Acknowledgments**

Before I begin to present this study, it is my pleasure to offer insufficient words of gratitude to my teachers, advisors and guides: Prof. Meira Polliack for her invaluable efforts on my behalf and continued insights, as well as for my inauguration into the world of the Judeao-Arabic Bible; Prof. Ishay Rosen-Zvi for not sparing criticism or praise when they are due and for luring me to the unknown of Midrash in my second year at university.

Further thanks must be evoked- to the department of Biblical studies and its various lecturers, both for the fruit of knowledge and for the opportunity to pass some of it on. Special mention should be given of the secretariat of the Chaim Rosenberg School of Jewish Studies and Archaeology in its various permutations, without which nothing would ever be done.

I salute my family for persevering through countless years of rambling monologues about characters and commenters and for loving support both morale and material. Above all else, I wish to thank my mother, Medy Nir, for who I am today and may yet be tomorrow.

Giv‘atayim, 2019
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English Abstract

The latter part of the Middle Ages (roughly, 7th to 12th centuries) saw the emergence of Jewish Bible exegesis as a genre independent from Midrash, as well as changes in the literary forms of both late Midrashim and what are known as systematic Bible commentaries. However, these changes have not been examined jointly as parallel phenomena, nor through the prism of the biblical characters represented in these texts. This thesis links the literary study of Midrash with the study of the literary awareness of medieval exegetes, using key insights developed in modern theories on literary character formation, as well as comparative literature. I analyze the concept of character in Jewish medieval exegetical texts using three main case studies: Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther, comparing their characterization in twelve different Midrashim and commentaries representing different periods and schools.

The introduction (0.1-0.5) discusses the shortcomings of existing studies on characterization in Midrash and medieval Bible exegesis, as well as the considerations for choosing the specific, characters, sources and literary criteria for their comparison. Each major part of the study opens with an extensive review of the character in question in Midrash literature.

The first part of this doctoral thesis (1.1-1.9.3) examines the analogical means used to describe Balaam. It finds that Tannaitic literature mostly used implicit comparisons in midrashic lists as performative variants of longer narratives, and as part of an orally inspired context, similar to that witnessed in some aspects of Hellenic lists and epics. Midrashic lists have an implicit analogical side comparing the characters mentioned. It also showed how this exegetical aspect differs from classical rhetorical comparison (synkrisis).
Tanḥuma Balak enhances Balaam’s sympathy and complexity by dramatizing midrashic lists, as well as by supplying narratives focused on showing Balaam’s inferiority to Moses on the one hand and moral superiority to Balak on the other. The differences stem from the more popular nature of the Tanḥuma, which in Balaam’s case, appealed to character analogy in mime and Roman new comedy, possibly alluding to Balaam’s nature as a comical cook (mageiros).

Yefet ben ‘Eli’s description of the relations of Balaam and Balak is a literary update of the Karaite conception of prognostic reading, using mental and character analogies as inspiration for the secondary hidden meaning. Yefet reads God rebuking Balaam and Balak as secondary recipients of Balaam’s own speeches. Yefet’s interest in Balaam’s mentality and its comparison to Nebuchadnezzar, shows how Yefet may have pushed Mu’tazilite philosophical assumptions about analogy and psychology into the literary sphere. A discussion of the kinds of character analogies in Yefet’s commentaries follows therein.

R. Samuel ben Meir’s depiction of Balaam is a surprisingly complex and dynamic portrait based on an analogy to Jonah, which he is the first to introduce. I explain this use of analogy in light of similar uses in Chrétien’s chivalric romances and some of that genre’s Jewish receptions. Christian and Jewish Bible exegesis in Rashbam’s time widened the concept of the literary sense of the Bible, to include complex literary analogies and character studies and thus also impacted the chivalric novel.

The second part of the thesis (2.1-2.6.4) deals with the depiction of Jeremiah’s state of mind and finds a growing tendency in later sources to use quoted monologues. Pesikta deRav Kahana 13 systematically characterizes Jeremiah to be as negative as his prophecies, by not presenting his state of mind in diatribes as was common to that
Midrash. It instead characterizes Jeremiah with unflattering analogies and selfish discourse. This development is the result of associating Jeremiah’s character with the Christian reception of the book as suggested by parallels in Jerome, while in fact accepting some of the suppositions about the book of Jeremiah at the heart of these polemics.

Pesikta Rabatti 26 repeatedly tries to arouse sympathy for Jeremiah by adding inner monologues voicing innocence and compassion, in order to undermine negative Midrashic readings such as PRK 13. PR 26’s authors also identified with Jeremiah’s voice, to enhance his authority and candor. They blurred the line between themselves (“figural contagion”) and Jeremiah’s discourse, so as to assert his positive characteristics using secondary characters. I suggest this use of monologue is in line with a possible late Byzantine rhetorical background for PR 26, due to stylistic connections with Byzantine Midrash and Bible exegesis.

R. Shlomo Itzhaki’s Jeremiah is a continuation of PR 26’s trends. He rephrases harsh prophecies into apologetic monologues that enhance Jeremiah’s care for the people. Rashi also characterizes Jeremiah’s penchant for excessive complaints in a few monologues unrelated to verses. Hence, I consider the possible impact Byzantine Midrash and Bible exegesis might have had on Rashi in general and suggest he emulates patterns he knew from late Midrash, regardless of their source.

R. David Kimhi’s Jeremiah is a complex portrait of mental anguish that shows how past attempts on the prophet’s life haunted him and resurfaced as monologues in his laments and prophecies. Radak uses Jeremiah’s trauma to excuse some of his harsher rebukes and expressions. I explain Radak’s emphasis on psychological conflict, using similarities to geographically and historically adjacent troubadour
poetry, as well as developments in medieval piyut (liturgical poetry), notably by Joseph Kimhi.

The third part of the thesis (3.1-3.9.2) offers an examination of whether Esther is presented as the protagonist of her book, as a way to indirectly show what each source (namely, Midrash and medieval commentary) views as central to the concept of a character. Esther in the Babylonian Esther Midrash is characterized by two repeating themes, a love triangle and her royal misconduct. Both themes allude to the heroines of the Greek novel, but subvert its message of personal growth in favor of divine intervention. I try to explain why this sort of allusion in the Babylonian Talmud is not farfetched.

Both parts of Esther Rabbah marginalize Esther in favor of Mordecai, unlike other late midrashic parallels. This is accomplished by inserting Mordecai into accounts that have parallels that focus on Esther, as well as by almost solely including the less flattering versions of accounts about Esther. “Neo-classical” Midrash is thus found to characterize Esther by inclusion and omission of sources, and not through the creation of new narrative. The way Esther Rabbah presents Mordecai is also suggestive of a folkloristic understanding of characters. Esther’s dismissive treatment is linked to medieval misogynic literature, created by the same circles as neo-classical Midrashim. I highlighted some misogynic themes inherent to versions of accounts unique to this group of Midrashim.

Sa‘adiah Gaon’s Esther is a paradigmatic role model, which he uses to characterize the whole Jewish people, resulting in Esther herself being almost featureless. I suggest this is due to the impact of Muslim receptions of Aristotle on Sa‘adiah’s view of “character”, emphasizing the didactic quality of narrative, a quality Sa‘adiah stresses in his other commentaries. Sa‘adiah also associates the book
of Esther with the “Adab” (Belles-lettres) Arabic genre and so has reason to emphasize Esther as an exemplum.

Abraham ibn Ezra’s Esther is reflective of philosophical changes in the concept of character development. He seems to have abandoned his original emphasis on Andalusian sexuality and beauty in the first part of both his commentaries, in favor of spiritual growth. I explain that Ibn Ezra’s views Esther and not Mordecai as a protagonist, due to his need to combine her beauty with spiritual development. This is supported by his comments on beauty in other commentaries, the characterization in his “Hay ben Mekitz” and similar ideas found in the Arabic and Hebrew maqama (literary genre of rhymed prose) form Spain.

Finally, the conclusions (4.1-4.4) reconsider the three modes of characterization: analogy, representation of consciousness, protagonist, in light of all three case studies- the characters of Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther. Two main concepts emerge: Midrash has a horizontal typological concept of character. It alludes to other genres’ types to better explain a character’s conduct to its audience as part of a didactic message or an appeal to a specific historical context. These findings are in line with characters and character types in various Late Antiquity and early Middle Ages literary genres.

Different Midrashic genres express typology differently. Tannaitic literature is orally inspired in its indirect implicit comparisons of characters, whereas Amoraic characters serve as organizing principles of texts in light of their reception, compatible with a growing degree of abstraction in legal texts. Late Midrash assimilates and implements larger dramatic narrative structures from Pseudoepigrapha and piyut, resulting in more extensive characterization.
Conversely, medieval exegesis turns characters into a distinct area of study, because of preconceptions about the historicity of the Bible. Generally, these exegetes increase the mimesis of biblical characterizations to support the non-fictional aspect of the text, resulting in more novelistic and realistic-typed characters. This should be considered as part of the reemergence of the novel in the Late Middle Ages. There is a marked difference, though, between the Christian and Muslim zones:

Exegetes from Muslim zones of influence favor less dramatized characterization techniques such as “psycho-narration” and reduced character development, perhaps due to the medieval Muslim tendency to shy away from representations associated with fictionality, and to and emphasize the paradigmatic nature of religious figures. Jewish exegetes from Christian zones were more inclined to use quoted monologue. They may be inspired by the more biographic-typed characterization inherent to late Midrashim, as part of the reemergence of a concept of an “author”, and by changes in the medieval Christian study of rhetoric.

This research shows that the various distinctions do not always enable us to trace an evolutionary concept of character in Medieval Jewish exegetic sources (including Midrashim and medieval Bible commentaries). Characterization may be regarded instead, as the result of many changes in internal genres, side by side with contextual intellectual and literary developments. The conclusions also suggest how these findings might contribute to future studies of Midrash, medieval Bible exegesis and medieval literature in general.
Introduction: Poetics of Characterization in Jewish Medieval Exegetical Sources

This study analyses the formation of biblical characters through a diachronic and comparative study of classical and late-midrashic and medieval exegetical Jewish sources. Its goal is to track, illustrate and contextualize the similarities and differences in characterizations, in terms of transitions, changes and developments, between Midrash and medieval systematic exegesis.

0.1 The Rise of Narrative in Medieval Jewish Exegetical Sources

The poetics of medieval Jewish exegetical sources such as late Midrashim and systematic biblical commentaries at times dramatically differ from what came before them, mainly classical Midrash. These changes are part of the broader emergence of an independent medieval category of narrative fiction¹. However, little attention has been paid to the formation of biblical characters in these texts, unlike other aspects. In the following two sections (0.1.1-0.1.2) I review studies, which have focused on some of these changes, even though they have mostly left out questions of characterization. The references to the different studies summarized below will appear mainly in the footnotes so to allow the argument to unfold without interruption.

0.1.1 Changes in Literary Qualities in Late Midrash

Joseph Dan highlighted the fact that from the 8th century onwards the Midrashim underwent a change that involved the gradual foregoing of their exegetical emphasis in favor of a distinctive stress on narrative². This key difference between classical and

¹ Unlike allegory the more dominant Gaonic reception of Midrash narrative, see Levinson, Parable to Invention, 5-8, 12-4. Gaonic Judaism expressed a “fictional” status by classifying certain types of Midrashim as parables. Later Provençal thought defined narratives as meant primarily as a leisurely pastime. The connections between Bible commentators and Midrash remained complex and non linear, see Japhet, Collected Studies, 26-8, 182-8, 376-82.

² Dan, Hebrew Story, 17-23. The extent of this narrative independence appears to increase over time.
late Midrashim may be explained by the growing attractiveness of the Midrash form in popular spheres, and by a desire to update and revive older traditions in order to capture new audiences. Other Midrash scholars have also discussed the emergence of the concept of the “author” in the Middle Ages, as a motive for the change from classical to late Midrash.

Jacob Elbaum showed that Pirqei de Rabbi Eliezer (PRE) and Seder Eliyahu are far more liberal than the Tanḥuma (Tan.) in their treatment of previous sources. This greater creative freedom in late Midrashim leads to the occasional adoption of the Rewritten Bible form and the use of styles previously known only from pseudo-epigraphic compositions. Thus, late Midrashim seem to serve as a bridge between late independent medieval narrative forms and Second Temple as well as rabbinic literatures.

Nevertheless, individual studies on the literary qualities of biblical characters in late Midrashim are hard to come by and have only come to partial conclusions based on small units of texts. They typically do not encompass all the characterizations of one character in a specific composition. For example, scholars concluded that Tan. Gen. as compared to Genesis Rabbah, (Gen. R.) has a more

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3 For the popularity approach see Frankel, Aggadic Narrative, 236-60; and the objection in the conclusions of Levinson about late Midrashim, Twice Told Tale, 315-8. For the element of surprise, see Shinan, Aggadic Motifs, 214-6. For the author’s place, see Elbaum, Late Midrash, 58-9. The lack of actual historical details in late Midrashim when contrasted with classical Midrashim, was also linked in Seder Eliyahu to a more authorial persona in Stein, Poetics and Imagined Landscapes, 83-7; Lehmann, Were Not Understanding, 236-53.

4 Elbaum, Late Midrash, ibid; Melitza, 125; Seder Eliyahu, 152-4; Sermon to Story, 100-1. See also Heinemann, Aggadah and its Development, 181-2; Zunz, Sermons, 53-8, 110-4.

5 On the resurgence of pseudo epigraphic materials, see Rubenstein, Myth, 136, 143; Adelman, Return of the Repressed, 259-64.
dramatic representation of characters and a more sequential narrative, or that PRE and the Tanḥuma both focus on pathos.

Describing the modes of characterization in Midrash calls for a stricter emphasis on separating the unique diachronic nature of various layers of classical and late Midrashim. Currently there is scant research highlighting the characterization features of individual late Midrashim, and their extensive presentation of one character. Such research may examine the broader viability of studies as those presented above.

0.1.2 Medieval Exegetes’ Heightened Literary Awareness

Scholars have shown that medieval systematic exegesis employed new features that were unknown in Midrashim, such as verse by verse, linguistic contextual commentaries, the commentators’ programmatic introductions to the exegetical works, a clear conceptual differentiation between textual layers, genres and types of interpretation applied to the text, and an acute awareness of biblical narrative style. Biblical narrative also came to be regarded as distinct from rabbinic sources in general and rabbinic narrative in particular, and as an independent genre of biblical literature, alongside other biblical genres such as law, prophecy and poetry.

This heightened literary awareness on the part of medieval exegetes is a central feature in the new exegetic conception of their period. The breadth of this awareness varied as a function of geographic and personal circumstances. Several key areas of interest emerge in many studies. The first is an awareness of biblical style as

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6 Meir, Homiletical Narrative, 261*-3.
7 Stein, Maxim, 148-50. PRE is more narrative driven than the epic nature of Tanḥuma passages.
8 See examples of medieval approaches to aggadah in Elbaum, To Understand, 45-104.
9 See Polliack, Concepts, 94-6 and for a case study, see Polliack and Sasson, Book of Torah, 163-8.
an independent category, which appears in discussions of uniquely biblical rhetorical features, such as parallelism\(^\text{10}\). The second has to do with the Judaeo-Arabic commentators’ acknowledgment of and debate over the role of the editor or author of a biblical text in shaping its aesthetics and contents, debates which can also be found in a more limited capacity in Northern French exegesis\(^\text{11}\). Commentators also dealt with gaps in biblical narratives\(^\text{12}\). The Northern French School in particular, discussed exposition as an interpretive tool\(^\text{13}\). Strikingly, medieval exegetes were also cognizant of literary macro structures such as story frames\(^\text{14}\).

Nonetheless, instances of characterization unique to the commentaries as literary compositions in their own right have rarely been discussed in scholarship. Nor have these instances been explained by modern literary theories, or by synchronic literary changes in genres such as the novel or philosophy. The current study aims at filling this lacuna.

\textbf{0.1.3 The Choice of Three Characters as Case Studies}

This dissertation examines the portrayal of biblical figures in Midrash and medieval commentaries in search of the nature of their characterization. It thus investigates Midrashim and systematic Bible exegesis through the prism of literary studies. The

\begin{itemize}
  \item \(^\text{10}\) See Tobi, Poetic Practice, 255-7; Meir, Poetry, 42-4; Polliack and Schlossberg, Hosea, 62-4; Berlin, Use of Traditional, 178ff and the works of Mordecai. Z. Cohen, especially.
  \item \(^\text{11}\) See Polliack, Karaite Conception, 350-74; Ben-Shamai, Mudawwin, 76-92; Zawanowska, Moses, 29-32*. For France see for instance, Japhet, Ecclesiastics, 75-7; Song of Songs, 265-6; Liss, Fictional Worlds, 96-9; Brin, Josef Qara, 104-7; Harris, Awareness, 291, 305-6; Peretz, Exegetic Method, 313-4.
  \item \(^\text{12}\) See Mondschein, Gaps, 138-43; Polliack, Unseen Joints, 179-82.
  \item \(^\text{13}\) See Brin, Josef Qara, 86-102; Jacobs, Retrospection, 126-9, 138-42; exposition is better associated with Rashbam, ibid, Major Principles, 451-4, and 463ff as for Rashbam’s more sophisticated uses; See also some hints of this approach in Rashi, as in Mondschein, Exposition, 112-5, 130-8.
  \item \(^\text{14}\) See for instance Toitou, Perpetual Motion, 126-77; Signer, Rashi as Narrator, 103-10; Sapir, Correlation Principle, 247-57; Polliack, Conceptualization, 118-9; Shenvald, Coherence, 179-86. Lockshin, Literary Exegete, 87-91.
\end{itemize}
means by which I attempt to do this, is comparing the historical reception and the
colorization of three biblical characters: Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther.

These specific figures were chosen for several reasons. Although midrashic
literature engages with a plethora of biblical characters, because of its monumental
scope and flexibility, medieval exegetes tend to concentrate on biblical characters
who have a consecutive descriptive mass in the Bible. After thoroughly considering
various figures, such as Moses, David, Miriam, Hezekiah, Samson, Saul and Hagar, I
became convinced that Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther were particularly suited to
comparisons of Midrash with systematic exegesis, primarily because of the substantial
yet not insurmountable number of references to them.15

In addition, Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther provided a broad cross section of
biblical characters in differing genres, including Pentateuch and Hagiographa as well
as prophetic prose and poetry. The figure of Esther also raises issues of gender
politics and their changes over time and space. Some medieval sources have been
shown to take a more egalitarian approach to female characters such as Esther, so the
medieval reception of her character emphasizes the transitions from Midrashim to
systematic exegesis.16 Although the Esther Midrashim were composed over multiple
periods, they preserve a level of unity thus making Esther a case study of historical
poetic differences. Lastly, Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther received limited scholarly
attention in the context of both late Midrashim and medieval exegesis (see 0.3.3).

In the following sections I describe how the literary method of inquiry relating
to these three characters shapes the structure of this study (0.2), and how studies on

16 Gender issues are raised in Northern France, as in Grossman, Rashi’s Teachings, 187-90; as well as in
Judaeo-Arabic exegesis, specifically that of Yefet ben ‘Eli, see Sasson, Gender Equality, 72-4.
both the Bible and rabbinic texts contribute (or fail to contribute) to a discussion of these and other characters (0.3). I conclude with an overview of the dissertation objectives and a brief outline of the main argument (0.4).

0.2 Method: A Comparative Literary Study of Characterization in Midrashim and Systematic Medieval Exegesis

As Erich Auerbach pointed out, there is a specific dramatic connection between historical periods and their typical modes of expression and stylings\(^\text{17}\). Historical poetics aspires to amass the greatest possible number of facts about the poetics of a certain period, and pays preponderant attention to the transmission of literary conventions and the ways in which these encapsulate the whole literary system\(^\text{18}\). This dissertation attempts to identify this type of historical poetics through a series of comparisons, while applying it to the specific field of characters and characterizations.

Baruch Hochman argued that although modern concepts of character most likely emerged with the 18\(^{th}\) century novel, pre-modern literature, including rabbinic literature, intuitively differentiated between characters and their motivations\(^\text{19}\). The rabbis and exegetes did not write poetical treatises, or any systematic reflections, to explain their concept of character, in contrast to medieval poetry manuals\(^\text{20}\). Nevertheless, specific philosophical and psychological characteristics can be extracted from this literature. E.M. Forster convincingly argued that characterization

\(^{17}\) Auerbach, Mimesis, see the epilogue in particular.
\(^{18}\) As defined and problematized in Tsur, Between, 8-28.
\(^{19}\) Hochman, Character, 28-9.
\(^{20}\) For more on their importance, see Cohen, Best of Poetry, 15-20; Poet’s Literary Approach, 533-40.
techniques are fundamentally a-temporal since they are hypothetically available to authors in any era.21

There are extensive longstanding debates in literary theory on what constitutes a character.22 While I cannot fully summarize the different approaches here, I will note the specific phenomenological criteria employed in this study. I define a literary character as constructed from potentially a-temporal characterizations, as suggested by Seymour Chatman and developed by others.23 In other words, a character is the representation of a possible person, collated by the reader from traits retrieved from textual details. This process is analogical to the way people are identified in the real world.

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan suggested that the best way to extrapolate a specific period’s concept of character is to center on the mode of characterization employed to describe specific characters in specific texts and in specific periods rather than to look for an abstract concept.24 Accordingly, this study avoids searching for theoretical concepts of character but rather attempts to reconstruct them by comparing pairs of geographically and chronologically disparate Midrashim and exegeses on each biblical character.25

I examine three major literary criteria of characterization: analogical devices, the representation of consciousness, and the concept of the protagonist (0.2.1), as reflected in the late antique and medieval exegesis of Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther.

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21 Forster, Aspects of the Novel, 10-9. Also, Ewen, Character, 193; Polak, Biblical Narrative, 294-5.
22 On standard definitions and some problems associated with them, see Margolin, The What, 453-60.
23 Chatman, Story and Discourse, 131-73, and developed by many others, such as Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, 36-40; Hochman, Character, 35-8. For an older concept, see Harvey, Character, 31-2.
24 Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, 97-8.
25 Within the confines of the more limited subject of character consciousness, highlighting differences and similarities in forms of representation in texts from varied periods and origins, can also reveal the unique intellectual qualities of the periods in question. See in Palmer, Fictional Minds, 240-4.
On this basis, I present the historical poetics of biblical characters from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages in two defined genres, Midrashim and systematic Bible exegesis. By comparing the characterizations in these texts, I highlight the transmission of conventions as well as the key differences in characterizations between Midrash and systematic exegesis, as part of the uniquely medieval phenomenon of Jewish Bible exegesis in this period, developed independently of classical Midrash.

0.2.1 The Three Criteria for Characterizations in this Study

Given the comparative nature of this study, I chose conventional literary criteria that can best serve to articulate the unique nature of characterization in different genres and periods. I preferred an eclectic approach to literary theory, rather than adhering to one method or theoretician, so as to better serve the inquiry. I present each character as a case study for the uses of one such criterion that is repeatedly associated with that specific character by my sources.

Several criteria were discarded after I had found that they were either unpresented, too diffuse, or generally problematic to discuss when focusing on the Middle Ages. There are many indirect modes that present character traits; all require the reader to make a deduction from inconclusive details such as appearance, mannerisms, style of speech, metonymy, surprising actions within the overall plot and

26 As a parallel see Levinson’s treatment of the genre of the homiletic tale in Midrashim. Levinson, Twice Told Tale and his conclusions, in particular, 311-5.
27 While I had hoped for some sources to favor direct characterizations, that seems to be done piecemeal and so I will note these instances as they come up and consider their possible significance. Similarly, the criterion of complexity will also be addressed indirectly, in that longer sources seem to portray more complicated characters by sheer accumulation, but the basic question of whether compilations of accounts actually coalesce into a character, is one of the main issues I aim to resolve.
28 As opposed to directly informing the reader of the abstract traits of the character, which is direct characterization, or can indicate the direct opinion of the narrator about the character. See Ewen, Character, 48-56; Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, 61-3; Bar Efrat, Poetics, 53-63.
the analogical relationships between characters29. Of these, only analogical relationships30 were found to be consistently useful31.

A. Analogical Characterization of Balaam

Of all the indirect characterization modes, analogy is present in all literary texts to a certain extent and thus may be considered one of the key devices. The reader learns about characters not solely from details but from the analogical structures used to enforce other characterizations by contrast or parallelization32. Analogical devices include names, descriptive passages, compared actions, and most importantly direct and indirect comparisons between characters33.

Obvious character analogies can be found in biblical narratives; for instance Esther and Daniel are characterized as Joseph’s doubles34. The reception of a certain character orally or in writing might include the adaptation or allusion to episodes about other characters, which were not necessarily connected in the biblical

29 See in detail in Ewen, Character, 61-99; Polak, Biblical Narrative, 270-7.
30 Physical appearance has a utilitarian function in the Bible, in that it only serves the plot and may reflect a rejection of physical representations of the divine. This was also the case in many pre modern genres including those which use long descriptive passages on character beauty, such as some Greek novels or the “Arabian Nights”. They praise beauty but do not always render it in realistic detail. Hence attention to the character’s appearance beyond biblical use appears to be rare, with the exception of Esther which will be readdressed in the appropriate place. See Berlin, Poetics, 34-7; Bar Efrat, Poetics, 48-53. When beauty does not advance the plot it can even be a sign of spiritual weakness. See Avioz, Beauty, 351-9. For the suggestion that the biblical approach to beauty leads to the abstraction of literary characters and to disinterest in “character” as a distinct topic in Medieval Christian Bible exegesis, see Meltzer, Salome, 34-45.
31 Style of speech is equally disappointing. The Bible makes ample use of stylistic differences as modes of characterization, see Polak, Biblical Narrative, 270-5, and the sages and medieval exegetes, notably Judaeo-Arabic commenters, pay great attention to the linguistic and possibly divine peculiarities of Biblical Hebrew, see Heinemann, Methods of Aggada, 56-61, 97-101. For the resulting reading practices, see for example Boyarin, Intertextuality, 47-71; Cohen, Literary Approaches, 55-7; Polliack, Major Trends, 363-83. However, many medieval genres prefer to use one, notably high or popular style. Hence, the kinds of rhetorical shifts found in the Bible only become part of Christian literature towards the end of the Middle Ages and are not utilized by either Midrashim or Jewish exegesis in their phraseology, as Auerbach concluded in his inquiries in Mimesis, 108-19.
32 Hochman, Character, 66-9.
33 See, Ewen, Character, 99-135; Rimmon-Kennan, Narrative Fiction, 67-70.
34 Berlin, Poetics, 40-1.
I focus on analogy for Balaam, since my queries showed that he is defined in most sources in comparison to other figures, mainly Moses and Balak.

B. Representations of Jeremiah’s Consciousness

The approachability of the inner life of a literary character is one of its defining features. As a result, there are many kinds of devices used to flesh out these traits, including direct psycho-narration, summarization, quoted inner monologue, dreams, reoccurring motifs and imagery, as well as shifts in style. Therefore, as David Herman argued, literary genres can be classified solely in terms of how much and in what ways, namely how directly, how coherently and with what measure of conflict, they represent consciousness.

Biblical narrative tends to prefer mentally opaque characters and primarily ambiguous modes. To differentiate between exegetes and midrashic layers, this study pays special attention to the ways in which they deviate from the mental poetics of the Bible. The mental sphere is one of the major ways to create an emotional connection between audience and character, as well as to alter the meaning of known events, thus making it an ideal avenue for interpretation. The character of Jeremiah whose laments expressing his emotions are present in the Bible itself, is therefore well suited to serve as a case study for character consciousness.

My examination of the mental sphere is limited to comparative literature. I do not use methods of mental history and history of the “Self”, a growing trend in recent

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35 Honko, Four Forms, 144-9.
36 As argued by Forster, Aspects of the Novel, 34-8 and see the objection of Hochman, Character, 42-5.
37 See extensively in Ewen, Character, 136-93.
38 See in Herman, Basic Elements, 136-43.
39 As in Auerbach, Mimesis, 4-11; Sternberg, Poetics, 230-64; Polak, Biblical Narrative, 286-92.
40 On this technique as integral to many forms of media, see for instance, the seventh chapter of Ryan, Narrative as Virtual Reality.
analyses of rabbinic sources. I thus do not posit a direct relationship between the representation of consciousness in my sources and their author’s sense of “Self” or consciousness, though this might be worthwhile to explore in the future.

C. The Presentation of Esther as a Protagonist

Literary studies tend to assign characters to hierarchies headed by the protagonist, hence recognition of the protagonist, is important to define all other characters in a work. Accordingly, an understanding of how different medieval readers conceptualize characters, can be intuited indirectly by examining how they discuss and treat a character’s centrality to the plot.

Literature engenders a central conflict between plot and character. Some theories, dating as far back as Aristotle’s “Poetics”, view characters as mere cogs in the wheels of the plot. Semiotologists also reduce a character to an acting code in an overreaching scheme. Russian formalism in particular defined characters as the sub-total of the requirements of their function in the plot. On the other hand, modern theories of the novel have veered towards seeing plot as the expression of character.

This study examines the ways in which medieval Jewish exegetical sources addressed this question, by focusing on how they designate a character as important and indirectly assign that character a place in the narrative. This is used to reveal the way they viewed characters in general. This aspect is especially pertinent, since Midrashim have folkloristic elements, which could lead to a certain dismissal of

41 For some examples, see the studies referenced in Levinson, Poetics to Praxis, 65-7, 74-6.
42 See the hierarchies suggested in Harvey, Character, 55-68; Hochman, Character, 87-144.
43 See his emphasis on action, Aristotle, Poetics, 24-7, 35-6.
44 Such as Greimas, Structural Semantics, 202-7.
45 Propp, Morphology, 19-22, 64-5.
46 See Forster, Aspects of the Novel, 111-7; Bakhtin, Problems, 47-68; Ewen, Character, 195-9.
character\textsuperscript{47}, whereas medieval exegetes emphasize different literary facets of biblical narrative\textsuperscript{48}, which may lead to a different evaluation of the protagonist.

Here I focus on the way different sources engage with Esther’s role in the plot, to examine her centrality to different accounts. This method will allow me to describe the actual concept of character at work in them, even when it is not directly expressed.

0.3 Scholarship on Characterization in Midrashim and Systematic Medieval Exegesis

0.3.1 Characters in the Literary Study of Midrash

While many studies have discussed the literary nature of Midrash, few have examined the overall qualities of characters in it, and fewer still have considered later sources in light of the three criteria above\textsuperscript{49}. This study aims to further these observations.

0.3.1.1 Analogical Characterization and the Representation of Consciousness

Isaac Heinemann and Jonah Frankel both highlighted two main modes of characterization inherent to Midrashim; namely comparative character analogy and monologue quoted to render pathos. Galit Hasan-Rokem has shown the latter to be more frequent in Palestinian sources dealing with the destruction of Jerusalem, when compared to their Babylonian counterparts\textsuperscript{50}. The use of this technique in late Midrashim was not explored independently.

Joshua Levinson examined the many devices implemented in the midrashic homiletic tales to represent the consciousness of its heroes or heroines, as part of their

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\textsuperscript{47} See in Hasan-Rokem, Did Rabbinic Culture, 52-3; Frankel, Aggadic Narrative, 62-72; Ways of Aggada, 280-5.

\textsuperscript{48} See above.

\textsuperscript{49} Heinemann, Methods of Aggada, 42-51, 58-60. Conversely, Frankel, Aggadic Narrative, 273-94, 346-65; Ways of Aggada, 235-85, for instance, focused on the characters of sages and their dramatic structural functions more than on biblical characters and their midrashic representation.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid; Hasan-Rokem, Web of Life, 34-8, 58-61.
focus on the tensions between intent and action and between the human and the divine spheres, as well as the use of characters to represent the audience’s reaction. He noted that classical Midrashim translate epic patterns into the mental sphere, thus reflecting a broader change in the perception of the “Self” in Late Antiquity. He also noted that his conclusions should be considered separately in late Midrashim, and I attempt to do this below51.

0.3.1.2 The Underlying Nature of Midrash Characters

Isaac Heinemann drew attention to the fact that Midrash use “flat” stereotypes alongside more nuanced characters. The focus on flatness is part of the folkloristic nature of some of accounts meant to facilitate audience identification52. I examine whether this is universally true of all Midrashic genres and periods.

David Stern questioned the coherence of seemingly complex Midrash characters, and wondered whether individual accounts even had the same characters or whether these were ad hoc adaptations connected only by their common name53. Stern’s initial analysis of God in Lamentations Rabbah (Lam. R.) and Gen. R. supports the former option, and this study reasserts his conclusions using many other case studies54.

Ofra Meir noted that Babylonian Talmud (BT) stories tend to present two main character types that differ in terms of their development, in that the negative character needs to change to confirm to the revealed ideology of its positive

51 See, Levinson, Twice Told Tale, 172-89, 216-20, 225-30; Poetics to Praxis, 80-6.
53 As in the case of R. Akiva’s wife in Shinan, Three Wives, 24-5.
54 Stern, Midrash and theory, 90-3.
counterpart. This important observation has not yet been tested on other compositions.

0.3.2 Literary Characters in Jewish Medieval Exegesis

Although a great deal has been written about the exegetes’ literary approach to the Bible, few studies have discussed the characterization of specific figures. There are no studies detailing the exegetes’ rendering and insight into Balaam, Jeremiah or Esther.

Exegetes have been shown to be aware of many kinds of indirect forms of characterization employed by the biblical text, such as appearance, actions, epithets, style of speech and to a lesser degree analogy. These studies show how the awareness of the exegete is translated into unique versions of the characters, at times at odds with Midrashim. However, few works have suggested synchronic explanations for this new-found awareness.

One major medieval trend can be seen in the growing interest in consciousness and motives, in the commentaries of Sa‘adiah Gaon, Yefet ben ‘Eli, Rashbam, Radak and Joseph Kara. Comparing this trend to the mental sphere Levinson identified in Midrashim will be a central avenue for this study.

55 Meir, Changing Character, 61-8.
56 Even Walfish’s illuminating study of Esther in some thirty commentaries lacks a separate discussion of the characters, but rather focuses on wider themes. See Walfish, Medieval Garb.
57 See, Seidler, Doubling, 560-4; Davidovitz, Appraisal, 45-50; Avioz, Lot, 34-5; Raffeld, Cain, 11-6; Liss Fictional Worlds, 154-68; Zawanowska, ibid; and conclusions of Shalem, Literary Reading.
58 Sadik, Psychology, 93, 96-100.
59 Yefet deals with motives in most of the examples in Polliack, Voice of the Narrator. He attempts to elucidate them, see Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 16-9; Zawanowska, Literary Approach, 75-83.
60 See extensively in Liss, Fictional Worlds, 120-48.
62 In Kara’s comments on Ruth, but in many others as well, see Nir, Portrait of Ruth, 66-76.
Several studies have dealt with Esther’s shifting centrality to the plot. I intend to revisit this question but with regards to Midrash as well, as a way to discuss her possible status as a protagonist.

0.3.3 Studies on Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther in Midrashim and Systematic Exegesis

Studies on these three characters tend to focus on questions of reception, and primarily the positivity, negativity or centrality of each character. But they usually do not distinguish between different midrashic spheres, and do not opt for a comprehensive discussion of all the characterizations inherent to specific Midrashim or commentaries.

To address these lacunae, the introduction to each of the major parts of this thesis will briefly outline the major diachronic trends in the representation of the case studies. I will pay special attention to differences between the Tannaitic, Amoraic, Talmudic, and Tanhumah compositions as well as late outliers and neo-classical compilations. This will be done with regards to changing themes typical of midrashic character studies, as discussed in the literature.

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63 See insights about Esther’s characterization as influenced by her plot status in Kamin, Double Causation: 555-8; Davidovitz, Two Commentaries, 38; Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 25-7; Sasson, Gender Equality, 57-60.
64 For some examples discussed in later chapters, note that Baksin and Vermes’ use of the late Num. R. might undermine some of their conclusions, as in Baskin, Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 88-9; Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 175-7. Nikolsky’s treatment of Balaam in BT Sanhedrin is an exception because it is highly focused, see Nikolsky, Interpret Him, 222-4. Wieder’s analysis of Jeremiah in Midrashim is very extensive though he aims for a more folkloristic overview that ignores possible diachronic differences. See in Wieder, Jeremiah. Tomes suggested that Jeremiah is characterized in Midrash mostly in order to shift away the harshness of his message from God. Tomes, Reception of Jeremiah, 233-53. His conclusions might only pertain to some kinds of Midrashim but not others. Similarly both Bronner’s depiction of Esther in Midrashim, as well as Segal’s short discussion of her character in b. Megilla are not fine-tuned enough and ignore some accounts, see Bronner, Esther Revisited, 177, 197; Segal, Esther Midrash, iii, 263-5. Specific studies on the three characters in commentaries are almost nonexistent, though some attention has been devoted to Esther’s character as a side note to other queries, see the above note. I will address these studies as well as others.
65 See the overview in Reizel, Introduction to Midrash.
66 For instance, Joseph’s character in late and classical Midrashim in Kugel, Potiphar’s House, 13-73.
compare in detail two Midrashic sources, one classical and one late, to broaden the diachronic applicability of the conclusions.

Scholars generally agree that Jewish medieval exegetes belonged to different schools or zones. The major partition reflects the division between Muslim and Christian lands, wherein living under intellectual, linguistic and material circumstances during the crucial period of transitioning to literate communities, naturally impacted Jewish Bible exegesis. Another impactful factor was the encounter and subsequent often hidden dialogue, with Muslim religious exegesis on the one hand and Latin Christian literature on the other.

The emergent medieval exegetes such as the Karaite Jerusalem School or the Northern French peshat commentators were concrete groups sharing an exegetic edifice, often within familial bonds. However, different schools could have been interconnected, although this was not always acknowledged directly as was the medieval custom, and so warrants further comparison. The prism of characterization has yet to be employed to compare these schools and identify their mutual

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67 For a preliminary comparison of the literary exegetic approaches of these schools see Polliack, Literary Consciousness, 391-6.
68 For some examples see Drory, Contacts, 83-7, 156-63.
69 See Smalley, Study of the Bible, 149-55; Signer, Peshat, 204-7; Toitou, Perpetual Motion, 11-33.
70 For one clear example of familial bonds see Kislev, Methodological Saying, 234-6.
71 Thus, Judaean-Arabic exegesis might have impacted French comments via Spanish mediation in Provence. For this eventuality, see the arguments in Grossman, Early Sages, 464-5, 555-60; Rashi’s Linguistics, 425-33 and Cohen, Spanish Source, 367-74. This is exemplified in the character of David Kimhi, who was not only indebted to Abraham Ibn Ezra and Rashi, as in Grunhaus, Dependence, 422-4; but might also have heard of Yefet, see Polliack and Schlossberg, Hosea, 98-100; Nadler-Akirav, Comparative Study, 136-7. Another such key character is Abraham Ibn Ezra who travelled extensively in Spain and France. Not only was he in dialogue with Rashi, as in Mondschein, One in a Thousand, 228-9, but he might have been so with Joseph Kara, though this is less likely, ibid, Did Ibn Ezra know, 244-6. Needless to say, Ibn Ezra was versed in Judeao-Arabic commentaries, as he knew of Sa’adia Gaon and Yefet ben ’Eli among many others, see the discussion in Nir, Portrait of Ruth, 88-104. Ibn Ezra’s possible impact on Rashbam has also been debated. See for instance, Kislev, Ibn Ezra as a Source, 435-8; Jacobs, Does Rashbam’s Commentary, 304-7; Was Ramban, 106-8.
connections. For this reason, the three major parts of this thesis go on to compare two exegetes from different zones and periods, after discussing Midrashim.

0.4 The Structure of this Dissertation

All three parts of this study share the same basic outline. Each is dedicated to a different character and its associated literary characterization criterion. Each is split into four major sources, two midrashic sources and two systematic Bible exegetes. No midrashic composition or exegete is repeated throughout this study, except for some partial comparisons. This panoramic approach is meant to produce as diverse and as broad a picture of characterization as possible.

I present close readings of my sources to reconstruct their conceptions of Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther, to determine whether and how they cohere, according to key literary themes. This is aimed at producing an updated and more extensive portrayal of their medieval reception, but will also answer the broader questions raised in this introduction.

The parts are as follows. Part 1: Balaam in Tannaitic literature is compared to Tanḥuma Balak’s many analogies between Balaam and Moses or Balak. Yefet ben ‘Eli’s depiction of Balaam as Balak and Nebuchadnezzar in in his commentary on Numbers is compared to Rashbam’s matching of Balaam with Jonah. Part 2: Jeremiah’s relative lack of voice in Pesikta de Rav Kahana 13 is compared to his inner monologues in Pesikta Rabatti 26. Rashi’s apologetic Jeremiah monologues are matched with Radak’s treatment of Jeremiah’s trauma. Part 3: Novelistic themes in BT Megilla’s treatment of Esther are contrasted with Esther Rabbah’s marginalization of Esther. Sa‘adiah Gaon’s paradigmatic Esther is compared with Abraham Ibn Ezra’s flawed beautiful Esther.
I usually end my treatment of each source with an inquiry into the possible cultural synchronic contexts and how these may impact characterization. I do so by focusing on contemporaneous genres, such as the Greek novel, not so much to ascertain their possible influence, but to highlight the unique features of the medieval Jewish accounts in question. This methodology will illustrate the need to go beyond a diachronic developmental framework, in favor of mapping the many factors that shape and reshape “character”.

The Conclusions summarize the findings, and provides an analytical comparative overview that considers the literary criteria with regard to the findings on the two other case studies. This synthesis compares the various accounts in several diachronic cross sections: characterization in classical versus late Midrashim, characterization in systematic medieval exegesis in Christian versus Muslim zones of influence, and characterization in Midrashim versus systematic medieval exegesis.

Overall, this study aims to determine whether a certain chronological layer can be associated with a certain characterization mode. What did each view as essential to biblical characters? What constitutes their emerging concept of character? A considerable difference in characterization between midrashic and systematic Bible exegesis would further cement the centrality of the literary mode in medieval Bible exegesis. Conversely, considerable continuity between these genres would help answer the intriguing question of the factors contributing to the emergence of Jewish Bible exegesis in the first place, especially in Northern France. The overarching goal is to present a brief historical poetics of character mimesis in medieval Jewish exegetical sources.

72 Given the scope of this study, these contextual inquires will primarily use secondary sources, but are still relevant, since there are very few such studies with regards to medieval exegetic sources.
0.5 Sources and Quotations

As a rule, I use English translations for my primary sources in the actual text, and relegate the Hebrew originals to the notes for reference. The sources of the translations, or when relevant the sources of my own translations, are detailed in the notes. These quotations appear indented and single-spaced. Their use of Bold marks biblical quotations. Midrashic sources are either based on critical editions or amended according to the manuscripts in the “Ma’agarim” historical dictionary73. I comment on differences between different textual witnesses where they are significant.

The medieval Bible exegetes were selected according to three criteria: (1) including representatives of both the Christian and Muslim zones of influence, (2) showing as many characterizations as possible for the biblical character in question or presenting those characterizations which seem unique74, and (3) the existence of critical editions, such as “HaKeter”75. As in the case of midrashic sources, bibliographical information, critical philological notes as well as post biblical or midrashic parallels, are noted when pertinent.

73 The reasons for choosing specific account are to be found in the opening review section of each part. Nevertheless, several compositions, such as Midr. Psalms, “Pitron Torah” and Panim Aherim B, were rejected not due to a lack of interest on my part, but due to difficulties in dating them or establishing the primacy of their versions of accounts, as I attempt to do to my other late sources.

74 Thus, Joseph Kara’s commentaries were dropped since Rashi and Rashbam reflect the modes better with respect to the three characters. Judah ibn Balaam, Tanḥum ben Joseph Hayerushalmi, Joseph ibn Caspi and Isaiah di Tirani are also omitted because of their relative lack of focus on the characters in question. The chosen exegetes then are Yefet ben ’Eli and Sa’adiah Gaon reflecting a Judaeo-Arabic milieu, Rashi and Rashbam representing developments in Northern France; and Abraham Ibn Ezra and David Kimhi for their Spanish and Andalusian heritage in transition. The resulting description of characterization is thus still inclusive, diverse and consistent in focusing on these three schools of exegesis and not on individuals.

75 Another consideration limiting the choice of exegetes is the medieval nature of the debate, since the Renaissance has its own unique views on characters given the increased role of representation of the individual and his/her choices. See Lawee, On the Threshold, 288-306. This is also accompanied by some instances of heightening the moral aspect of well-crafted midrashic fiction, which is foreign to medieval exegesis in terms of its clarity, see Levinson, Parable to Invention, 19-23. Thus exegetes who are on the cusp of the Renaissance, such as Isaac Abarbanel and Judah Sforno are beyond the scope of this study, in spite of their character studies. See for instance some examples in Gutwirth, Exegesis and Self-fashioning, 35-42; Skalli, Portraits, 255-62, 268-70; Rachimi, Apology, 620-2.
Part One: Balaam and Analogy

1.1 Introduction: A Review of Balaam’s Character in Midrashim

Balaam is a uniquely appropriate case study for the use of character analogy in Midrashim. This section presents a survey of his portrayal in various midrashic sources, with greater emphasis on late Midrash examples, since this period is underrepresented in the scholarly literature. All the major themes associated with Balaam can be traced back to Tannaitic literature, although there are a few important innovations in the Babylonian Talmud (BT) and in the Tanḥuma.

Tannaitic sources on Balaam depict his wickedness, greed and hatred of Israel which motivated him to give the advice that led to fornication in Shittim and eventually to his own death. This is done almost exclusively via his inclusion in lists with obvious and implicit analogical devices. However, these sources also illustrate Balaam’s prestige and wisdom as an advisor to the nations, by casting him as the nations’ very own Moses.

Judith Baskin considers the portrayal of Balaam to be ambiguous in Tannaitic literature and more uniformly maligned in Amoraic and late Midrashim. In her analysis of his depictions in Midrashim, she posits that in Amoraic accounts, Balaam is mostly modeled after the “advisor to the nations” theme and that the Moses comparison tends to be dropped, in favor of showing how Balaam’s prophetic

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1 For a more on analogical characterization, see 0.2.1.
2 The same ambiguity is evident in some Christian sources, but Balaam’s love of wealth is a negative Christian theme from the New Testament onwards, see in Baskin, Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 101.
3 Baskin, Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 88-9. For more on Balaam’s lost ambiguity see in Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 175-7.
prowess declined⁴. Baksin suggests that growing polemics with Christianity were the main reason for these changes in focus⁵.

The BT’s treatment of Balaam is divergent from Tannaitic literature, as most of Balaam’s Talmudic characterizations are direct and not based on analogy. This makes them less conducive to this part’s focus on analogy but also indirectly supports a polemical thesis⁶. Ronit Nikolsky analyzed how b. Sanhedrin 105a-106b, accomplishes this polemical goal⁷, and the same overall literary qualities are found in the other scattered Talmudic accounts concerned with Balaam⁸.

Baskin argued that late Midrash on Balaam continues the negative trends set in Talmudic literature⁹. However, a review of most of the accounts about Balaam in the

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⁴ Baskin mentions many accounts that discount Balaam’s prophecy altogether. For instance, Gen. R. 55:20; Lev. R. 1:12 (=SoS. R. 2:5, Pitron Torah, VaYikra p. 4-6). Lev. R. 13 is important for distancing Balaam from Moses when comparing Gentile and Israelite prophecy. See in Baskin, Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 13, 83-4. A similar trend occurs in the proems of Lam. R. and also in b. Sanhedrin 105b, 106a-b. Avoda Zara 4b, Berakhot 7a, Tan. VaYehi 10, Pitorn Torah Balak, p.199. Compare this to Origen’s view of Balaam’s limited power in Braverman, Balaam, 44-5.

⁵ Baskin, Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 88-9, 100-1. One specific example of anti-Christian polemics is Y. Sotah 5:6, which argues that Balaam is Elihu (contra b. Baba Batra 15b), mentions that God undid Balaam’s curses (=b. Berakhot 55b), and that his prophecy was contemptible. These assertions have an anti-Christian focus, due to the connection with R. Johanan and the parallels in Jerome. See ibid, 23, 39. Another polemical claim is that Balaam was killed at the age of 33 which corresponds to the halved life span of the wicked, possibly alluding to Jesus in b. Sanhedrin 106b.

⁶ B. Gittin 56b-57a, equates Balaam with Titus and Jesus and their torments in hell. Balaam has become an archetypical enemy. See extensively in Schäfer, Jesus, 86-94. Greene similarly concludes that Balaam in pre-biblical sources and most certainly in biblical redactions and Qumran, was reduced to a type meant to distinguish between legitimate and “other”. See Greene, Balaam, 164-8.

⁷ Nikolsky, Interpret Him, 224. She also notes how his change for the worse in the biblical narrative is integral to the BT’s overarching message. Nikolsky, Interpret Him, 228-9. Several of the BT accounts are harsher versions of Tannaitic accounts. Nikolsky also argues that the Talmud’s preoccupation with Balaam’s sexual deviancy is one of its distinguishing features that makes him a wicked Gentile and separates him from pious forms of sexuality described in adjacent accounts. Ibid, 216. He is reduced to a ridiculed villain, possessed of sexual deviancy and physical deformity, who can be updated according to the needs of the homeliest to target any rival “other”. Ibid, 222-4. Two other accounts discuss Balaam’s sexuality. B. Niddah (=Pitron Torah Balak, p.202) and b. Baba Batra 60a (= Tan. BaMidbar 11, Exod. R. 20:5).

⁸ The BT has a consistent sense of Balaam. Balaam is associated with Laban and Kushan Rishatatayim, as a type (b. Sanhedrin 105a= Tan. VaYetze 13, contra Tan. Devarim 3). B. Zebahim 116a is another version of a Tannaitic narrative about Balaam and the kings of the nations (see below), which also influenced b. Sanhedrin 106a, where Balaam blesses Jethro with wording suggestive of familiarity with a baraita about him being one of Pharaoh’s advisors (=b. Sotah 11a, Exod. R. 27:3, 6 as well as the later Exod. R. 1:9). Al-Samarqandi’s Tafsir (10⁶ century C.E.) also connects Balaam to Pharaoh, see Leemhuis, Bal’am, 306-7.

⁹ Baskin, Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 13, 83-4.
Tanḥuma and related literature\textsuperscript{10}, neo-classical Midrashim\textsuperscript{11} and several other late compositions, suggests that Balaam’s negativity actually wanes in late Midrashim, which instead re-embrace the Tannaitic comparison between Balaam and Moses with great aplomb\textsuperscript{12}. Balaam’s late depictions are built around analogy, but are centered on comparisons to a few key figures in narratives rather than on midrashic lists.

Balaam is described as Moses’ figurative competitor more so than as a wicked Gentile. Tanḥuma\textsuperscript{13} Balak seems to be the major exemplar for the themes of late Midrash accounts and also introduces its own unique idea\textsuperscript{14}. The Tanḥuma compares Balaam to a more sinister Balak, primarily to Balaam’s advantage\textsuperscript{15}.

The renewed late Midrash analogy to Moses specifically increases Balaam’s complexity, while still showing his wickedness. The late sources show Balaam as an “advisor to nations”, but also heighten his prestige as Moses’s rival\textsuperscript{16}. The negative

\textsuperscript{10} For the possible scope of Tanḥuma-related literature, see Reizel, Introduction, 235-6, 240-1.
\textsuperscript{11} Neo-Classical Midrashim on Balaam build on existing Tannaitic and Amoraic themes, but do not add new character attributes. For the term “neo-classical” see 3.5.1.
\textsuperscript{12} Although not one direct lengthy comparison of Balaam to Moses is repeated, many unattested smaller comparisons are present. These comparisons constantly argue for Balaam’s inferiority, when considered against the Tannaitic source, which is less clear (see below). See Tan. Buber Matot 5, Tan. Buber VaYesalach 24 (= possibly based on Lev. R. 1:13). Tan. Buber Toldot 16, Tan. V’Zot HaBerachah 1. The comparison to Moses is also ingrained in the problematic nature of Balaam’s blessings in Deut. R. 1:2, 4; 3:4= Tan. Buber add. Devarim 2. See also Eccles. R. 7 1:5, ARN a 2, 29=b 34, Eccles. Zuz. 3:19, as well as Elijahu Rabbah 19, 26 and partially in Elijahu Zutta 10. These last two sources are a synthesis of Tanḥuma, BT and Tannaitic accounts that still highlight the connection to Moses. Targum Pseudo Jonathan also builds on this connection, by describing the Egyptian magicians opposing Moses as Balaam’s sons. See in Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 137. The Samaritan Book of Secrets also connects Moses’ birth with Balaam’s oracles, see Greene, Balaam, 125-31
\textsuperscript{13} I used Buber’s numbering in this section and throughout the chapter, as Tan. Balak is nearly identical in the two main Tanḥuma versions. Buber also more extensively segments the parashah thereby allowing for more accurate references, see in detail in 1.4.1.
\textsuperscript{14} Another unique Tanḥuma Theme is Balaam’s attempts to validate Gentile sacrifices. Tan. Tzav 1 = Tan. Balak 16, PR Shalom Addendum 1:1, Pitron Torah Tzav, p. 20. Compatibly, Tan. Tzav. 4 is a possible update of a Tannaitic narrative of Balaam advising the kings, but turning to Gentile sacrifices instead of the Torah. For the polemical and possible cultic undertones informing these Tanḥuma passages and others like them, mostly found only in Tanḥuma related literature, see Knohl, Acceptance, 343-5. These claims might support the more popular and late nature of some Tanḥuma layers, by actively arguing against what is actually halakhah. Other Tanḥuma discussions enhance older themes mostly by expansion. See Tan. Noah 14, Pinhas 5, Tan. Ḥukat 24 =Tan. Balak Buber 6.
\textsuperscript{15} The comparison may be reflected by Midrashim quoted by Jerome, see Braverman, Balaam, 45-6.
\textsuperscript{16} There are some striking examples of Balaam’s prestige. In Exod. R. 30:24 Balaam is a counselor to Israel, instead of the nations. PR 40 adds Moses to its account of Balaam’s blessings as Balaam’s foil. These contrasts between Balaam and Moses are also evident in Eccles. R. In Eccles. R. 2:2, Israel will preserve and turn to the memory of Moses in times of trouble and not to the memory of Balaam,
Talmudic characterizations have few other parallels and are mostly underutilized in late sources, except for the Babylonian compilation “Pitron Torah”\(^{17}\), which melds Tanḥuma\(^{18}\) and BT accounts together, but still results in an ambivalent Balaam\(^{19}\).

It remains unclear why late Midrashim are so different than the BT and Amoraic sources. Baskin argues that Josephus and Biblical Antiquities had a much more positive view of Balaam\(^{20}\), and that his figure was altered in Amoraic sources due to tensions with Christianity\(^{21}\). Hence, I argue that Balaam’s associations with Christianity would matter less to late redactors active in a dominantly Muslim environment\(^{22}\). This suggestion complements dating Tanḥuma Balak’s to the early Muslim period (See 1.4.1) and is supported by the fact that neo-classical Midrashim, which were mostly redacted in Christian Provence and Northern Spain, are the only distinct late group of compositions opposed to comparing Balaam and Moses\(^{23}\).

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\(^{17}\) Urbach, Pitron Torah, 23-5, 32-3.

\(^{18}\) Balaam’s role as Moses’ competitor is at its most enhanced in “Pitorn Torah”. Balaam waited for Balak’s second messengers because he was fearful of Moses spying on him with his prophetic powers (Pitorn Torah, p. 193). Pitorn Torah adds Moses to the account contrasting Abraham and Balaam rising early (Ibid, p. 195= MekhY. WaYehi 1, MekhSh.14:6, repeated in b. Sanhedrin 105b, Tan. Balak Buber 11, 14). Balaam wanted to curse Israel since he had originally wanted to lead Israel out of Egypt and give them the Torah instead of Moses, but was denied this (Pitorn Torah, p.198).

\(^{19}\) Pitorn Torah also contains some unique details meant to humiliate Balaam. He is described as honoring the Midianite elders by making their beds with quality linens (p. 194). After losing his prophetic powers (=b. Sanhedrin 106a), Balaam was forced to work as a magician for meager pay (Pitron Torah p. 204). A divine message also made clear that Balaam was not a prophet when he died (contra Tan. Buber Balak 4).

\(^{20}\) Later sympathetic accounts could be echoing older ambivalent post biblical depictions due to the late tendency noted by Kister, to embellish the mere existence of both the paradigmatically righteous and wicked like Balaam as signs of God, see Kister, Affinity, 130-1. Comparing Targum Pseudo Jonathan to the Neofiti and Fragment Targums, might support these conclusions and suggest that later Targums were less negative about Balaam parallelizing the same trend in late Midrashim. See Houtman and Sysling, Balaam, 197, 210-1. Also see Alexander, PR 34, 154-7.

\(^{21}\) See Baskin, Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 100; Greene, Balaam, 144-5. Nikolsky notes the difference in tone in the Tanḥuma when compared to the BT, but does not address it in any detail. I do so below. See Nikolsky, Interpret Him, 225.

\(^{22}\) Late layers in the Tanḥuma could easily be Gaonic and Balaam’s character is hardly central in Islam. See Reizel, Introduction, 236-7. Indeed, some of the Tanḥuma positivity about Balaam has echoes in Tafsir Muqātil, see in Leemhuis, Bal’am, 304-5.

\(^{23}\) Neo-classical Midrashim seem to expand on older themes, such as Balaam being an advisor to nations or his wicked blessings, but almost never discusses Balaam and Moses together. For examples,
The following builds on the established thematic and poetic comparisons of Balaam to other figures, in order to contrast the portraits of Balaam in Tannaitic literature and Tanḥuma Balak, as a broader case study for the differences in character analogies between classical and late Midrashim. I describe how Tannaitic literature and Tanḥuma Balak use fundamentally different kinds of analogy to characterize Balaam. Since analogy requires some working understanding of the things compared, it can also suggest a phenomenological description of a concept of character, which is dependent on how and what the characters are likened to.

1.2 Balaam in Tannaitic Literature

1.2.1 Lists as the Main Form of Tannaitic Character Discourse

1.2.1.1 Character Discourse as Centered on Hierarchies

One unexpected outcome of reexamining the diachronic differences between midrashic depictions of Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther for review sections like the one above, is that Tannaitic sources rarely supply narratives about biblical characters, but commonly provide hierarchical character lists. Thus, while the analysis below is

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see Deut. R. Lieberman 1:5 = Eccles. Zu. 7:5, Eccles. R. 7 1:5, Pitron Torah Dvarim, p. 229. These sources possess some similarity to Origen’s emphasis on Balaam’s dishonest heart, see note 15 in Urbach, Balaam. 285. For expansions on Balaam as advisor, see Exod. R. 1 4:3, as well as ER II 7:9 =Aba Gurion 3 3:5, which introduces blindness. ER II 7:13 tells of how Balaam advised Amalek to attack Israel = Aba Gurion 3 3:12. This account might be inspired by Amalek mentioned in Num. 24:20, as argued by Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 167.

24 A small number of Tannaitic accounts paraphrase character speech such that one facet of the character’s personality comes through. This form seems rarer than the list, since on average there was only one account per character examined. In particular, MekhY. WAYes’a 5 rephrases Jeremiah to sound cordial (2.1). Similarly, Sifrei Numbers 119 paraphrases several Ps. 119 verses to have David comment on Torah study. Another exception is a homily, which argues that Ruth lived to see the trial of Solomon as a reward for her conversion, since Ruth is silent (Sifrei Zutta Deuteronomy 10:29).

25 The timeless quality of Tannaitic Messianic sources might also reflect a negating view of history which separates its lists from narrative. In other words, rejecting messianic immediacy might also be a rejection of narrative. See in Boyarin, Intertextuality, 42-4; Fraade, Tradition to Commentary, 157-8. For an extended description of non-halakhic texts in Tannaitic compositions, see Shemesh-Raiskin, Towards a Description, 218-20.
centered on sources about Balaam, its implications might very well pertain to the depiction of biblical characters in Tannaitic literature in general.

Examples about Balaam are examined extensively below. The following table shows the rare instances of characterization in midrashic lists relating to Jeremiah and Esther. The implicit nature of this characterization is explained below. Also see the next note.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>The index’s Explicit Message</th>
<th>Implicit Message via Analogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sifrei Deuteronomy 1</td>
<td>The formula “These are the words” suggests rebukes as provided by Moses, Amos, Jeremiah, David and Ecclesiastics.</td>
<td>Also hints at the characters being perceived as authors and prophets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifrei Numbers 78 (list within list)</td>
<td>Jeremiah is of the prophets and priests who descended from Rahab.</td>
<td>Pious biblical converts all received disproportionately great rewards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MekhY. Pasha 1</td>
<td>Three types of prophets, contrasting caring for God with caring for Israel.</td>
<td>Jeremiah takes the most balanced stance as a prophet when compared to Jonah and Elijah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifrei Numbers 45</td>
<td>Esther, Joseph and Daniel were made more likable by God.</td>
<td>Showing divine intervention in Esther. Esther, Daniel and Joseph all navigated a foreign court and hence are alike.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My observations are also based on initial examinations, unrelated to this study, of Ruth and David in Tannaitic sources. The following table concentrates my findings, again suggesting that Tannaitic versions of biblical characters are expressed mostly in lists:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>The index’s Explicit Message</th>
<th>Implicit Message via Analogy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MekhY. Shira 1(digression from another list)</td>
<td>The temple was named after David, since he wanted to build it at his own expense.</td>
<td>David is almost as positive as Moses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MekhY. Amalek 2</td>
<td>God’s promise to David’s progeny was inferior to his promise to Jonadab.</td>
<td>The unreliability of David’s progeny or the unfair advantage of Jonadab’s descendants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifrei Numbers 119</td>
<td>The inferiority of David’s royalty to Aaron’s priesthood.</td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifrei Numbers 137</td>
<td>David did not want his sin to be mentioned, but Moses insisted that his sin would be.</td>
<td>Moses is superior to David in humility (also in a Parable).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifrei Deuteronomy 26</td>
<td>Idem.</td>
<td>Moses and David both have their strengths (Parables).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifrei Deuteronomy 27</td>
<td>Episodes where characters called themselves the slaves of God and He repeated or rejected this phrasing. Other cases where God called a character a slave are unwarranted.</td>
<td>Greater intimacy with God for Isaiah, Moses and David.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifrei Zutta Numbers 10:29</td>
<td>God greatly rewards converts, as in Sifrei Numbers 78, but Ruth’s reward there was reported in a paraphrase of God, which is missing here.</td>
<td>Pious biblical converts all received disproportionately great rewards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sifrei Deuteronomy 33</td>
<td>All the righteous abjured their yetzer, David included.</td>
<td>All the righteous are similar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MekhY. Amalek 2</td>
<td>Jacob, Moses, David and Mordecai received a hint of future events, but only the latter two figures understood what they had been shown.</td>
<td>David and Mordecai are more attentive. The structure of the account focuses on Moses, though.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next sections examine how the lists relating to Balaam might function as an analogical form of characterization (1.2.1.1), how the lists and Tannaitic character narratives share a preconception of Balaam (1.2.1.2), and the uses of lists and analogy in comparable Hellenic genres (1.2.2.3, 1.3). These inquiries highlight a Tannaitic conception of character emanating from lists about Balaam, a type of orally inspired post-biblical bed of traditions common to distant sources, but expressed differently in narratives and lists as performative variants of each other.

1.2.1.2 The Implicit Nature of Character Lists

Character lists are part of a broader Tannaitic common use of lists. Wayne Towner describes that Tannaitic literature is almost entirely couched in stereotypical forms, of which lists are the most ubiquitous. One of the commonest forms is an “enumeration of scriptural examples”. He divides this pattern into “proverbial” and “exegetic”, a distinction which hinges on whether the list manipulates verses or not. Character lists use characters as examples instead of verses. This is the most frequent way for biblical characters to be mentioned in Tannaitic literature and so seemingly falls within Towner’s division as “proverbial”. Using characters as illustrations is part of a wider “paradigmatic” function of Tannaitic Midrash identified by Daniel Boyarin. Characters are a shorthand for the rules of their respective lists.

This explicit “paradigmatic” rule is not about the character in itself, but almost always a comparison of its standing with regards to other figures. Thus, there

28 Towner, Enumeration, 14-5.
30 See the distinctions in Boyarin, Intertextuality, 54-60.
31 Isaac Heinemann noted a midrashic trend to chart hierarchies of more than two opposing categories, which he equated with the need to examine the psychological differences between individuals to depict the place of the individual in society in a non-dualistic fashion. Heinemann, Methods of Aggada, 54-5. These lists seem to fall within his observation. For the opposite trend, see ibid, 44-9. Kister notes that generally, comparisons between characters in the biblical or post biblical literatures turn into competitions in Midrashim. Kister, Affinity, 118-21.
is little direct Tannaitic interest in a character in isolation or in the disembodied concept of a literary character, but great interest in character hierarchies and their ideological implications\textsuperscript{32}. However, this is not the only creative effort at work.

The character lists often \textit{implicitly} characterize the named figures and hence are no different from the opaque interpretive crux of many other kinds of Tannaitic texts such as parables\textsuperscript{33}. Character lists have a “\textit{syntagmatic}” innovative side, like the other kinds of Tannaitic indexes discussed by Boyarin\textsuperscript{34}. Grouping characters together in lists associates them with each other’s attributes and thus with possible characterizations\textsuperscript{35}. Biblical characters in Tannaitic texts are not a privileged category thought of separately, but rather are another form of text manipulated in favor of creative and generative intertextuality\textsuperscript{36}.

Boyarin argues that Tannaitic discourse compares various texts, not in terms of their abstracted qualities, but as concrete beings in the metaphorical capacity of all their connotations, which are used to create new midrashic intertextual readings\textsuperscript{37}. I argue that character lists also share this dimension. Their intertext is not that of verses, but rather of characters as repositories of presumed traits. The lists superimpose

\textsuperscript{32}Disinterest in characters is further demonstrated by Tannaitic sources which view a figure, such as David but also Jeremiah, as a moniker for a respective biblical book, such as the Psalms. The character in question is reported to have “\textit{said}” whatever proof text that homily in question requires. This then is just an elaborate introduction of a biblical quote. Some examples: M. Abbot 6:3; T. Berakhot 6:26; Sanhedrin 9:9; MekhY. WaYehi 2; Shira 1, 4; Nezikin 18; Sifra 1:7; 2:5; 3:8; Sifrei Deut. 36, 62. This is similar to the emphasis on correct transmission as a value exemplified by Esther speaking to Ahasuerus on Mordecai’s behalf (M. Abbot 6:6; Sifrei Num. 157).

\textsuperscript{33}Implicitness is a feature noted in Fraade, Tradition to Commentary, 8-16. This kind of implicit analogy is also inherent to the “Gentiles as a substitute for God” theme in the Mekhilta, as identified in Rosen-Zvi and Ophir, Goy, 110-1.

\textsuperscript{34}See his analysis of one of Towner’s examples, Boyarin, Intertextuality, 60-3, 67-70.

\textsuperscript{35}As is true of Tannaitic manipulations of text as fluid speech. Boyarin, Intertextuality, 45-7. See also Fraade, Tradition to Commentary, 16-8, 111-2. For another take on the orality of lists as mostly mnemonic, see Towner, Enumeration, 21-2.

\textsuperscript{36}For textual manipulations see Boyarin, Intertextuality, 174-6. Tannaitic Midrashim cannot satisfy themselves with the merely abstract and must deal with a reenactment of the exclusion inherent to their divisions, as they do with Goy-Israel as described by Rosen-Zvi and Ophir, Goy, 108-9. Characters as concrete examples are simply another manifestation of a preference for a tangible subtext.

\textsuperscript{37}Boyarin, Intertextuality, 223-4; 229.
unrelated characters, to produce new messages about them beyond their individual biblical characterizations. Grouping characters together forges an analogy between the figures in novel ways that often depart from the biblical material they are based on\(^\text{38}\). However, these analogical characterizations are often left unstated.

One Tannaitic homily actually acknowledges the existence of the same kind of analogical characterization hidden in lists. The second disputation in MekhY. Pisha 1 is a list about the equal status of different characters. It claims that the order in which characters are mentioned in the biblical text should not be confused with their actual comparative status, since other verses reverse this order:

**Another Interpretation. Why is it said here, “unto Moses and Aaron” (Exod. 12:1)? Because it says, “And the Lord said unto Moses: See I have set thee in God’s stead to Pharaoh” (Exod. 7:1). From this I would know only that Moses was a judge over Pharaoh. How about Aaron? By saying here, “unto Moses and Aaron,” Scripture teaches that Aaron was equal to Moses: just as Moses was a judge over Pharaoh, so also was Aaron a judge over Pharaoh; just as Moses would speak his words fearlessly, so also would Aaron speak his words fearlessly. Rabbi says: unto Moses and Aaron. I might understand that the one preceding in the scriptural text actually had precedence over the other. But in the passage: “These are that Aaron and Moses to whom the Lord said,” etc. (Exod. 6:26), Aaron is mentioned first. Scripture thus declares that both were equal, the one as important as the other. In like manner you must interpret: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). I might understand that the one preceding in the scriptural text actually preceded in the process of creation. But in the passage: “In the day that the Lord God made earth and heavens” (Gen. 2:4), the earth is mentioned first. Scripture thus declares that both were created simultaneously. In like manner you must interpret: “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Exod. 3:6). I might understand that each one who precedes in the scriptural text was of greater importance than the one following him. But the order is reversed in the passage: “Then will I remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac, and also My covenant with Abraham will I remember” (Lev. 26:42). Scripture thus declares that all three were equal. In like manner you must interpret: “Honour thy father and thy mother” (Exod. 20:12). I might understand that the one preceding in the scriptural text actually have precedence over the other. But in the passage: “Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father” (Lev. 19:3), the mother precedes. Scripture thus declares that both are equal. In like manner you must interpret: “And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh,” etc. (Num. 14:6). I might understand that the one preceding in the scriptural text actually had precedence over the other. But in the passage: “Save Caleb the son of Jephunneh the

\(^{38}\)As Ewen argues, analogical devices, which compare the traits of different characters, tend to strengthen pre-established characterizations within a text, see Ewen, Character, 99-102.
Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun” (Num. 32:12), Caleb is mentioned first. Scripture thus declares that they were both equal.39

This account is not only compatible with character lists in searching for hierarchies, but is also important with regard to what it does not say. Specifically, it equates characters with each other by discounting the possibility that order of appearance denotes importance by way of a counter-example. This means that without counter examples, the order of juxtaposition is prone to be read as an order of importance. Hence, the juxtaposition of characters might have inspired implicit comparisons in midrashic lists, as evidenced by the internal logic of this Pisha homily. Lists import and presuppose various unstated character traits, such as importance that they impart to other characters via analogy. This suggests that the Tannaim have an indirect and often unstated concept of various biblical characters, which we can only partially glimpse through their use of list analogies.

To better establish the analogical nature of Tannaitic character lists, the next section compares midrashic lists on Balaam to the most extensive Tannaitic narrative about him. I argue that narratives and lists are the two sides of the same poetic coin, developing similar presupposed attributes for Balaam via analogical characterizations. Lists and narratives are interchangeable for establishing his character and thus share a common concept of the character.

1.2.2 The Compatibility of Tannaitic Balaam Lists and Narratives

The only extant Tannaitic narrative involving Balaam is the following episode in Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael (MekhY) Amalek 3 and its parallels\(^{40}\). I focus on the Mekhili Amalek’s version because of its probable primacy to show how Balaam’s traits in this narrative also echo in lists\(^{41}\). The narrative establishes Balaam’s character traits indirectly by contrasting Balaam’s character with that of the kings of the nations, as well as by using Balaam’s style of speech\(^{42}\). He is presented as both wise and blunt. MekhY. Amalek 3:

Now Jethro the Priest of Midian, Moses’ Father-in-Law Heard. What tidings did he hear that he came?... R. Eleazar of Modi‘im says: He heard of the giving of the Torah and came. For, at the time that the Torah was given to Israel all the kings of the world trembled in their palaces, as it is said: “And in his palace everyone says: ‘Glory’” (Ps. 29.9). At that time all the kings of the nations of the world assembled and they came to Balaam the wicked\(^{43}\). They said to him: “Balaam! Perhaps God is about to do unto us as He did to the generation of the Flood.” For it is said: “The Lord sat enthroned at the flood” (ibid. v. 10) He said to them: “Fools that ye are! Long ago the Holy One, blessed be He, swore that He would not bring a flood upon the world,” as it is said: “For this is as the waters of Noah unto Me; for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth” (Isa. 54.9). They, then, said to him: “Perhaps He will not bring a flood of water, but He may bring a flood of fire.” But he said to them: “He is not going to bring a flood of water or a flood of fire. He is just going to give the Torah to His people and his friends.” For it is said: “The Lord will give strength unto His people” (Ps.29.11). As they heard this

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\(^{40}\) The parallel versions are MekhY. Jethro 5, MekhSh.18:1 and Sifrei Deut. 343:16. The versions are very similar. Kahana views this narrative in both Mekhiltot as part of an earlier aggadic source, which was incorporated relatively unaltered. See Kahana, Two Mekhiltot, 383. I suggest that the Sifrei version is a later derivative, because its use of Ps. 29 is more elaborate but tenuous. I found another parallel to this narrative in PR 20, but Balaam is outlined differently there and hence it is less helpful.

\(^{41}\) For some differences see Hirshman, Torah, 98-103. Hirshman noted that a parallel in MekhY. Jethro 5 evolves into an account about how the nations rejected the Torah. He argues the Amalek version might be earlier, due to the names of the sages and to problems with the wider context. Hirshman’s analysis combined with Amalek’s richer characterization led to me to focus on it.

\(^{42}\) Fraade argues that Israel’s problematic relations with the nations, are repeated and heightened as dramatized dialogues in Sifrei Deut. Thus, perhaps a similar polemical impetus gave rise to the narratives in the Mekhilta instead of another list. Fraade, Tradition to Commentary, 27.

\(^{43}\) While this epithet is a form of direct characterization, which supports the claim that Balaam’s further depiction in the account is all about his wicked nature, it can also be a petrified convention and so should not be over-emphasized.
from him, they all afterwards answered and said: May the Lord bless his people with peace! (ibid). And they all turned back and went each to his place.

The Mekhilta wonders what Jethro heard to entice him to seek Moses then and there. One answer is the noise emanating from the cosmic boom accompanying the giving of the Torah. An exegetic narrative based on Ps. 29:9-11 is supplied to prove that the event was noisy and could be heard. The narrative reads Ps. 29 as a dramatic dialogue inspired by the mention of the flood as it could relate to Sinai (underlined).

The verses are split between Balaam and the Kings (Ps 29:9-11) thus:

9 The voice of the Lord causes the oaks to whirl*, and strips the forest bare; [proof text about the kings trembling]: and in his palace* (and not temple) all say, ‘Glory!’

[The kings]: 10 The Lord sits enthroned over the flood: the Lord sits enthroned as king forever.

[Balaam]: May the Lord give strength to his people! [The Kings]: May the Lord bless his people with peace!

1.2.2.1 Prophetic Prestige

The Kings of the Mekhilta narrative are agitated by noise and ask Balaam whether God intends to flood the world. Balaam answers that God has promised Noah that

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44 See Fraade, Tradition to Commentary, 37n46. He notes that this citation, which is put into the mouths of the nations, constitutes the climax of the section. It is absent in the other versions, see for instance, MekhY. Bahodes 1, Lauterbach, Mekhilta, vol. 2, 198. However, in the later b. Zebahim 116a, the nations bless Israel as they do above.

45 Lauterbach, Mekhilta, vol. 2, 271. I changed a few words to better reflect the Hebrew.

46 See Hirshman, Torah, 94.

47 See extensively in Boyarin, Intertextuality, 151-83. See also Hirshman, Torah, 157, 179-80.

48 Fraade interprets the parallel version in Sifrei Deut. 343 as born out of splitting verses as well, see Fraade, Tradition to Commentary, 37, and the following translation:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to give the Torah to Israel, He shook the entire world, together with its inhabitants, as it is said, “The voice of the Lord is over the waters, the God of glory thunders” (Ps. 29:3). When they heard the thunderous voices [of revelation], all the nations gathered together and came to Balaam, saying to him, “It seems to us that the Holy One, blessed be He, is about to destroy the world with water.” He said to them, “It has already been said, ‘The waters shall never again become a flood’ (Gen. 9:15).” They said to him, “What then is this thunderous voice?” He replied, “The Lord will grant strength to His people” (Ps. 29:11)—and “strength” must refer to Torah, as it is said, “With Him are strength and sound wisdom” (Job 12:16). They said to him, “If that is so, ‘May the Lord bless His people with peace’” (Ps. 29:11).
there will be no other flood and thus they are mistaken. His proof text is based on Isa. 54:9: *This is like the days of Noah to me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth.* The kings then suggest that God might destroy the world with a flood of fire and so find a loophole in the promise.

So far, all these verse-based questions and Balaam’s scriptural responses are rote “rabinizations” that support Balaam’s indirect description as wise in rabbinic terms. His character, like this homily, is utilized to make the Gentile kings acknowledge the monumental nature of Sinai and Israel in the sacred history of the world. He thus underscores a rabbinic view.

Balaam’s wisdom, as well as his advisory function are paralleled by the implicit aspect of the following list. M. Sanhedrin (10:2) mentions three kings and four commoners who will have no part in the world to come due to their sins, which are not elaborated on: (2) … *The four commoners [are], Bilam, Doeg (see I Sam. 22:9), Ahitophel (see II Sam. 17), and Gehazi (see II Kgs. 4-5).* Apart from noting that Balaam is doomed, his inclusion with the other commoners implicitly marks him as both wise and as a counselor to kings, since Doeg and Ahitpohel are described as such in the Bible and in the Tannaitic literature.

Balaam’s actual inclusion is surprising since he is a Gentile and thus supports his pseudo-Jewish nature, given that Mishnaic sources never directly acknowledge or

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49 Midrashic sources tend to portray Gentile figures as adept at scripture. See Heinemann, Methods of Aaggada, 39-42. Sifrei Deut. 250 also argues that Mic. 6:5’s mention of Balaam is prestigious.
50 Trans. according to Yoswp Milstein and Ovadiah M’Bartenurah, Mishnah: A New Integrated Translation, vol. 7, 276-7.
51 For instance, Sifrei Numbers 46. Balaam’s depiction as a royal advisor is based on Balaam’s connection to the Midianite kings (Num. 31:8).
question his otherness\textsuperscript{52}. Gila Vachman noted that the fact that neither the sins nor the features shared by these four figures are mentioned, hints that the authors assumed the audience already knew them. She concluded that the main similarity lies in the four characters’ foregoing of rabbinic faith and thus in another unstated midrashic tradition the audience must have known\textsuperscript{53}. Her interpretation also strengthens Balaam’s proximity to Judaism, since she assumes the Mishna’s audience took Balaam’s connection to rabbinic faith for granted.

The Mishna list and the Mekhilta narrative appear to echo the same view of Balaam as a liminal figure whose rabbinic knowledge, replacing prophetic prowess, draws him closer to Jewish characters and explains why he is punished along with them. This is also the fate of Doeg in later sources\textsuperscript{54}. In fact, the narrative dramatizes Balaam’s intellectual prestige, whereas lists only hint at very similar traits\textsuperscript{55}.

For instance, Mekhilta Deut. (33:28) also implies Balaam’s prestige, via implicit character analogy to two positive prophetic exemplars\textsuperscript{56}: “\textit{Alone}”--not as the

\textsuperscript{52} This ethnic discrepancy is even more accentuated in later rabbinic revisions, which attempt to explain Balaam’s strange presence with his wisdom. The fact that Balaam is mentioned hints that his wisdom might have sufficed to warrant a part in the world to come as is the case of righteous Gentiles in T. Sanhedrin 13:2. There is no reason to assume that this deduction was intended in the Mishna.

\textsuperscript{53} Vachman, Gehazi, 79-82. See Balaam’s self-separation from God in the Mekhilta narrative below.

\textsuperscript{54} Thus completing the Jewish nature of the characters, for instance in Ruth R. 4:9 and both Talmuds.

\textsuperscript{55} This advisory theme is also developed in other Tannaitic lists. For example, MekhSh. alludes to the notion that Amalek had advice, probably from Balaam, as to when to strike Israel (=ER 7:13). Another trait endowed by a list and for which there is no parallel in the Mekhilta Amalek narrative, is Balaam’s greed. See Baskin, Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 79. The Mishna’s four commoners above Balaam included, are also placed in a larger group of those who coveted that which was not for them and so lost what they had. (T. Sotah 4:19): \textit{And so you find in Cain, Korah, Balaam, Doeg, Ahitophel and Gehazi; Absalom, Adonijah, Oziiah and Haman, who gazed at what they do not deserve. What they wished for was not given to them and what they had was taken from them.}

Mishnayot 17 and 18 state that the serpent was not satisfied with his exalted man-like positon in Eden, but wanted to slay Adam and marry Eve, mirroring the infidelity of the Sotah. As punishment, his status was revoked. Similarly, the Tosefta equates the serpent’s desire with that of several biblical characters. All had some form of exaltation, but lost it due to scheming or greed. While this analogy explicitly frames Balaam as greedy, its exact nature remains unstated (=Gen. R. 20:14). Another list found in Gen. R. 19:12 mentions Balaam as one of four who chose to lie to God and hence are likened to a pot of urine (=ARN b 45). The citing of characters together evokes new negative traits, as befitting the Gen. R. source’s citing of Tannaim and not Amoraim.

\textsuperscript{56} The Jeremiah analogy in particular might hint that Balaam is positive in this account based on Jeremiah’s positivity in Tannaitic sources (2.1).
‘alone’ said by Balaam (Num. 23:9): *Here is a people living alone* and not as the ‘alone’ said by Jeremiah: *How lonely sits* (Lam. 1:1), but as the ‘alone’ Moses said: *the Lord alone guided him* (Deut. 32:12). Moses is the positive example of love of Israel. However, both Lam. 1:1 and Balaam’s assertion of living “alone” are considered elsewhere in rabbinic literature to be positive. As a result, this source takes pains to manufacture negativity in Balaam’s blessing. Nevertheless, Balaam’s inclusion with Moses and Jeremiah frames him as a prestigious prophet, as there are other figures associated with the phrasing which could have been instead.

1.2.2.2 Liminal Rabbinic Discourse Turned to Arrogance

Balaam’s style of speech in MekhY. Amalek 3 further cements his rabbinic nature, which is echoed in other sources. “Fools that ye are! (שוטים שבעולם)” an expression of absolute theological certainty, is used by Balaam to humble Gentile kings. Balaam’s use is in line with the fact that this expression is used solely to rebuke the nations or heretics, but in Tannaitic literature, Balaam is the only figure that uses this phrase apart from God. The same is true for all other midrashic compositions, with a few possible late exceptions. Hence, Balaam might be implicitly compared to God here with regard to his authority on Jewish religious matters.

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57 בֶּדֶד הַאֲלֵפָּה יִשָּׁרָה, לוֹא בֵּדֶד שָׁאוּר (בֶּדֶד שֶׁל לָו מַעְנֵי לֵב לָו מַעְנֵי לוֹא בֵּדֶד שָׁאוּר), וְרוּחַ אֶחָד יִשָּׁרָה מִדֶּד (אֱלֹהֵי אֲלֵפָּה, לוֹא בֵּדֶד שָׁאוּר).

58 See for instance, Sifrei Deut. 65:28, which is nearly identical, except it might view Balaam’s words as positive. See also Tan. Balak 12, as well as Exod. R. 16:7.

59 This interpretation is focused on types of ‘alone’ (בדד) and not on the nature of the characters. See in Isa. 27:10, Lev. 13:46 and other instances in Lamentations.

60 A different iteration of Balaam as pharaoh’s councilor also contains an additional example of his speech mannerisms, albeit only as indirect praise for Israel, see b. Sanhedrin 106a. Balaam praises Jethro as in the company of Israel the “mighty of the world”. His perspective is once more close to the Israelite one, but willfully separate from it.


62 See Tan. Kedoshim 4 and BR VaYetze 3:24, the expression is still used in similar situations.

63 This may be explained in light of the structural argument made by Rosen-Zvi and Ophir, Goy, 106-15. The Gentiles are the opposite of God in triangular relations with Israel. Balaam could be
Other parts of Balaam’s Mekhilta phrasing strengthen the case for his rabbinic perspective. He has no trouble separating himself from God: “His people and his friends” thereby acknowledging God’s remoteness from the Gentiles. However, the Kings’ last words bless Israel unlike Balaam’s dismissal. His seemingly rightful self-separation from Israel is understood as resentment in some midrashic accounts, prefiguring later accounts’ more negative portrayals of Balaam.

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64 “and his friends” is known from a Genizah fragment, though otherwise present only in prints. The comment might be original, since it adds a midrashic representation of the second appearance of “People” in Ps. 29:11. Alternatively, the presence of the additional phrase or its later removal, accentuate Balaam’s ambiguity. Later readers of the narrative may have intervened to accentuate or sever Balaam’s connection to God.

65 Eliciting a favorable view of God from the Gentiles is also important to Y. Baba Meṣiʿa 2:5 (8c).

66 Balaam’s motivation for wanting to harm Israel is not greed, but rather hatred in the following list.

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Balaam’s hatred is also a theme in Mekhilta Deuteronomy 1:9. It discusses his hatred, when comparing the simile of his blessing of Israel’s multitude to that of Moses and Hosea.

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Other sources add more details to these blessings as curses in disguise, see b. Sanhedrin 105b-106a=b. Taanit 20a, for example. Christian polemics might account for some of the details.
Like the Mekhilta narrative, Sifrei Num. 157 also indirectly characterizes Balaam as distinctly rabbinic-like, though in a negative fashion. He counsels how to harm Israel by advising Balak how to seduce the Israelite men in Shittim so they will lose God’s favor. His style of speech again reflects a willful exclusion from God: “their God”. Balaam’s advice is based on the scripture proof texts which show that God will turn on Israel for committing adultery. Sifrei 157’s Balaam is in fact delivering a known Tannaitic homily (=MekhY. Shira 5). As in the Mekhilta Amalek, he the Gentile’s prophet in possession of Israelite rabbinic knowledge.

Sifrei Num. 157 compliments Balaam’s confident style of speech in the Mekhilta narrative by supplying a narrative, where Balaam’s discourse implies his own importance unto arrogance (underlined). His wicked advice is the cause of Israel’s downfall, hinted by the proximity of Balaam’s narrative to the Shittim episode in the Bible, and he knows it. Balaam describes the present after Israel was struck by the plague (Num. 25:9). Only now after listening to him, can the Moabites overcome Israel (underlined):

...They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword. The Israelites paid him his full salary, and did not deprive him because he had come to give them (the Moabites) counsel. He said to them: if you were six hundred thousand you could not overpower them; but now you can. Therefore Israel paid him his full salary, and did not deprive him of it...

67 There is a lengthier parallel in Y. Sanhedrin 10:2. It expands Balaam’s seduction advice with more details about using girls, wine and gradual seduction (=b. Sanhedrin 106a but in Hebrew unlike the Palestinian Talmud’s Aramaic). The advice has parallels in Biblical Antiquates, Josephus and Philo, see in Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 162-4. Balaam’s advice on how to seduce the Israelite men has the added details of using kosher food and no wine to aggravate the sins committed in later sources (Tan. Balak Buber 27), as well as other unique embellishments. PRE 46 describes how the woman used eye makeup. ARN a 1, has Balaam argue for the use of exotic food, since he knew the Israelites were bored of manna. Pitron Torali (Balak p.204-5), focuses on kissing; ibid, Pinhas. In p. 216 Balaam asks Balak to send his daughter first. All these stress the theme that he has dangerous knowledge of Israel as befitting his liminal disposition.

68 וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] לֶחָזֵא אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם Rabbah אֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] לֶחָזֵא אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם רַבָּם Rabbah אֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] לֶחָזֵא אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם Rabbah אֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] לֶחָזֵא אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם Rabbah אֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] לֶחָזֵא אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם Rabbah אֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם [וַאֲתֵאֲלֹהֵי מְדִינָם] לֶחָזֵא אֲלָה אֲלָה בֵּרָם Rabbah
The phrasing of the last assertion is ironic and is a prelude to Balaam’s ultimate failure, turning this source into indirect criticism. The reference to salary suggests that Balaam’s self-aggrandizement was meant to improve his payment by the Moabites, so Israel pays him with the sword. His presence with the Midianite Kings and his death in Num. 31:8 are thus explained as a just reward, since otherwise both are hard to account for. The use of irony is unusual when dealing with complete villains in Tannaitic literature, which suggests that Balaam is still conceived as an ambiguous figure, in line with less negative accounts.

Both Balaam’s liminality in the Mekhilta and arrogance and greed in the Sifrei Num. are paralleled in another list, suggesting an underlying concept of a Tannaitic Balaam that ties together these lists and narratives. The Mishna argues that Balaam and Abraham have disciples throughout history. They become two ever-present types, of which Balaam is certainly the negative analog (M. Avot 5:19):

(19) One who possesses these three qualities is among the disciples of Abraham our father; but one who possesses three other qualities is of the disciples of the wicked Balaam. A good eye, a humble spirit, and a subdued desire, are [characteristics] of the disciples of Abraham our father. An evil eye, a haughty spirit, and an excessive desire, are [characteristics] of the disciples of Balaam. What is the difference between the disciples of Abraham our father and the disciples of the wicked Balaam? The disciples of Abraham our father enjoy this world and inherit the World to Come as it is said: “That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance, and that I may fill their treasuries” (Prov. 8:21), while the disciples of the evil Balaam inherit Gehinnom and descend into the pit of destruction as it says: “But You O God will bring them down to the pit of destruction, men of blood and deceit will not live out their days, but, as for me, I Trust in You” (Ps. 55:24).

69 Wolf-Monzon, Falling into a Trance, 255-6.
In contrast, irony is absent in more than 50 or so tannaitic texts discussing Pharaoh (a complete villain in MekhSh. 6:2), even when his punishment, is lex talionis like Balaam’s end (such as MekhY. Shirah 4). Pharaoh is not ridiculed in this way. I thank Prof. Rosen-Zvi for this observation.

71 The connection to disciples is also reflected in Christian sources, such as in Origen, which associates them with the magi, see Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 172-3.

72 Only the “evil eye”, which is probably a play on Balaam’s biblical eye in Num. 24:3 has no parallel in other Tannaitic sources. However, he did gaze at “what was not his” in the Tosefta Sotah above.

73 The terminology “disciples of Abraham” might reflect a common Judeo-Christian distinction.

The comparison of the disciples utilizes analogy to reveal the traits of Abraham and Balaam themselves. The negative content is compatible with the Sifrei Num. accounts, as well as with T. Sotah 4:19\(^{75}\); whereas the fact that Balaam has metaphorical disciples like a rabbi, the main theme of M. Avot, meshes well with his prestige hinted at by the lists and the Mekhilta narrative\(^{76}\). Balaam’s traits could simply stem from inverting Abraham’s enumerated traits, specifically Balaam’s evil eye. However, the compatibility between this list and the other accounts in this section suggests that all these Tannaitic sources share some preconception of Balaam that goes above and beyond their immediate exegetic needs.

In summary, the lists and the Mekhilta Amalek and Sifrei Num. narratives use analogy as well as short snippets of quoted monologue, to strive for similar traits for Balaam. Both genres enhance the attributes found in the Bible in a similar fashion thus developing Balaam’s rabbinical liminality and its associated wisdom, as well as his arrogance and greed. However, these shared traits, which cohere into a Tannaitic portrait of Balaam, are not explained by any exegetical manipulation of verses. The accounts seem to assume what they are implying is obvious. This assumption explains the general similarity of Balaam in Tannaitic sources to Biblical Antiquities XVIII.

Both present a liminal picture of Balaam and both similarly characterize his...
knowledge of the divine and style of speech\textsuperscript{77}. Both corpora share an overall impression of Balaam drawn from common interpretations rather than dependence.

Although mutual dependence between all the Tannaitic accounts of Balaam cannot be assumed, many of their interpretations share commonalities and suggest that their authors had a shared view of the character beyond their biblical source material, a \textit{gestalt} of Balaam’s character based on the biblical and postbiblical traditions that are not directly stated. This Balaam is sometimes expressed in narratives but more often in a list that compares the accounts’ preconception of him to presuppositions about others\textsuperscript{78}. This interchangeability of lists and narratives suggests a specific oral aspect.

\textbf{1.2.2.3 Character Lists as a Reflection of a Flexible Oral Reality}

The duality of Tannaitic midrashic lists and narratives about Balaam has much in common with character lists in epic literature and their relations with isolated narratives about these same figures elsewhere in the same epics. Charles Rowan Beye suggested a genetic connection between Homeric and Hesiodic catalogues, centered mostly on character names, to battle “\textit{androktasiao}”\textsuperscript{79}. The poets sometimes expand lists to battle narratives, but only provide lists when there is a need for brevity\textsuperscript{79}. The inverse, where a narrative is reduced to a list is well documented in the “\textit{Fabulae Hygini}”, one of the most extensive collection of lists in Hellenic literature. It often transforms a known play or narrative into a shorter list parallel\textsuperscript{80}.

\textsuperscript{77} Biblical Antiquities partially parallels both Balaam’s wicked advice with its midrashic theology (XVIII:13) and has him admonish Balak for being foolish in his misunderstanding of God (ibid, 8), not unlike his choice of phrasing in the Mekhilta narrative. Tanhuma Balak also reflects other themes in the Biblical antiquities, such as the worthlessness of sacrifices (ibid, 7–8), Balaam’s previous success (ibid, 2) and his accusation of Balak (ibid, 12).

\textsuperscript{78} Fraade even notes a possible source of inspiration for the Balaam Mekhilta narrative. One index homily, found in the Biblical Antiquities, parallels the flood of fire mentioned by the kings. Ibid, 37-8.

\textsuperscript{79} Beye, Homeric Battle Narrative, 368-70.

\textsuperscript{80} Breen, Fabulae, 39-44, 60-4, 159-60, 182-92. This collection seems to take an interest in physical metamorphosis. Connecting this interest to character development is beyond the scope of this study.
I argue that Tannaitic literature does the same with lists about biblical characters such as Balaam, as do both Hellenic epics and Listenwissenschaft. The character lists hint at character traits through analogy, but only occasionally express the same traits in narratives about the same figures. The character traits themselves are not the result of midrashic rhetoric engaging scripture.

A shift between lists and narratives represents a recognized tension between “ornamentation” and “thrift” in oral storytelling. When retelling a tale, a performer often adds or subtracts ornamentations depending on his inspiration and the importance of the characters. These can range from formulaic repetitions and descriptive details to whole scenes.

Similar to epic poets, Tannaim tend to only “invest” to use Albert Lord’s term, in their characters in some homilies and not in others, narrating things that remain elsewhere only as lists. The characters included in these lists appear to be in possession of traits fleshed out in separate stories that can be tapped when need be. The narratives are the only occasional recorded evidence of the oral “immanence” of the lists, which act as a mnemonic for a wider repository of characterizations.

Tannaitic character lists therefore reflect a performative context. Different transmissions shape the same character materials into different forms. Note that these are multiple versions of roughly the same traditions based on different needs and not necessarily later written redactions of this data. The list transmitters assumed their audience shared their knowledge of the characters and so would appreciate their analogies hidden in lists as place holders for the known narratives.

81 Ibid.
82 Ben-Sira’s “Praise of the Fathers” (44:1ff) can also be seen as midway between list and narrative forms. Another possible example is certain characterizations in Euripides’ “Iphigenia in Aulis”.
83 For this term as representing the oral data transmitted around a performed text, see Jaffee, Torah in the Mouth, 110-3.
This is an expression of James Kugel’s hypothesized post biblical shared corpus of exegetic traditions, which were communicated orally and are only dimly reflected in writing\textsuperscript{84}. Such a phenomenon is also evident in Shani Tzoref’s analysis of two sections of the 4Q252 list of blessings. These sections show familiarity with, but do not directly express traditions found in “\textit{Jubilees}”\textsuperscript{85}. The same connection is also apparent in Paul’s New Testament lists and their dialogue with second temple literature accounts of biblical characters\textsuperscript{86}. Midrashic lists should be read in this light.

A performative context can only be explored speculatively, pending a much broader inquiry into Tannaitic homilies, though some clues remain. When considering the Mekhila’s narrative about Balaam with Tannaitic sources about Jeremiah and Esther that are not lists (such as MekhY. WAYes’a 5 discussed in 2.1), several similarities emerge. In particular, they use quoted speech for characterization, the narratives are mentioned only as one exegetic alternative and they are often associated with the trio of R. Joshua, R. Eleazar HaModai and R. Eliezer\textsuperscript{87}.

All these features jointly argue that narrative characterization might be more reflective of a public homiletic setting\textsuperscript{88}, since the preserved narratives almost exclusively stress the merits of Torah or its study\textsuperscript{89}. The rare Tannaitic character

\textsuperscript{84} Kugel, In Potiphar’s House, 266-7.
\textsuperscript{85} See, Tzoref, 4Q252, 351-2, 355-6. Some sections presuppose interpretive conceptions from Jub. 23 and 26. The authors of 4Q252 therefore assumed the readers shared these exegetic traditions with them.
\textsuperscript{86} See Abraham in “\textit{Romans}” as willfully opposed to “\textit{Jubilees}”. Das, Works of Obedience, 807-10.
\textsuperscript{87} Other versions of the Mekhila Balaam narrative omit R. Eleazar in favor of anonymity. This might suggest that narratives in the aggadic portions of Tannaitic Midrashim on Num. and Deut. were similarly treated and could have been associated with other aggadic masters. Many anonymous sources which favor quoted monologue, are located next to interpretations attributed to R. Nathan. Could they have been associated with him or another omitted source? These coincidences merit future study.
\textsuperscript{88} As in the cases of Ruth and David, see 1.2.1.1. Other instances of quoted monologue or speech of biblical characters associated with R. Eleazar include: God (MekhY. WAYes’a 5), Joshua (ibid Amalek 1) an index that combines quoted monologue (ibid, Amalek 2), Moses and God (ibid), Moses (Jethro 1), Jethro (ibid), Moses and Jethro (ibid 2), God (MekhSh. 14:15). See also Sifrei Num. 137 and Sifrei Deut. 40. His companions in the above sources also use quoted forms, but R. Eleazar rarely uses lengthier narratives. Thus, the narrative form might be more characteristic of some sages.
\textsuperscript{89} This specific context might have preempted the quoted narrative form, since the reenactment of revelation as recitation and oral emulation might be the midrashic model to think about the dual Torah. See Fraade, Literary Composition, 44-5.
narratives mimic the communal aspect of the Amoraic diatribe meant to embellish core values. Hence, narrative characterizations in Tannaitic literature may have been chosen according to a communal performative setting or subject (2.3.4).

Character lists, which might be more appropriate for mnemonic study were preserved along with some performative variations of what they potentially encompass, as part of the orally inspired context informing Tannaitic Midrash redaction. The dialogic midrashic format used known forms, possibly preexisting homilies, as building blocks. It included narratives and their list parallels indiscriminately as support for often unrelated discussions, resulting in only an indirect depiction of biblical characters.

In other words, I am not arguing for the existence of lost underlying rabbinic epics, written or otherwise, but rather for the impact of the common Late Antiquity reality of “orally inspired” storytelling, as shown by Lawrence Kim to have shaped many other kinds of written Late Antiquity texts such as novels and historiography. The Tannaitic lists were shaped in light of a popular dimension of the biblical characters in question. Steven D. Fraade describes this performative aspect of written Midrash as “an Orality grounded in a textuality that remains orally fluid.” Thus, Tannaitic biblical characters parallel Tannaitic halakhah by showing that

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90 For a generally similar argument about the transmission of stories about sages and not about biblical characters, no less due to Amoraic recension, see Jaffee, Torah in the Mouth, 132-9.
91 Characterizations occur, but not as the chief category. See Fraade’s comparison of Rewritten Bible and Midrashim, which argues that the Midrash is unique in its dialogic appearance, even though it shares some traditions. Fraade, Legal Fictions, 391-2. I suggest that some of these older materials are more about the character than the verses, marking them as less midrashic.
92 For more on oral inspiration see Lord, Singer, 53-5, 86-9, 150-1. For the influence of oral storytelling on written sources in Late Antiquity, see Kim, Orality, 307-11, 316-22.
93 Many 4Q “excerpted” texts as well as the more narrative focused “Genesis Apocryphon”, use biblical characters as a frame of reference for their reorganization biblical events. Characters lists were therefore a convenient medium for the condensation or creation of narrative like in Tannaitic literature. See Tzoref, 4Q252, 337-42, 352.
94 Fraade, Literary Composition, 35-6.
midrashic lists and narratives reflect the same flexible oral model of performance as also evident in the variance of Mishna accounts compared to the Tosefta\(^95\).

An appeal to an oral context also highlights a significant difference, though. In epics unlike Tannaitic Midrash, lists and genealogies provide very little in the way of implicit analogy. This exegetic feature is also not part of the Hellenic art of list-making. Shaye Cohen points out that the shared list making tendency in Tannaitic literature as well as Qumranic literature and other post biblical forms, are similar to classic forms of Hellenic scholarship focused on thematic lists of articles taken from a canonical body of works\(^96\). In contrast, I argue that midrashic lists are more comparative than their mythological list counterparts, which are either shorthand genealogies or narrative anecdotes\(^97\), with one possible exception\(^98\).

A closer parallel to the comparative list aspect seems to appear in rhetorical exercises, where students revised famous written texts, including comparisons, by performing them orally. This as described by Martin S. Jaffee, made the texts mutable in form and equivalent to the orally inspired nature of midrashic literature\(^99\). In what

\(^95\) Alexander, Transmitting Mishnah, 9, 36-7. In essence implicit analogy might connect Tannaitic character lists with the list analogy in the Mishna in general as described in Neusner, Generative Mode of Thought, 317, 319-21.
\(^96\) Cohen, Hellenism, 217-23.
\(^97\) See Breen, Fabulae, 39-44, 60-4, 159-60. A possible exception is the realm of etiology.
\(^98\) The closest to tannaitic character lists I could find are the historical character lists in Marcus Aurelius’ Meditations (c. 167 C.E.). Marcus Aurelius evokes many figures of emperors and philosophers past as exempla of the frailty of men and memory. For some detailed examples, see Marcus Aurelius, Meditations, Books 8 and 12. However, a few of these evocations of past figures suggest that Marcus Aurelius was thinking about his relationship to these figures as emperor, see ibid, Books 6 and 10. A few of these instances directly compare various figures in a way pertinent to the discussion of lists above, specifically in books 8 and 7. In contrast, midrashic lists are about character hierarchies and not relationships to the actual author, which is the purpose of many of Marcus Aurelius’ lists. This is based mostly on book 5 of the “Meditations”. See in detail in Wolf, Others, 14-6, 20-3. The personal aspect is uniquely apparent in the first book and its biographical implications, though still different from the Tannaitic focus on literary rather than biographical hierarchy An actual self for Marcus Aurelius is excised from book one, which is little more than an index of received virtues. See Dickson, Oneself as Others, 101-4, 115-21. While there is little actually suggesting a Stoic dimension to Tannaitic use of lists, see MekhY. Shira 2 (=S.B 15:1) which notes that Antoninus asked R. Judah the Patriarch about the judgment of the soul. This tale might have a Stoic background, furthering this unlikely context, as per Weiss, Embodied Cognition, 800-3.
\(^99\) For the orally inspired nature of Mishna accounts including lists, see in Jaffee, Torah in the Mouth, 108-9, 128–39.
follows however, I will show that classical rhetoric used analogy extensively, but just not in conjunction with lists.

1.3 Tannaitic Character Analogy and Classical Rhetorical Analogy

1.3.1 Moses Compared to Balaam in Josephus as Rhetoric

Character analogy has numerous Hellenic expressions in rhetoric, namely *synkrisis*. Rhetoric directly influenced some Jewish authors, and Michael Martin believes that rhetorical comparisons influenced the biographical aspects of the life of Moses in Philo, several gospels and, as Louis Feldman further shows, Josephus\(^{100}\). The Church fathers also continued to use such rhetorical comparisons\(^ {101}\). All these utilizations, however, are not wholly compatible with the Tannaitic use, despite sharing an interest in hierarchies\(^ {102}\). Tannaitic *synkrisis*, has two key features; namely, an exegetic implicit nature and a list format. Both elements have separate textual parallels in other contextual literatures but appear together only in Midrashim.

An exegetic dimension is not common in classical rhetoric. Character traits in “*Progymnasmata*” comparisons are rote and typical and usually focus on comparing similar individuals, unlike the surprising creative philological aspects inherent to midrashic comparisons\(^ {103}\). Tannaitic comparisons are also less strict than *synkrisis*, which is almost exclusively about praise and blame, especially in Quintilian’s


\(^{101}\) Martin, *Judas the Secessionist*, 48-60, 95-105. Towner noted that the enumeration form is mostly rabbinic and that Christian parallels are probably adaptations of Jewish sources. Towner, *Enumeration*, 229, 234-7. As such, lists would be less natural to Patristics even if they are at times evident.

\(^{102}\) Though Paul’s character lists might be functionally close to the narrative expansion that some time occurs in Tannaitic literature. See Seid, *Rhetorical Form*, 4-18. Hebrews 11 (and its shorthand ending section 11:32ff in particular), seems to me to be the closest to the midrashic indexes. The same does not apply to the passage’s explicit emphasis on faith, which isolates the characters and hence does not enable implicit characterization. See analysis in ibid, 108-9.

\(^{103}\) See for instance in Theon’s exercises in Seid, *Rhetorical Form*, 49-51, 60-1, 69-9, 99. Later forms of *synkrisis* though (manuscripts from the 4-5th century C.E.) introduce the subject of the comparison explicitly via a rhetorical question and thus are more akin to the common rule of the midrashic list.
description. Rhetorical comparative qualities are about virtue rather than characterization, while Midrashim achieve both aims.\textsuperscript{104}

Plutarch comes the closest to the implicit aspect of midrashic lists in comparing several character qualities simultaneously, but he as well is more focused on the moral aspects and does not use lists.\textsuperscript{105} A more sophisticated use of character analogy by intertext, which thus shares the exegetic dimension with Tannaitic literature, is to be found in the Greek and Roman novel. As Koen De Temmerman shows extensively, allusion to canonical texts or myths such Homer, is one of the major devices used to implicitly characterize the protagonists of the Greek novels, at times in subversive and ironic ways.\textsuperscript{106} By contrast, these allusions are not part of lists in the novels, even if they appear in a form of indirect analogical allusion.

In order to exemplify the key differences between rhetorical comparisons and midrashic lists let us briefly contrast Josephus’ comparison of Moses and Balaam with the one found in the Tannaitic literature. Although, as Feldman argues, Josephus’ Balaam is more positive than his biblical counterpart in many ways, Balaam’s last mention in the “Antiquities” is a critical implicit comparison to Moses:\textsuperscript{107}

\textit{This Balaam, in fact, who had been summoned by the Midianites to curse the Hebrews and who, though prevented from so doing by divine providence, had yet suggested a plan which, being adopted by the enemy, well-nigh led to a demoralization of the whole Hebrew community and actually infected the morals of some—this was the man to whom Moses did the high honour of recording his prophecies; and though it was open to him to appropriate and take the credit for them himself, as there would have been no witness to convict him, he has given Balaam this testimony and deigned to perpetuate his memory.}\textsuperscript{108}

\textsuperscript{104} Seid, Rhetorical Form, 42-5. For the fuzzy conceptualization of indirect characterization in classical rhetoric, see De Temmerman, Ancient Rhetoric, 28-9, 33-5. The sages reflect a similar conception of characterization dependent on group attribution. The lists are a way to create a new group instead of mostly relying on existing type.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid, see the discussion about \textit{synkrisis} beyond the introductory and concluding section of each life in Stadter, Plutarch’s’ Comparison, 77-9 and the references therein for other such discussions.

\textsuperscript{106} De Temmerman, Crafting Characters, 317-9.

\textsuperscript{107} See Feldman, Studies, 125, 135-6.

\textsuperscript{108} Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, II, IV:157-8, 76-7. See also the comparison made by Balaam between God and soothsayers, hence implicitly himself, ibid, IV: 120-1, 60-1.
Josephus first notes Balaam’s fault in persisting to want to harm the Israelites and implicitly contrasts this with Moses’ humility and honesty, which are implied by not attributing Balaam’s prophecies to himself. The appeal to contrast the figures is triggered by the phrase: “this was the man to whom Moses did the high honour”.

Josephus’ style is that of two connected summaries that highlight differing motivations, rather than a list. His rhetoric is like a combination of Theon’s appeal to compare character deeds last when contrasting two characters, and of the later Hermogenes’ description of synkrasis as preferable to amplify misdeeds, such as Balaam’s evil advice\(^{109}\). The major Tannaitic comparison of Moses and Balaam differs in form, tone and device, as we shall see below.

### 1.3.2 Balaam as a Second Moses in Tannaitic Sources

An extensive Tannaitic account is a list with three known versions, all of which enumerate and contrast the prophetic traits of Balaam and Moses (Sifrei Deut. 357/ Mekhillta Deut. 34:10/ Sifrei Zutta Num. 254). The very nature of this argument honors Balaam, even more than Josephus, as a second Moses and is in line with the prestigious and liminal conceptions of Balaam elsewhere. However, the crux of the comparison is a parable, whose message is not explicit\(^{110}\). This once more shows the

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\(^{109}\) See the appendices and discussion in Seid, Rhetorical Form, 49-51, 57, 140-1.

\(^{110}\) The full Hebrew versions follow. Note that the square brackets are passages in Sifrei Zutta that have noted by Horowitz’s to have no parallel in Yalkut Naso’ 714.

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<th>ספירהrama דביכי יא</th>
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<td>...בדבר משה אל אהל מועד לדבר אליו כיון שהיה נכנס היה מדבר עמו.</td>
<td>...בדבר משה אל אהל מועד לדבר אליו כיון שהי входتدخل עמו</td>
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<td>אלא הפרש יש בין נבואתו של משה לנבואתו של בלעם: משה לא היה יודע מי מדבר עמו, בלעם היה יודע מי מדבר עמו, שנאמר (במדבר כג טז) נאם שומע אמרי אל בלעם: בלעם מידבר עמו והוא נופל שנא’ (במדרש כג ד) נפל וג’ עי’ בלעם היה יודע אימתי החולות שנ’ (שם כד טז) מחזה שדי יחז’: בלעם היה יודע מה העתיד לידבר עמו שנ’ (שם כד טז) ויודע דע’ על’ (דברים ה כח)</td>
<td>אלא הפרש יש בין נבואתו של משה לנבואתו של בלעם: משה לא היה יודע מי מדבר עמו, אלא נופל שנא’ נופל משה גלוי עיניו (במדבר כד ד) היה מדבר עמו פה אל פה שנא’ פה אל פה אדבר בו (שם במדבר יב ח) ובבלעם כתיב נאם שומע אמרי אל (במדבר כד כב)</td>
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circumspect nature of Tannaitic character discourse, which is markedly different from
Josephus’ direct narration and comparison. I have divided the accounts into sections
that follow the sequence in Sifrei Deut., since I argue below that it is the most original
reflection of the account shared by the three versions:

| Sifrei Zutta Num. 254\(^{111}\) | Mekhilta Deut. 34:10\(^{112}\) | Sifrei Deut. 357\(^{113}\) |
|--------------------------------|
| **A. When Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with him** (Num. 7:89). Since he entered, He would speak to him. | **A. And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses** (Deu. 34:10). In Israel has not arisen, but one has arisen among the nations. And who was he? Balaam Son of Beor. |

\(^{111}\) Taken from Hammer, Classic Midrash, 270-1.
\(^{112}\) My original translation.
\(^{113}\) Taken from Hammer, Sifrei, 383.
Section A: The introductory section is nearly identical in the Sifrei Deut. and in the Mekhilta Deut. Both interpret Deut. 34:10: Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. The verse could have read: “no prophet like Moses” and so “Israel” is an indication of the existence of a prophet like Moses but not of Israel, identified as Balaam. The Sifrei Zutta Num. on the other hand, connects its version to its Numbers context, and a mention of Moses talking to God. Talking to God is the subject explored in its comparison to Balaam.

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<tr>
<th>Sifrei Zutta Num. 254</th>
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<tr>
<td>C. Balaam had three qualities which Moses did not have: Moses did not know who spoke to him. Balaam did know who spoke to him as it is said, And Knoweth the knowledge of the most high and beholds visions from the Almighty (Num. 24:16). Moses did not know when the Holy one would speak with him and Balaam knew what the Holy one would speak with him about, as it says, And Knoweth the knowledge of the most high (ibid).</td>
<td>B. What is between Moses’ prophecy and Balaam’s Prophecy: Balaam speaks to Him when he was fallen down, as it is said, fallen down, yet with open eyes (Num. 24:14). Balaam would know when the Holy one would speak with him, as it is said, Who seeth the visons of the Almighty (ibid). Balaam knew what (He) would speak with him about, as it says, And Knoweth the knowledge of the most high (ibid).</td>
<td>B. Yet there is a difference between the prophecy of Moses and that of Balaam: Moses did not know who was speaking to him, whereas Balaam did know who was speaking to him, as it is said. The saying of him who heareth the words of God (Num. 24:16). C. Moses did not know when God would speak to him. Whereas Balaam did know, as it is said, And Knoweth the knowledge of the most high (ibid). D. Moses was spoken to by God only when he was standing, as it is said, But as for thee, stand thou here by Me, (and I will speak unto thee) (Deu. 5:28), whereas Balaam he was spoken to when he was fallen down, as it is said, Who seeth the visons of the Almighty, fallen down, yet with open eyes (Num. 24:14).</td>
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Section B: Section B is different in each version. Sifrei Deut. questions the advantages Moses had over Balaam, while Mekhilta Deut. is interested in the
differences between them. Sifrei Deut. claims that Balaam knew he spoke to God without needing to be told, probably noting that he identified God in the proof text and contrasting this implicitly with Moses not recognizing God in Exod. 3:3ff.

Mekhilta Deut. B, enumerates the ways in which Balaam’s prophecy differed from Moses’ prophecy. Balaam only prophesied lying down, based on him falling (Num. 24:4)\(^{114}\). Balaam also knew when God would talk to him based on Num. 24:4: who sees the vision of the Almighty, understood as Balaam “(for)seeing” when the visions would occur. Balaam also knew in advance what God would tell him, reading Num. 24:4: “ידע דעת עליון” as ‘knowing the mind of the almighty’.

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<tr>
<td>B. Moses had three qualities which Balaam lacked: Moses would speak to him standing upright, as it says, But as for thee, stand thou here by Me, (and I will speak unto thee) (Deu. 5:28). He spoke with Balaam only when he was prostrate, as it says, Who seeth the visions of the Almighty, fallen down, yet with open eyes (Num. 24:14). Moses would speak with Him mouth to mouth, as it is said, With him I speak mouth to mouth (Num. 12:8) and of Balaam it says, The saying of him who heareth the words of God (Num. 24:16). Indicating that he did not speak with Him mouth to mouth. Moses would speak to him face to face, as it is said, The Lord would speak to Moses face to face (Exod. 33:11), but with Balaam, He spoke only in parables, as it is said, he took</td>
<td>D. What is between Balaam’s prophecy and Moses’ prophecy: Moses was spoken to (by God) when he was standing, as it is said, stand thou here by Me, (and I will speak unto thee) (Deu. 5:28). Moses speaks with Him mouth to mouth, as it is said, With him I speak mouth to mouth (Num. 12:8). Moses speaks with him face to face, as it is said, The Lord would speak to Moses face to face (Exod. 33:11).</td>
<td>D. Moses was spoken to by God only when he was standing, as it is said, But as for thee, stand thou here by Me, (and I will speak unto thee) (Deu. 5:28), whereas Balaam he was spoken to when he was fallen down, as it is said, Who seeth the visions of the Almighty, fallen down, yet with open eyes (Num. 24:14).</td>
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\(^{114}\) Balaam “falling” can also be understood as ecstatic prophecy, as in some Christian sources such as Tertullian. See Urbach, Balaam, 279-80. However, the other above versions of the account seem to weaken this argument. Balaam’s supposed ecstasy is not always superior to Moses’ prophecy.
up his parable and said (Num. 24:15).

Sections C and D: Sifrei Zutta Num. B first mentions the three ways Moses was superior to Balaam. Moses could speak directly with God while standing. The Sifrei Zutta version may have wished to emphasize Moses’ superiority by choosing to highlight it first, unlike the other versions.\(^{115}\) Praise of Moses is further strengthened by an argument found in the Sifrei Zutta but lacking in Mekhilta Deut. and Sifrei Deut\(^{116}\). God would speak to Balaam only in parables. Sifrei Zutta bases this assertion on the fact that Balaam’s speeches are called a “mashal” (lit. parable and not poetic speech as in Num. 24:16)\(^ {117}\). The contrast between parables and conversing face to face is reminiscent of God’s rebuke of Miriam and Aaron (Num. 12:8).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sifrei Zutta Num. 254</th>
<th>Mekhilta Deut. 34:10</th>
<th>Sifrei Deut. 357</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>D.</strong> It may be likened to a king’s cook who knew what was going to be served at the king’s table and how much was being expended on it. Thus, Balaam knew what the Holy one as going to speak to him about.</td>
<td><strong>C.</strong> Made into a parable, to what can this be likened? To a king’s cook who knew what was going to be served at the king’s table, Thus, Balaam knew what (He) one as going to speak to him about.</td>
<td><strong>E.</strong> To what may this be likened? To the parable of the king’s butcher who knows what the king’s expenses are for supplying his table.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Parable: Sifrei Deut. E concludes with a royal parable. Boyarin describes the function of these parables as another midrashic paradigm meant to link verses\(^{118}\).

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\(^{115}\) This is how Fraade shows that Sifrei Num. 137 was developed by Sifrei Deuteronomy 26, to turn the contrast between Moses and David into a compliment of both of them. Redactions of these Tannaitic sources seem to prefer the enhancement of the paradigmatic nature of Biblical heroes such as Moses, rather than their undoing. See Fraade, How Conscious, 290-2.

\(^{116}\) Sifrei Zutta Num. Oxford Bodleian Library, b. 6 (2637), p. 254, shares the same structure as the above Sifrei Zutta favoring Moses, but it does not contain the mentions of his deficiencies, further suggesting that these are late, see also below.

\(^{117}\) *Mahsal* can denote generic poetic speech, such as Balaam’s in the Bible and not just a parable. See Brown, Driver and Briggs, English Lexicon, Mashal II, 605.

\(^{118}\) Boyarin, Intertextuality, 60-2.
This parable does not do so however. Its main aim is to supply further characterization that undermines Balaam’s advantage over Moses.

David Stern views rabbinic parables as being the prime means to compliment or denigrate a figure mentioned or hinted at by the parable, as in synkrisis. Stern also argues that these parables tend to have apologetic or polemical goals and thus are grounded in comparisons, which I would add, gives them an analogical quality.

One of their key rhetorical qualities is the use of surprising arguments, which suggests that the Balaam comparison is meant to be provocative. The cook parable equates Balaam with God’s cook. He is a lesser ranked servant than Moses, but due to the nature of his role knows a great deal of minute details, as the cook knows the King’s expenditures very intimately. Superior knowledge does not equal greater intimacy, as shown in a similar parable in a baraita (b. Berakhot 34b).

The parable functions slightly differently in the other two versions. In Mekhilta Deut., parable C dismisses Balaam’s advantages in favor of Moses’ superiority. It is also phrased differently. Balaam knew what God would tell him in advance, as the cook knows what the king would eat and implicitly does not share his meal. Afterwards Mekhilta Deut. D enumerates Moses’ advantages. Hence, when compared with Sifrei Deut. E, Mekhilta Deut. enhances Moses’ intimacy with God.

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119 This is specifically true in the Sifrei Deut. version, where Moses’s only advantage is standing.
120 See Stern, Function, 95-100; Parables, 48-53; Hirshman, Torah, 133-7. The rabbinic parable is a story about the story in question, which has no truer reference than the text it describes. The parable’s story is not its meaning; rather it comments on characters instead of their higher meaning.
121 A similar message in a royal parable is found in a baraita in b. Berakhot 34b, where the superiority of Hanina b. Dosa’s prayer to that of Johanan ben Zakai, is explained by the fact that the latter is like a minister of the king, whereas Hanina b. Dosa is but the king’s slave. I thank Prof. Rosen-Zvi for bringing this source to my attention. Thus, lower status might suggest an easier approach to God but not actual intimacy. Leqah Tov on these verses, which has a different version of Mekhilta Deut., contains a version which states that Moses is the important minister, whereas Balaam is the lowly cook in a very similar vein to the above Talmud. Conversely, another homily in Leqah Tov attributed to the author himself utterly rejects the comparison between Moses and Balaam, and instead argues that there was no prophecy at all among the nations after Moses’ time. Hence, his rejected parable is from another source similar to Mekhilta Deut. See Kahana, Pages, 175-6.
The parable in Sifrei Zutta num. D is similar to Mekhilta Deut., with the added comment that Balaam did not even prepare the food, further distancing him from God.

E. Balaam spoke to Him whenever he wanted, as it is said, fallen down, yet with open eyes (Num. 24:14). As soon as he would prostrate himself, He would reveal to him whatever he wanted to know. But Moses could not speak to Him whenever he wanted. R. Simeon said: “Moses would too speak to Him whenever he wanted, as it is said, When Moses went into the tent of meeting to speak with him (Num. 7:89). Whenever he wanted, he would enter and He would speak to him”.

Section E: Sifrei Zutta Num. E is a unique section which seemingly just returns to the interpreted Numbers verse in section A. E is actually a rejection of a possible reading that God would speak to Balaam and not to Moses, whenever Balaam wanted, suggested by the tenses in Num. 24:4122. God, Sifrei Zutta states, was also freely available to Moses as the verse proves and unlike the other versions.

Thus, the version of Sifrei Zutta Num. (parts B-D) is close to that of Mekhilta Deut.,123 and only incorporates a few other differences meant to weaken Balaam’s praises124. Sifrei Deut.’s version more faithfully reflects the shared account, which was modified in the other two compositions125. Sifrei Deut. is more positive regarding Balaam, whereas the two other versions denigrate his prophetic prowess. This means that if Sifrei Deut. is derivative, it removed some of Moses’ praises evident in the

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122 The frame created by the Sifrei Zutta’s addition above might be a sign of its relative lateness, since such pseudo proem structures in Tannaite literature are generally uncommon, as argued in Heinemann, Tannaite Proems, 129-34. However, this is not a foolproof observation and should not be overstressed, see Kahana, Fragments, 509-10.

123 Sifrei Zutta seems dependent on a version like Mekhilta Deut., as it echoes some of its claims in a chiastic fashion (B=D; C=B above). The entire comparison between Moses and Balaam seems forced in the context of Sifrei Zutta, as evidenced by a tenuous absence of Balaam in its opening and thus its less integrated appearance (section A above). Chiasmus suggests familiarity, as argued specifically for ancient lists in Brin and Hoffman, Chiasmus, 280-9. Another example where Mekhilta Deut. is the closer redacted parallel to a Sifrei aggadic account is in Kister, Metamorphoses, 190-3.

124 A similar situation where the Sifrei Zutta version is more explicit about a comparison than the Sifrei is mentioned by Fraade, How Conscious, 279-80.

125 It has been assumed that Sifrei Deut. is more recent than Sifrei Zutta and Mekhilta Deut., but in fact the above homilies are part of the reconstructed portions of these compositions, with few discovered Genizah parallels. See in Reizel, Introduction, 90-4. See also Baksin, Pharaoh’s’ Counsellors, 81-3.
other versions. This is extremely unlikely.\textsuperscript{126} Hence, Sifrei Deut. 357:10 is the more original account and the two other versions mitigate its universalistic message.\textsuperscript{127}

This mitigation is compatible with the transformation of Balaam’s character in Amoraic sources leading to the rejection of his prophecy and explicit comparisons to Moses (1.1.). This is telling, since an Amoraic redaction of these Sifrei. Zutta Num./Mekhilta Deut. is quite possible.\textsuperscript{128} The later transformation also run counter to the idea that these are three unrelated versions of a shared unknowable tradition. Even if historical priority between the versions cannot be determined with absolute certainty, observing how the common traditions were shaped suggests which redactional version is logically earlier. The differences in Balaam’s presentations are compatible with the general trends regarding him and his prophecy in later compositions.\textsuperscript{129}

Sifrei Deut. also provides no clear lesson (nimshal) to the cook parable. The addition of a nimshal is the most obvious “regularization” of parables in later sources described by Stern.\textsuperscript{130} In a similar case of parallel parables in b. Yoma 86b, Sifrei Numbers 137 and Sifrei Deut. 26, Fraade notes that the BT and Sifrei Deut. parables could be identified as later versions because they have such an added nimshal.\textsuperscript{131} An older lost version which does not argue for Moses’ superiority

\textsuperscript{126} Sifrei Deut.’s overall association with what scholars have shown to be Gentile averse R. Akiva sources is no objection to this, see in Kahana, Two Mekhiltot, 364-5; 368-9; 377-9. Kahana claims that that aggadic materials in Sifrei and Mekhilta Deut. are not easily associated with the schools, compared to halakhic comments. See in Kahana, When, 161-4 and his notes 71 and 97; Ibid, New Fragments, 487. He argues that the similarity in aggadic materials across schools is also true for the halakhic Midrashim on Numbers. Hammer also showed that the concluding aggadic sections of Sifrei Deut., 357 included, might be more reflective of Debe R. Ishmael composition, as do some of Kahana’s notes, Hammer, Sifrei 38, 165-7. The aggadic sections might have been an independent source. Also see Kahana, Pages, 176 in note 53 but also note 103.

\textsuperscript{127} Sifrei Deut. 250 does not actually blame Balaam for Shittim, and so this may account for the generally more positive impression of him in Sifrei Deut.

\textsuperscript{128} Fraade, How Conscious, 252-7 but also 296-7.

\textsuperscript{129} Numbers R. 14:20 echoes a version like that of Sifrei Zutta Num. as well.

\textsuperscript{130} Stern, Parables, 15-16, 205-7.

\textsuperscript{131} Fraade, How Conscious, 273-8. Kahana discusses Fraade’s text in the Mekhilta and Sifrei and seems to come to the same conclusions; see in Kahana, Fragments, 497n 80-1. Similar argumentation aided Kahana in determining the originality of several Genizah fragments of Mekhilta Deut., specifically with regards to the rejection of universalist themes, see Kahana, Pages, 180-6, 200-1.
through the parable or its nimshal has been suggested separately by both Alan Appelbaum and John Greene\textsuperscript{132}. The oldest version (Sifrei Deut.) is thus also the most implicit in its comparison of Balaam and Moses, which is in line with other lists. Not only is this example of Tannatic synkrisis more ambivalent than Josephus, most of its comparisons are not interpreted directly in the way required by “good” rhetoric.

1.3.3 Conclusions: An Indirect Hermeneutic Discourse

The case study of Balaam in Tannaitic texts does not suggest an abstract concept of literary character, but the oral reality of Balaam’s reception lurking beneath the surface, which connects midrashic lists, narratives and other forms of post biblical literature. This overall impression is typical of an orally-influenced literary reality, which alternates between narratives and lists as performative variants dictated by specific needs. List characters are still in possession of traits based on narratives that are not always expounded, for whom the lists remain as opaque “place holders”.

However, midrashic character lists also possess a central hidden analogical aspect. Character indexes allude to their understating of a specific figure or its associated narratives through indirect analogy to the other characters mentioned, leading to new implied characterizations. Such character comparisons are also found in classical rhetoric, at times in an equally circumspect manner, but do not conform to list form, as evident by my analysis of the Balaam and Moses comparison in halakhic Midrashim and Josephus. Midrashic lists are then more exegetical than rhetorical.

Tannaitic intertextuality thus melds Hellenic-like scholarly lists of characters with classical comparative rhetoric in a uniquely rabbinic way, by focusing on an

\textsuperscript{132} The cook parable itself might not even be original to the Sifrei homily, since it could be easily removed without compromising the actual disputation. See Appelbaum, Clothed You, 137 in note 39, 173-5. I have found no record of such a version, though this is congruent with the approaches described by Urbach, Balaam, 274. For a variant of the above parable seeing Moses as an Egyptian prince and Balaam as his cook, see Greene, Balaam, 154.
exegetic dimension. Characters and traditions about them, like biblical verses, are another component that is manipulated and connected in novel ways. Without an interest in analogical characterization this aspect is hard to explain. The following sections will show how the analogy inherent to midrashic character lists about Balaam is transformed by late Midrash into dramatized narratives of rivalry.

1.4 Balaam in Tanḥuma Balak: The Dramatic Contrast

1.4.1 Suggested Dating of Tanḥuma Balak

Tanḥuma Balak is one of the lengthiest and most detailed sources on Balaam in rabbinic literature. It brings to light many new comments while developing earlier themes in a cohesive manner. Before discussing its poetic qualities, issues related to its dating need to be discussed.

Margarete Schlüter argued that Tanḥuma Balak as well as several other portions of the Tanḥuma on Numbers are unique in their nearly consecutive strings of comments, compared to most Tanḥuma passages commenting on only a few weekly verses. These portions are also less compatible with the typical form of a Tanḥuma homily, which focuses on proems and updated fragments. This led Schlüter to suggest that the redaction of Tanḥuma on Numbers incorporates a late independent exegetic composition. This is consistent with Marc Bergman, who posited that sections where the two main versions of the Tanḥuma (reflected in the Buber and print editions) are nearly identical, belong to an intermediate layer that is older than both main versions. This is also true of Tan. Balak.

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133 Schlüter, Exegetic Midrash, 43-7. Her argument is supported by the quasi anonymity of the Balak homilies, suggestive of a late hand.
135 Interesting differences between versions are noted in the footnotes throughout this chapter, but I found the two main versions to be extremely similar. I will use the Tan. Buber version, based on Oxford Bodleian Library 154 and its numbering in print as the basis for the quotations in this section, with emendations from the “other” Tanḥuma version as it is known in the literature and will be referred
Tan. Balak is arguably earlier than the 8th century redactions described by Bergman, since one version diverges very little from the other. This is supported by the close parallels in “Pitron Torah” that suggest that many accounts in Tan. Balak predate later Tanḥuma redactions that might be later than the composition of “Pitron Torah”\textsuperscript{136}. However, Tan. Balak is probably later than the homiletic Midrashim of the 5th century, since it has a consecutive exegetic form, as well as unique thematic parallels found only in later texts\textsuperscript{137}.

Balak’s characterizations in the Tanḥuma parallel themes known only from Yannai’s \textit{piyyutim} (5-6th centuries C.E.). Laura Lieber notes that while midrashic and Targum traditions focus on Balaam, Yannai’s \textit{piyyutim} emphasize Balak instead, because he is the subject of the first verses of the \textit{parashah}\textsuperscript{138}. As such, Yannai portrays the Moabite king as the typical timeless archenemy of Israel, instead of Balaam\textsuperscript{139}. This parallels many Tanḥuma passages described below (1.4.3).

Hence, I argue that Tanḥuma Balak is a later thematic parallel to Yannai, which predates the latest Tanḥuma redactions. A possible dating later than Yannai, say to the 6-7th centuries seems more likely, since Balaam’s more sympathetic portrayal could be the outcome of a more Muslim context where Balaam is no longer

\textsuperscript{136} When describing “Pitron Torah”, Urbach finds that it is very accurate in copying its sources as well as that it is probably the work of a post-8th century nomad scholar. Urbach, Pitron Torah, 23-5, 32-3. This suggests it is an important proof that Tanḥuma Balak is associated with the middle redaction of the Tanḥuma, as its extensive parallels in Pitron Torah support the claim that Tan. Balak might have been almost completely finished by the time of the latest Tanḥuma redactions.

\textsuperscript{137} Bergman claims that to prove seemingly original late Tanḥuma sections like Balak are in fact older incorporated traditions, one must show the existence of an older easily dated parallel, usually Patristic. Bergman, Older Traditions, 269-74. My above attempt uses \textit{piyut} instead.

\textsuperscript{138} Lieber, Liturgical Tale, 214-5.

\textsuperscript{139} Ibid, 222-3, 228-31. Lieber mentions a number of examples including an \textit{Asiriyyah} (“Tenner”), which has Balak and not Balaam wishing to curse the Israelites, an acrostic detailing how Balak used the evil eye and a magic circle; as well as a \textit{Rabīt} (“Runner”), which details all the evil intentions and threats Balak proffered against the Israelites, including a triple repetition of him planning to curse them. All these arguments are in line with Tan. Balak’s claims about him.
used in polemics against Christianity, but that could pertain to the inclusion of Tan.
Balak in the Tanḥuma more so than to the genesis of its accounts. Thus, Tan. Balak is
a late exegetic Midrash with some unique themes representing the middle Tanḥuma.

1.4.2 Character Analogy in Tanḥuma Balak

1.4.2.1 Tannaitic Lists Revised in Tanḥuma Balak: Abraham and Balaam

Tanḥuma narrative as described by Ofra Meir and Jacob Elbaum flows well
stylistically at the expense of sophistication. It chooses to mimic the verse structure
of biblical narrative, quoting connecting verses and using formulae to mimic
immediacy. It primarily develops one theme taken from an earlier source of
inspiration. Thus, Tanḥuma trades polysemy for narrative. Norman J. Cohen made
comments about Tanḥuma homilies and proems. Flow and singlemindedness are
the result of Tanḥuma redaction and style.

What is the impact of these stylistic devices on characterization? Elbaum’s
initial observations were that the Tanḥuma characters were simpler than their Gen. R.
counterparts, had less depth and were ethically more coherent. The decision to
abandon multiple views on a single character restricts the number of contradictory
traits a character can have and thus makes it more unidimensional. However, these
conclusions are only related to one facet of characterization; namely, complexity and
coherence. In the next sections I discuss character analogy and compare the
Tanḥuma’s use of character lists about Balaam to its Tannaitic predecessors.

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140 Elbaum, Sermon to Story, 105-6. He also notes that the editing of Tan. Buber seems simpler in its
macro-structures. Meir, Homiletical Narrative, 260*-6. The adherence to connecting formulae
suggesting immediacy might be influenced by a novelistic tone, as these are prevalent in the Greek
novel. See Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 91-2.
141 Cohen, Structure and Editing, 19-21. Deut. R. is an exception to more simplified Tanḥuma homilies.
142 Elbaum, Sermon to Story, 107-9. Elbaum indirectly discussed character analogy in late Midrashim,
when he showed that implicit analogy between sages in ARN b is one of the key forces shaping later
tales of the sages, see Elbaum, Models, 73-7. I consider the treatment of Balaam in Tan. Balak to be
another facet of this late focus on the analogy between different character narratives.
Generally, Towner found late midrashic lists to be as simplified as other aspects of the Tanḥuma. Late Midrashim veer towards standardization of the list pattern and rework older lists to be more stereotypical. Nonetheless, Towner notes a few late lists with novel features. One pertinent example is a list of the “ten miracles of the sea” (MekhY. WaYehi 4) which is transformed in Midr. Ps. 114:7, in that the first two miracles are embellished with dialogue between Moses and the Israelites, who refuse to cross the sea without the aid of further miracles.

In my view, although the pattern in Midr. Ps. 114:7 is incomplete because it does not relate all the miracles, its new structure is that of a narrative. It sequences the miracles one after the other and not as a simultaneous enumeration of examples. This use of lists as the inspiration for story structure is in line with Steven Sacks’ findings about the construction of PRE and thus pertains to other late-midrashic compositions. This suggests that midrashic lists about Balaam in the Tanḥuma would likewise be transformed into narratives, and that their analogical characterizations would be expressed differently than by implicit juxtaposition.

I will briefly review a source already mentioned (1.2.2.2.) (M. Avot 5:19):

(19) One who possesses these three qualities is among the disciples of Abraham our father; but one who possesses three other qualities is of the disciples of the wicked Balaam. A good eye, a humble spirit, and a subdued desire, are [characteristics] of the disciples of Abraham our father. An evil eye, a haughty spirit, and an excessive desire, are [characteristics] of the disciples of Balaam. What is the difference between the disciples of Abraham our father and the disciples of the wicked Balaam? The disciples of Abraham our father enjoy this world and inherit the World to Come

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143 As also noted by Towner, Enumeration, 22.
144 Ibid, 26-7.
145 Ibid, 88-95. See also MekhY. Amalek 2, an index describing the four characters who were given hints. When compared to a parallel in Tanḥuma BeShalah (“other”) 28, it only shows some minor alterations, such as an omission of David’s thoughts and a rephrasing of Jacob’s thoughts, as well as no clear attribution to R. Eleazar HaMod’ai. Thus, this Tanḥuma version is stereotypical, as Towner notes in Enumeration, 135-9. His other examples include Tanḥuma BaMidbar 6, which appends new examples to a list comparable to the one in MekhY. Jethro 5. Ibid, 80-3.
147 Sacks, Midrash and Multiplicity, 27-32.
as it is said: “That I may cause those that love Me to inherit substance, and that I may fill their treasuries” (Prov. 8:21), while the disciples of the evil Balaam inherit Gehinnom and descend into the pit of destruction as it says: “But You O God will bring them down to the pit of destruction, men of blood and deceit will not live out their days, but, as for me, I Trust in You” (Ps. 55:24).

The comparison harnesses implicit analogy to depict the traits of Abraham and Balaam. The traits associated with each are probably based on a separate unstated view of the characters, which is dependent and consistent with biblical or other narrative sources. The difference in the fates of the disciples and by extension Abraham and Balaam is the only hierarchical assertion that is clearly stated and has a textual basis as the main focus of their didactic significance. By contrast, the two Tanḥuma Balak versions of this list are radically different. Tan. Balak 9 has a version of the index discussing only Balaam149:

…(Num. 22:18:) BUT BALAAM ANSWERED AND SAID UNTO THE [PRINCES] [SERVANTS] OF BALAK: [EVEN] IF BALAK SHOULD GIVE ME [A HOUSE FULL OF SILVER AND GOLD, I COULD NOT TRANSGRESS THE COMMAND OF THE LORD MY GOD TO DO LESS OR MORE]. From here you learn that he had [a haughty spirit, an evil eye] [an evil eye, a haughty spirit], a greedy soul: An evil eye, since it is stated (in Num. 24:2): THEN BALAAM RAISED HIS EYES AND SAW ISRAEL DWELLING TRIBE BY TRIBE. A haughty spirit, [since] (according to Num. 22:13): [SO BALAAM AROSE IN THE MORNING AND SAID TO THE PRINCES OF BALAK: GO UNTO YOUR OWN LAND, FOR] THE LORD REFUSED TO LET ME GO WITH YOU. A greedy soul, [since] (according to Num. 22:18): [EVEN] IF BALAK SHOULD GIVE ME [A HOUSE FULL OF SILVER AND GOLD].(Ibid.) I COULD NOT TRANSGRESS [THE COMMAND OF THE LORD] [MY GOD]... 150.

The hyperbole of a house full of gold (Num. 22:18) is understood to be a hinted request for a genuine house of gold151. This prompts a proemic digression

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149 Unless otherwise noted, all English translations of Tanḥuma Balak are based on the third volume of Townsend’s edition.
150 That is even clearer in the other version of the Tanḥuma (Balak 6), where an anonymous homilist complains that spending money on soldiers would have been a better tactic for Balak, but Balaam knew this and still wanted more money: ...If he wanted to hire soldiers to fight against them, doubtful (if) they win, doubtful (if) they fall. (and ) Not that he (Balak) would pay and be defeated. Therefore you learn that he (Balaam) desired this (that Balak would fail)...

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(ending with the same verse) in the form of the list. No longer is the index implicitly about Balaam; rather, the qualities of the disciples are now obviously his. A textual biblical basis is established for each of his attributes152. The Tanḥuma index is not interested in hierarchies or enumeration but in showing Balaam’s reprehensible character traits153. The following account does the same for both Abraham and Balaam (Tanḥuma Balak 15):

...(Num. 22:40): THEN BALAK SACRIFICED AN OX AND A SHEEP. The righteous say little and do much. It is written of Abraham (in Gen. 18:5): LET ME BRING A PIECE OF BREAD; but after that (in vs. 6–7): HURRY UP WITH THREE SE’AHS [OF FINE MEAL]... THEN ABRAHAM RAN UNTO THE HERD... But the wicked say a lot and do little154. Balak said (in Num. 22:17): FOR I WILL SURELY HONOR YOU GREATLY... When [Balaam] came, he only sent him an ox and a sheep. Balaam began gnashing his teeth at him, for he was greedy. He spoke thus: Is this what he sent me? Tomorrow I will deliver a curse through his own property, as stated (in Num. 23:1): THEN BALAAM SAID [UNTINO BALAK]: BUILD [SEVEN ALTARS] FOR ME HERE, [AND MAKE READY FOR ME HERE SEVEN BULLS AND SEVEN RAMS]...155.

This index is about the rule: “The righteous say little and do much but the wicked say a lot and do little”. For purposes of illustration, it contrasts Balak and Abraham’s conduct when playing host respectively, to the three angels and Balaam. Unlike the above Tanḥuma index, the scriptural examples are used to form their own narratives156. The description of Abraham’s hospitality tries to preserve the dynamic biblical phrasing and shows Abraham’s rapid efforts to exceed his promise.

Conversely, Balak only sent one ox and one sheep to Balaam, based on their mention in the singular in Num. 22:40, understood as the contrary of the promise to

152 According to Urbach, Balaam, 276-7, the Tannaitic account was also based on these verses.
153 ARN b 45 adds a triple demonstration of the Mishna’s traits, noting that Balaam gave Israel the evil eye since even a handmaiden of Israel, due to the “revelation at the sea” common to rabbinic tradition, was wiser than he in the ways of God. He had thus lost his special role as advisor to the nations.
154 The other Tanḥuma Balak 11 has: But the wicked say a lot and even a little (they) do not do (ילו ואפמעט אינם עושים), which is again a slightly more negative description.
155 Text in Hebrew.
156 As was the case in the account discussed by Meir, Homiletical Narrative, 264*-5.
honor Balaam greatly. This leads to a narrative explanation of the sequence of events connecting the end of Num. 22 and the beginning of Num. 23. Dejected by the meager offering, Balaam is reported through an inner monologue to have demanded his many sacrifices as a ruse to punish Balak’s miserliness. The underscored gesture of teeth gnashing (underlined), is a sign of Balaam’s greed, which could very well be based on the list of his and Abraham’s disciples.

This is made clearer when discussing a parallel of this expanded index in ARN b 23, which makes no mention of Balaam at all, or any of the Tanḥuma’s sequencing of his and Abraham’s behavior in what Elbaum dubbed a “continuous homileticized story”.157 ARN presents an expanded enumeration of the meager cuts of meat that Balak supplied, in contrast to the many kinds of sweets and gifts Abraham gave. Hence, ARN is the more standardized late list Towner’s analysis anticipated, whereas Tanḥuma Balak deviates from the list structure in favor of narratives, which show Balaam’s greed instead of leaving it implicit.

In summary, the analysis of the two Tanḥuma Balak permutations of the M. Avot list of Abraham and Balaam’s disciples158 reveals that the Tanḥuma is more interested in expressing Balaam’s character in a narrative than in placing him in a hierarchy. Character attributes matter sufficiently to warrant completion and deviation from the enumeration pattern. This is also true of how Tan. Balak rephrases the elaborate Tannaitic Balaam and Moses comparison (seen in 1.3.2).

1.4.2.2 Narrative Competitions between Balaam and Moses

157 Elbaum, Sermon to Story, 100-1.
158 Other examples of the contrast between Abraham and Balaam include Tan. Balak 11 and 14. In these texts there is no index, even though one could have been written based on previous sources. Balaam’s character is once more the actual subject and not making a comparison. Another example of a Tanḥuma revision of an older list into narratives is Tan. Toldot 12.
Tannaitic sources compared Moses and Balaam directly and implicitly in indexes. However, as in the Balaam and Abraham list, Tan. Balak prefers to show Balaam’s character through narrative analogies to Moses, as well as in scattered comparisons.

This is intentional when compared to possible parallels. Tan. Balak actually informs us how it aims to compare the two figures.

The opening account in Tanhuma Balak is a polemical index showing how God was egalitarian with the nations, when they seemingly were not given Israel’s opportunities and benefits. They were given these, but the gifts were misused (Tan. Balak 1).

Balak 1\(^{159}\). That portion is more in line with the Tannaitic index though more direct in its comparison of the characters. Both Balaam and Moses shared God’s ear constantly, a possible reference to the Tannaitic comparisons, but Balaam tries to use his prophecy to destroy Israel with licentiousness (Tan. Balak 1)\(^{160}\):

A ...In like manner he raised up Moses for Israel, who spoke with him any time that he wanted, [and] he raised up Balaam for the nations of the world, in order that he might speak with him any time that he wanted.
Look at what a difference there is between the prophets of Israel and the prophets of the nations of the world! The prophets of Israel warn the nation about transgressions, and so it says (in Ezek. 3:17): I HAVE APPOINTED YOU A SENTINEL FOR THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL. [Any] prophet who arose from the nations, however, established a breach to cut off mortals from the world to come. And not only that, but all the prophets had a merciful attitude towards both Israel and the nations of the world; for so did Isaiah say (in Isa. 16:11): THEREFORE MY INNER PARTS THROB LIKE A HARP FOR MOAB.... And similarly has Ezekiel said (in Ezek. 27:2): RAISE UP A DIRGE OVER TYRE.

But this cruel man rose up to uproot a whole nation without cause, for nothing. Therefore the Parashah on Balaam was written to make known why the Holy One removed the Holy Spirit from the nations of the world. [It was] because this man arose out of them, and look at what he did!

The index portion contrasting Gentile and Jewish prophets is probably a reworking of an Amoraic comparison (1.1), which is reiterated more faithfully in a different Tanḥuma account. Like classical synkrasis the comparison shows Balaam as immoral, but not as less intimate with God, to highlight Moses’ superiority. The underlined portion explicitly states that this parashah is meant to show Balaam’s failings. I suggest that this comment functions as an introduction to the whole of Tanḥuma Balak, like Dina Stein’s description of the opening of PRE. The Tanḥuma will now make us “see” Balaam’s failings by characterizing him in light of Moses in the whole of the parashah, in an elaboration of this opening homily. Tan. Balak does uses secondary characters for what Tannaitic sources do with lists.

1.4.2.2.1 “Balaam vs. Moses”

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161 This phrase might be a proemic return to the opening verse: ‘Balak saw the Israelites. You, audience, will now see Balaam and the nations’ failings’.

162 For example, Tan. (Buber) Vayishlach 24.

163 Tanḥuma (Buber) Matot 8 denies Balaam’s prophecy by equating his wisdom to that of Ahitpohel, as was done implicitly in M. Sanhedrin (1.2.2.1).

164 The opening portions of some late-midrashic compositions, such as PRE 1-2, serve as a kind of redactor’s preface, showing key themes implicitly. See, Stein, Maxim, 148-50.

165 This is compatible with the connection to theatrical characterizations I argue for below. Juniper claims that a new comedy character is initially presented in a lengthy monologue scene attributing its self-attested qualities to a type. Then repetitions in scenes reinforce the type. Juniper, Character Portrayal, 283-4. Thus the first mention of Balaam’s failure in Tan. Balak 1 sets the stage for him.
Several accounts stress Tan. Balak 1’s insistence that Balaam misused his prophecy. They show him attempting in vain to prophesy to discover how to defeat Moses, thereby translating the opening comparison (Tan. Balak 1) into narratives.

Moses and Balaam’s deaths are linked as competitors (Tan. Balak 21):

(Num. 23:14) **SO HE TOOK HIM TO THE FIELD OF ZOPHIM [AT THE TOP OF PISGAH].** He saw that Israel would be breached there, for it was there that Moses died, as stated (in Deu. 3:27): **GO UP TO THE TOP OF PISGAH ... [FOR YOU SHALL NOT CROSS OVER THIS JORDAN].** Is there a breach greater than this? What he saw was through divinations, and he was of the opinion that because of him they would fall there.

Balak took Balaam to the place where Moses will die. The unnamed peak (PISGAH) is understood to be the top of Mount Nevo through analogy (gezerah shava) to the similar wording of the two verses. Balak or Balaam’s prophecy can only harm Israel with Moses gone. This theme is repeated (Tan. Balak 22):

(Num. 23:21) **NO ONE HAS BEHELD FALSEHOOD IN JACOB.** Balaam said: He has neither paid attention to the transgressions at their hands nor at their pride. A. **THE LORD THEIR GOD IS WITH HIM.** You (Balak) said to me (in Num. 23:7): **COME, CURSE [JACOB] FOR ME.** If an orchard has no keeper, a thief is able to harm it; or if the keeper falls asleep, the thief will enter [it]. But in the case of these people (according to Ps. 121:4): **BEHOLD, THE ONE KEEPING ISRAEL SHALL NEITHER SLUMBER NOR SLEEP.** So how can I harm [Israel]? (Num. 23:21)

B. **THE LORD THEIR GOD IS WITH HIM** (i.e., Moses). Balak said to him: Since you cannot touch them because of Moses, their minister, look at his successor. What will he be? He said to him: He also will be strong like him. (Num. 23:21) **THE LORD THEIR GOD IS WITH HIM** (i.e., Joshua); A **ROYAL WAR CRY IS WITHIN HIM.** He is blowing [a trumpet], giving a war cry, and throwing down a wall.

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166 See also Tan. Devarim Wolfenbuttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod.Guelf. Novi B (G. 2) I. and Buber’s additions to Tan. Devarim 2, for more comparisons between Moses and Balaam. Eccles. R. 2:2 even goes as far as voicing the concern that in the future Israel will mention Balaam rather than Moses.

167 ARN a 2 combines comparisons to Moses with the theme of Balaam as being Jewish as well, by having them born circumcised. The competition between the two figures is probably at its most developed in Pitron Torah’s (VaYerah-Balak) unique account, which has Balaam envy Moses, wanting to have led the exodus instead of him.

168 See also Deut. R. (Lieberman) 1:1. Moses protects against thieves, such as those in Tan. Balak.

169 See also Y. Sanhedrin 10:2, Tan. Matot 4
Option A ties “the keeper of Israel” to God. However, Balaam could not harm Israel because of Moses in B (underlined). He used prophecy to find a different opportunity to curse, but saw that Joshua would be too much for him. A different narrative characterizes Moses to be on a par with Balaam instead. Moses defeated Balaam in a sorcerous competition thereby killing him. Balaam’s ability to prophecy informed him of this (Tan. Balak 23):

(Num. 23:24, cont.) AND DRUNK THE BLOOD OF THE SLAIN. He prophesied that Moses would not sleep (in his grave), until he had taken vengeance on himself and on the five kings of Midian. (Num. 23:24) IT DOES NOT SLEEP UNTIL IT HAS EATEN ITS PREY. This [prey] is Balaam. (Ibid., cont.) AND DRUNK THE BLOOD OF THE SLAIN. These are the five kings of Midian. (Num. 31:6) WITH THE VESSELS [OF THE SANCTUARY. This is] the [high priestly diadem] plate on which it is said (according to Exod. 28:36): HOLY TO THE LORD. (Num. 31:6, cont.) AND THE TRUMPETS FOR SOUNDING THE ALARM IN HIS HAND. Moses said to Israel: Balaam the Wicked has practiced magic for you and is making the five kings fly. So he flies and makes [others] fly. Show him the [high priestly diadem] plate on which the name of the Holy One is engraved, and they will fall down before you. You know that it is so written (in Num. 31:8): AND ALONG WITH THEIR [OTHER] VICTIMS THEY KILLED THE KINGS OF MIDIAN: [EVI, REKEM, ZUR, HUR, AND REBA, THE FIVE KINGS OF MIDIAN,] [THEY ALSO KILLED] BALAAM BEN BEOR [WITH THE SWORD]. What did that wicked man want with the kings of Midian? Is it not in fact written (in Num. 24:25): [THEN BALAAM AROSE] AND WENT BACK TO HIS OWN PLACE? It is simply this: When he heard that twenty-four thousand [Israelites] had fallen (in Num. 25:9) through his counsel, he returned to get his reward. For that reason Balaam ben Beor is recorded (in Num. 31:8) together with the five kings of Midian.

The account reads Num. 23:24 allegorically about the events of the war against Midian in Num. 31. It notes that Moses would not die before killing Balaam.

“Other” Tanhuma 14 has God look at “only their merit” (כזה בלעם), it also has Balak confessing that he cannot touch them, which might be inspired by his own powers as a sorcerer.

171 See also Tan. (Buber) Matot 5.
172 This reading might have been inspired by an attempt to avoid actually sanctioning drinking blood, see Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 154.
as well, linking their fates and an actual competition between them is described.

Moses counseled the Israelites on how to dispel Balaam’s magical levitation that protected him and the Midianite Kings. This gloss stems from reading “over their dead” (Num. 31:8) as the Kings being in the air over the bodies of their dead soldiers.

The narrative casts Moses as an advisor to Israel on matters relating to magic. This could be an inversion of Balaam’s role as counsel to the nations about Israel in Midrash. I suggest that this theme was reversed to present Moses’ superiority to Balaam. This is evident by the existence of another version (Y. Sanhedrin 10:2) that has Pinhas and not Moses kill Balaam, which better fits the priestly regalia mentioned. Thus, the redaction of Tan. Balak probably altered an account to achieve its comparative aims. These alterations are clear-cut in Balaam’s seven altars (Tan. Balak 16):

(Num. 23:1) THEN BALAAM SAID [UNTO BALAK]: BUILD [SEVEN ALTARS] FOR ME HERE, [AND MAKE SEVEN BULLS AND SEVEN RAMS READY FOR ME HERE]... Why seven altars? [They] corresponded to seven righteous ones from Adam to Moses, who built seven altars and had been accepted: Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. Then [Balaam] said: Why did you accept these? Was it not because of a liturgy which they performed before you that you accepted them? Is it not [more] suitable for you to be served by seventy nations and not by [merely] one nation? The Holy Spirit answered him (in Prov. 17:1): BETTER A DRY MORSEL WITH TRANQUILITY THAN A HOUSE FULL OF QUARRELSOME FEASTING. Better (in the words of Lev. 7:10) A GRAIN OFFERING MIXED WITH OIL OR DRY than (in Prov. 17:1) A HOUSE FULL OF QUARRELSOME FEASTING: for you want to introduce strife between me and Israel. (Num. 23:2–3)...  

174 Targum Pseudo Jonathan on Num. 31:8 has parallels to this source, as well as to the connection to Amalek in ER, see Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 171.
175 Deut. R. (Lieberman) V’Zot HaBerachah offers an interesting parallel to this passage. It contains an extra comparison between Balaam’s evil eye and Moses’ beautiful eyes and heightens the inferiority of Balaam’s prophecy as compared to Moses. A possible Yelamdenu source found in attachment A of PRK (Mandelbaum) V’Zot HaBerachah, might be an older form of both accounts. It contains another rebuke by God of Balaam’s unwillingness to bless Israel. Conversely, Midr. Ps. 90:1 associates Moses’ prayer with Balaam’s attempt to sway God =SoS. Zu. 8:14, where Balaam’s altars are actually successful in removing the divine presence from Israel for a while.
176 א). למה שבע מזבחות, כנגד שבעה צדיקים שבנו שבע מזבחות כג בנה לי בזה וגו’ (במדבר אל בלק ויאמר בלעם טז מאדם עד משה ונпередו, אדם הבל נח ואברהם ויצחק ויעקב ומשה, ויאמר למה קבלת את אלו, לא בשביל עבודה שעבדו לפניך קבלתם, לא נאה לך שתהא נעבד משבעים אומות, ולא מאומה אחת, השיבו רוח הקודש טוב פת חריבה שלוה בה מבית מלא זבחי ריב (משלי יז א), טובה מנחה בלולה בשמן וחריבה, מבית מלא זבחי ריב, אתה רוצה להכניס מריבה ביני ובין בני ישראל...
Balaam tries to counter the altars of seven righteous figures ending with Moses by tempting God with a greater amount of offerings. Moses is nowhere to be found in a parallel in Tan. Tzav 1. His possible addition has the effect of associating Balaam with the illicit nations’ desire to supplant Israel and Moses mentioned by Tan. Balak 1. Balaam tries to tempt God away from Israel through his access to him. This, however, is not the end of Balaam’s proximity to Moses.

1.4.2.2.2 Balaam’s ‘Jewish’ Power of Speech

I identify a minor theme in Tan. Balak that casts Balaam as Moses’ dubious “double” rather than as his competitor, leading to richer characterization. Joseph Ewen states that sometimes a secondary character is a “double”, whose similarity to the protagonist coupled with slight difference is meant to better define the protagonist and his psychology.  

My claim is that Tan. Balak narrowed the scope of the Tannaitic depiction of Balaam’s liminality (1.2.2.2) into a Moses-like power of speech, thus turning Balaam into a “double” and defining their hierarchy not in a list. This hierarchy is triple-tiered. Herman notes that character “doubles” sometimes represent a character’s futile attempt to disavow certain elements of itself by displacing them onto another, thereby leading to the destruction of the character. This is reflected in Balaam’s relations with Balak, as his worse self, as I will argue extensively below.

Compare the message of the passage about lentils being preferable to strife at a dinner party as a known saying in Athenaeus, Deipnosophists, 254-5. The same midrashic theme, but mentioning “lentils”, is indeed present in one version of the late Aba Gurion in Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 212-3.

The reference to the first Passover in a latter part of this passage might also be an allusion to Moses who conducted that meal: …[Better] the dinner of unleavened bread and bitter herbs which Israel ate in Egypt, than bulls which you offer with hands of [hatred]…

Ewen, Character, 18-9, 114-5. On such characters reflecting possible development, see extensively in Phelan, Reading People, 198-205.

Herman, Storytelling, 206.

On the tragic fate of characters who rebel against their minor status, see Woloch, One vs. Many, 26.
In the following accounts Tan. Balak turns Balaam’s similarity to Moses and Israel into a point of conflict, by expressing these ideas in narratives about these characters. Balaam is described by the Midianite elders who know Moses\(^{181}\) as sharing his power of killing by utterances\(^{182}\) (Tan. Balak 4):

\[(\text{Num. } 22:4) \text{ SO MOAB SAID UNTO THE ELDERS OF MIDIAN. What is the relevance of [mentioning] the ELDERS OF MIDIAN here? It is simply that they saw Israel conquering in a way that was not customary for conquerors. They said: Their leader (i.e., Moses) was raised in Midian. Let us learn through them what his character is like. The elders of Midian said to them: His power is only in his mouth}\(^{183}\). They said to them: We also will bring someone against them who has power in his mouth\(^{184}\).\]

This idea is also undermined by an account where Balaam even speaks Hebrew, which probably assumes he converses with the divine mouth of the ass and the angel in Hebrew. Balaam is a foul mouthed imitation (B below, underlined)\(^{185}\).

The passage also integrates several older accounts that disqualify Balaam’s implied power, since he failed to kill his ass by speaking. This line of thought is potentially meant as a jab against Christianity (A and C)\(^{186}\) (Tan. Balak 13):

**A. (Num. 22:28) THEN THE LORD OPENED THE MOUTH OF THE SHE-ASS, in order to make known to you that the mouth and the tongue are under his (i.e., God’s) control, so that if he desired to curse, his mouth was under his control...**

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\(^{181}\) Mann’s *Yelamdenu* (Balak) reflects this comparison to Balaam’s further detriment by heightening his resemblance to that of a bull; i.e., a mindless beast and not another Moses.

\(^{182}\) Prayer is associated with Israel in rabbinic literature, whereas weapons are used by Gentiles. See for instance MekhY. VaYehi 2=MekhSh.14;10. Other Tanhuma BeShalah 9=Midr. Ps. 22;20, contrasts Israel the “worm” with the hard Gentile “trees”. If any change is apparent in this motif, it is that later sources, such as the above Tanhuma, advocated for actual confrontation with Gentiles.

\(^{183}\) Another possible comparison is the description of Balaam being forced to bless Israel with a miraculously loud voice (Tan. Balak 24), which is one of Moses’s hallmarks in some late Midrashim, for instance Exod. R. 1.24. For the possible origins of this idea see Urbach, Balaam, 287.

\(^{184}\) \[ָיָמָר יָמָא אָתָאָלֶא יָפָחְתָא (מְדָרָבָא בֶּלֶת). מֵחַרְבָּמ שֶׁלֶלֶת מְדָרָבָא בֶּלֶת. אָלָא שָׁלוֹא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָчָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא נִיי אָחָיָא
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\(^{185}\) אֵלָי תֶּפֶר תַּלְתְּלֶא וַתֶּפֶר בְּנַפְּסָה (מְדָרָבָא בֶּלֶת). מֵחַרְבָּמ שֶׁלֶלֶת מְדָרָבָא בֶּלֶת. אָלָא שָׁלוֹא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָา אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא נִיי אָחָיָא יַדְיָא

\(^{186}\) Also see Tanhuma (Buber) Metzora 1, which has Balaam pushed into Hell, by his speech.

\(^{187}\) B. Sanhedrin 105a=b. Avoda Zara 4b. There is no clear mention of Balaam’s sexual encounters with the ass although it fits with the more sympathetic depictions of him below. Also see, Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 138; Baskin, Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 91-3; Urbach, Balaam, 283-9. They argue that the snake parable might be connected to Christianity and its preachers.
B. (Num. 22:29) **BUT BALAAM SAID TO THE SHE-ASS: YOU HAVE TRULY MADE A FOOL OF ME!** Even though he was a star worshiper, he spoke in the holy tongue. A star worshiper has a foul tongue.

C. **IF I HAD A SWORD IN MY HAND, I WOULD KILL YOU RIGHT NOW.** [The situation] is comparable to a physician who came to cure with his tongue a person bitten by a snake on the road. On the way he saw a lizard. He began searching for a stick to kill it. They said to him: Are you unable to get this [creature] (without a stick)? How do you come to cure with your tongue a person bitten by a snake?

Similarly, the she-ass said to Balaam: You cannot kill me unless you have a sword in your hand. How do you intend to uproot an entire people! He was silent and could not find an answer. The princes of Moab began to express astonishment, for they had seen a miracle the like of which had never happened in the world... 187

The Tanḥuma even has the sword wielding angel (Num. 22:23ff) state that Balaam is stealing Israel’s thunder by “killing with his mouth” and so must die. His liminality is acknowledged as a threat, unlike Tannaitic sources (Tan. Balak 11) 188:

... It is also written (Isa. 40:24): **HE BLOWS ON THEM AND THEY WITHER.** However, he said to him: [Skill with] the mouth was given to Jacob, as stated (in Gen. 27:22): **THE VOICE IS THE VOICE OF JACOB, BUT THE HANDS ARE THE HANDS OF ESAU;** but the nations all live by the sword. Now you are trading off your skill and coming against them with their [skill]. I also am coming against you with your own [skill] 189.

1.4.3 Balak and Balaam

One of the most important insights with regards to character analogy is how it can simultaneously enrich and mark characters as central to a text 190. Hochman views analogical characterizations as wider structures embedded into a work around a character that create a “space” to fill in by the other characters who reflect hinted-at

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187 B. Gittin 57b showcases the destruction caused by Gentiles associated with Jacob’s voice. The parallel in Y. Taanit 4:5 is less about assimilation. Elijah Zu. 10 continues the Balaam vs. Moses theme by insisting that God swore not only not to give more prophecy to the Gentiles, but also not to replace Israel. This theme appears alongside Balaam in Tan. Balak 16.

188 This suggests the destruction caused by Gentiles associated with Jacob’s voice. The parallel in Y. Taanit 4:5 is less about assimilation. Elijah Zu. 10 continues the Balaam vs. Moses theme by insisting that God swore not only not to give more prophecy to the Gentiles, but also not to replace Israel. This theme appears alongside Balaam in Tan. Balak 16.

189 Also note that the Angel mentioned in the text is supposed to be an angel of mercy who is acting out of character to spite Balaam’s imitation of Judaism. This motif is also found in Exod. R. 5:8 on the angel who accosted Moses (Exod. 4:24) and so furthers the indirect comparison to Moses in late sources.

190 Berlin notes the importance of this analogy to biblical prose. Berlin, Poetics, 40-1.
characterizations. As Alex Woloch argues, this is at once a relevant model for 19th century novels and the Iliad and hence comparable to Midrashim.

W. J. Harvey mentions that some so called “flat” characters (simple and static), achieve a “quarter circle” by analogical devices. They show glimpses of depths that could have made their character “round”, if it had been given enough narrative time and space. The Tanḥuma’s Balaam is one such character by the space he is allotted not just by Moses, but by Balak, who renders Balaam more sympathetic. This sympathy shows that the overall thematic structure and space allotted to Balaam in Tan. Balak is closer to novels or theater rather than an exegetic Midrash, suggesting a different poetics. Sympathy for Balaam is achieved through two complementary devices: narratives showing that Balak actually seduced a reluctant Balaam and Balaam, and the anonymous redaction admonishing Balak for being the worse of the two.

1.4.3.1 Balak Seduced Balaam

The sub-genre of the homiletic tale or narrative, as described by Levinson, adheres to the common pattern of adding complications to heighten narrative tension, by filling in the gaps with new narrative features that often weaken the epic stature of the heroes. Conversely, the exegetic Tanḥuma Balak renditions of Balaam and Balak’s
first meeting turn Balaam’s reluctance into a new obstacle, which besides weakening him, seem to make Balaam more resilient, since he needed far more persuasion. This is at its most clear-cut in the rendering of their initial dialogue (Tan. Balak 5):

…(Num. 22:5, cont.:) **TO THE LAND OF HIS KINSFOLK**, for Balak came from there; and [Balaam] had told him: Your destiny is to become king (Num. 22:5, cont.) **TO SUMMON HIM.** Thus he wrote him: Do not suppose that it is for myself alone that you are doing this and that I alone am honoring you. If you uproot them, you shall receive honor from all the nations, so that the Canaanites and the Egyptians shall all bow down to you. (Num. 22:5, cont.) **HERE IS A PEOPLE THAT HAS COME OUT OF EGYPT.** He said to him: As for you, how does it concern you? He said to him (in Num. 22:5): **LOOK, THEY HAVE COVERED THE FACE (literally: EYE) OF THE EARTH.** [There are] two eyes upon which the earth depends, Sihon and Og. They have destroyed them and covered their eyes. (Num. 22:5, cont.) **NOW THEY ARE DWELLING OPPOSITE ME** (memuly). [in the biblical text- MMLY], just as it says (Ps. 118:11): **IN THE NAME OF THE LORD I CUT THEM OFF**.

This passage rephrases Balak’s message to Balaam by adding several sentences based on seemingly unimportant details in the biblical wording. First, the mention of Egypt in the verse (Num. 22:5) works as a reminder that the Egyptians and others will reward Balaam for harming the Israelites, their sworn enemies.

Second, Balaam objects to Balak’s request by wanting to know why Balak cares about the Israelites at all (underlined). This shows that he unlike Balak, is not fervently interested in Israel. Balak does not answer as in the Bible, that Israel covers the face of the land, thus highlighting the threat of its great numbers. He instead laments that they killed Sihon and Og, the dignitaries (“eyes of the earth”). This lament may have been added by redactors as another ploy meant to convince Balaam.

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198 The “other” Tanhuma Balak 4, has Balak raise the rhetorical objection and not Balaam, but it still combines this account with another that highlights Balak as more evil and sorcerous than Balaam.
199 The Israelites are described by Balak in a way comparable to the plague of locusts, see Exod. 10:5.
Balak supposes that Balaam is interested in Sihon’s welfare, since he previously prophesied Sihon’s victory (Tan. Balak 6)\textsuperscript{200}.

Third, Balak, in a comparison to Ps. 118:11, expressly fears the Israelites will cut him off, and kill him. The audience knows he is lying. In this version, Balaam needs to be conned by Balak to cooperate, resulting in an eviler Balak\textsuperscript{201}. Other accounts also describe Balak’s efforts at persuasion. Balak tries to persuade Balaam to curse Israel by demonstrating their allegedly destructive influence (Tan. Balak 14):

…”(Num. 22:35, cont.) \textbf{HE WENT OUT TO MEET HIM UNTO THE CITY OF MOAB}, [i.e.,] unto their metropolis. What was [Balak’s] reason for preceding him to the borders? He said to him: These are borders which have been fixed from the days of Noah, so that a nation would not enter the territory of its neighbor. These [people] are coming to despoil. Then he showed him how they had broken through and crossed the border of Sihon, as though lodging a complaint against them...

This reading is based on the fact that borders are mentioned in the verses together with the city, which is understood as a different place. Balak chose their place of meeting for an undisclosed reason and it is not a mimetic detail. This description tarnishes Balak further by marking him as hypocritically lamenting Sihon and Og (underlined). The opening of Tan. Balak 15 harps on the choice of location from a different angle:

\textit{(Num. 22:39): THEN BALAAM WENT UNTO BALAK, AND THEY CAME UNTO KIRIATH-HUZOTH} (literally: CITY OF MARKETS), where he had made market places for buying and selling. He had also made a bazaar. [His purpose was] to show him crowds and say: What are those people coming to kill? Children and infants, who have done no wrong?…

The account continues where the above Tan. Balak 14 left off. It assumes Balak knows by way of divination that the Israelites will kill his people and that

\textsuperscript{200} Also in Biblical Antiquates XVIII:2.
\textsuperscript{201} A possible reversal of Balak’s piety in the BT, as noted in Nikolsky, Interpret Him, 219-20.
Balaam cares about Moabite children so as to risk cursing Israel in their behalf. Balaam has become a humanitarian (compare to 1.8.1).

### 1.4.3.2 Balaam Rebukes Balak for his Conduct

The other way Tan. Balak contrasts Balaam and Balak is by directly and indirectly stating that Balak is worse than Balaam. This is done in various narratives and not lists. Meir suggested a division of the characters in Talmudic stories based on their differing degrees of dynamism. She noted that midrashic tales are too short to demonstrate actual development, however they do display instances of change.

Rabbinic authors do not tend to outwardly criticize their heroes but instead have a character correct them. One character will be revealed as being right, while the other will need to change to stand corrected. These types are respectively seen as positive and negative by the authors.

Implementing Meir’s classification, I identify Balaam with the static rebuking character and hence probably as a positive influence. Balaam is understood to be rebuking Balak in the following monologue (Tan. Balak 17):

**A. (Num. 23:7) SO HE TOOK UP HIS THEME AND SAID: IT IS FROM ARAM THAT BALAK HAS BROUGHT ME, THE KING OF MOAB FROM THE HILLS OF THE EAST. I was one of the exalted ones, but Balak has brought me down to the pit of corruption. (ibid.:) BROUGHT ME [is to be understood] just as you say (in Ezek. 32:18): BRING THE MASSES OF EGYPT AND CAST THEM DOWN … [UNTO THE LOWEST PART OF THE NETHERWORLD ALONG WITH THOSE WHO GO DOWN TO THE PIT].**

**B. Another interpretation (of Num. 23:7): FROM ARAM. I was with the highest (ram) of the high, and Balak has brought me down from my glory. [The matter] is comparable to one who was walking with the king. When he saw [some] robbers, he left the king and toured along with the robbers. When he returned to be with the king, he said to him: Go with whomever you have toured with, because it not possible for...**

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202 The account shares some similarities with older parallels, which focus on Balaam’s greed instead. Balaam is given magnificent receptions in Josephus and Philo to sway him, see Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 141.

203 Meir, Changing Character, 63-4, 68.

204 Bakhtin argued that viewing positive nature as being static is a residue of the epic. Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 34-5.

205 Compare to Biblical Antiquates XVIII:10.
you to walk again with me. Similarly Balaam had been bound to the Holy Spirit. When he paired himself with Balak, the Holy Spirit departed from him. So he returned to being a diviner as in the beginning. Thus it is stated (at his death in Jos. 13:22):

Balaam [Ben Beor] the Diviner. Therefore did he cry: I was high up (ram), and Balak brought me down.

C. Another interpretation (of Num. 23:7): [IT IS FROM ARAM [THAT BALAK] HAS BROUGHT ME. Balaam] said to [Balak]: We are alike, even both of us, for being ungrateful, because were it not for our father Abraham, there would have been no Balak. Thus it is stated (in Gen. 19:29): AND IT CAME TO PASS THAT WHEN GOD DESTROYED THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN, GOD REMEMBERED ABRAHAM AND SENT LOT AWAY. Except for Abraham, he would not have delivered Lot from Sodom; and you are one of the children of the children of Lot. Moreover, if it were not for their father Jacob, I should not have been present in the world, because Laban had sons only through the merit of Jacob, since it is written at the beginning (in Gen. 29:9): Rachel came with the sheep. Now if he had sons, how was his daughter a shepherdess? As soon as Jacob came there, sons were given to him, as stated (in Gen. 31:1): NOW HE HEARD THE THINGS THAT LABAN’S SONS [WERE SAYING]. (Gen. 30:27): BUT [LABAN] SAID [UNTO HIM] … I HAVE LEARNED BY DIVINATION THAT THE LORD HAS BLESSED ME FOR YOUR SAKE. So if it were not for their ancestors, you and I would not have been present in the world...

A is about wordplay. Balaam notes that he was a prophet accompanied by God, one of the exalted ones, based on reading (Num. 23:7): ‘the exalted’ (HaRam) instead of Aram. But Balak caused Balaam to literally fall from grace, based on reading “brought me” not as N-H-I (guide) but as Aramaic N-H-T (fall)208. B uses similar word play. Balak caused Balaam to leave God, by reading the verse literally as ‘brought him down from God the Ram’. A parable explains the change. Balaam was a companion of the King (God), but having fallen into the company of a bandit (Balak),

206 The beginning of Balaam is described similarly in Tan. Buber Noah 20: ...Balaam initiated dice, gladiator combat and divination...

God would not permit him to accompany him anymore. The change is proved by Balaam being called a sorcerer later in Jos. 13:22\textsuperscript{209}.

Both A and B interpret Balaam’s geographic reference to be a lament for losing his gift of prophecy and blaming Balak for it. This seems to coincide satisfactorily with the seduction theme in Tan. Balak 5, 14, 15, above, where the character realizes that he has been tricked. A and B also show Balaam angry with Balak and preferring closeness to God and thus cast him as a more tragic figure\textsuperscript{210}.

C goes one step further. It is a lengthy homily phrased as though spoken by Balaam, through a putative link to the verse, based on the word play of A and B, or more probably by reading Aram as a place holder for Balaam’s ancestor, Laban\textsuperscript{211}.

Balaam accuses Balak of turning them into ingrates by trying to destroy Israel, since both of them indirectly owe their lives to the actions of Abraham and Jacob. Having an enemy Balaam praise Israel to this extent, has the rhetorical effect of strengthening Israel’s positive image, as do his blessings in the Bible. However, revealing Balaam’s mind via monologue to be close to rabbinic propaganda, shapes Balaam to be Balak’s better and turns his negative liminality into a positive feature\textsuperscript{212}.

A similar effect is achieved by having Balaam disavow Balak’s divination (Tan. Balak 23, underlined):

\textit{(Num. 23:23) Surely there is no augury in Jacob and no divination in Israel. Here you are (Balak) practicing augury and divining in

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\textsuperscript{209} Reading changes in Balaam’s character is both similar and opposed to some Patristic readings, see, Baskin Pharaoh’s Counsellors, 103-13. The Tanḥuma’s royal parables might be some of the latest examples the type, as mentioned in Appelbaum, Clothed You, 35-6 and note 86 there; 57-8.

\textsuperscript{210} The only other cognate I encountered of a more sympathetic and tragic Balaam is Biblical Antiquities. See Vermes, Scripture and Tradition, 132, 134, 136, 140, 145, 173-4. Balaam’s rebuke of Balak might in both Biblical Antiquities and Tan. Balak, reflect the same exegetic tradition.

\textsuperscript{211} This is clearer in the other Tanḥuma Balak 12.

\textsuperscript{212} PR 39 has Balaam praising Jacob, since unlike Abraham and Isaac he did not father other nations, namely Ishmael and Esau. This is another clear case of polemics, which again assumes Balaam has a somewhat Jewish perspective. As such it is very much like the above Tanḥuma motif.
what place you may prevail against them\textsuperscript{213}, but they are not like that. When they have to fight against enemies, a high priest stands up and puts on Urim and Thummim, which are asked about the [will of] Holy One. So all the Gentiles practice divination and augury, but these (Israelites) prove them false through repentance and nullify their divinations. It is so written (in Isa. 44:25): WHO FRUSTRATES OMENS OF LIARS AND CONFOUNDS DIVINERS.\textsuperscript{214}

The Israelite rebuke can also account for Balaam’s sudden interest in honoring God (Tan. Balak 21)\textsuperscript{215}:

(Num. 23:14, cont., 16, 17): AND HE BUILT SEVEN ALTARS [AND OFFERED A RAM AND A BULL ON EACH ALTAR]. THEN HE SAID UNTO BALAK: STAND HERE [BESIDE YOUR BURNT OFFERINGS AND LET ME MAKE MYSELF AVAILABLE TO THE LORD OVER THERE]... SO HE [RETURNED] [CAME] UNTO HIM, AND THERE HE WAS STANDING BESIDE HIS BURNT OFFERINGS TOGETHER WITH THE PRINCES OF MOAB. Concerning the first occasion, it is written (in Num. 23:6): WITH ALL THE PRINCES OF MOAB. When they saw that they had derived no benefit at all, they left him; and only a small portion of the princes of Moab were left with him .(Num. 23:17): BALAK SAID TO HIM: WHAT DID THE LORD SAY? When he saw that [Balaam] was not in control of himself to say what he wanted, [Balak] sat down himself and mocked him. As soon as he saw that he was mocking him, Balaam said to him: Get up from there. It is not fitting to sit while the words of the Omnipresent are being spoken...\textsuperscript{216}

Balaam is scolding Balak, who is laughing at his inability to defy God.

Balaam’s phrasing is understood as a call to show deference to God by standing (underlined). This reading is inspired by Balaam asking Balak to rise in v. 18, but might still be Balaam’s selfish excuse to respond to a personal insult\textsuperscript{217}.

\textsuperscript{213} Ms. Genève Public and University Library 146, might be a better version: in what place will prevail against them the evil eye, and all nations (they) fear war, but (עין רעה ביל אומתות ופוחדים מלחמה). So, Balak wanted to direct the evil eye, mentioned in other Tanhuma sources, such as Balak 9.


\textsuperscript{215} A similar message is echoed in Tan. Balak 14, though it is not as direct.

\textsuperscript{216} ספר עמים עםitto לאריה: יראם לבלק ורבבות עמים ידועות לים, (שם). 3: מקריא את ענפת צלב, והם נבש ענפת הפרת ממעטפ שירת.

\textsuperscript{217} The “other” Tanhuma 13 even has Balaam confess his unwillingness to approach an angry Balak, which caused God to force him like a beast of burden dragged by its bridle.
Finally, Tanḥuma Balak 6 has an anonymous homily, which suggests that Balak is the greater magician of the two; as well as accusing Balak and not Balaam, for the harlotry of Shittim. Hence, sympathy for Balaam is one of the overarching themes of this Tanḥuma portion (Tan. Balak 6):

\[\text{...A. (Num. 22:6, cont.)} \text{PERHAPS I SHALL BE ABLE TO SMITE THEM.} \text{What reason was there for this one to engage them (i.e., Israel) in war? Did not the Holy One tell them this that they were not to take any of their land? [It was] simply that [Balak] was more of a master of sorceries and divinations than Balaam, for it is so written of him (in Num. 22:2): NOW BALAK [BEN ZIPPOR] SAW (in a vision), except that he did not really comprehend the things [he saw]. And so it says (in Isa. 47:13–14):}

\[\text{YOU ARE WEARIED WITH YOUR MANY DELIBERATIONS; LET THOSE WHO STUDY THE HEAVENS PLEASE STAND UP AND SAVE YOU; LET THOSE WHO GAZE AT THE STARS MAKE KNOWN MONTH BY MONTH WHATEVER WILL COME UPON YOU. SEE THEY HAVE BECOME LIKE STRAW; [FIRE CONSUMES THEM]... When he saw that Israel would fall into his hand, he therefore gave his daughter over (to prostitution); and through her twenty-four thousand fell. To this end he would have engaged them in war, but he did not know how.}

\[\text{B. (Num. 22:6) PERHAPS I SHALL BE ABLE TO SMITE (NKH) THEM. As one discounts one twenty-fourth of a seah; so also did there fall from Israel twenty-four thousand, one [thousand] less [than should have fallen]. [Interpretation: 24 X 20,000 = 480,000, and 24 X 5,000 = 120,000, It turns out that, if 25,000 is found to be 1/24 of 600,000 and only 24,000 fell, then 1,000 are missing.218 (Num. 22:6, cont.): AND DRIVE THEM AWAY FROM THE LAND, for he only desired to drive them away, so that they would not enter the land. (Num. 22:6).219}

A explicitly states that Balak was the greater magician than Balaam and that he instigated the Shittim incident; Balaam’s involvement is not even mentioned. Balak acted on his own accord based on his own divinations, for which Isa. 47:13-14 serves as a proof text of efficacy220. B might also imply that Balak was informed by God that

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218 The Other Tanḥuma has no numerical interpretation as in the parenthesis above, which suggests it was incorporated later into the manuscript by a redactor, who liked such numerical manipulations.

219 In the “other” Tanḥuma Balak 4, Balak is even more wicked, since he deliberately does not predict the future as he knows it must be, but instead only sees that he can harm the Israelites. Thus, the above Isaiah proof text serves a closer function to its original context; namely, the worthlessness of divination.
he had nothing to fear from the Israelites, but still acted as he did, since he knew he
could harm them greatly. Hence, Balak and not Balaam, is characterized as the true
enemy of Israel.

In summary, Balaam was fashioned by Tanḥuma Balak to be the middle tier of
a hierarchy consisting of himself, Moses and Balak. When compared to Moses he is
dangerously liminal and immoral, but when compared to Balak he is more
sympathetic and even seriocomic. The Tannaitic conception of list-like duality
between Israel and Gentiles as signified by two characters, is thus supplanted by a
complex analogical triangle. There is a dominant preference for phrasing analogy in
terms of actual secondary characters and not as lists.

1.5 Tanḥuma Character Analogy as Increased Theatricality
After demonstrating the extensive utilization of character analogy in Tanḥuma Balak,
it is worth inquiring why was it formulated in this specific manner, in the form of
caracter analogies reoccurring in multiple accounts, rather than through a concise
index, proem or monologue?

Meir compared Tanḥuma to Gen. R., and argued for a greater degree of
dramatization and character dialogue in the former. This is also true of
developments in concurrent piyyutim. Lieber framed them as “a popular Greco-
Roman performative style translated into a Jewish context” and even speculated about
their theatrical staging in the synagogue that would have mirrored the interpretive
chorus and seating arrangement of popular theatrical mimes.
Such popular theatrical forms, like our Tanḥuma, are also fond of analogy. In point of fact, all literary analogy between characters can be considered a theatrical function from the inception of the form. As Woloch showed, the development of Greek drama was driven by the increased analogical ties between characters\(^\text{224}\). In Roman new comedy in particular, character analogy became extremely ingrained and was expected to be recognized by playwrights and audience.

Timothy Moore examined these comedies’ now unknown musical accompaniment\(^\text{225}\). While the exact details have been lost, surviving directions show a clear understanding of analogy. Certain stock types are always accompanied by music while others are not. Moreover, Terence and Plautus to a greater degree, used music to contrast their characters. For instance, in Plautus’ “Menaechmi”, music is used to distinguish between the two twin Menaechmus of the play. Similarly, in “Mercator” young and old are distinguished by differences in tunes\(^\text{226}\). Music was even associated with the characters the audience was meant to sympathize with\(^\text{227}\).

The contents of such plays are also rife with analogy. Ortha Wilner found both direct comparisons made by characters as well as indirect devices, focused on a protagonist in Terence but on pairs in Plautus\(^\text{228}\). Accordingly, George Franko claims that one of Terence’s prime methods of characterization is the use of “doubles”, in particular in dramatic action\(^\text{229}\).

\(^{224}\) Woloch, One vs. Many, 223-4. Dox notes that from 7th century Christianity, there emerged a definition of classical theater as a physical conflict between enemies/characters. Dox, Idea of Theater, 32. Thus, character contest seems central to the reception of theater in Tanḥuma era poetics.

\(^{225}\) Moore, Facing the Music, 134.

\(^{226}\) Ibid, 142.

\(^{227}\) Ibid, 136-9. He also shows how new comedy associated music with characters who were emotional, whereas the absence of music was linked to self-controlled characters who try to impede others’ goals. Music was even used for character development, such as succumbing to emotion or designating the victor when there were two opposing characters in a scene. Ibid, 142, 151-2.

\(^{228}\) Wilner, Contrast and Repetition, 56-8.

\(^{229}\) Franko, Tradition, 32-3.
Such prolonged contrast between pairs of characters is also very relevant to Tan. Balak’s Balaam in relation to Moses and Balak, as we have seen. Below I review key instances of new comedy character types in midrashic literature, as well as hints that this may be the case in Tanḥuma Balak’s portrayals of Balaam, to facilitate the theatrical context of Tanḥuma Balak poetics.

1.5.1 Theater and Tanḥuma

One of the most important sources for interpreting characterizations is the shared cultural knowledge of stock types and professions provided by the social and historical context. There is sufficient evidence to assume that some rabbinic audiences would have picked up on theatrical characterization or references.

Eliezer Segal argues that Eliezer’s Talmudic characterization (b. Sanhedrin 109b) is an adaptation of a stock new Roman comedy type, the “clever slave” (servus callidus). Eliezer’s association with this type helps clarify episodes of this Talmudic account and its minutia. Lieber describes a similar adaption in some piyyutim. One piyut in her analysis in particular, “A certain youth belongs to me” (it li h.ad talya’) displays the strongest connections. She argues that Potiphar’s wife is a gender-inversed version of one stock character. In new comedy, the “senex” and his son (the “adulescens”) often pursue the same “virgo”. Potiphar’s wife similarly pursues Joseph as does her daughter Aseneth in “a certain youth”.

However, could Jewish audiences pick out these similarities? I suspect the answer is yes. Martin Jacobs found that the rabbis’ condemnation of theater was not

230 Herman, Storytelling, 197.
231 Segal, Funny Thing, 110-3.
232 Lieber, Setting the Stage, 559-61.
233 Ibid. The fact that Potiphar’s wife takes the audience into her confidence at the start of the piyut is also a common device in new Roman comedy.
234 Ibid.
wholly one-sided, nor did actual opposition completely exclude cultural imitation, insofar that imitation was mostly literary. He even mentions two rabbinic accounts describing risqué mimes in a positive light. Levinson also finds ample textual evidence that Jews enjoyed visiting theaters on the Sabbath, not all of which should be dismissed as Christian polemics outright.

My dating of Tanḥuma’s Balak further bolsters this possibility. The 5th and 6th centuries witnessed the restoration and refurbishment of existing theaters in Palestine. Eden HaCohen also notes that much of the cultural tension between the pagan and Jewish elements of Palestine, and by extension pagan theater, had dissipated by then due to the pressures exerted by Christianity. This climate could ease an allusion to theater in later texts. Although risqué mimes tended to replace classical comedies in Late Antiquity, classic scenes were preserved as free-standing pieces as were some of the types and poetics of new comedy. It is less surprising then, that one such type might be identified with Tanḥuma Balak’s Balaam.

1.5.2 Balaam in Tanḥuma Balak as “Mageiros”
Tanḥuma Balak conjures up the Tannaitic cook imagery (1.3.2) to serve a different message about Balaam’s bumbling nature. Scholarship has shown that Tanḥuma like PRE, tends to dress older ideas in newer colorful imagery and detail. This suggests that the following two sources are a late Midrash updating of a rabbinic parable utilizing a more colorful theatrical type (Tan. Balak 15):

235 Jacobs, Theaters and Performances, 366-7, 344-6.
236 Ibid. One anonymous opinion even permits theater attendance for the sake of public assembly or to warn gladiators and hence actively attempt to save them. One of the positive accounts is a parable, which might show how parables adopted theatrical allusions, as in the cook parables below.
237 Levinson, An-Other Woman, 286-8.
238 HaCohen, Studies, 136-8. A late rabbinic appeal to theater might have been made in light of Christianity’s hostility to that medium, see the introduction of Dox, Idea of Theater.
239 Lieber, Setting the Stage, 541-2.
...*(Num. 22:41)*: *SO IT CAME TO PASS IN THE MORNING THAT BARAK TOOK BALAAM AND BROUGHT HIM UP TO THE HIGH PLACES OF BAAL, [AND FROM THERE HE SAW THE EDGE OF THE PEOPLE].* Balak was a more of a master of divinations and auguries than Balaam, for Balaam was being dragged along after him like a blind man. What did the two of them resemble? Someone who had a knife in his hand but did not know [where to find] the [animal] joints, while his companion knew the joints but did not have a knife in his hand. Balak saw the places in which Israel would fall and *(ibid.)* BROUGHT HIM UP INTO THE HIGH PLACES OF BAAL. This was Baal Peor, where he saw that Israel would fall

Balak is identified as superior diviner of the two. The phrasing of Balak taking Balaam to high places is explained through a parable which condemns them both.

Balak was as a butcher with a knife, paralleling his power to curse, who does not know how to find the animal’s joints or the halakhic chapters in ritual slaughter.

Conversely, because he is the better diviner, as mentioned earlier, Balak knew how to find the joints-chapters, the places Israel would fall, and dragged the “blind” and hence less responsible Balaam there.

The cook parable is reused to garner sympathy for Balaam. This cookery theme is not isolated *(Tan. Balak 20)*:

...*(Num. 23:10, cont.):* LET ME DIE THE DEATH OF THE UPRIGHT. [The matter] is comparable to a butcher who came to slaughter a cow that belonged to a king. The king began to take notice. When [the butcher] realized [what was happening], he began by discarding the knife, then giving [the cow] a rubdown and filling the feeding trough for it. He began to say: Let my life be forfeit for coming to steal it; but observe that I have provided fodder for it. Similarly Balaam said: Let my life be forfeit for coming to curse, but I will bless them. Ergo *(in Num. 23:10):* LET
ME DIE THE DEATH OF THE UPRIGHT, AND LET MY END BE LIKE THEIRS! 244.

The account disproves Balaam’s wish to die as Israel and thus repentant. He is a complete scoundrel. Balaam is like the cook who wanted to butcher the king’s cow. Since the king caught him in the act, Balaam pretends to show affection for the cow in a hyperbolic manner245. His oath in the verse (Num. 23:10) is likened to the cook’s deceptive oath246. The cook’s demeanor strikes me as theatrical as evidenced by his detailed mimicry that has theatrical parallels247.

The cooking theme is associated with sacrifices and Balaam’s character even beyond the scope of parashaht Balak. Balaam is also compared to a money changer in Tan. Balak 5248 and in Tan. Balak 16249. However, a parallel (Tan. Buber Tzav 1) has Balaam as a “cook who would sell in the market”. What then are the connotations of cooks like Balaam in Midrashim?

Cooks were also butchers in most rabbinic mentions, as in M. Beitzah 3:7 and in Tan. Balak. Moreover, cookery was perceived as a servile occupation and thus
forbidden to be forced upon a Hebrew slave, for instance in MekhY. Nezikin. More importantly, rabbinic cooks are seen as negative untrustworthy characters, specifically with regards to the nature of their meat, as symbolized by “the most fit of cooks is the partner of Amalek” (Y. Kiddushin 4:14). Accordingly, a rare Talmudic narrative about a cook as analyzed by Admiel Kosman, is about a villainous brutish individual who is ultimately punished.

The rabbinic sources surveyed thus far cannot account for all of Balaam’s traits in the Tanḥuma, or even in the above parables. They only show that this comparison is unflattering, which is intuitively obvious. An appeal to comic types is more illuminating. J. C. B. Lowe examined the cook scenes in Plautus’ “Pseudolus.” He mentions that Plutus’ cooks are an updated version of the Greek mageiros type. The cook in question is a typical comic mageiros and represents this type well. He is loquacious, boastful, claims he and his food have magic powers, mocks his rivals and uses grandiose language.

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250 A cook was so servile a position, that it was customary in Second Temple Jerusalem to punish cooks for problematic meals (T. Berakhot 4:8). This low status helps explains why Tannaitic circles chose to compare Balaam to a royal cook, when depicting his inferiority to Moses.

251 There a few positive notes on cooks. Gen. R. 11:4 tells about a righteous cook who had merit, but the need for the reward suggests how rare meritorious behavior was. Both ARN (version a 43b) and Tanḥuma Emor 21 are more positive to cooks, likening the righteous, wicked and priests to them.

252 Cooks are untrustworthy as regards sanctity of their food (M. Hulin 7:1) but less so than grocers (Y. Pe’ah 1:6). Thus, T. Baba Batra 2:4 notes that Onelkos’s cook served unclean meat. Similarly, Y. Terumot 8:4 talks about a cook who was punished by death for serving unclean meat. Other sources repeat these messages: You must not eat meat from a cook-butcher who does not know the chapters/joints (b. Hulin 9a), like Balaam’s ignorance in the Tan. Balak 15 parable. Gentile butchers, like Balaam in the Tanḥuma, are never trustworthy, eat only of what they choose to eat themselves (Minor Tractate Kutim 2:1). The neo-classical Est. R. 7:13, for instance, argues that Amalek also sought Balaam’s advice.

253 Kosman, Tractate Men, 17-8. Kosman analyzed the story of Rav and the butcher/cook (b. Yoma 87a). Like Balaam, the cook was characterized by Rashi and the Talmudic narrator as the antagonist and was contrasted as being a man of violence with Rav as the new ideal Jewish “feminine” man.

254 Lowe, Cook Scene, 411; 414-6. Ibid, Cooks in Plautus, 72. Roman cooks are ascribed some peculiar Roman features. These include threats of physical violence, theft and verbal abuse, ibid, 101-2. The differences are likely due to the fact that cooks in Plautus’ time were household slaves, ibid, 81-4.

255 The scene in question adds theft to these attributes, which is also a common theme. For some collected examples of such speeches, see Athenaeus, Deipnosophists, 216-5, 271-2, 275.
Similarly, an association with this type might have inspired the myriad Tanhūma references to Balaam’s greed, boastful prophetic powers and analogical relations to Balak, as many theatrical parallels show. Possible references to the mageiros go beyond the above two parables and thus might have shaped the Tanhūma redactors’ choice of sources. As Ruth Webb argues, all mime plots are clumsy failed attempts of subordinates to outwit those who hold power over them. Balaam’s failure to convince God in the Bible, let alone in Midrash and specifically his portrayal as a cook endeavoring to convince a king of his innocence, are all very much a mime reading of the whole parashah.

Lowe and John Wilkins note that the mageiros were sacrificial cooks in their Greek form (5th B.C.E onwards). Like in ancient Israel, meat in Athens was eaten only on special sacrificial occasions, apart from hunting. The mageiros could be

256 Wilkins describes the theatrical development of the cook type as split into several characters, often in new comedy. Wilkins, Boastful Chef, 369-414; Lowe, Cooks in Plautus, 77-8. The split occurred because some actors played both major and minor roles at once; for instance the actor who played Psedolus might have also played his cook. This was done to limit troupe size. See, in Marshall, Stagecraft, 96-104, 116-7. Moreover, in the later mimes that are perhaps relevant to Tan. Balak, the mime would use gesture to reflect several characters and their reactions, see in Webb, Dancers, 79-82. Hence this typical splitting of the cook into two or more characters could explain the need for Balaam’s cooperation with Balak in the cook parable, if not the preference for “doubles” (Tan. Balak 15). Compare to “Bacchides” (109-69), where the mageiros often has a whole host of assistants.

257 To avoid overstressing the many possible parallels between Balaam and theatrical cooks in the texts, I refer only to a few examples in this note, see Terrence, Comedies. The main point is that the association between Balaam and this type seems very apt, regardless of the veracity of particular cases. In “Curculio” (251-370) the titular “parasite” interprets Cappadox’s dream, a function which had been uniquely endowed on him by Plautus. Lowe, Cooks in Plautus, 95-6. This is reminiscent of Balaam’s prophetic dream prowess. Fontaine notes that one of the key traits of the “parasite” type, which can be traced back to the mageiros, is senseless eating of the provider’s food in exchange for flattery. Balaam’s blessings were treated as such flattery by all layers of midrashic literature, for example Deut. R. 1:2, 4 (See 1.1). Fontaine also refers to the example of Ergasilus in Plautine’s “Captivi”, who introduces himself in a monologue, as likened to voracious mice and dogs consuming the others’ food, see Fontaine, Reconsidering, 421-3. This is reminiscent of Tan. Balak 15, as is the character of Gnatho in Terence’s “Eunuchs” who was welcomed by all the eager vendors of the market, because of his wasteful nature (2:2), which seems quite similar to Balaam’s visit to the market in the Tanhūma above.

258 Webb, Dancers, 130-1.

259 Ecclesiastics R. 7:1 might also reflect a theatrical connection between Targum and piyut. It notes that the Targumists are fools but the homilists are wise, probably because of the Targumists’ excess theatricality. Another reading in that account contrasts Balaam and Moses in similar terms.

260 For more details on the history of this type, see Wilkins, Boastful Chef, 369-414; Lowe, Cooks in Plautus, 73-5. While the mageiros was a cook with low status, he always retained his ritualistic function. In Menander’s earlier comedies the theatrical adaptation of the type’s most central feature is boastfulness. This is also paralleled in the Tanhūma’s presentation of Balaam, as in Tan. Balak 9.
hired from the market for such occasions. This quality of the type brings to mind Balaam’s mercenary status, the many altars and offerings in the biblical narrative as well as in Tan. Balak, which were are designated as polemical and dishonest (1.4.2.2.1). The sacrificial emphasis may have inspired the theme. The Tanḥuma discourse is in line with Christian polemics opposing pagan sacrifice as theater.261

Cooks were even used to criticize other texts and groups by mere association in some plays.262 Balaam could have been used in a similar fashion, but transported to the theological sphere. The appeal to comedy also accounts for the sympathy for Balaam, since the resulting character complexity, as Mikhail Bakhtin argues, is a direct result of the comical and one of its features.263

Segal argues that an unshakable identification of a theatrical type in rabbinic literature, such as the clever slave or in my example the dubious cook, is less important in proving the rabbis’ knowledge of theater, than in furthering our understanding of the Jewish-filtered absorption of Greek and Roman culture.264

Levinson described how the rabbis might have borrowed certain mime motifs and plot structures when depicting Joseph and Potiphar’s wife, to the detriment of their sources.265 Balaam’s theatrical Tanḥuma presentation thus shares this polemic attitude, but not against theater. It ultimately associates Gentile sacrifice and its

261 See Webb, Dancers, 34-5.
262 I am basing this assertion on Frangoulidis’ examination of the role of food in Plautus’ “Captivi”. He noted the metaphorical nature of food as poetry and poetic texts in several scenes. Frangoulidis, Food and Poetics, 225-8. Urbach also views the homily about the seven altars (Tan. Balak 16) as polemics. See Urbach, Balaam, 288-9. This is in line with other literary applications of types. See Dox, Idea of Theater, 4-5; Webb, Dancers, 105-6 and extensively in Harrison, Characterization in Apuleius, 94-103, 148-57. Ancient readers were meant to spot such allusions.
263 Character ambiguity is a result of the fact that the seriocomic mode predated the rise of the novel in satirical works, see Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 21-2. The emphasis on the comical leads as in Balaam’s case, to a greater degree of character ambiguity in some classical plays. See, Halliwell, Traditional Greek Conceptions, 56-8.
264 Segal, Funny Thing, 128. Whether a parable about a “bad slave” in Tan. Buber Metzora 12 should also be associated with the theatrical conception, is beyond the scope of this study.
265 Levinson, An-Other Woman, 290-1.
sacrificers such as Christians who wish to replace Judaism, with pagan Greek rites performed by a farcical cook. Neither should be taken seriously\textsuperscript{266}.

Note that using the \textit{mageiros} does not require direct knowledge of New or Old comedy. As HaCohen claims, while such plays were no longer performed in that time period in Palestine, the popular mime plays of that era were centered on everyday scenes, including cooking\textsuperscript{267}. There are even cooks in one of the only surviving lists of mime characters mentioned by Webb\textsuperscript{268}. Furthermore, Y. Avoda Zara 1,7/1-2 (40a) has several loan words that identify performers with several types of fools relevant to the “\textit{Atellana}”. Some of the stock characters of the mime include fools such as the \textit{mageiros}. Hence these types were certain to have been known to Palestinian audiences, even though Plautus or Terrence were not\textsuperscript{269}.

\textbf{1.5.3 Summary and Conclusion: Analogy Manifested as Comedy}
Tanḥuma Balak displays widespread use of analogy when reflecting on Balaam’s character through the characters of Moses and Balak. I argue that this is a theatrical late-midrashic narrative development of the analogical component of the Tannaitic hierarchical list. The Tanḥuma cloaks older themes in a new poetic form, which suggests that audiences were familiar with complex analogical characterizations in theater and \textit{piyyutim}.

The same theatrics that identified Balaam as a \textit{mageiros} and ridiculed his character also gave rise to a more complex sympathetic rendering, and such character

\textsuperscript{266} Applications of theater types are not meant to be completely accurate to be understood. Greek and Roman novels, like Tan. Balak, update them. See, Billault, Characterization, 117-22.
\textsuperscript{267} HaCohen, Studies, 136-8.
\textsuperscript{268} See in Webb, Dancers, 99-100. Moreover, Lam. R. Proem 17 describes a parody of a Jew, who Webb argues should be a mime fool type of some kind.
\textsuperscript{269} Jacobs, Theaters and Performances, 332-5. For the identifications of the characters in the list, see Veltri, Magic, 246-50. Classical oratory also tended to use types to influence an audience that could recognize them. See Russell, Ethos, 197-200.
complexity also features in systematic medieval exegesis. Tanḥuma Balak demonstrates that late Midrashim are at times capable of literary sophistication in their treatment of character, as a result of their popular nature; i.e., appeal to theater and storytelling, not in spite of it.\[^{270}\]

### 1.6 Yefet ben ‘Eli's Interpretive Strategies to Deepen the Characterization of Balaam

#### 1.6.1 Background: Yefet’s Two-Tier Interpretation Method for Prophecy

Yefet ben 'Eli (Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī al-Ḵaṣrī), died after 1004/5 C.E. in Jerusalem. He was the most prominent Karaite translator and exegete of the 10th century, and the first Jewish exegete of any persuasion to compose programmatic Judeo-Arabic commentaries, as well as translations, on every book of the Hebrew Bible, all of which are extant in manuscript.\[^{271}\]

In General, Yefet ben 'Eli’s (=Yefet) employs two parallel approaches to the biblical text: a contextual-linguistic-historical approach and a prognostic-symbolic approach, usually evident in his work on the prophetic books, the Song of Songs and the Psalms.\[^{272}\] Yefet’s predecessor, Daniel al-Qumisi (fl. second half of 9th century Jerusalem), also applied two independent interpretive layers when commenting on biblical prophecy, which have been termed contextual-historic and prognostic.\[^{273}\] In his interpretation of Hos. 12:11, al-Qumisi claims that God created man in order to be

\[^{270}\] Halakhic discourse in the late Tanḥuma layers is very much a layman’s version of rabbinics. See Reizel, Introduction, 238-9. Why not view an appeal to theater in the same light in aggadic texts?

\[^{271}\] For a detailed survey of Yefet’s life and works, see Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 3-11.

\[^{272}\] For the prognostic interpretations relating to Qumran, see Erder, Mourners of Zion, 116–75, 378–93. For a different view, see Polliack, Wherein Lies the Pesher, 181–200; Ibid, Historicizing Prophetic Literature, 152–6, 159–63, 175–80.

\[^{273}\] Polliack and Schlossberg, Hosea, 18–9. This enables Yefet to treat the text as double layered, an outlook not dissimilar to Jewish medieval exegetes that identify a contextual linguistic interpretation and a midrashic one in the same verse.
punished or rewarded. Thus, the prophets’ prerogative is to warn the Israelites (and future Jews) of their upcoming punishment for their wrongdoings. He views God’s words (וַאֲנִי הָעֵדָה) “I have multiplied visions” (Hos. 12:11) as a divine deceleration that God endowed certain prophecies with additional messages warning different people in different periods of time. One such message, as described by Nehemiah Gordon, is a warning to the ancient Israelites about their punishment should they not repent, and the other is a warning to the sinners of the future exile, namely, Jews of al-Qumisi’s generation and audience.

According to Meira Polliack and Eliezer Schlossberg, Yefet tones down these predictive readings of al-Qumisi. Yefet’s commentary on Hosea refrains from relying on al-Qumisi when the latter’s commentary reads certain elements prognostically as related to his own age and time, especially with regard to the Karaites. Yefet viewed the predictive role of prophecy as mostly educational and emphasized that the continued value of prophecy to Israel in exile lay more in strengthening the belief in future salvation than in the specific foretelling of events to come. Thus, Yefet’s commentary on the expression “I have multiplied visions” (Hos. 12:11) does not explain the verse as multiple prognostic aspects of prophecy, but rather as a discussion of the different subgenres of prophecy. Yefet prefers to discuss the immediate historic context of a prophecy, since in his mind, it was primarily created for a specific historical audience.

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274 See his commentary on Amos 3:12 in Gordon, Does Scripture, 399.
275 Ibid.
276 Polliack and Schlossberg, Hosea, 77–8.
277 Ibid, 16. Yefet preferred to actualize readings of texts that had messianic content or an allegoric bent, as in his commentaries on Daniel and the Song of Songs. For instance, a comparison of Yefet with al-Qumisi on Hos. 1–3, shows that while al-Qumisi devotes more than half of his comments to prognostic readings, Yefet only refers to several verses. Ibid, 20.
278 Polliack and Schlossberg, Hosea, 46–7.
In line with this general approach, Yefet also views some of Balaam’s speeches as prophetic (Num. 24:15ff; 23:24; 24:6–9) and applies a form of prognostic reading to the last speech. He identifies historical events from Israel’s ancient history in the other speeches. However, Yefet’s interpretation of Num. 23:7 demonstrates that not all of Balaam’s parables contain prognostic information. As argued by Yoram Erder, some parables should be understood in their “literal” (i.e., simple symbolic) sense, because they are meant to respond to the audience’s immediate dilemmas.

Below, I analyze a selection of Yefet’s comments on Num. 23–24, and highlight Yefet's two-tiered reading of the text, especially in relation to his character portrayal of Balaam. In this case, his reading does not revolve around a literal versus a prognostic interpretation. Instead of interpreting Balaam’s speeches as directed at both their historical audience and future generations, Yefet sees them as addressing two “historical/real” audiences at once: God spoke through Balaam to all present on the scene, but he also addressed Balaam and Balak personally. By suggesting this innovative interpretation, Yefet highlights the biblical characterizations of Balaam and Balak and at times introduces new characterizations, which shed additional light on the figure of Balaam.

280 Al-Qumisi insists that the prognostic sense of a verse must always be derived from the literal sense. There is not a single example in all of his surviving writings, where the symbolic message is based on a different literal interpretation than the one he supplies for that verse, see Gordon, Does Scripture, 395. 281 Erder, Mourners of Zion, 343. 282 The translation is mostly based on A– Ms. EVR–ARAB I 86 (53813) in the Russian National Library, St. Petersburg ff. 88–106, which is dated to the 11th century, as well as Zvi Avni’s critical edition and translation into Hebrew of Yefet on Num. 23–24, which relies on this manuscript. See in Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 375–8. Avni also consulted several other manuscripts: Ms Qt. 2475 Margoliouth 271 (6247) housed in the British Library, London, ff. 31–17, which was his first choice for completing lacunas; other lesser later manuscripts include Ms. B365 (53544), Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg ff. 63–33; Ms. EVR–ARAB I 23 (53809) of the Russian national library, St. Petersburg ff. 18–6; Ms. EVR–ARAB I 171 (53822) of the Russian national library, St. Petersburg ff. 426–405. Additionally, Avni used B– Ms. 283 (4301) at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris ff. 171–194. The colophon states this manuscript was copied in Jerusalem 1399 CE. I amend the text in a few instances according to this manuscript. Square brackets [] denote a completion by the translator, and parentheses () are purely explanatory additions.
1.6.2 Homogenizing the Characters of Balaam and Balak

1.6.2.1 Pinpointing Verses as Dialogic to Enhance their Interrelatedness

One of the characterization techniques repeatedly used by Yefet is to argue that specific verses spoken by the characters are connected to other verses in the broader narrative. He notes that certain verses spoken by Balaam are actually arguments against his and Balak’s future or past claims in other verses. In this way, Yefet enhances God’s rebuke of the two figures and their negativity. The most contextually apparent of these assertions is that God refuted Balak’s hopes that Balaam could curse Israel against his wishes (underlined):

...In him (Balaam) saying: “How can I curse” (Num. 23:8) there is an argument against Balaam who [previously] claimed that he could cause bad luck and good luck to whomever he wished and when Balaam said “How can I curse whom God has not cursed?” (ibid, 23:8) he denied his own saying and in that [denial] there is also an answer to Balak saying “for I know that whomsoever you bless is blessed” (Num. 22:6)...

God is refuting Balaam’s claims while also answering Balak who believed those claims, by forcing Balaam to confess that he has no power to act against the divine will. God is speaking through Balaam to answer what Yefet understood Balaam had previously claimed (underlined), namely that he could alter people’s fate as he wished. Yefet deduces this argument from Balak’s false knowledge of Balaam’s power (Num. 22:6). Hence, Numbers 23:8 is an answer to Num. 22:6 and probably to Num. 23:3 in which Balaam still hopes to act against God.

Yefet presents a similar interpretation later: ...Him saying “How can I curse” (Num. 23:8), God forced him to say to Balak by his own admission: “Balak, know that [with regards to] you saying to me “whomsoever you curse is cursed”

283 Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 381, 422.
(Num. 22:6) that was not of my doing but of God’s doing, not as I used to claim\textsuperscript{284} and not like [what] you and any who had heard of me\textsuperscript{285} assumed”….\textsuperscript{286}

Yefet paraphrases Num. 23:8, noting that God forced Balaam to refute these claims and give him due credit. Yefet identifies another instance where the divine message prefigures a response to another attempt to curse Israel:

...and God inspired Balaam that he was forced to say “or number the fourth part of Israel” (Num. 23:10), in order to cancel Balak’s hope that [he-Balaam] could curse the part he saw from Bamoth-baal...him saying “Let me die the death of the upright” (Num. 23:10) is of the angel’s forcing him to speak and he forced him to speak thus due to two matters, one of which is to rouse Balak’s wrath by displaying his (God’s?) love for Israel for he (Balaam) does not wish to be like them (Israel) when he wishes them ill; the second [matter] is him notifying [Balak] that they (Israel) are a people whose end is good, so that Balak and Balaam as well should know that nothing that they wish will not befall [Israel]. And him saying “and let my end be like his!” (ibid), he is referring so to the world to come. This saying also approves the religion of Israel as the right one and no other and that is why he wishes that his end will be like the end of Israel…\textsuperscript{287}

Yefet emphasizes the refutation by saying that “Who can count the dust of Jacob, or number the dust-cloud\textsuperscript{*} of Israel? Let me die the death of the upright, and let my end be like his!’”(Num. 23:10) is forced upon Balaam by God and thus treats it as a divine rebuke. He understands the inability to count the fourth part as an answer to Balak’s request to curse only part of Israel (Num. 23:13), which shows that Balak did not heed God’s warning. Yefet reads the rest of the verse as propaganda for the advantages of the religion of Israel presented by God, provoked by Balaam, who wished Israel ill and still did not desire an end like that of Israel. It is possible that these claims are also meant to annoy Balak by displaying God’s love and the curses expected to hear. Another focal point is the emphasis that Israel’s fate is beneficial,

\textsuperscript{284} Simpler form according to B: בַּדֶּעָה, Blau, Dictionary, 215.
\textsuperscript{285} Other versions “him”.
\textsuperscript{286} Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 382, 423–4. B: בַּדֶּעָה, likely erroneous, but may be influenced by מַסְכִּין, Blau, Dictionary, 303.
\textsuperscript{287} Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 384–5, 425–6.
which implies that Balaam and Balak should cease their attempts to curse Israel since these are destined to fail.\(^{288}\)

1.6.2.2 Addressing Balaam and Balak as a Pair

In other instances, Yefet identifies ulterior messages meant for Balaam or Balak encoded in the speeches. Yefet accomplishes this by interpreting certain utterances addressed directly to one of them as addressing both of them at the same time, thus implying God’s judgment of their association. These instances show that Yefet sees both figures as similar in the eyes of God, whereas the Tanhuma’s attempts to differentiate between them (1.4.3). The paring of Balaam and Balak is yet another interpretive strategy meant to broaden their negative characterization:

(from Yefet’s concentrated interpretation of the second speech)...the beginning of his words was “Rise, Balak, and hear” (Num. 23:18), “God is not a human being, that he should lie” (Num. 23:19), “See, I received a command to bless” (Num. 23:20), and these utterances even though he confronted Balak with them, they are actually addressed to them both for they thought that by moving to the field of Zophim, the situation of Israel will change with the Master of the universe. The utterance “Rise, Balak, and hear” (Num. 23:18), there have been said about it two opinions: One [opinion] is that Balak told Balaam “What has the Lord said?” (Num. 23:17) and that was\(^{289}\) said on his part in a mocking fashion and the angel made him (Balaam) speak to tell him “Rise Balak” in a fashion of mocking and rebuke, meaning: “rise to stand [on your feet] so that you hear these things, for they are the words of God and so do not make light of them!”\(^{290}\). The second [opinion] is that it has been said that he meant by that: “Rise and take leave of these places and return to the situation you were in, as there is no room for you [to have] designs on this people...\(^{291}\)

The passage in Numbers 23:18–20 is read as rebuking Balak but also Balaam (underlined above), since they both cooperated in the second attempt to curse Israel, without heeding the previous warnings and thought that God would change his

\(^{288}\) See Abraham Ibn Ezra’s comment on the verse, where he claims that Balaam truly longed to end like Israel in addition to voicing his praises, since he magically knew he would die by the sword. This is yet another view of an undisclosed message, although not God’s message.

\(^{289}\) Up to this point, based on Ms. Qr. 2475 Margoliouth 271 (6247) in the British Library, London because A is stained.

\(^{290}\) Num. R. 20:20.

\(^{291}\) Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 392, 430–1.
mind. Yefet also cites two readings of “Rise, Balak, and hear” (Num. 23:18), the first of which is a rebuke for making light of God known from Midrash. The source of the second reading is unknown. In it, Yefet suggests that God’s call to leave is addressed to Balak and Balaam at once, and he marks this passage as part of a larger group meant for both of them by stipulating it as: “these utterances...”. Yefet bases his claims on the independent divine voice speaking through Balaam but also to him.

Similar to this dual address, Yefet views Num. 24:9 not only as an indirect curse on Balaam for his attempt to curse Israel, but also indirectly as a curse on Balak as the instigator of that attempt to curse. Yefet argues this is proved by Balak’s reported anger (Num. 24:10) upon hearing vs.9:

...Know that this blessing (Num. 24:9): “Blessed is everyone who blesses you, and cursed is everyone who curses you, God gave inspiration to Balaam to say it, to bless Israel, and he was not made happy by it and did not intend to [do] that willingly and so he was not blessed, even if his saying[s] bless [them]. This saying had in it a curse on Balak, as he cursed Israel and so he got angry this time...”

1.6.2.3 Negative Epithets

Yefet considers the speeches as admonishments against Balaam and Balak, hence he systematically interprets the derogatory terms mentioned in the speeches as hinting at Balaam and Balak’s personal idolatrous practices. These critical forms of characterization also make it difficult to distinguish between the two figures:

... He said: “indeed, I saw him from the top of crags and beheld him from the hills (based on Num. 23:9) and I see him as a people living alone, not like the nations that dwell with each other, as Midian lives with Moab and he does not mingle with the nations, with their foods, with their feasts and with them in wedlock” and all these matters are included in “living alone” (ibid). And him saying “not reckoning itself among the nations” (ibid), intends that the rest of the nations are considered together, since they return to one source as we shall explain in “Their vine comes from the vine-stock of Sodom” (Dt 32:32) and that is in the sense that he who worships another...
beside God and does not follow in his teachings belongs to [the] one part, which is of lies; and whomever worships God and follows in his teachings, certainly he is [of the part of truth. That is why he said “and not reckoning itself among the nations!” (Num. 23:9) and in these sayings there is also an argument against Balaam and Balak for they are not apart from the nations but of their whole and [they] all [are going] to destruction and doom and have no merit and no existence as he (Isaiah) said “Even the nations are like a drop from a bucket” etc. (Is 40:15) and he said “All the nations are as nothing before him” (Is 40:17)...

Yefet paraphrases לבדד ישכנון (Num. 23:9), as being apart from other nations in custom and religion: “living alone”. Israel is thus spared the fate of the nations, not reckoning itself among” them. Yefet also sees a personal message for Balaam and Balak that their fate will be terrible, because they are part of the nations (underlined)

Yefet interprets Num. 23:21 (לא-bilit אוון ביעקב, ולא-ראה עמל בישראל) in a similar vein to that of his rendering of Num. 23:9, which is meant not only as praise for Israel, but also an undisclosed rebuke of Balaam and Balak for their idolatry. They are the men of “misfortune” and “trouble” mentioned in the verse:

...him saying “He has not beheld misfortune in Jacob” (Num. 23:21) means that the bad ways like apostasy in God and the worship of another apart from him- that is not found in the house of Israel. This saying teaches three things: The one, a claim against the nations apart for them (for Israel), whose religious ways are misfortune and trouble (based on Num. 23:21) and Balaam and Balak are men of misfortune and trouble and the argument is against them both...

Likewise, in Numbers 23:23, Yefet interprets the phrase “enchantment is not among Israel” (ו לא קסם בישראל) as a personal epitaph with regard to Balaam’s wrongful practices of divination and omens (underlined below), mentioned elsewhere.

298 Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 383, 424. See Blau, Dictionary, 95–6, for manuscript C’s use of לבדד ישכנון. Also in Sa’adiah to Genesis, see ibid.
299 In the world to come probably, see Yefet on Num. 24:2 below.
300 Al-Qumisi raises a similar point about Mic. 6:5. He claims that Balaam was forced to state that all the Gentiles are as sinful as he, and was used by God as a mouthpiece to demonstrate God and Israel’s glory, Markon, ed., Pitron Shnem Asar, 46–7. Yefet greatly expands this single argument.
301 Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 393, 432.
302 Rashbam on v. 23 also considers the mentioned “enchantment” and “divination” as jibes against at Balaam and Balak, but paraphrases them to be Balaam’s deliberate self-rebuke, see 1.8.1.
...Afterwards he said “Surely there is no enchantment among Jacob” (Num. 23:23), which teaches that as there is no misfortune and trouble (Num. 23:21), so there is no use of enchantment and divination among them. This is also an argument against Balaam who was a diviner as he said “the Israelites also put to the sword Balaam son of Beor, who practiced divination” (Jos. 13:22) and would look for omens as he said “so he did not go, as at other times, to look for omens” (Num. 24:1) and he (God) gave divination and omens the same rank as that of idolatry, for all of these are abhorrent to the Lord...303.

1.6.2.4 Summary and Conclusions

I reviewed three interpretive devices employed by Yefet to highlight and underscore the negative characterization of Balaam by juxtaposing him with Balak. The next section, addresses his use of a broader form of character analogy, this time with respect to more distant biblical figures.

As I have shown earlier, character analogy is used extensively in midrashic sources as well, from older implementations as a form of orally inspired intertextuality (1.2) to later sources that thus highlight dramatic aspects of biblical characterization (1.4). It is known that the Karaite exegetes in general, and Yefet among them, were intimately familiar with midrashic sources, even while their ideology was anti-Rabbinic. They did not refrain from referring to them or even mentioning some of midrashic interpretations favorably304.

Nevertheless, Yefet differs from midrashic sources in that he goes beyond applying character analogy contextually or even creatively. He views biblical characters as constructed literary entities independent of their stories on the one hand, and as a more abstract way to envision the plot on the other. He implements a more literary understanding of character analogy, in contrast to Midrash sources that hint at a more performative depiction. This may stem from a difference in intellectual climate in Yefet’s time and from his Islamic sources of inspiration, as I discuss below.

303 Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 394–5, 434.
304 See extensively in Tirosh-Becker, Rabbinic Excerpts; the intro of Polliack and Schlossberg, Hosea.
1.6.3 The Unheeded Call to Repent: Yefet’s Analogy between Balaam and Nebuchadnezzar’s Theological Consciousness

1.6.3.1 Balaam’s Failure to Convert

In his introduction to Hosea and prophecy at large, Yefet notes that the admonishing function is one of the major aims of biblical prophecy. In his comments on the story of Balaam there is a narrative application of this concept. Having established Balaam and Balak as recipients of an additional divine message mostly noting their inequities, Yefet also identifies a call for Balaam to repent which he promptly ignores:

...Num. 23:14 So he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah. He built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. And he took him to the field of Zophim, to the top of Pisgah. And he built seven altars, and offered a bull and a ram on each altar. [This] teaches that Balaam went with him because he longed [to do them harm], as Balak longed and also because he wanted to answer Balak’s need and thus show him that he wished to do that if he could succeed... Him saying “He built seven altars” (Num. 23:14) teaches that Balaam continued as was his habit, with building alters and offering sacrifices, since the angel did not deter him from that when he told him (the angel) “I have arranged the seven altars” (Num. 23:4). Additionally, Balaam did not dwell on him (God) saying “Let me die the death of the upright” (Num. 23:10), for then he would have abandoned his [evil] way. All these things testify that he was continuing in his evil way while knowing that he is sinning. Woe to whomever respects Balaam’s situation while these verses make clear his sin and his evil and insolence...

Had Balaam listened to God previously in Num. 23:10, he would have ceased trying to curse Israel and wished for the “death of the upright” mentioned there. Instead Balaam longed to curse Israel and continued to set up altars, all the while knowing that he was sinning against God. Yefet thinks Balaam should have repented by converting to the religion of Israel (underlined):

Num. 24:2: Balaam looked up and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. Then the spirit of God came upon him. Balaam looked up and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. Then a divine spirit came upon him. He explained that the tribes of Israel were dwelling in the desert and Balaam saw them. Him saying “Then a divine spirit came

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305 Polliack and Schlossberg, Hosea, 15, 141, 260.
306 Yefet systematically changes “God” to “angel” in God’s dealings with Balaam up to 24:2 above. This is consistent with his tendency to alter biblical anthropomorphisms, see Zawanowska, Border–Land of Literalism, 179–80.
308 Ibid, n446.
upon him” intends that at that time, when he did not go in search of omens and the angel did not speak to him and all he (Balaam) said was divinely inspired, to teach that when he was going in search of omens the angel met him with a drawn sword (based on Num. 22:23) and when he turned to the desert to look on their situation, a divine spirit came upon him and God did this to him, in order to change his mind to leave his worthless religious way and to [inspire] the turning\textsuperscript{309} to the religion of Israel in the same manner he (God) did with Nebuchadnezzar, for Balaam and Nebuchadnezzar witnessed\textsuperscript{310} the wonders of the Lord and his signs\textsuperscript{311} and acknowledged and admitted [the truth] of his religion, yet they did not leave their religious way and passed away being cursed\textsuperscript{312} and there is no doubt that they shall be punished\textsuperscript{313 314}.

At the start of Num. 24, Balaam did not try to divine or to curse Israel; as a result he was directly inspired by God and not an angel. “\textit{God did this to him}” as a formidable favor meant to cause Balaam to convert. Yefet is probably referring to the convincing effect of an actual experience of the divine\textsuperscript{315}. This experience should be considered in light of Yefet’s Islamic notion of the degrees of prophecy as reviewed by Daniel Lasker\textsuperscript{316}. In this hierarchy, Balaam’s revelation would be auditory alone, which makes it superior to that of the Patriarch Abraham, who relied on sound and sight and akin to higher prophetic levels possessed by figures such as Samuel.

Hence, Balaam should have converted when so honored by God. However, Balaam like Nebuchadnezzar, in an analogy introduced by Yefet himself, refused to

\textsuperscript{309} As in Blau, Dictionary, 241, this form might hint that Balaam accepted the religion of Israel at some point but then rejected it. On his aborted confession of faith, see below.

\textsuperscript{310} Rendered according to B as plural.

\textsuperscript{311} Margoliouth, Daniel, 20. Nebuchadnezzar noted God’s signs and wonders in his letters: \textit{Shewing that he believed in them, and did not reject them as the philosophers do.}

\textsuperscript{312} A: “condemned”. The above is according to B and others, מְדַמְמוֹן, due to a comparable form in Yefet on Daniel. Blau, Dictionary, 220.

\textsuperscript{313} B and others use a more difficult form, מַעְקַבִּים, perhaps, “lowered” as a metonym for being spidery, but unlikely, see Lane, Lexicon, 2119, 2177.

\textsuperscript{314} Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 400, 438.

\textsuperscript{315} Alternatively, God attempted to teach Balaam that cooperating with him had beneficial outcomes, which are demonstrated by the removal of the forceful angel, but Balaam did not learn the lesson. See in Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 376-7.

\textsuperscript{316} For a detailed discussion of Yefet’s list of prophetic degrees see Lasker, The Prophecy of Abraham, 104–5. For a similar claim that Balaam was not endowed with prophecy for his own sake in Midrash, see also, Tanhuma Balak 1, Ms. Cambridge University Library, Add. 1212. For the possibility that a certain layer in the Tanhuma Balak might have been influenced by Karaites or influenced them, see Knohl, Acceptance, 343–5; Wieder, Formation of Prayer, 331-2.
convert and thus is punished, making his fate comparable to that of the nations (see above, Yefet on Num. 23:9).

1.6.3.2 Balaam’s Failure to Recognize God’s Unity and Supremacy

Although Yefet’s assumption that Balaam should have converted might seem strange, it is rooted in his theological world view (Mu’tazilite). Generally speaking, some of enduring basic ideas propagated by the diverse groups associated with this school in Yefet’s time: A unique, transcendent and necessarily just God, punishment in accordance to sin and a theory of an “intermediate” state of unbelief, a liberal use of analogy (qiyaṣ) as part of an overall stress on ethical reasoning free of revelation\textsuperscript{317}.

Balaam was forced to acknowledge God’s supremacy by confessing God’s just nature. According to Erder, this confession is the prime characteristic of a Gentile who converts at the end of days. In Yefet’s interpretation of Jol. 3:5, at the end of days only Jews who call the name of the Lord will remain in the world. Among those Jews there will probably be converted Gentiles\textsuperscript{318}. Their nature is made more apparent in Yefet’s comments on Psalms. In his interpretation of Ps. 53, Yefet claims that the remnants of Ishmael will enter the religion of Israel willingly at the Eschaton\textsuperscript{319}.

In his interpretation of Ps. 139, Yefet again claims that the only Muslims who survive the judgment of the end of days, will be those closest to admitting God’s unity, especially the Mu’tazilites\textsuperscript{320}. It may be the case that Balaam also attains this rank by having confessed to God’s nature in Yefet’s exegesis of his speeches (Num. 23:19, for instance) and thus should have converted fully.

\textsuperscript{317} See Gimaret, “Mu’tazila: Ben-Shammai, A Leader’s Project, 42-8 and 50-65 for Jewish reception.
\textsuperscript{318} Erder, Mourners of Zion, 412–4. The pseudo Qūmisīan sermon might also suggest a more missionary approach to Gentiles. See Nemoy, The Pseudo–Qūmisīan Sermon, 86. The sermon’s author notes that it is forbidden to say that Gentile and Israel are the alike in respect to all things. However, it also forbidden to make distinctions between Gentile and Israelite, except where God alone decreed.
\textsuperscript{319} Erder, Attitude of Yefet ben ‘Eli to Islam, 47 see also note 95 there.
\textsuperscript{320} Ibid.
The comparison between Nebuchadnezzar and Balaam strengthens this argument, since it hints at the genuine nature of Balaam’s acknowledgment of the Divine. In Yefet’s comments on Dan. 2, Nebuchadnezzar undergoes a form of conversion where he recognizes God as the God of Gods\textsuperscript{321}. Yefet also suggests that Nebuchadnezzar’s continued idol worship in subsequent Daniel narratives could be the result of political necessity: “if he proclaimed to the world that he adopted the religion of the Jews, their laws would be incumbent on him, and he would fall”\textsuperscript{322}.

Yefet insists on the genuine nature of Nebuchadnezzar’s conversion even in spite of his idol worship in Dan. 3. Nebuchadnezzar, like the Israelites in the desert, could rationalize away the miracles that he had seen and abdicate a faith he genuinely espoused\textsuperscript{323}. In Dan. 4 Nebuchadnezzar admitted that God was righteous in punishing him for this lapse, since Daniel had warned him to no avail, until he was punished by being forced to live as a beast\textsuperscript{324}. Similarly, Balaam truthfully admitted God’s power and righteousness (Yefet on Num. 23:10, 1\textsuperscript{8}), but did not convert or repent his sorcerous ways.

Yefet’s disappointment with Balaam as “evil” merits further explanation, since he does not have ample narrative opportunities to repent unlike Nebuchadnezzar. According to Yefet’s comments on Num.20 summarized by Moshe Zucker, a prophet can err in things other than relaying his divine message, namely in other aspects of his relationship with God\textsuperscript{325}. Hence, while Balaam was forced to confess his acknowledgment of the biblical God’s nature, God could not convince him to heed his

\textsuperscript{321} See the source in Margoliouth, Daniel, 15.
\textsuperscript{322} Margoliouth, Daniel, 21, which is Yefet’s comments on Dan. 4:5–6.
\textsuperscript{323} Ibid, 19.
\textsuperscript{324} Margoliouth, Daniel, 24.
\textsuperscript{325} Zucker, Problem of ‘Iṣma, 164–5.
very own words of prophecy, which resemble Nebuchadnezzar’s narrative opportunities. Balaam heard many things about God, but remained unconvinced.

Furthermore, Yefet took the unique position that God only chose people to be prophets who would feel obliged as his representatives, to be loyal to his intentions. Nonetheless, Yefet assigns a special role to the prophet’s own psyche and choice. Specifically, whereas Balaam was acting under duress, he could still convert willingly, since otherwise God would not have chosen to use him in the first place.

1.6.4 Conclusions: A Sophisticated Dialogical Reading

Yefet’s treatment of Balaam’s poetic verses is unique insofar as he understood them as systematically addressed to Balak and Balaam, while being spoken by Balaam nonetheless. Yefet’s inspiration for this dual interpretation may have emerged from his prognostic readings of prophecy, in that he read the verses as containing hidden as well as literal characterizations. In any event, Yefet’s treatment of dialogue in biblical prose is sophisticated and has a strong stylistic dimension in that he often brings out nuanced arguments in the biblical wording, which appear to be concealed in the character’s speech and also echo the thoughts of other characters.

I have also shown how Yefet’s emphasis on Balaam’s genuine prophetic experience and his genuine confession of faith as hinted at by the comparison with Nebuchadnezzar, is a unique form of character analogy focused on a character’s state of mind. This use is markedly different from anything we have witnessed in Midrashim, with their penchant to illustrate character relations as general rules,

326 Ibid.
327 Yefet also highlights how certain verses function as responses to others. See for example, his treatment of Exod. 3, where he emphasizes the dialogue between Moses and God. Zucker, Problem of ‘Išma, 157; or see Naomi’s manipulation of her brides in Ruth 1:8ff, Nir, Portrait of Ruth, 43–5.
parables or monologues, but not as direct psychological comparisons. Let us now consider how Yefet’s approach might be related to the theological views of his era, while also being more radical and innovative.

1.7 Yefet’s Innovative Use of Analogy in Characterization in Light of Mu’tazilite Thought

This section discusses the ways in which Yefet’s different utilizations of character analogy relate to the concepts of consciousness of his period. For this purpose I reference some generic Mu’tazilite views, based mostly on George Hourani’s review of ‘Abd al-Jabbar’s ethics, since Yefet is unlikely to have engaged in an analysis of specific doctrinal points. David Sklare used al-Jabber to fill in the gaps in our understanding of Ḥofni Gaon’s thought, given that the Basran Mu’tazilite School had the greatest impact on Gaonic Judaism. I will attempt to do the same with Yefet. Given the scope of this topic and the issue in question, the presentation is mostly limited to Yefet’s comments on Esther, Ruth and Daniel.

1.7.1 Exegetical Character Analogy

One way Yefet applies analogical thinking to characters is explanatory or exegetical. He generates an analogy to show that one figure shares a characterization or trait with another, thus suggesting that these two characters are different exemplars of the same trait. Alternatively, he tries to explain one situation or trait in greater depth by referring to another.

Yefet viewed characters as having different and even multiple traits. This is compatible with Polliack’s findings on the way Yefet conceptualized the redaction of

328 Although there are midrashic mental illustrations of unique mental states experienced by Jeremiah (PR 26:1-2), for instance, they are not based on an analogy between two characters (2.3.1).

329 Sklare, Cultural World, 49n37, 144.
some narrative portions of the Bible. Yefet assumed that the biblical authorial-editor/s (Arb. mudawwin) incorporated pieces of existing oral or written tales, originally about individual characters such as Jethro or Ruth, into their complex edited compilations. In a similar manner, Yefet appears to have perceived characters as organizing principles, which could draw on and unite different traditions, content and even plots. Thus, Yefet has no difficulty in dissembling pieces of stories about one character to compare them to others. He seems to have thought of the different, probably oral, contexts in which these “original” stories were first created, as narrative continuums focused on a popular historical figure before they became the stories, histories or prophecies we come across in the written Bible.

In many cases, Yefet explains that character A’s trait is like or unlike character B’s trait. An especially telling example of this type of explanatory analogy is found in Yefet’s’ comments on Prov. 31. Ilana Sasson has shown that according to Yefet, the “woman of valor” song was composed by Bathsheba. Yefet further argues that Rebekah is an example of the merger of all of the woman of valor’s character traits. He does so not only by noting the analogy between this type of woman and Rebekah, but also by indicating where in Genesis Rebekah manifests these traits. This

330 Polliack, Conceptualization, 130-4. Note her association of these terms with the idea of Jews reading fiction and the Muslim “stories of the prophets”, ibid, 112-4. Sklare notes that Hai Gaon has little trouble comparing Midrashim to “Kalīlah wa Dimnah”, Sklare Cultural World, 52.
331 Yefet on Dan. 1:3-4 notes that the knowledge of the mentioned exiled children was philosophical, like Solomon’s knowledge, Margoliouth, Daniel, 2. Yefet on Dan. 2:1 compares Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar’s prophetic dreams, mostly to differentiate between their fulfillments, Ibid, 6. Yefet on Dan. 5:5 argues that Belshazzar like Nebuchadnezzar is the only one who saw the miracle of the writing on the wall and the angel saving those cast into the fiery furnace, respectively, Ibid, 25. According to Yefet on Dan. 7:17-18, Daniel and Joseph had a similar concise method of interpreting dreams by only referring to their core details, ibid 36. Moreover, Yefet argues that Mordecai’s position was ultimately superior to that of Haman in his heyday, Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 259-60. Yefet also compares between Ahasuerus giving his signet ring to Mordechai and Pharaoh and Joseph’s similar exchange, ibid 274. Yefet on Ruth 2:10 compares Ruth bowing before Boaz to Eliezer’s similar conduct in Gen. 24:52, Butbul, Ruth, 539. Furthermore, Sasson found that Yefet’s comment on Prov. 4:3-4 contains a lengthy first person addition that rephrases the verse as spoken by Solomon, who compares his rule over his brothers to Isaac’s favored status, Sasson, Mudawwin Revisited, 332.
332 Also see his interpretation of 2Sam. 11, where he compares the conduct of Bathsheba and Tamar.
333 Wechsler, Yefet on Prov. 31, 308.
elaborated analogical thinking about characters seems to be distinctly Karaite and is found throughout Yefet’s commentaries.

Sasson was the first to point out the gender equality in Yefet’s exegesis concerning female characters and its connections to analogical principles in Karaite legal thought. Analogy (qiyās) is in fact one of the three defining principles of Karaite halakhah. Nevertheless, analogy in Yefet’s narrative exegesis goes beyond gender equality issues to become a highly productive interpretive mechanism.

The underlying assumption is that when themes or subjects have something in common, the conditions that apply to one can be applied to the other. Yefet and all the important Karaite scholars exploited this idea frequently. Sklare has shown that Samuel ben Ḥofni Gaon in his “Treaties on the Ten Commandments” repeatedly attacks the Karaites for their use of qiyās. Yefet’s use however, has a literary focus, which is seldom purely legal. Broader use of analogy was also an important tool in Karaite linguistics, but Yefet goes much further.

As noted by Polliack, he was less philosophically and theologically inclined than some other Karaite scholars, which makes his ties to Mu’tazilite doctrines often less straightforward. However, by Yefet’s time, Mu’tazilite rationalism had been absorbed into the Karaite intellectual tradition as an integral part of any correct

334 See extensively in Sasson, Gender Equality, 61-7.
335 Sasson, Gender Equality, 81-2. Sasson discusses Yefet’s egalitarian qiyās with regard to marital rights and divorce, ibid, 82-5.
336 Sklare, Cultural World, 218n142. Yefet criticized Sa’adiah and defended qiyās, see Ravitsky, Logical Structure 178-81.
337 Gamliel-Barak described Al-Fasi’s linguistic notions in relation to characters. Al-Fasi tried to apply analogy to differentiate between the names of ambiguous biblical figures such as David’s heroes and their epithets, see Gamliel-Barak, Exegetic Ways, 92-3. The Karaites’ emphasis on legal analogy is comparable to certain Mu’tazilite s. Sklare mentions a medieval polemical tract which seems to view the Karaites as specifically open to Arabic culture, primarily identified as Mu’tazilite. See Sklare, Cultural World, 130-3.
338 Polliack, Historicizing Prophetic Literature, 150-1.
interpretation of the Bible. As Sklare points out, this is also evidenced by the lengthy verbose Mu’tazilite style which Yefet and even Jewish polemics, leveled precisely against these exact Muslim influences. As Haggai Ben-Shammasi shows, Yefet did not need to endorse the Mu’tazila to be heavily in dialogue with it. Hourani notes that qiyyās in the Mu’tazilite science of divine law was considered the same as in the rational sciences and thus applicable to more than the legal sphere. Acts committed without premeditation and understanding were judged ethically based on analogy with other acts. This may suggests that the Mu’tazilite conception of analogy, especially in the ethical sphere of judging people’s acts could have informed some of Yefet’s interpretations, such as Yefet’s comparison of abstracted qualities of different biblical characters.

This evaluation of characters might also correspond to Yefet’s conception of divine justice as exemplified in his emphasis on the rewards of the righteous in his introduction to Ruth, and in his psychological insight that a person seeks his analogous other half. The above examples of analogies by Yefet might also stem from searching for such symmetry in the real world, especially in the psychological

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339 Sklare, Reception of Mu’tazilism, 23-5. Sklare notes that Yefet sharply criticizes all learning from foreign books (kutub barrāniyya), particularly in his commentary on Ecclesiastes, while specifically mentioning his displeasure with the Mu’tazila.
341 Yefet presented the issues of creation, divinity and revelation in Mu’tazilite terms, see Ben-Shammasi, Major Trends, 347-52; Sklare, Cultural World, 111-2. In contrast, later Karaite thinkers such as Yusuf al-Basir were more direct about their ties to the Mu’tazila.
342 Hourani, Islamic Rationalism, 26. The practice of analogical reasoning from scripture was considered a Muslim religious duty, Ibid, 139.
343 Hourani, Islamic Rationalism, 90.
344 ‘Abd al-Jabbar considers that the evaluation of damage vs. benefits in all actions, as the cornerstone of ethical judgment. This means that forming an analogy between actions is paramount to their interpretation, Ibid, 72-3. However, the formative period of Muslim law brought it into contact with all kinds of other systems with their corresponding views of the place of analogy such that analogy was always tenuous. Thus, the possible Jewish influence on Muslim law is not impossible. See in detail in Schacht, Introduction, 37-8, 46-8, 64-8, 199-205.
345 See in Butbul, Ruth, 522-3. Yefet on Boaz’s compliments to Ruth (3:10), notes that as the young man wishes for a woman like him, so does the young woman wish for a young man like her, ibid, 548.
sphere. All these instances indicate a novel Karaite category, all be it informed by a Mu’tazilite backdrop.

1.7.2 Exemplary or Paradigmatic Character Analogy

In his exegetic and reductive applications of analogy, Yefet viewed biblical characters as collections of elements, not unlike modern definitions of character. The following examples go a step further by comparing not one trait but a character’s whole story or style to another’s. Yefet usually does this to show that one or both characters and their stories are examples of a specific moral lesson. Alternatively, he compares several figures to showcase their moral differences. Regardless, all the following examples have a clear didactic dimension and deal with whole figures and not individual character traits, thereby showing that Yefet conceived characters as defining a story.

Polliack argued that Yefet viewed Moses’ personal story (as it appears in Exod. 2-5) as an analogical introduction to the national history of the Israelites as a whole. Yefet thus possesses an abstract understanding of these stories. In particular, Yefet on Ruth 2:12 compares Ruth being honored by Boaz’s blessing to the trials and tribulations faced by Abraham in leaving everything behind and journeying to Canaan. This is Yefet’s own analogy, in which he compares whole sections; namely, Ruth 1 and Gen. 12.

Sometimes the analogies Yefet suggests are related to the validity of Karaite practices, and hence strengthen them by forging an additional unstated analogy.

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346 See for instance, Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, 31-4.
347 Polliack, Conceptualization, 116.
348 Similarly, Yefet on Dan. 11:35 has the followers of the teachers mentioned in the verse, compare themselves or their teachers unfavorably to the martyrdom of Hananiah, Mishael and Azaria. See in Margoliouth, Daniel, 68-9. This is an analogy Yefet introduces, showing he perceived the story of the fiery furnace and its characters as an exemplar.
349 Butbul, Ruth, 540.
between the Karaite audience and the compared biblical characters. This practice is evoked in issues related to prayer\textsuperscript{350}, the mourners of Zion’s mourning practices\textsuperscript{351} and the superiority of converts\textsuperscript{352}. These examples highlight the radical nature of the Karaite movement\textsuperscript{353}.

One example even depicts the analogical nature of scripture. Yefet attributes the unnamed authorial-editor of Daniel with a similar analogical view of the characters. Yefet on Dan. 4:37 remarks that the verse is a formulaic addition (probably on the part of the authorial-editor) denoting the end of the tale of Nebuchadnezzar. Yefet then comments on why the book of Daniel skips the reign of Ewil-Merdoch (Heb. ֶ֑וְיֶ֕֨ל מְרֹדַ֖ך; Acc. Amel-Mrodach) in favor of his son Belshazzar and explains that Ewil-Merdoch committed no act like his father or son. Yefet probably means no evil act, since he notes that we only know of Ewil-Merdoch’s positive treatment of Jehoiakin (2kings 25:27). On this basis Yefet suggests that Evil Merdoch “was the best of them (of the Babylonian kings)”\textsuperscript{354}.

Hence, Yefet is comparing the kings’ moral character, and explaining why only acts of specific kings are recorded in the Bible. Yefet is thus assuming that the redactors of Daniel wanted to showcase the miraculous repentance and punishment of sinful Babylonian kings and shaped the opening portion of the book of Daniel to that effect, by highlighting the similarity between the stories about the wicked Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. A more positive king had no place in their

\textsuperscript{350} Yefet compares Jonah and David with regard to their prophetic style of prayer and choice of language, which he argues is about the two exiles and should be adopted by his Karaite compatriots when beseeching God. For a translation of the original see Andrucc, Jonah, 55-6.
\textsuperscript{351} Yefet compares Daniel’s acts of mourning (Dan. 10:2) meant to induce God to convey his will, to those of David according to Ps. 132, see Margoliouth, Daniel, 52.
\textsuperscript{352} Yefet’s introduction to Ruth claims she is like Jethro or Yael, proof that the dignity of religion is superior to that of noble birth, since the nobles can be removed from their high positions by God, but the proselyte achieves higher status by obeying God, see Butbul, Ruth, 521-2.
\textsuperscript{353} See for instance, Nemoy, The Pseudo–Qūmīsīan Sermon, 44.
\textsuperscript{354} Margoliouth, Daniel, 24-5.
The biblical authors and editors think of characters as having a moral, exemplary dimension and collect materials to convey a single plot structure and message, not unlike Yefet’s own exegesis.

The Mu‘tazila held a similar view of sacred narrative. For instance, ‘Abd al-Jabbar viewed the second function of all revelation, which does not impart knowledge, as stimulating motives for good. There must always be an intelligible reason for the things prohibited and commanded in revelation. Accordingly, Sasson found that throughout his commentary on Proverbs, Yefet relates to the editor by discussing him through verbs that describe such intent. In these instances, Yefet often maintains that the mudawwin says something to encourage people to do good.

Yefet’s discussion of Num. 24:2, which prompted this inquiry, is another cautionary exemplar combined with a mental analogy. Yefet emphasizes that: Balaam and Nebuchadnezzar witnessed the wonders of the Lord and his signs and acknowledged that and admitted [the truth?] of his religion and did not leave their religious way and left the world being odious and there is no doubt that they shall be punished. Thus, Yefet is indirectly warning his readers not to be as stubborn as the two biblical figures. He uses the entirety of Nebuchadnezzar’s narratives from Daniel, in order to ascertain a sinful state of mind and identify it in Balaam.

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355 Yefet’s claim is actually an ingenious solution to a lacuna in Daniel explained by assuming a conscious editor, since it is much simpler to assume that the editor of Daniel is unfamiliar with Evil Merdoch. For more on Yefet detecting such uses by the editor/narrator, see Polliack, Unseen Joints.
356 Sklare, Cultural World, 296-7. Yefet’s view of characters as exemplars is not unlike Sa‘adiah (3.7) or Samuel Ben Ḥofni’s views. Sklare notes that in his “Ten Questions” Ḥofni wants to use the descriptions of the prophets and saints performing supererogatory acts as exemplars. In contrast, Yefet uses analogy to advance his view, whereas Sa‘adiah mostly used direct characterizations (3.6.2.1-2).
357 Hourani, Islamic Rationalism, 136.
358 Ibid, 57.
359 Sasson, Mudawwin Revisited, 333-4.
360 Rendered according to B as plural.
361 Margoliouth, Daniel, 20. Thus, Nebuchadnezzar in his letters came to note God’s signs and wonders: Shewing that he believed in them, and did not reject them as the philosophers do.
362 A: “condemned”. The above is according to B and others, מַדְמֹמִין as it has a correlate in Yefet to Daniel. Blau, Dictionary, 220.
363 Avni, Balaam’s Poetic Verses, 400, 438.
1.7.3 Mental Analogy

Mental analogies between characters are prevalent in Yefet’s exegesis. Hence, feelings and intentions are also a defined category he analyzes and compares in many instances in his commentary on Daniel and other books. For example, Yefet on Dan. 6:17 contrasts Darius’ words (v.16) and intentions when casting Daniel into the lion’s den, with those of Nebuchadnezzar and his fiery furnace, noting that Darius believed in Daniel’s probable salvation by God. Yefet’s treats Jonah’s death wish throughout Jon. 4 as the result of wishing to die, lest he hears that Israel has merited misfortune. The same mindset as Moses (Exod. 32:32), when he asks God to forgive his people or slay him. Both prophets suffered as a result of their love for Israel.

These mental comparisons are consistent with other kinds of psychological characterizations of biblical figures rife in Yefet’s exegesis. Marzena Zawanowska notes that in his commentary on Genesis, Yefet takes great pains to highlight the rational motivations and mental permutations of the characters, mostly through psycho-narration in the third person as well as sparse quoted inner monologue. Her findings

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364 Belshazzar’s suggested reward for the interpreter of the miracle of the writing on the wall is likened by Yefet on Dan. 5:7 to that of Joseph. Yefet notes that the Belshazzar was more generous than both Pharaoh and Nebuchadnezzar, due to a shaken mental state. Margoliouth, Daniel, 25-6. Yefet on Dan. 6:1-3 compares Darius’ management of his affairs to that of the Pharaoh who appointed Joseph to manage his kingdom, both gave themselves up to amusements and thus both are hinted at being frivolous, ibid, 29. Yefet on Dan. 6:26 compares Darius’ decree to revere God with the letter of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:34ff). Their reactions showcase the same kind of pious awe. Ibid, 32. Yefet argues that Daniel’s vision (8:2) in Shusha standing next to the river Ulai is like Ezekiel seeing himself in Jerusalem while being in Babylon, actually an altered state, ibid, 39.

365 Margoliouth, Daniel, 31.

366 Andruss, Jonah, 69.

367 Yefet also argues that it would not have been permissible for Mordecai to appear to be worshipping Haman since Hananiah, Mishael and Azaria were not permitted to do so. Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 216. Note there 271 has Salmon offering a similar example.

368 Zawanowska, Literary Approach, 75-9. According to Yefet, Sarai’s conduct is calculated and her rational motives are presented at length. Hagar by contrast is depicted by Yefet as the more dynamic and developing character, mostly to her detriment. Psycho-narration is the description or summary of a character’s thoughts and feelings in the third person by a narrator. See Ewen, Character, 136-93.
are corroborated by Michel Wechsler’s initial insights about Yefet on Esther, several passages in that commentary and by some of Yefet’s comments on Ruth.\textsuperscript{369}

Hourani describes how the Mu’tazila viewed knowledge as the main condition for a fully responsible act. Action is possible for an agent as a result of the impact of his/her knowledge on the will and not the desire to act.\textsuperscript{370} Motives are intellectual states, and are seen as a character’s knowledge of the act. Several motives may thus coexist in the mind of an agent.\textsuperscript{371}

One possible explanation for Yefet’s interest in depicting accurate mental states through analogy or psycho-narration is that no character can actually be judged without ascertaining his or her exact knowledge of a situation, from a Mu’tazilite-like rationalistic point of view. This is the main reason why Yefet insisted on the candor of Nebuchadnezzar and Balaam’s confessions of faith in God. Had they no knowledge of God, their punishments would not be completely merited. Analogy allows Yefet to make sure they fit his more exacting standards of villainy. Yefet’s stress on multiple motives can also explain his tendency to presume characters have multiple motives.\textsuperscript{372}

Yefet gives an exegetical expression to a medieval philosophical innovation in thinking about legal subjects. Sklare identified a similar halakhic moment in Samuel ben Hofni’s emphasis on intent when performing the commandments. Knowledge and intent become the deciding factors for fulfilling religious obligations. Sklare notes that this view is far more Mu’tazilite than Talmudic.\textsuperscript{373} Yefet partially fits this bill as well.

\textsuperscript{369} See the instances mentioned in 3.6.3, 3.8.1.1 as well as in Nir, Portrait of Ruth, 42, 45, 55.

\textsuperscript{370} Hourani, Islamic Rationalism, 37-8.

\textsuperscript{371} Given the Mu’tazilite stress on free will, a motive is merely a reason for an act but not its necessary cause; see Hourani, Islamic Rationalism, 82-4.

\textsuperscript{372} Together with his adherence to the verbose convoluted style typical of Kalām, which tries to cover every possible argument, as noted by Sklare, Cultural World, 56-7.

\textsuperscript{373} Sklare, Cultural World, 60-2, 209.
In summary, philosophical developments led Yefet to a novel Judaeo-Arabic perspective on the subjectivity of literary characters analogous to real forms of consciousness but expressed in the literary sphere and not only in the legal discipline. Sa’adiah’s discussion of Esther harbors a similar approach (3.6). Yefet unlike Sa’adiah or Samuel ben Ḥofni disclosed his Karaite tendencies by highlighting multiple character motivations as part of the interpretive endeavor. He thus connected exegesis and psychology in a way that rejected rabbinic traditionalism.

1.8 Samuel ben Meir’s Enhancement of Balaam’s Characterizations through Analogy to Jonah

1.8.1 Balaam’s Two Changes of Heart

Rabbi Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam), one of Rashi’s grandsons and an important Tosafist, was active in Northern France in the first half of the 12th century. He is considered by various scholars to place a different and at times extreme emphasis on peshat. However, Hannah Liss argued that Rashbam also displays several innovative narrative elements. He animates many of the characters of the Pentateuch by paraphrasing their assertions into monologues. His treatment of some biblical characters also subverts rote expectations to better engage his audience.

The following sections examine what Martin Lockshin described as Rashbam’s subversive depiction of Balaam and focus on Rashbam’s indirect analogy...
to Jonah. Balaam underwent negative changes in midrashic sources, in that he ultimately lost his status as a prophet and was reduced to sorcery. Tamar Wolf-Monzon argues that as part of anti-Christian polemics, Midrashim chose to depict Balaam as an inversion of his partial moral reform inherent to the Bible. Rashbam rejects the polemical midrashic reading, along with other negative readings we have encountered, in favor of a more positive biblically-oriented portrayal:

22:6 **Whatever you bless** - through prophetic powers [shall be blessed]. Even Balak understood that Balaam was [only] a prophet [i.e. someone who has insider information about the future, not someone who caused events to occur in the future]. When he foretold the future he did so through prophecy or through divination- that is why he is called in Joshua (13:22) “Balaam the diviner.” But [Balak wanted to hire him in any case], because he thought that his [=Balaam’s] prayers and sacrifices would be efficacious [in helping Balak carry out his plan to harm the Israelites].

Balaam knows the future via prophesy and magic as was the case in Joshua 13:22 (“diviner”). Rashbam imparts Balak’s thoughts (underlined). Balak may have thought Balaam’s sacrifices would help facilitate the curses, because Balaam was a prophet. By contrast, Rashbam charts Balaam’s prophetic improvement instead of his prophetic decline. Num. 23 (9-10):

23:9 **For I see them from the mountain tops** - [This verse and the ones that follow] explain the reason why God did not vitify them and why He did not want to curse them. Because from the mountain tops, on which I am currently standing, I see them and from the top of the hill I see that they are alone, no other nations are counted or intermingled among them And [I also see that] they have countless numbers of small children (For only those who were over twenty years of age were counted) That means that their [total] numbers must be extremely high, for (vs. 10) **Who can count the dust of Israel**. That is why He does not want to curse them, as it is written concerning Nineveh (Jon. 4:11): “Should I [God] not care about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than one hundred and twenty thousand persons who do

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378 Lockshin notes that Rashbam is far more positive in depicting Balaam and even Balak than Jewish tradition. See note 5 in Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 363-4.
379 For example, b. Sanhedrin 106a (1.1).
380 Wolf-Monzon, Falling into a Trance, 255-6.
381 Rashbam on Num. 21:27 also interprets “the governors” of that verse as being prophets like Balaam and unlike Tan. Balak 6. Hence, he is emphasizing Balaam’s prophetic nature.
382 Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 263.
383 Balak’s thoughts are based on the lack of magical descriptions in these chapters, in contrast to Ibn Ezra’s discussion of the verse and magic.
not yet know their right hand from their left?” [i.e. God said that he did not want to destroy the Ninevites, because] even if the adults sinned, what sin did the children commit?384

Balaam has become privy to the divine considerations preventing him from cursing Israel385; namely, that they were countless in number and had many small children386. Rashbam paraphrased the verse (underlined) from Balaam’s point of view to note what he sees. The following statement: “That is why God does not want to curse them”, is therefore part of a quoted monologue which indicates that Balaam realized God’s reasons for being merciful.

This interpretation is supported by several factors. First, Rashbam indicated in advance that this is the “bottom-line” of the comment, he need not repeat himself. Categorically as pointed out by Jonathan Jacobs, Rashbam tends to offer multiple literal explanations, when he needs to provide proof of psychological change387. This is the above case, since he repeats himself after he depicts Balaam’s mind.

Second, all the previous statements were formulated as though Balaam were speaking, so it is difficult to be sure at what juncture Rashbam stops interposing himself. Third, Rashbam’s comment on Num. 24:1-2 assumes Balaam realized he should not curse Israel (see below). The above episode seems the most likely

384 Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 270-1.
385 Rashbam is unique among the medieval commenters to highlight that Balaam comes to realize the reasons for God’s actions, since the more common opinion as in Rashi or Ibn Ezra, is that he realizes he will fail to oppose God and stops trying to do so.
386 As in b. Niddah 31a, for instance. This is brought about by the stem M-N-I as a denoting a census. Lockshin notes that this comparison also criticizes the Israelites by comparing them to the maligned Ninevites. Ibid, Leviticus and Numbers, 271n35.
387 Jacobs, Addenda, 446-7. See also note 9 there for an instance in Num. 22:33, where Rashbam might be adding an interpretation to counter Rashi.
candidate for such a realization. “He does not want to curse them (לכּ לא תִּפְן לְכֻלָּלִים),” is also ambiguous in Hebrew and the pronoun can easily refer to Balaam.

After Balaam’s realization, Rashbam comments that God’s considerations in Jon. 4:11 are identical to his considerations in Numbers. This suggests that both the Israelites and the Ninevites, had many blameless small children that God did not wish to harm. This allusion has ramifications on how we interpret Balaam. Jonah also wished to harm a blameless public; i.e. the children of the Ninevites, and was corrected by God. By suggesting such a comparison, Rashbam is describing Balaam like the biblical Jonah undergoing psychological development. Rashbam connects both characters in only one other place in all of his surviving commentaries, a comment on Gen. 32:29:

...and why Jacob was struck and became lame, for God promised him [help against Esau], but he was fleeing [, nonetheless]. And so we find in all who go [their] way without God’s consent or refuse to go, [these] were punished. Moses... and so Jonah who was swallowed into the bowels of the fish; and so Balaam “God’s anger was kindled because he was going” (Num. 22:22) and he became lame, as it is written: “it scraped... Balaam’s foot against the wall” (Num. 22:25)...

The main message of the midrashic index is one of lex talionis, he who sins with his feet by going or fleeing when told not to by God, is thus harmed by his feet in some manner. The list includes Jacob, Moses, Jonah as well as Balaam. Note that this comment, like the above, accuses Balaam of disobedience to God and not of hatred of Israel, as in “go [their] way without God’s consent”. This suggests that Rashbam is consistent in his less negative characterization of Balaam.

388 Liss, Fictional Worlds, 62-5. Liss does not discuss Balaam in Rashbam on Numbers. See also, Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 364n11.
389 On the possible sources of this comment see also Liss, Fictional Worlds, 62-5.
The list, like the comment above, also compares Balaam and Jonah. This is a highly infrequent association in Midrash. Rashbam also considers the rule, if not the details of the list as peshat, thereby making plot related character analogy an integral part of a contextual-literary understanding of scripture. Hence, like in Num. 23:9, Rashbam sees similarities in the stories of Balaam and Jonah, which support his more dynamic version of Balaam.

Another dynamic facet of Balaam’s character according to Rashbam, is his treatment of Israel. Initially, Balaam wants to curse Israel instead of what God orders him to do (Nu. 22:22): 22:22 [God was angry] that He was going- willingly [showing] that he was eager to curse them, even though he knew that God did not approve. Rashbam describes Balaam’s state of mind as a desire to curse Israel even though he knew God was against it, as in the Genesis list above. This desire constituted Balaam’s disobedience.

However after Balaam’s epiphany in Num. 23:9, Rashbam has Balaam voice admiration for the prophetic prowess of Israel by adding “like us” (כמונו underlined) to the biblical text. This is a demonstration of Balaam’s change of heart (Num. 23:23):

23:23 For there is no Augury in Jacob- [Balaam explained:] “They are not soothsayers and diviners like us, nor do they consult ghost or familiar spirits. Now he shall tell Jacob and Israel what. Rather since the Divine Presence is among them, the prophets can tell Jacob and Israel today what God is doing and what he has decreed for the future. That is why they do not need soothsayers and diviners. [The phrase] Now shall say [means] that which will happen now- i.e. at some time tomorrow or after a number days or years- is told to them today by a prophet. The phrase now always refers to predictions of the future...

391 So far I have only found a comparison between Balaam and Jonah in versions of Exod. R. 4:3, where they are among the prophets God compelled to do his bidding. It is worth inquiring whether this homily could be by a contemporary of Rashbam, as it might be connected with the compositional layer of Num. R. and Exod. R. I and thus the circle of R. Moshe HaDarshan, See Reizel, Introduction to Midrash, 117-8.
392 Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 265.
393 Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 364n10. Lockshin notes that unlike Rashi, Rashbam has Balaam angering God by his actual desire to curse and not the act of going to face the Israelites. This supports my claim that Rashbam had a heightened interest in Balaam’s state of mind.
394 Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 274.
Rashbam’s emphasis on Balaam’s change of heart and prophetic prowess peaks in his interpretation of Num. 24:1-2. He states using psycho-narration\(^{395}\) that Balaam was willing to bless Israel, as he felt love and affection for them, or that God felt love for Balaam due to his new-found willingness to bless Israel. Regardless, God entreats Balaam directly as proof of the latter’s change of heart:

24:1-2: *[Balaam did not, as on previous occasions, go] in search of augury: by going from place to place [looking for the most propitious spot] so that he might succeed in cursing them. Rather, from this point on he intended to bless them with all his heart. And for this reason, it is written here that the spirit of God came upon him: i.e. the spirit of the divine presence came upon him with love and affection*\(^{396}\).  

Rashbam’s comment is innovative and contrary to Jewish tradition\(^{397}\). In his reading, it was not God’s love for Israel which allowed an unworthy Balaam to bless Israel, but a loving Balaam (“with love and affection”), who was worthy of God’s presence\(^{398}\). Balaam is thus an obvious example of character development. Wolf-Monzon arrived at a similar conclusion about Balaam, by discussing changes in focalization indicating that Balaam’s perspective was only revealed from this third parable onwards, where he adopted a more positive stance towards Israel\(^{399}\). As we have seen, however, Rashbam based his character sketch on an analogy to the narrative of Jonah.
Thus far Rashbam has depicted Balaam as a legitimate prophet who comes into his own through his encounter with God and Israel\(^\text{400}\). He uses this plotline to account for Balaam’s further involvement in Shittim. Rashbam hints that Balaam understood the reasons for God’s humane considerations all too well: *for I know what this people will do to your people in days to come*. Knowing that the Israelites will destroy many nations and specifically the Moabites, causes Balaam to advise Balak to lead Israel astray in order to save lives (Num. 24:14):


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“Let me advise you”: [i.e. give you] advice on how to trip them up, for I know what this people will do to your people in days to come. But now in the near future. In your own lifetime there is no need for you to be afraid of them”. And the advice was [for the Moabite women to seduce Israelite men, as it is written] (Num. 31:16), “Yet they [the women] were the very ones, whom at Balaam’s suggestion, induce the Israelites to trespass against the Lord].” Moses wrote about this advice in an elliptical manner. For Balaam said it to Balak in a whisper. The advice was accordingly not known [widely] until Moses spoke of it explicitly at the appropriate time\(^\text{401}\).
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Rashbam reads the biblical “now” as ‘now that Balaam has spoken his oracle’.

Balaam says that Balak should not fear the Israelites in the present, which like in Tan. Balak 17, hints that Balak is the greater hater of Israel\(^\text{402}\). Nevertheless, Rashbam differs strikingly in two ways compared to earlier rabbinic sources.

First, he maintains that the omission of the actual advice is the work of the editor\(^\text{403}\). Because of realistic mimetic considerations, the details of the advice are relegated to a “flashback”. Balaam did not make public his advice and it only became

\(^{400}\) Similarly, Balaam’s desire to curse Israel might not be interpreted by Rashbam as stemming from a clear desire for glory or honorifics, see his comments on Num. 22:14-15 and contrast to Tan. Balak 9, Rashi and according to Ibn Ezra- Sa’adiah Gaon.

\(^{401}\) Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 279-80.

\(^{402}\) Rashbam on Num. 23:7, based on Isa. 9:11, emphasizes the long distance Balaam had to travel from Aram to curse Israel. Rahabam may show that Balaam believes his mission is futile and thus complains how tiring it is. Yefet makes a similar comment. It is possible that both exegetes are polemicizing against more far-reaching midrashic readings of Aram.

\(^{403}\) For Moses as the Pentateuch editor in Rashbam, see Liss, Fictional Worlds, 96-9; 102-17; Lockshin, Moses, 117-25 and 122 on the above account. For a different approach see Viezel, Rashbam, 181-7. For another example of Rashbam highlighting the possible contribution of the editor, see Gómez-Aranda, Two Perspectives, 248-9.
known later. Second, Rashbam does not argue that Balaam advised Balak on how to harm Israel out of his midrashic greed. Rashbam does not comment on Num. 31:16, leaving us with the impression that Balaam’s rationale was the future damage the Israelites would do in Num. 24:14. Rashbam’s analogical attention to Balaam’s psychology leads to several other novel insights.

1.8.2 Balaam’s Prophetic Prowess

Building on the theme of Balaam’s newly acquired legitimate prophetic status, Rashbam does not interpret the reference to Balaam’s eye as a physical defect as is customary in Jewish sources, but instead as a mark of prophetic prowess: 24:3 whose eye is closed (Stum): means “with an open eye” [in other words Balaam] sees divine visions [the word Stum refers to something open,] as in the Mishnah (AZ 5:3): “until he opens it (šeYistum) and then closes it”.

M. Avoda Zara renders the stem Š-T-M as open and at odds with the meaning of S-T-M. While slightly forced, Rashbam’s comment shows his emphasis on the legitimacy of Balaam’s prophecy. He puts a similar inverse stress on Balaam as an accomplished prophet which runs counter midrashic tradition:

24:4: Who beholds visions from the Almighty: at times prostrate, i.e. lying at night, and at other times- with open eyes. [Balaam says this,] because now he was receiving prophecies [even] during the daytime. [The word prostrate in this verse means “lying

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404 See also Jacobs, Retrospection, 134n27.
405 For instance, b. Sanhedrin 106b; Tan. Balak 15.
406 Unlike Rashi, b. Sanhedrin 105a-b and most other midrashic sources, but like Ibn Ezra and possibly Joseph Kara’s view embedded in Rashi.
407 See also Wolf-Monzon, Falling into a Trance, 252-3. She reads the verbs denoting sight as hinting at Balaam’s spiritual change and broadened perspective. Rashbam’s approach might be related to his greater acceptance of the genuine power of Gentile magic. See his comments on Gen. 31:19, Exod. 28:30; 32:1-4, Deut. 5:6; 13:3-4; 18:12-13.
408 Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 276.
409 If a non-Jew was transporting jars of wine together with a Jew from place to place, and it was presumed that [the wine] was under guard, it is permitted. But if [the Jew] informed him that he was going away [and he was absent a length of time] sufficient for the other to bore a hole [in a jar], stop it up and [the sealing clay] to become dry, [the wine is prohibited]. Rabban Shimon ben Gamaliel says: [a length of time] sufficient for him to open a cask, put a new stopper on and [the new stopper] to become dry.
Rashbam reverses midrashic tradition, which was based on Balaam as its main precedent, in which God only approaches Gentile prophets at night while they are lying down sleeping. According to Rashbam on Num. 24:4, God also approaches Balaam and by extension the Gentiles "during the day time". Hence, Balaam’s prophecy is like Israel’s prophecy. This position must stem from the more positive changes in Balaam we have seen previously.

1.8.3 Animal Cruelty in Rashbam’s Exegesis

Rashbam’s Balaam came to a surprising epiphany that mitigated his hatred for Israel; hence, Rashbam’s depiction of Balaam’s wickedness is also fundamentally different in its texture. Rashbam is empathic in his emphasis on the ass crushing Balaam’s leg against the fence. Unlike his discussion in Gen. 32:25, he does not actually argue that Balaam became lame merely as punishment for disobedience towards God, or as part of Balaam’s general defamation as a grotesque figure (Num. 22:25):

\[\text{The ass} \quad \text{squeezed Balaam’s foot- And that is how he became lame, as it is written (Num. 23:3) “he went about lame”}\]

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410 Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 276-7.
411 See for instance, Gen. R. 52:3. Rashbam’s comment is also unique in not viewing Balaam’s prophecy as inferior to Israelite prophecy, contra Yefet ben ‘Eli, Rashi and Ibn Ezra. Also see note 62 in Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 277.
412 He still does so indirectly by having the angel mention that he is the ultimate cause of Balaam’s injury in his comment on Num. 22:33.
413 See b. Sanhedrin 105a; b. Sotah 10a. Ibn Ezra explicitly rejects using Job as Rashbam does.
414 Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 265.
415 Rashbam mentions Job in Num. 23:3, the allusion is not unlike his comment on Genesis above.
Rashbam chooses to elevate Balaam’s cruelty to the ass to the level of a sin that warrants death by angel and also claims that the ass would have survived, thereby deviating from midrashic traditions, which had the ass killed (Num. 22:33)\textsuperscript{416}.

This is what the angel said [to Balaam]: Why have you beaten your ass three times? (v. 32), you did not behave properly...then I would have killed you. You would not have gotten away with the minor injury of the crushing of your leg. Rather I would even have killed you. She, though would not have been damaged for I would have spared her, just as she now survives [undamaged]. [She would not have been harmed by me] for She would not have sinned [even had she passed me against my will]. It would have been you who sinned against me [had passed against my will], for you hit her three times\textsuperscript{417}.

The angel emphasizes (in the underlined insertion) that Balaam struck his ass three times for no good reason and is ungrateful since the ass could have let him be killed, but the angel would still have spared her. This line of thought goes hand in hand with Rashbam’s general tendency to stress the Bible’s interest in animal welfare which Liss sees as influenced by Christian feudal moralistic trends\textsuperscript{418}. Accordingly, Mariano Gómez-Aranda argues that Rashbam on Eccles. 3:21 rejects the notion that man is fundamentally better than any beast\textsuperscript{419}. Another expression of this eco-centric line of thought is found in Rashbam’s comment on Deut. 22:6:

Do not take the mother together with her young- I already offered this explanation which is both in conformance with the way of the world and also appropriate for rebutting the heretics- concerning “boiling a kid in its mother's milk” (Exod. 23:19), or “[Slaughtering] it and its young” (Lev. 22:28): [This behavior-] either taking the mother and her young together, or slaughtering them together or cooking them together- [is forbidden because it] appears cruel and gluttonous\textsuperscript{420}.

\textsuperscript{416} See for example, b. Sanhedrin 105b.

\textsuperscript{417} Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 266-7. I do not believe his additions to the last sentence are necessary: for you [were the one who] hit her three times [to goad her pass me].

\textsuperscript{418} Liss, Fictional Worlds, 216-7.

\textsuperscript{419} Gómez-Aranda, Two Perspectives, 244-5.

\textsuperscript{420} Lockshin, Deuteronomy, 134. Note 18 connects the interpretation to Christian polemics.
Note the many negative verbs showing what Rashbam thought of the cruelty of transgressing this edict and others like it. The tone of his similar comment on Exod. 23:5, is equally harsh: …it is disgraceful and voracious and gluttonous to consume the mother’s milk together with its young. He maintains that transgressing Deut. 22:6-7 involves the same moral prohibition. Thus Rashbam, who loathes cruelty to animals, displaces Balaam’s wickedness from the national sphere and uses his change of heart to opt for a more universal theme of animal abuse. His Balaam is not anti-Israelite but rather a superficially cruel figure whose new-found humanitarian streak was led astray into more cruelty.

1.8.4 Summary and Conclusions: Compact Mental Analogy

Rashbam’s Balaam is a highly original psychological portrait based on the assumption that Balaam is a prophetic figure, and shared a complex analogical connection to Jonah. This relatively positive portrayal of Balaam has few precedents, mostly in Biblical Antiquities and Tanḥuma Balak (1.1). However, these older versions did not employ analogy in Rashbam’s complex cognitive way, nor do they connect the figure to Jonah. Hence even if these sources and specifically the Tanḥuma inspired Rashbam’s interpretation of Balaam, they did so in a rudimentary fashion.

Jacobs and Sarah Japhet noted that Rashbam uses analogy to interpret individual verses and specific linguistic issues. I claim that he goes a step further in his commentary on Numbers. He shows hints of analogical thinking about characters as complex literary structures that encompass plot and motivation simultaneously.

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421 Lockshin, Exodus, 287.
This is not unlike some of Yefet’s usages of mental analogy (1.7.3), but in a much more intuitive and less conceptual capacity. Rashbam’s cultural environment and the French literary tradition might have inspired his intuitive analogical way of thinking.

1.9 Rashbam, French Jews and Chivalric Romance

The familiarity of Rashbam’s audience with contemporary literary forms may have impacted his commentaries to a degree. Liss notes that Rashbam’s depiction of characters shows traces of some chivalric motifs such “adventure” and recognition scenes centered on identifying a figure’s tone of voice. She argues that chivalric romance was a major factor impacting Rashbam’s character portrayal. He tried to cater to his audience by stressing psychology and autonomy common to chivalric characters. I will claim Rashbam’s use of character analogy may be conceptually inspired by similar developments central to chivalric romance and Christian Bible exegesis. However, there is one major difficulty that needs to be resolved first; namely, why assume that Jews were interested in chivalric romances at all?

One possible answer is geography. The novels were written in Northern France at the height of Rashi’s school of systematic exegesis. Chivalric literature was produced in the vernacular, mirroring the widening use of the vernacular in Jewish commentaries that guarantees French Jews could have easily understood the romances. This is also hinted at by several instances of vernacular literary terminology common to chivalric novels and to Jewish commentaries.

423 Liss, Fictional Worlds, 32-4, 120-5.
424 Ibid. This attitude is also found in Radak on Jeremiah (2.6.1ff).
425 Ibid, 177-83. Liss claims that Rashbam sanctioned the sale of arms to knights even if they would be used against Jews elsewhere, ibid, 190-1. This could very well have been a pragmatic concept and not related to literary admiration of chivalric knights. On the other hand, note Rashbam’s comment on Eccles. 10:10, where he acknowledges the courage even blunt weapons can provide to some. This glorification of arms is not unlike what is reflected in several chivalric romances, especially “Percival”. That might not be Rashbam’s position though, but the opinion of others.
426 Liss, Fictional Worlds, 21-7.
There are also several studies containing historical anecdotes proving Jewish affection for some chivalric novels, despite the genre’s heavily allegorical Christian aspect. Kristena Fudeman mentions that “El Giv’at HaLevonah” (To the Hill of Frankincense), a 13th century Jewish wedding song in Hebrew and French, was influenced by the “Roman de la Rose”428. Florence Sandler similarly mentions a Yiddish translation of a German Arthurian romance, the “Urtus-hof”, which was sung at Jewish weddings in the Rhineland429.

There is another plausible explanation for the popularity of these novels with Jews. Eugene Vance noted the ambiguous treatment of merchants in high medieval Christian culture, which combined hostility and admiration. Hugh of St. Victor’s description of mercantile occupations, for instance, depicts surprising analogs between the questing knight and the traveling merchant. Hence, I posit that mercantile Jews may have identified with questing knights based on the joint element of the risks of travel. Accordingly, the Jewish Italian chivalric translation “King Artus”430, argues that Lancelot is a descendant of the tribe of Judah431.

The autodafé of thirteen innocent Jews in Troyes on April 24 1288 also shows traces of identification with contextual French literature. The incident was quickly recorded in five elegies, one of which is in Old French. Fudeman found good reason to relate the elegies and this vernacular one in particular to the “Song of Roland”432. The elegy indirectly presents the Troyes martyrdom as a Jewish reenactment of the

428 Fudeman, These things, 6.
429 Sandler, Jewish Encounter, 70.
430 A detailed discussion of this text follows.
431 Rovang, Hebraizing Romance, 5-7.
432 Fudeman, These Things, 1-3.
betrayal and destruction of the rearguard at *Roncevaux* through various analogies to “*Roland*”, in spite of its clear Christian overtones\(^\text{433}\).

Some medieval French Jews may thus have associated themselves with the heroes of the “*chansons de geste*” and the chivalric novels, though actual chivalric motifs are found sparingly in Rashbam’s commentaries. This lays the groundwork to examine how character analogy was treated in chivalric literature to better contextualize its use by Rashbam on Balaam. For reasons of historical significance to Rashbam’s period and due to the huge scope of this query, I will focus solely on novels by Chrétien de Troyes (1130-1191? C.E.), the originator of the genre.

### 1.9.1 Analogy in Chrétien de Troyes and “King Artus”

Norris Lacy repeatedly shows how analogy is the principal device organizing the seeming randomness of Chrétien’s novels\(^\text{434}\). The novels all isolate a nucleus of a theme in one episode and develop it in several analogous episodes. One typical form of structural analogy is the *contrapasso*, (Heb. *Mida KeNeged Mida*): what a character sought improperly he now has in excess, or alternatively what a character failed to do, he must now do in excess. For instance, Yvain failed to return to his wife on time. Therefore, he later must save many similar maidens without delay.

As Lacy showed, Chrétien’s novels can often be partitioned along the lines of prolonged analogy. For example, the titular hero’s tale in the second half of “*Cligès*”, parallels his father’s Alexander tale in the first half of the novel. The analogy reveals

\(^{433}\) Ibid. Though they differ from “*Roland*” and other chansons de geste in length and meter, the elegies resemble them in terms of their narrative structure, vocabulary, and especially martyrdom ideology. This is in line with the popularity of imitating these *chansons de geste* at the time. Ibid, 4-5, 9, 12.

\(^{434}\) Lacy, *Craft of Chrétien*, 7-8.
their psychological differences. Hence, analogy between characters is central to Chrétien’s compositional technique and representations of consciousness.

The most pivotal example of character analogy in Chrétien’s novels is that of “Yvain”. The entirety of the plot is reducible to Yvain transitioning between analogies. Throughout the novel he is systematically compared to Gawain, an exemplar of chivalry but also of frivolous adventure in many of Chrétien’s works. At first they are “doubles”, but after Gawain’s persuades Yvain not to return to his wife, Yvain experiences a breakdown. When he recovers, he gradually becomes associated with his lion, which symbolizes chivalry in service of others. The second half of “Yvain” has the titular hero and Gawain go on mirroring journeys culminating in a duel between the unsuspecting pair.

Vance indicated that the lion is both a character and a symbol to interpret Yvain. Its dual function of a character in its own right and as an analogical symbol whose association with the hero denotes mental development, is similar to Rashbam’s use of Jonah when characterizing Balaam’s development as a prophet of God (1.8.2). This similarity in function may hint at a similar implementation of character analogy in chivalric novels and in Rashbam’s commentaries.

Rashbam is not alone in Jewish medieval literature in using analogy to redefine figures in light of chivalric romance and the Bible. Curt Leviant presented “King Artus” as an incomplete Jewish synthesis and translation of “Merlin” and “Mort Artu” to pseudo biblical Hebrew, which he dated by a colophon to 1279 C.E. It is

436 Ibid, 79-80. For another example, In “Érec et Énide”, Mabonagran’s and Énide’s cousins are doubles, encountered near the end to show Érec’s and Énide’s flaws and development.
437 Lacy, Craft of Chrétien, 18-21.
438 Ibid.
439 Vance, Topic to Tale, 83, 89, 107. The more Yvain redeems himself the more symbolic the lion becomes. Later authors tended to render the lion simply as Yvain’s crest, and neglect it as a character.
probably of Northern Italian origin, possibly from Tuscany\textsuperscript{440}. Tamar Drukker claimed that the author and his intended Hebrew reading audience had extensive knowledge of Arthurian literature, since the text is strewn with opaque references to other novels\textsuperscript{441}.

Like some of Rashbam’s comments on the Pentateuch, “Aruts” is more retelling than translation. It is condensed when compared to possible sources and was inspired by the style of rewritten Bible works\textsuperscript{442}. In the same vein, Paul Rovang showed how the author chose episodes in light of his ability to supply biblical analogs to serve his original didactic messages\textsuperscript{443}. This is even truer of his characters. Sandler mentioned that “Artus” hints that Uther and Igraine are like David and Bathsheba and Amnon and Tamar, to show their moral decay\textsuperscript{444}.

Leviant argued that the lusting Lancelot is compared to Samson and his downfall \textsuperscript{445}. These uses suggest that Rashbam’s depiction of Balaam and what we know of “Artus” might be uniquely Jewish receptions of chivalric analogy, as expressed by their joint capacity to comment on characters and their development by

\textsuperscript{440} Leviant, King Artus, 1-7. “King Artus”, should be understood as a marginal example of the Italian Jewish translation project of the 13th century, see Drukker, Arthurian Tale, 121, possibly drawing on some lost Italian or old French texts.

\textsuperscript{441} Ibid, 116-8.

\textsuperscript{442} For instance, Uther’s love and courtship of Igraine is significantly abridged from “Merlin”. Note that this shorthand also eliminates various psychological and emotional descriptions in favor of dynamic descriptions of actions found in biblical poetics, as recounted in Polak, Biblical Narrative, 259-60, 264. Similarly, some minor chivalric characters are made anonymous and less dominant to better focus on the main characters, see Leviant, King Artus, 110-2. Another example is the naming of Artus, Artusin (=born through the power of art/magic), is phrased as though it were a biblical etymology. This line of thought is missing from all known chivalric sources, Sandler, Jewish Encounter, 72-4.

\textsuperscript{443} Rovang, Hebraizing Romance, 3-5. Levant and Drukker note that the author had a moralistic intent, which the Arthurian texts sometimes lack. His introduction states that he will use known stories to introduce a didactic message. Artus is unique in highlighting Lancelot’s illicit love for Guinevere as the cause of the downfall of Camelot. See Leviant, King Artus, 59; Drukker, Arthurian Tale, 122-3.

\textsuperscript{444} Sandler, Jewish Encounter, 73-5. It is possible that “Artus” was influenced by Rashi’s version of a homily on Exod.2:11 when describing his love triangle. This fact further cements the connection between Bible commentaries and novels.

\textsuperscript{445} For more examples, see Leviant, King Artus, 62-72. These include a Christmas feast which is transformed into Ahasuerus’ problematic banquet, and an association between the quest for the grail and civil war (based on 2Sam. 2:30).
analogical allusion. The same Bible-centric exegetic context is also applicable to “Artus” and Rashbam’s Christian cognates.

1.9.2 Systematic Bible Exegesis and Chrétien’s Novels

The chivalric novel was created as an exegetic medium that was influenced by developments in biblical exegesis and the scholastic curriculum of its period. Eugene Vinaver claimed that authors such as Chrétien were educated in the sphere of the monastic centers of Northern France. The exegetic facet was seen as the most important distinction between story and novel. Interesting interpretations of various *vitas* of saints were thought of as “the fruit of the story tree”, and thus more important than the actual stories. Authors like Chrétien, used metaphors drawn from the world of Bible glosses that prove their familiarity with biblical exegesis, as well as their interest in presenting their novels in a similar conceptual framework. The chivalric novel is a poetic implementation of exegetic norms by the class of clerks, who studied these very norms. The novels were written to be interpreted.

This is evidenced by the far-reaching uses of analogy described by Vance, as knowingly embedded for the reader to decipher, but also by several of Chrétien’s characters who need to interpret scripture as part of his novels. Lacy highlighted the inherent emphasis on faulty perception permeating Chrétien’s works. The Novels are replete with the interpretation of reality and in chivalric later novels, actual suggested interpretations of the novels themselves. For instance, “Percival”, as Eugene

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446 Ibid, 18-20.
447 Vinaver, Rise of Romance, 15-7. Rashbam in Eccles. 12:12 no longer argues that one must not write too many books, but that one cannot write all the books of wisdom, or all the books required to contain wisdom. This change suggests a more compositional understanding of literature and suggests something about Rashbam’s avid reading practices.
448 Ibid, 22-3.
449 Vance, Topic to Tale, 80-1. Vance notes that the maidens who find Yvain “read” his scars as pertaining to his nature and that in the “Cherrete” Lancelot needs to decipher tombstones, ibid, 5-7.
450 Lacy, Craft of Chrétien, 16, 25. On the later novels as exegesis, see Todorov, Quest of Narrative.
Weinraub reads it, might be a novelistic representation of the struggle between literal and allegorical readings of the Bible\footnote{With its \textit{Bildungsroman} helical structure, Percival’s spiritual journey is the most important. He could hypothetically not have left his mother at all. His journey is allegorically about how to interpret the Bible in the sense of differentiating between obeying the letter and the spirit of the law. Percival must overcome his simplistic legalistic tendency to arrive at a true understanding of Christianity, see Weinraub, Jewish Rite, 72, 109-15, 119, 152-5. The question of what Percival and the grail actually mean has plagued scholars from the Middle Ages to our own times and is too broad to be discussed here in any detail. One noteworthy possibility is that the novel argues against Jewish systematic exegesis like Rashi and his school, though this is highly speculative. See Sandler, Jewish Encounter, 75-6; Vance, Topic to Tale, 31-2.}. An exegetic background led authors whether Chrétien or Rashbam, to become exegetes not only of texts but of characters. Chrétien does so by including extremely lengthy interior monologues depicting conflicted heroes and psychological causality. Vinaver saw these instances as the novelist flaunting his skill not just as a storyteller, but as an exegete, not dissimilar from those who wrote interlinear biblical glosses\footnote{Vinaver, \textit{Rise of Romance}, 24-7, 30-1.}. Rashbam as I have depicted him, chose referential analogy to depict Balaam’s psychological conundrums. It is not a lone incident\footnote{For more mental analogies see Rashbam on: Gen. 25:30, 32:23, 34:30, 37:18, 43:32, Exod. 2:2, 4:13, 32:4, 33:18. Most of these are not as interesting as Balaam however, in that they do not extend beyond the discussed verse to redefine the narrative.}. Rashbam was pandering to an audience, which accepted that the skill of the exegete is partially also that of the novelist, regardless of if they actually ever heard of Chrétien. “omek peshuto shel \textit{mikra}” (lit. ‘the deepness of the literal sense’) was expected to include richer character interpretation in both chivalric novels and Rashbam’s exegesis.

This same phenomenon among contemporary Christians is recorded by Hugh of St. Victor, who derides those who want to read the Bible for entertainment, which he compares unfavorably to theater and literature (Bold):

“...\textit{There are still others who delight to hear the words of God and to learn of His works not because these bring them salvation but because they are marvels. They wish to search into hidden matters and to know about unheard-of things-to know much and to do nothing. In vain do they gape at God’s power when they do not love His mercy. What else can I call their conduct than a turning of the divine announcements into tales? It is for this that we are accustomed to turn to \textit{theatrical}}\textit{...}
performances, for this to dramatic recitations—namely, that we may feed our ears, not our mind. But persons of this sort I think should not so much be brought to confusion as helped. Their will is not evil, only senseless."

Chrétien probably knew of Hugh of St. Victor and some of his compositions. Equally, Rashbam on Num. 24 might have been influenced by Andrew of St. Victor’s commentary. Thus, the general connections Beryl Smalley hypothesized between the exegesis of St. Victor and Rashbam, may also be extended to the wider cultural and poetical horizon of Chrétien’s novels. Rashbam’s portrayal of Balaam as sympathetic and dynamic through analogy is more akin to chivalric characters than to midrashic figures. This disparity was caused by Rashbam’s own insertion of a new exegetic facet to the literal sense of the Bible.

1.9.3 Conclusions: Midrashic Types and Exegetic Characters

My key observation is that all four “versions” of Balaam presented in this part of the thesis utilize analogical devices, but their actual implementation in both quality and quantity is dependent on audience expectations to a greater extent than on the biblical Balaam, perhaps due to the greater need for audience willingness to decipher analogy. This leads to a broader distinction between Midrashim and Bible commentaries.

Yefet and Rashbam are more interested in the narrow filed of mental analogy, in how to understand Balaam’s thought processes using other precedents. Midrashic sources, both classical and late in the forms of the Tannaim and the Tanḥuma, were focused on who Balaam resembles: who is he like? Thus, the exegetes’ focus emerges

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454 Taylor, Didascalicon, 134. Rashbam also notes the entertainment value of “courtly” or at least “princely” song in his comment on Eccles. 2:1 and see the discussion of Troubadours below.
455 Vance, Topic to Tale, 66-7. Vance finds evidence for the influence of Hugh of St. Victor’s Didascalicon on Yvain, noting the compatibility between a list of human crafts by Hugh and their exact order and the stages of Yvain’s loss and recovery of his humanity.
456 Lockshin, Leviticus and Numbers, 280n81.
457 Smalley, Study of the Bible, 109-11, 149-55, 160-1. For one specific example of Hugh’s familiarity and partial endorsement of Jewish exegesis involving Ps. 85, see Moore, Jewish Influence, 151-6. For slightly later documented examples of French medieval figures using Jewish sources to acquire more details about biblical characters, see Mews and Perry, Jewish Biblical Exegesis, 7-8, 10-9.
from their systematic readings of biblical texts, while Midrashim veer towards assigning tactile types, as in ‘Balaam is like a funny cook or an inferior Moses’.

The distinction between the two genres suggests that because of their different exegetical practices, Midrash and systematic medieval exegesis differ considerably in their abstraction of characters and their rendering of complexity. Midrashic sources prefer allusions to known types outside of the Bible that enrich their claims, whereas the exegetes paint a more cumulative phenomenological picture based on biblical contexts. By contrast, the exegetes’ very interest in the psychological sphere constitutes their major link to late Midrashim, as I will now demonstrate through the case study of Jeremiah.
Part Two: Jeremiah and Inner Monologue

2.1 An Overview of Jeremiah in Midrash

Extensive reviews of Jeremiah in Midrashim are scarce, apart from an old dissertation by Arnold Wieder. He deals with the harmonious aspects of Jeremiah’s depictions, and hence is of limited use to a diachronic study of shifting characterizations.

Generally, the main reason for Jeremiah’s midrashic depiction appears to be his role, or lack thereof, in the destruction of Jerusalem. Jeremiah’s culpability and negative views depicting him as a willing participant in this destruction, are apparent mostly in sources associated with Amoraim and Homiletic Midrashim. These are revised by later sources that prefer a more heroic Jeremiah, as shown below.

Tannaitic characterizations of Jeremiah in the form of narrative as opposed to lists are rare but are generally positive, somewhat similarly to Balaam (1.1; 1.3.2). The Mekhilta DeRabbi Ishmael views Jeremiah as a positive paragon of prophecy. Conversely, Sifrei Deuteronomy voices a slightly less positive view of Jeremiah as an

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1 See Wieder, Jeremiah. Also see Callaway, Exegesis as Banquet, 227-30. She does not sufficiently discuss how Jeremiah is actually characterized in midrashic literature.

2 For instance, Sifrei Num. 78 includes Jeremiah as one of the eight prophets descending from Rahab, but confers no direct characteristics, unlike those in PR 13:4. Mekhilta Deut. 13:3=Y. Sanhedrin 11:5; b. Megilla 14b, Sanhedrin 89a, elaborates on how Hananiah ben Azzur copied Jeremiah’s prophecy, but only provides a neutral paraphrase of Jeremiah’s dialogue with Hananiah, whereas PR 26:4 is biased in Jeremiah’s favor and the Talmudic parallels are critical. See also Atzmon, Prophet of Gloom, 272.

3 MekhY. Pasha 1 directly notes that Jeremiah equally defended God and Israel’s honor, unlike Jonah and Elijah. See Wieder, Jeremiah, 97; Kalman, If Jeremiah, 49-50. MekhY. WAYes’a 5 has Jeremiah take a mellower tone than in the Bible (Jer. 2:31). This is the only Tannaitic narrative about Jeremiah.
especially virulent prophet⁴. These opposing depictions of Jeremiah as caring or wrathful are expanded considerably in later sources⁵.

Jeremiah and the content of his prophecies are characterized negatively in sources associated with the Amoraim. He becomes a symbol of rebuke, whereas the biblical prosaic sections of Jeremiah are mostly ignored. The BT contains instances of veiled criticism against Jeremiah, hinting that he wanted the destruction to occur⁶. Pesikta de Rav Khanna and Lamentations R. are harsher still. PRK 13 is exceptionally severe in its treatment of Jeremiah. Jeremiah’s actual existence is in itself a form of punishment and is characterized as such in many direct comments⁷. This is done by arguing that he willingly failed Jerusalem, by characterizing him as a comically excessive prophet of wrath or by voicing disbelief about his concern for Jerusalem and its people.

Lamentation R. shares this negative view. It is critical of Jeremiah’s elegies in Lamentations, and raises doubts in the form of narratives implying that he could not properly lament the fulfilment of his mission⁸. Lam. R. so focuses on God instead of

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⁴ See Sifrei Deut. 1:1, Jeremiah announces prophecies of wrath according to the formula “These are the words” (Jer. 1:1, for instance) as part of the writings of two books (with Lamentations), as did Moses and Amos. In Sifrei Deuteronomy 342, Jeremiah is singled out by the query as to whether he ends his book with words of comfort, as in the typical rabbinic scheme =Y. Berakhot 8:4, where one should part with one’s friend with words of Torah just as the prophets ended their books with comfort. For the possible origins of this idea, see Stein, Symposia Literature, 221-2. The ending scheme might be connected to genus laudativum, public orations which consist of a mix of praise and rebuke. Excellence and perfection are best judged against a background of some dubious quality in the character of the person whose fame is extolled. The rabbis imagined prophets applying this to Israel.

⁵ ARN a (2, 40) mixes indirect depictions of Jeremiah as a paradigmatic character and as a symbol of wrath. This is in line with Tannaitic theatics, in spite of ARN’s later redaction and hints at the primality of the accounts. See Reizel, Introduction, 321-2, 328.

⁶ B. Sotah 41b-42a adds that Jeremiah was punished for flattering Hananiah, by wishing that his comforting false prophecy would come true. This reading hints that Jeremiah is not really interested in the wellbeing of Judah and is insincere. Moreover, Rava (b. Baba Batra 9) notes how Jeremiah asked God to cause Judah to fail by summoning unscrupulous people to undermine charitable deeds and thus facilitate the destruction. Conversely, a unique positive account centered on Jeremiah’s leadership claims that he returned some of the ten tribes of Israel to Josiah’s Judah (b. Arakhin 33a).

⁷ See the extensive analysis of this text and its features below.

⁸ One reoccurring theme is that Jeremiah is unfit to weep or lament over the destruction and hence implicitly that he willed it. See, Lam. R. Proem 24 (=Lam. Zu. 25), Proem 34 (=PRK 13:9); Lam. R. 1:52. Alternatively, other accounts stress that Jeremiah’s prophecies need to be actually revoked,
Jeremiah, as a fitting comforter of Israel in exile. There is, however, some sympathy for Jeremiah’s conflicted position in Lam. R. and as Arnon Atzmon shows, this mellow attitude and some of its accounts are shared by PRK 14.9

Other sources too are equivocal in their treatment of Jeremiah. Ruth Rabbah argues that Jeremiah desired the destruction, but also that he endeavored to avoid it10. Ecclesiastes Rabbah is equally ambivalent, stating Jeremiah’s excessive wrathful nature11, while also his just dissatisfaction with the people of Jerusalem12.

Another line of thought found in some Amoraic and later sources is to absolve Jeremiah from any responsibility for the destruction, since God commanded the prophet and the events that followed13. This argument turns Jeremiah into a blameless but silent messenger, and thereby simultaneously vindicates and eradicates his characterization. This type of account becomes central in Tanḥuma related literature and is mostly shaped as a dialogue between God and Israel or Judah with a silent Jeremiah mediating14.

By contrast, late Midrash swings the pendulum squarely in Jeremiah’s favor. He is turned into a symbol of leniency, and his efforts to forestall the destruction are suggesting that they were too dire and shameful to begin with. Lam. R. 1:21, 23 = PR 29:3. Similarly, Lam. R. 5:20. Lam. R. (Proems 1, 15 and 19) attributes new extra biblical rebukes to Jeremiah.

9 Lam. R. 1:1 notes that when comparing Jeremiah, Moses and Isaiah, only Jeremiah witnessed Jerusalem in its downfall and thus is unfortunate. Lam. R. 3:18-19 notes Jeremiah’s sufferings in the pit. Lam. R. 1:54 paraphrases a midrashic dialogue in which Jeremiah calls on Israel to repent in exile in earnest. Jeremiah’s rebuke of the daughters of Zion (Lam. R. 4:15=PRK 17:6) is equally kind. Argumentation in PRK 14:3 seems to suggest that Jeremiah was kinder than Isaiah in tone and thus ineffectual. See also Lam. R. 5:2; Wieder, Jeremiah, 98; Atzmon, Prophet of Gloom, 287-90.

10 Jeremiah was the first prophet to utter “Amen” and did so when the covenant was breached (Ruth R. 1:4), see Wieder, Jeremiah, 206 n23. But, Ruth R. 2 shows how Jeremiah, like Ezekiel, tried to appease God to avert the destruction to no avail, also see the same idea in PRK 4:10=Tan. Ḥukat 28.

11 Eccles. R. 1:2=PRK 13:12.

12 As in Eccles. R. 10 1:18; 12 1:7. See also Y. Berakhot 11:3 and its use of MeḥY. Shira 8.

13 See PRK 13:8; 16:10; 24:16; Eccles. R. 4 1:3; 6 1:10. All these accounts describe Jeremiah either silent or silenced by God. See also Exod. R. 1 4:3. I associate these instances with the Amoraic diatribe pattern identified in Anisfeld, Sustain Me, 45-55. Thus, later readers iterated on this pattern.

14 See in Tan. Behuukotai 5, Shemot 14; Deut. R. Va’ethanan 2:24, Akav 3:3. Tanḥuma Metzora 9 on the other hand, coolly describes Jeremiah as asking Israel to repent and them refusing.
exalted. He then becomes a heroic or tragic character even to the extent of reversing previous accounts. The most extreme example of the positive late position is found in Pesikta Rabatti 26, a late-midrashic biography of Jeremiah that underscores the idea that he only wished to avert destruction and prophesy comfort. This idea is presented in several evocative ways; including insertions of monologues where Jeremiah demonstrates his concern and innocence, a liberal treatment of older traditions to highlight Jeremiah favorably, and a lengthy Rewritten Bible section that contrasts Jeremiah’s positive character with other figures.

Biblical scholars find that since the book of Jeremiah contains the most prosaic accounts describing any prophet in the Bible and incorporates many verses of lament, he is especially fitting to be read as a distinct character, by both biblical and post biblical redactors. Conversely, many of these prosaic accounts are ignored in the Midrashim. This is because Jeremiah is only extensively characterized when the question of his culpability in the destruction of Jerusalem is mentioned.

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15 Midr. Ps. 90:2 includes Jeremiah among the four who prayed to God but also dared reproach him. An index in Deut. R. VA’etḥanan 2:11 no longer describes Jeremiah as the most balanced or dire prophet, but as the most lenient. In PR 31, Jeremiah himself asks God to avert the different kinds of ruin the prophet described, with only partial success, obviating the need for other prophets to do so, in contrast to several Lam. R accounts. Jeremiah is also very vocal in protecting Israel in Exod. R. 31:10.

16 Lamentations Zutta is an interesting case in that it contains a synthesis of accounts which parallel PRK 13, Lam. R. and PR 26. Hence, the composition as a whole takes a mixed view of Jeremiah. An examination of the four unfamiliar accounts, suggests that the redactors reveal sympathy for Jeremiah by including or composing new homilies that favor him. These are the sources:

1) Lam. Zu. 1: 1, 1 is a dialogue in verse drawn from Lamentations, Ezekiel and Jeremiah. Jeremiah (=Lam.) wants God to help the destroyed Jerusalem, but God refuses because of the sins of the people described by the two prophets (Ezekiel and Jeremiah). This further distances Jeremiah from his own rebukes, which are now associated solely with God.

2) Lam. Zu. 7 (1, 2) (variant of PR 26:1/2), stresses that Jeremiah lamented the whole of Lamentations immediately after his dedication, thus highlighting his sorrow at his assigned mission. The phrasing of the account reflects Tan. Shemot 14.

3) Lam. Zu. 17, which describes Jeremiah concluding a pact with the people on route to Babylon. He would weep for Jerusalem during the day and the exiles during the night, since the Chaldeans whose feast day was Sunday, no less, suggesting a Byzantine context, forbade them to weep in the day.

4) Lam. Zu. 19 compares the sufferings of the Babylonian exile to the glory of the Exodus. Jeremiah is made the titular voice of his people’s suffering, unlike a similar comparison in PRK 13:13.

17 See the analysis in Heinemann, A Homily, 35-7 and the extensive disputation below.

18 Segal, Jeremiah, 863, 873-5. Note how the author engages with his own biographical speculations spurred by the same passages.

Jason Kalman argues that apologetic needs shift some of the blame for the destruction from the Jerusalemites (and thus implicitly from the Jewish people at the time of the homilist) to Jeremiah and even unto God\textsuperscript{20}. This leads to two starkly contrasting midrashic portraits of Jeremiah. Nonetheless, it is Jeremiah’s state of mind and implicit responsibility for the failure or success of his mission that remain central to both the negative and positive portrayals, far beyond other possible facets of his character.

Ishay Rosen-Zvi identified the two major examples of conflicting views on Jeremiah: the homiletic Pesikta de Rav Khanna 13 and its alleged later reinterpretation PR 26\textsuperscript{21}. These two sources differ in genre, tone and treatment, of character in general, and represent the two midrashic extremes. The following major sections of this part of the thesis, illustrate the differences between the rendering of Jeremiah in the two sources, as a case study for differences in the representation of character consciousness between classical and late Midrashim. This is made possible since some implications are also key to other late Midrashim and even to systematic medieval bible exegesis.

\section*{2.2 Jeremiah’s Characterization in Pesikta de-Rav Kahana 13}

\subsection*{2.2.1 The Message of PRK 13: A Dire Book for a Dour Character}

PRK 13, “\textit{The Words of Jeremiah}”, is the most unflattering portrayal of Jeremiah in all of rabbinic literature\textsuperscript{22}. \textit{Piska} 13 undeniably contains myriad references to

\textsuperscript{20} Kalman, If Jeremiah, 38, 42-7.
\textsuperscript{21} Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 584-90.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, 584-5. Jeremiah as portrayed in Lam. R., is conflicted and torn like his biblical depiction because of his mission and thus rendered both critically and empathically by the rabbis. However, all versions of Jeremiah appearing in the more rhetorically minded PRK are more uniform. Note that PRK 13 indeed ends on a comforting note but not with a more positive assessment of Jeremiah. Generally speaking, most chapters in PRK end on a positive note about God and Israel or the world to come. A few are more ambiguous, such as PRK 6 and 8; thus the fact that Jeremiah deviates from this rabbinic scheme, is a valid complaint from PRK’s point of view.
Jeremiah, but there is a catch. Rosen-Zvi noted that the rabbis treat scripture not as a series of books, but rather as a compilation of verses to be read in the context of all scripture. Thus, the name “Jeremiah” refers in Tannaitic and Amoraic accounts, both to the man and the book. Talking about Jeremiah thus might not be equivalent to characterizing him.

Nonetheless, the very nature of PRK’s editing lends itself to discussing Jeremiah as a character. Jacob Neusner compared the rhetoric of Leviticus R. with that of PRK and found an interesting development in PRK. It employs a much more cohesive rhetoric that focuses not on myriad interpretations of a verse, but on repeatedly stating one point in many verses. This leads the reader to form a repeating unstated syllogism, which in turn is the main message of the piska.

As Chatman describes, one of the processes that occurs while reading is the accumulation of similar characterizations in the mind of the reader. I suggest that by repeating a syllogism about Jeremiah, PRK 13 is in fact characterizing him. Likewise, Isaiah Ben-Pazi found that the editors of PRK and to a lesser degree those of the Y. Talmud utilized characters to organize their sections. This is true of Rashbi in PRK 11 and Jethro in PRK 3 and 12. As Brachi Elitzur shows, the PRK redaction ignored homilies that praised Jethro and included only those that criticized him. The PRK redaction thus characterizes by collection and repetition.

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23 Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 570-1.
24 Neusner, Appropriation and Imitation, 142-3, 150-1. For an updated view emphasizing the opening proem of a piska, see Stern, From Rebuke, 123-5; Atzmon, Prophet of Gloom, 273-4. One possible axis of midrashic transformation is from Tannaitic-exegetic to Amoraic-rhetoric/homiletic discourse, see Anisfeld, Sustain Me, 8.
26 Ben-Pazi, Compilation, 138-9.
27 Ibid, 143-5. Another lengthy example is the end of PRK VaYehi BeShalah 10:15-24. The figures of Rashbi and his son are the organizing principles of this respective chapter. Ibid, 141-2. 10:23 contains a legend similar to 10:13. This frame may have been the original impetus to combine all the sources.
28 Elitzur, Yitro, 9-10. The editor emphasizes the connection between Israel and God that conversion cannot bridge. The message was influenced by PRK’s aim as to be read during holidays to strengthen
Lewis M. Barth suggested one possible repeated syllogistic message for PRK 13 concerned with Jeremiah; namely, the ending of homilies with Jer 1:1 justifies the inclusion of the dire words of Jeremiah in scripture. This is inaccurate. As Atzmon argues, PRK 13’s redaction is focused not only on the justification of biblical rebuke but also touches upon Jeremiah himself. PRK 13 strings negative characterizations together to depict Jeremiah’s character as especially harsh. I argue below that this is done in an attempt to characterize Jeremiah in line with the contents of his book. This also has a unique impact on the representation of his psyche.

2.2.1.1 Characterizing the Book of Jeremiah

In order to show how dire verses become dire characterizations, this section examines how the text of Jeremiah is perceived by Piska 13. The unstated syllogism in several sections of PRK 13 is that the existence in and of itself of the book of Jeremiah is a form of punishment. Jeremiah is contrasted with Ezekiel in PRK 13:2. Repenting as a result of wise reproof leads to a reward, in the form of the mission of Ezekiel who is perceived as a comforting prophet. Disobedience leads to Jeremiah’s prophecy, a sign that all hope has been lost. As Rosen-Zvi pointed out, in PRK 13:3 Jeremiah’s words, like those of Moses, endure as a form of punishment for Israel’s attitude, thus preserving denunciation forever.

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one’s national identity, ibid, 27-9. Generally, the editors were careful in their choice of materials included; hence only negative portrayals of Jethro, ibid, 25.

29 Barth, Sermons, 514n33.

30 As opposed to PRK 14 that has a different message, see Atzmon, Prophet of Gloom, 271-2, 290-3.

31 Ezekiel was thought of as a more comforting book and the above source suggests that this may have extended to his prophetic figure, see b. Baba Batra 14b: ...Jeremiah speaks throughout of destruction and Ezekiel commences with destruction and ends with consolation...

32 Also see Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 583-5.

33 Ibid. See also b. Baba Batra 14b, which describes the whole of Jeremiah as prophecies of doom.
Other PRK 13 sections characterize the whole book of Jeremiah in this light as exclusively composed of curses and rebuke\textsuperscript{34}. Therefore in PRK 13:5 the \textbf{sum} of Jeremiah’s prophecies is described as thorns:

*R. Samuel bar Nahman began his discourse with the verse* But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the Land before you, then shall those that remain of them be as thorns in your eyes, and as pricks in your sides (Num. 33:55). The Holy One reminded Israel: I said to you, “Thou shalt utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite” (Deut. 20:17). But you did not do so; for “Rahab the harlot, and her father’s household, and all that she had, did Joshua save alive” (Josh. 6:25). Behold, Jeremiah will spring from the children’s children of Rahab the harlot and will thrust such words into you as will be thorns in your eyes and pricks in your sides. Hence Scripture deems it necessary for the Book to begin with the [sharp] words of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1)\textsuperscript{35}.

Numbers 33 warns the Israelites that sparing any of the original inhabitants of Canaan will make them “thorns in your eyes and pricks in your sides”. This verse as Rosen-Zvi notes, is then directed toward the words of Jeremiah as a descendent of one such Gentile, Rahab the Harlot. Annoying thorns are Jeremiah’s flavor of prophecy\textsuperscript{36}.

Est. R. Proem 7 uses a similar interpretation of Num. 33 to describe Haman as a thorn in one’s eye. Hence, one or both of these homilies might suggest that Jeremiah is worse than Haman\textsuperscript{37}.

PRK 13:8 describes Jeremiah’s words not as thorns but as a plague\textsuperscript{38}. PRK 13:7 has a similar message. It is a list which argues that since Jer. 1:1 uses the stem $D$-

\begin{itemize}
  \item Thereby distancing Jeremiah’s words from God, see Wieder, Jeremiah, 92.
  \item Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 341-2. \textit{לע}, ר’ שמעון בר נחמן פנה לא ולפיים ואו יאבר
  \item Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 343-4: In another comment, the word dibre in the phrase “The words (dibre) of Jeremiah” (Jer. 1:1), usually derived from dabar, “word,” is derived instead from dber, “pestilence leading to death,” so that the entire phrase is construed as “The death-dealing words of Jeremiah” (ibid.) such as are for death to death (Jer. 43:11).
\end{itemize}
B-R for the words of Jeremiah, all his words are curses from heaven. Unlike the other examples cited in the index, the Jeremiah proof text is not immediately related to the opening verse and hence glosses over the majority of prophecy in the book.

So far I have shown that the rabbis in PKR 13 had a stereotypical interpretation of the verses of Jeremiah following Jer. 1:1, as filled with strident curses and saw their preservation as a form of punishment in and of itself. This is translated into a characterization of Jeremiah himself as similar to his book.

2.2.1.2 The Characterization of Jeremiah in Light of his Book

Much that was said above about the book of Jeremiah is applied to Jeremiah the character, as well. Since the recording of the book of Jeremiah is punishment, Jeremiah the character is in itself another punishment. Much of this is accomplished via analogy. PRK 13:1 indirectly compares Jeremiah with Nebuchadnezzar, which Wieder contends might imply that Jeremiah was responsible for the destruction:

Hearken (Isa. 10:30): hearken to My commands, hearken to words of Torah, hearken to words of prophecy. If you do not, Laishah (ibid.), the “lion” (layis) will come upon you, the wicked Nebuchadnezzar, of whom it is written “The lion is gone up from his thicket” (Jer. 4:7). O thou [who at this time art] poor (Isa. 10:30) in righteous men, poor in words of Torah, poor in obedience to divine commandments, and poor in deeds in behalf of your fellow men! If you do not hearken, Anathoth (Isa. 10:30), the man of Anathoth, [Jeremiah], will come and will prophecy dire things as punishment for you. But because Israel disregarded Isaiah’s warning, it became necessary for Scripture to set down The [direful] words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah (Jer. 1:1).

39 Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 342-3.
40 See extensively in the previous chapter.
41 Wieder, Jeremiah, 93. The analogy derives from the fact that the same language is used to describe both Jeremiah and Nebuchadnezzar. See also Atzmon, Prophet of Gloom, 276. He argues that this homily is less negative in its Lam. R. version.
42 Braude and Kapstein, 338.
The use of the verses from Isaiah reverses the verses’ original comforting tone. “listen” and “poor” become conditions: If you do not listen then you get Nebuchadnezzar. If you are poor in deeds you will get Jeremiah. He, “the man of Anathoth” is a sanction. Jeremiah the man and not his prophecy is similarly a mark of certain doom much like the way the birth of Benjamin proved that there would be twelve tribes (PRK 13:14):

In the land of Benjamin (Jer. 1:1). Jeremiah’s portion was set in the land of Benjamin. Why Benjamin? Because until Benjamin was born, it was not certain, [despite the prophecy that a twelfth son would be born to Jacob], that our Father Jacob would, in fact, raise up Twelve Tribes; so, too, despite all the Prophets who prophesied against Jerusalem, their prophecy did not become a certainty until Jeremiah rose up...

Jeremiah’s mere existence is part of the destruction. Furthermore, Benjamin’s birth also killed Rachel, as she expresses herself in the Bible (Gen. 35:18). This comparison to Benjamin may imply that Jeremiah like Benjamin ‘killed’ Jerusalem.

As elaborated above, the book was described in PRK 13 as entirely composed of curses. Thus, Jeremiah the prophet can only give voice (lehallek) to many dire prophecies wherever he goes, modelled after Jer. 37:12 (PRK 13:4):

...But R. Benjamin ben Levi said: Jeremiah [did not go forth to receive his portion there, but] to portion out (lehallek) many direful prophecies there. The text does not say “the word of Jeremiah” but the WORDS of Jeremiah. Therefore Scripture deems it necessary for the Book to begin with the [direful] WORDS of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1)...

Jeremiah’s conduct is explained by the phrasing of Jer. 1:1, which has “words” in the plural implying many words and thus many prophecies. Note that this reading of Jer. 37 is the inverse of the biblical context in which Jeremiah’s act is

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43 Atzmon notes that this proem’s depiction of Jeremiah is forced when compared to other versions. Atzmon, Prophet of Gloom, 277.
44 Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 352-3. They also suggest that a play on words of the previous understanding of Jeremiah’s name, “rose up”, is hinted at by this interpretation. ירמיהו אסר, נמי הזקן של מבנים ברך. לפי מבנה לא מבנה,말ים ערבו שראו תמם, שום שאירント מטבל עד שבל uw... כל המברים ישנות ברût וירשליט לא מבנה אסר הוא שבו... ר. בן משה אミי אלי למשהו מה נבוא תמי, ובר... ר. בן משה אלי אלי למשהו מה נבוא תמי, ובר... ר. בן משה אלי אלי למשהו מה נבוא תמי, ובר... ר. בן משה אלי אלי למשהו מה נבוא תמי, ובר...
45 Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 339-341. ר. בן משה אלי אלי למשהו מה נבוא תמי, ובר... ר. בן משה אלי אלי למשהו מה נבוא תמי, ובר... ר. בן משה אלי אלי למשהו מה נבוא תמי, ובר...
meant to comfort the listeners. PRK 13’s Jeremiah cannot help but rebuke. Rebuke is also the sole quality that Jeremiah shares with Moses, while parallels enforce other more positive similarities (PRK 13:6)46:

R. Judah bar R. Simon began his discourse with the verse I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee (Deut.18:18). But a little farther on, Scripture says, “And there hath not risen a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses” (Deut. 34:10), even though the first verse speaks of a prophet... like unto thee. The point, however, is that there will be, God promised, “a prophet like unto thee” in the uttering of reproofs. As a matter of fact, you find that much of what is written of the one, Moses, is written of the other, Jeremiah: the one prophesied forty years, and the other prophesied forty years: the one prophesied concerning Judah and Israel, and the other prophesied concerning Judah and Israel; the one—people of his own Tribe rose against him, and the other—people of his own Tribe rose against him; the one was cast into a river and the other was cast into a pit; the one was saved by a maidservant, the other was saved by a manservant; finally, the one came with words of reproof, and the other came with words of reproof. Therefore the Book begins The[reproving] words of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1)47.

R. Judah notes that Deut. 18:18 contradicts Deut. 34:10. Read in conjunction, the verses imply that there will be a prophet like Moses but that there never was one. Jeremiah is the answer. He is like Moses but only in his sharp reproofs48, which is followed by an index of narrative similarities between the two characters. This very same index indirectly proves that a positive comparison between Moses and Jeremiah was possible, but the homilist chose to stress Jeremiah’s rebukes, just as other PRK 13 accounts had treated his book49.

A similar fusing of Jeremiah’s character with the book emerges from the suggestion that the book does not even conclude with consolation, and thus strays

46 See Atzmon, Prophet of Gloom, 279-80.
47 Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 342. אֲנַא מַעְרֵךְ מַכָּהּ מַכָּהּ, מַעְרֵךְ מַכָּהּ מַכָּהּ, אֲנַא מַעְרֵךְ מַכָּהּ מַכָּהּ, אֲנַא מַעְרֵךְ מַכָּהּ מַכָּהּ. לִפְיכָךְ צָרִיךְ הַכָּהָן לִמֵּר דִּבְרֵי יְרֵמְיָהוּ (ירמיהו א:א). כְּלָל אָלֶּלְּלִי מַכָּהּ מַכָּהּ, כְּלָל אָלֶּלְּלִי מַכָּהּ מַכָּהּ.
48 Kalman on the other hand, believes that the comparison is meant to give Jeremiah authority in order to blunt his rebukes in Lamentations. Kalman, If Jeremiah, 34-6. However, he is ignoring the narrow scope of the comparison to Moses, especially with regards to their respective books.
49 For an alternative, see Lam. Zu. 19. This character contrast goes against a Qumranic analogy, which was meant to portray Jeremiah as the new Moses, further suggesting PRK 13’s novelty. See Davis, Cave 4, 172-4.
from the rabbinic scheme of how to end prophetic books. In effect this is an accusation against the prophet (underlined) (PRK 13:14):

...R. Eleazar and R. Johanan differ [on the way in which Prophets conclude their prophecies]. R. Eleazar said: All Prophets begin with words of reproof, but all conclude with words of comfort, except Jeremiah who concludes with words of reproof, saying “Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise again” (Jer. 51:64). R. Johanan said: But Jeremiah also concludes with words of comfort, for since he keeps prophesying the Temple’s destruction, you might suppose that he would conclude with the Temple’s destruction. Not at all. Scripture brings his prophecy to a close with the verse “Thus far are the words of Jeremiah” (ibid.), so that he concludes with prophecy of the downfall of those who destroyed the Temple... is it not a fact that he says therein “But Thou hast utterly rejected us” (Lam. 5:22)? Yes, but directly after he says “Thou hast utterly rejected us,” he goes onto say comfortingly, “Turn Thou us unto Thee” (Lam. 5:21) 50.

R. Eleazar singles out Jeremiah, the man, as especially fond of reproof by concluding with the fall of Babylon. R. Johanan counters this claim by arguing that Jeremiah does not stop prophesying with the fall of the temple; in other words, Jer. 52 is not part of his prophecy, but rather he chose to end with the positive note of the fall of Babylon. However, the redactors do not stop there and add another difficulty 51. When Lamentations is included among Jeremiah’s prophecies, 5:21 needs to be read as following v. 22, to end it on a consolatory note 52. This marks Jeremiah the prophet especially harsh. He concludes another book with rebuke, not just his namesake.

The following account goes beyond characterizing Jeremiah according to the book of Jeremiah’s contents and indirectly argues that Jeremiah willingly took part in

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50 Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 352-3.
51 A parallel in Lam. R., for instance, chooses not to argue that the book of Jeremiah is unique and other prophets have trouble with the rabbinic scheme. See also Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 579.
52 See also Kalman, If Jeremiah, 48-9. He notes that the above argument for the lateness of the end of Lamentations has the added effect of blunting the harsh ending.
the destruction of Jerusalem. PRK 13:4 implies this using Jeremiah’s aggadic connection with Rahab in a *pitorn*:

R. Joshua of Silnin, citing R. Levi, began his discourse with the verse A servant that dealeth wisely shall have rule over a son that doeth shamefully; and shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren (Prov. 17:2). The words A servant that dealeth wisely apply to Jeremiah; the words shall speak in prophetic parable of a son that doeth shamefully mean that Jeremiah had in mind Israel who brought shame on themselves through service to idolatry. R. Abba bar Kahana applied to Israel the verse “You are not as the harlot who made her deeds comely” (Ezek. 16:31), and then said: Let the descendant of a shameless woman who made her deeds comely, present himself and reprimand the son of a comely woman who made her deeds shameless. ...
The words And shall have part of the inheritance among the brethren (Prov. 17:2) apply to Jeremiah, of whom it is written “Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin [which included Jericho, Rahab’s city], to receive his portion (lehallek) there in the midst of his brethren” (Jer. 37:12)—that is, said Rab, Jeremiah went forth to take possession of the portion of land which was his...

R. Levi identifies Jeremiah with the figure of the servant of Proverbs who will rule over the more legitimate but shameless Israel when it claims its inheritance.

This reading implicitly characterizes Jeremiah as a lowly servant who wants to disinherit Israel. This is further emphasized by the redactor’s juxtaposition of Rab’s reading of Jer. 37:12 describing Jeremiah going to *lehallek*; i.e., receive his portion,

53 Jeremiah’s name in PRK 13:12, is taken to be negative in two different ways. He was the prophet in whose time divine justice was the strongest or he was the prophet in the time of the Temple’s desolation. I suspect both renderings hint that Jeremiah was a failure in having desolation occur. For instance, if as per the Hebrew “the measure of Justice rose” (sound play on Jeremiah in Heb.), why didn’t Jeremiah stop it? Comparatively, PRK 15:7 describes Nebuzaradan succeeding in turning this measure of Justice into mercy. Is Jeremiah a lesser prophet than he is? Contrast this with Jeremiah’s depiction in MekH. Pashla I, where he is an example of a successful prophet. See also, Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 576-7.

54 See above. I include Jeremiah in the hostility of PRK towards the converted as noted by Elitzur, Ytro, 21-3. Jeremiah is the descendant of the “shameless” Rahab. This epithet is not always utilized in the parallel sources. In addition, the reproach embedded in the references to Rahab’s deeds might symbolize Jeremiah’s prophecies. Note the reversal of fortunes between Israel and Rahab hinted at by this source. For Jeremiah’s lineage in the Midrashim, also see Wieder, Jeremiah, 6.

55 Braude and Kapstein, 339-341.

56 Identifying Jeremiah with the servant is a crucial ploy. This character is viewed negatively in Prov. 30:22. Note that Midrash Prov. 30:27 uses this last verse as a polemic against Islam “the sons of Ishmael”. Thus, the interpretation is polemical, but the target changes. In any case, Prov. 17:2 is used by Gen. R. 60:12 to describe Eliezer, again a “proselyte” character.
Rahab’s portion of land. These joint interpretations hint that the Gentile descendent-Jeremiah has a vested interest in having his warnings come to pass so he can usurp Israel. There is no inherent need even in the context of PRK 13 to criticize Jeremiah’s connection with Rahab, thus making this account’s implications seem premeditated.

2.2.1.3 Negative Characterization Employing Character Monologue

The way PRK 13 presents Jeremiah’s mind is also in line with this work’s stereotypic and accusatory portrayal of him. Rachel A. Anisfeld claimed that instances of direct speech via monologue or dialogue especially by God, were one of the major innovations of PRK and other Amoraic Midrashim. Accordingly, Piska 13 characterizes Jeremiah’s mental state by only rarely paraphrasing verses spoken by him into a monologue. As noted by Rosen-Zvi, monologues modelled after the book of Jeremiah are surprisingly infrequent in Midrashim. Nonetheless, this is a critical form of characterization, since Ewen describes monologue as the most direct indication of how a narrator perceives the character’s consciousness. Hence, the two rare cases below underscore PRK 13’s more direct criticism of Jeremiah.

Unlike PRK 13:6’s comparisons to Moses above, PRK 13:13 is phrased as though Jeremiah himself is the one making the comparison (see in the underlined):

Of (min) the priests that were in Anathoth (Jer. 1:1). By min, “of,” in the phrase Of the priests that were in Anathoth, Jeremiah meant, according to R. Berechiah: Among the priests my name is deprived of the respect due it. In the days of Moses, priests were told to say, “The Lord bless thee” (Num. 6:24); but in my days, said Jeremiah, I am told “Of them shall be taken up a curse” (Jer. 29:22). In the days of Moses, priests were told to say, “and keep thee” (Num. 6:24); but in my days, said Jeremiah,

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57 As also noted in Atzmon, Prophet of Gloom, 281-3.
58 Compare to PRK 13:12: [God deemed it necessary to speak thus of Jeremiah, for] he, according to R. Samuel bar Nahman, was one of four men—Phinehas, Uriah, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah—who were reputed to have come from blemished stock... Jeremiah as well—Israel were running him down, saying, “Is he not of the descendants of Rahab the harlot?” To set the record straight, however, Scripture finds it necessary to indicate his lofty pedigree: The words of Jeremiah the son of Hilkiah, of the priests (Jer. 1:1), Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 351.
59 Anisfeld, Sustain Me, 45-55.
60 Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 573.
61 Ewen, Character, 156-61.
I am told “Such as are for death, to death” (Jer. 15:2). In the days of Moses, “The Lord make His face to shine upon thee” (Num. 6:25); but in my days, “He hath made me to dwell in dark places as those do that have been long dead” (Lam. 3:6). In the days of Moses, “and be gracious unto thee” (Num. 6:25); but in my days, “I will show you no favor” (Jer. 16:13), [said God]. In the days of Moses, “The Lord lift up His countenance upon Thee” (Num.6:26); but in my days, “A nation of fierce countenance, that shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young” (Deut.28:50). In the days of Moses, “and give thee peace” (Num. 6:26); but in my days, “I have taken away My peace from this people, saith the Lord, even mercy and compassion” (Jer. 16:5).

This monologue is composed of an index which is mostly connecting biblical verses, and thus seemingly does little to reflect Jeremiah’s personality. However, since the majority of the complaints are framed by “but in my days” and since Jeremiah complains first about his status as a priest, overall this may lead to the calculated impression that Jeremiah is only thinking of himself. The emerging consciousness is of a Jeremiah who is mentally distant from his people and is motivated by selfish interests, in line with PRK 13:4’s “land grab” (described above). The same rhetorical comparison, without Jeremiah’s unflattering characterizations is known from one of Yannai’s piyyutim. His version thus heightens PRK 13’s biased contributions. PRK 13 may have been inspired by biblical Jeremiah’s personal laments, such as Jer. 20:7ff to portray him as selfishly complaining.

Anisfeld notes that a common uniquely Amoraic “type scene” in PRK is a dialogue between God and Israel via a mediator, which contains divine speech introduced by “Amar HaKadosh Baruchhu” and also conveys intimacy by employing

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62 Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 351. א"ע ויתoblin א"ע ויתו

63 Further support for this account depicting Jeremiah as selfish is found in Wieder, Jeremiah, 217n25. He notes that Jeremiah’s answer to Nebuzaradan in some versions of PRK 13:9 seem to deflect a possible selfish portrayal. The phrasing “I and others” prophesied suggests that it is a rejoinder to PRK 13:13’s “but in my days”.

64 Yahalom, Piyut in Byzantium, 325-7. He also identifies PRK 13:13’s monologue structure in concurrent Christian hymns. This structure thus might associate Jeremiah with polemics, see below.
“you” and “I” instead of the biblical third person. This stylistic choice allows PRK to address its contemporary audience in a pretense of addressing historical Israel.

In the following example, Jeremiah engages in a lengthy monologue in PRK 13:10, which paraphrases Jer. 9:9 but contains its own unique addition that I view as undermining PRK’s main discourse of intimacy (see the underlined):

For the mountains will I take up a weeping and wailing, and for the pastures turned into wilderness a lamentation (Jer. 9:9). I take up a lamentation for the high mountains which have become a wilderness. Because they are burned up, so that none passeth through—because they hearkened not to the Voice, nay mikneh (מִקְנֶה). It was not enough for you, O Israel [that you were like a thoughtless wife who] hearkens not to her husband’s voice; you even went so far as to make God warn you, mikneh [as a husband may formally warn his wife] to desist or face the consequences of your whorish seeking after idols…

Jeremiah uses PRK’s language of intimacy, “wife” and “husband”, in a parable that derides Israel as a “thoughtless wife”. Hence Jeremiah is depicted as subverting what Anisfeld considers to be the PRK’s wider aims; namely, that he is undermining the intimacy between Israel and God. Jeremiah uses intimacy to highlight Israel’s guilt. Thus, Jeremiah is characterized as antagonistic to the wider aims of PRK. Essentially, Jeremiah is characterized by the redactors in ways that

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65 Anisfeld, Sustain Me, 52-65. She argues that Amoraic Midrashim are better suited for a homiletic personal voice than Tannaitic Midrashim as seen in their differing terminologies. Among other things, “Amar HaKadosh Baruchhu” appears 343 times in Amoraic Midrashim as compared to 36 times in Tannaitic sources. Ibid, 111-8.
66 Ibid, 58.
67 Ibid, 79-83, 35-8, 4-5. The theological language of intimacy was very popular in Late Antiquity in Judaism and Christianity alike, ibid, 30-1.
68 Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 346-8. I wonder whether a subversion of this homily inspired the bitter waters mentioned in PR 26:1/2, as Israel-Zion is depicted as a whoring wife in both accounts, but Jeremiah is only horrified at this reality in PR 26:8.
69 See Anisfeld, Sustain Me, 52-5.
70 There is one exception contained in PRK 13:14: ...Another explanation of why Jeremiah’s portion was set in the land of Benjamin: as long as Benjamin was in his mother’s womb, she did not die, but as soon as he went forth from it, she died, as is written “and it came to pass as he went forth, her soul—it expired” (Gen.35:18). So, too, during all the days that Jeremiah was in Jerusalem, it was not destroyed, but when he went forth from it, it was destroyed. It was of this going forth that Jeremiah said: “O Lord, Thou hast enticed me, and I was enticed” (Jer. 20:7)—Thou didst set out to entice me, and I let myself be enticed. Thou didst have me go forth out of Jerusalem, and then Thou didst destroy it. Yesterday, Thou didst tell me, “Behold, Hanamel, the son of Shallum thine uncle, shall come unto...
denigrate his mental objectivity in favor of culpability and so they undermine him and
his book. He represents a theological problem.

2.2.3 Summary: A Poetics of Characters as Textual Repositories

I have shown that the rabbis in PRK 13 were not so much influenced by the
biographical information in the book of Jeremiah but by their conception of it as
scripture. The rabbis base the prophet’s character on his harsh verses more than they
relate to his prose depictions. While Tannaitic literature treated biblical characters as
clusters of traditions that lent themselves to be connected, homiletic Midrashim as
suggested by PRK 13, view them as impressions of ever-present texts, in line with
PRK’s connection to the haftarot.

I view this association of text and character as another facet of a general
Amoraic innovation mentioned by Leib Moscovitz; namely, the retroactive linking of
different legal cases with a one character or Torah of a certain sage. This linkage is in
fact a literary fiction that uses a character to express a theoretical legal principle.

The collections of accounts about characters and sages in PRK, the Y. Talmud and
other compositions related to homiletic Midrashim, might suggest the onset of an

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thee, saying: Buy thee my field’’ (Jer. 32:7), and it was ‘‘thus [that] Thou didst overcome me, and didst
prevail over me’’ (Jer. 20:7)... Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 352-3.
A play on the previous interpretation of Jeremiah’s name (rose up) is hinted at. Jeremiah confesses his
concern for Jerusalem via quoted verse explaining he was tricked by God to leave the city so that it
could be destroyed. Hence, Jeremiah in this account has very different motivations than in the rest of
PRK 13 and God is to blame. This argument was greatly enhanced in PR 26 and I suspect might be
different in tone to the rest of the piska because of its different origins in the Baruch literature, see
2.3.3.1 and 2.3.1.2.

71 See also Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 572-3.
72 Further support for an Amoraic reception of characters influenced by associated texts, might be the
figures of Adam and Solomon in PRK, but in accounts modelled not on their respective biblical
narratives, but rather on texts associated with them such as Eccles. See a similar line of thought about
the Amoraic reception of Job as book or sage in Mack, Job, 151-5, 176-91.
73 Moscovitz, Talmudic Reasoning, 280-92.
Amoraic sense of character as composed of collectable and demonstrable accounts, whose preconceived nature characterizes the character more than the actual contents.

The dire image of Jeremiah in PRK 13 emerges from negative analogical associations as well as the exclusion of Jeremiah from dialogue scenes typical of PRK; the end result is a silencing of his consciousness. Rare instances of monologue or dialogue express the prophet’s sense of harshness and selfishness. Piska 13 systematically arranges materials around a harsh Jeremiah and so produces an interpretation of the character as its major unifying message, but rarely pays attention to his state of mind.

The unique harshness of PRK 13 in the history of Jeremiah’s midrashic reception is evident to a lesser extent in other Midrashim, whose redaction was traced by Barth to the mid to late 5th century. The possible role of Jeremiah in anti-Jewish Christian polemics embedded in this specific period of Midrash composition, is presented below as an explanation for Jeremiah’s depiction in PRK 13.

### 2.2.4 Christian Polemics Characterizing Jeremiah in PRK 13

PRK 17:1 shows Jeremiah arguing for Israel’s abandonment but refuted by God. The “congregation of Israel” perceives Jeremiah as overly harsh:

...Is His promise come to an end for evermore? (Ps. 77:5). R. Simon, on the other hand, took the words to mean that the congregation of Israel is asking: Was Thy promise completely dissolved, brought to an end for evermore, as would appear from the words of Jeremiah who declared, “I have taken away My peace from this people, saith the Lord, even mercy and compassion” (Jer. 16:5)? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? (Ps. 77:10) [The congregation of Israel asks, and replies in the conclusion of the verse]: Though wroth in anger, His compassions endure forever (ibid)...

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74 According to Barth, Piska 13 of the Pesikta de-Rav Kahana (PRK) (like 14 to 22), was probably composed during the latter half of the 5th century, after the completion of Lev. R. and the Y. Talmud, but in the same academy. Barth, Sermons, 509-10.

75 Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 406-9.
Anisfeld identifies such PRK dialogue scenes with a diatribe form, in which a speaker loosely develops an ethical/philosophical question by imitating a dialogue between two or more persons. Karl-Heinz Uthemann notes that it was common to place quotations from known sources, such as poets or the common assumptions and fears of the listeners in the mouth of the arguers and interjectors. PRK Jeremiah voices such polemic induced fears that were known to its Jewish audience.

Jeremiah’s claims are much alike the Gentile philosopher, who uses Hos. 5:6 to demonstrate that God had completely forsaken Israel (Midr. Ps. 10:8). Jeremiah’s PRK perspective seems to be foreign to his Jewish congregation. His descriptions of God’s rejection of Judah in the Bible therefore might have been used in Christian polemics that blackened the character in the eyes of the authors of PRK.

The most obvious proof would be a positive polemical parallel to PRK negative characterization of Jeremiah. However, looking for Patristic parallels to Midrash can be problematic. Marc Hirshman found that Amoraic Midrashim, such as SoS. R. and by extension PRK, do not accurately repeat Christian polemical...
arguments, but only vaguely hint at them. Clear references only appear from the Tanhuma Midrashim and onwards but are still hard to identify.

It comes as no surprise that an examination of all the texts mentioned by Joseph Jacobs and Isaac Broyde as central to Christian anti-Jewish polemics in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages was disappointing, as there is no “smoking gun." While the book of Jeremiah is central to Christian polemics against Judaism, it is hardly unique or more frequently included among the proof texts used for that purpose, nor is the prophet characterized in any meaningful fashion relevant to his portrayal in PRK 13. In fact, as far as I can tell, no verse used by accounts hostile to Jeremiah in PRK or Lam. R. is ever evoked as prof against Judaism.

There is a surprising explanation for this incompatibility. PRK 13 does not polemicize against Christian claims using Jeremiah, but actually expresses a general acceptance of these claims as its starting point for the character. Like Eusebius

80 See Reizel, Introduction, 155-6, 223-4.
81 Hirschman, Mikra and Midrash, 14-5, 22. I did find a one possible parallel to Christian polemics echoed by Jeremiah, who actively opposes having God forsake Israel in Tanhuma-related literature (Exod. R. 31:10).
83 Another verse unused by Midrash (Jer. 16:6), is far more popular. For instance, Tertullian (D. 240 C.E): By saying this, He suggested to them the meaning of the fulfilled prophecy, that it was even He who by Jeremiah had foretold, “Behold, I will send many fishers; and they shall fish them” (Jer. 16:16). Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, ANFO3, The Five Books against Marcion, IV: IX, 355. Surprisingly, the only clear anti-Christian polemic in PRK 13 is Jeremiah’s portrayal as a second lesser Moses (PRK 13:6). Eusebius of Caesarea (D. 339 C.E): Demonstratio Evangelica (3:2), notes that no prophet that came after Moses was a lawgiver or behaved similarly, Jeremiah included, only Jesus. The PRK parallel if anything, suggests a more positive outlook on Jeremiah’s capacities than in Eusebius. Also see Eusebius, Demonstratio, 104-5.
(Demonstratio Evangelica, X: V, based on Jer. 16:1-4), who argues that the book of Jeremiah perpetuates the murder of Jesus, the PRK 13 syllogism agrees that the book of Jeremiah is a form of punishment for Israel since it perpetuates Israel’s sins. PRK actually shares a Christian conception of the text of Jeremiah as punishing, in that it problematizes the character instead of undermining his accepted message.

Jerome’s commentary on Jeremiah (D. 420 C.E) provides clear evidence that this negative view of the book of Jeremiah circulated among Jews. In the preface to his commentary to the Psalms, Jerome states that discussions between the Church and the Synagogue were frequent in his time and hence is a good source for such claims. While closer chronologically to Lev. R. and the Y. Talmud, some sources later than PRK are also in line with Jerome’s tenure in Palestine. I reviewed the sages who speak about Jeremiah in PRK 13 and found support for Jerome’s relevance to PRK redaction and collection of mostly older early to mid-4th century accounts about Jeremiah.

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84 For the history and difficulties involved in the study of Jerome’s use of Midrashim, see Salvesen, Tradunt, 59-67. Jerome had a Jewish teacher he calls “bar Haninah”. This teacher might be Haninah bar Hama’s grandson and the son of Haninah, if truly famous as Jerome claims. Not all of Jerome’s quotations are reliable, since they might only be the opinion of one Jew or based on Greek sources. Still, striking parallels to Midrashim are found throughout his commentary on Jeremiah as well as the Minor Prophets, ibid, 68-77. Michael Graves found the following Jeremiah parallels: Jerome, Jeremiah, 67, Note 243: Num. R. 12:4; Exod. R. 35:1; SoS. R. 3 (10:3); b. Yoma 44b-45a. There are many more, such as in Ibid, 54, 7:30-31. He notes (n. 159) an interpretation of ghena similar to b. Erubin 19a= lam. R. 1.9.36. See also, ibid, 180 which sees a partial parallel to Tan. Vayikra 6 in Jerome’s interpretation of Jer. 29:21-23, false prophets promising adulterous wives that their descendants will be prophets, but could be reliant on Origen, see ibid, note 244. I have found a few other parallels, such as Jerome claiming that Isaiah was noble in style and Jeremiah rustic as in PRK 14:3, in Ibid, 184 in note 6. Moreover, his following comment on Jer. 13:16-17a, ibid, 84, is quite similar to Lam. Zu. (Buber b) 15: But if you are unwilling to listen in secret, (“in darkness” according to Aquila”), he says, “then (my) soul” or “your soul” according to the LXX “will weep for you pride.” Not even groaning and lamenting will be permitted openly, so as to not offend the eyes of the conquerors....

85 See Jacobs and Broyde, Polemics, 103. Such debates are more openly admitted to in later Midrashim such as Eccles. R., as argued by Hirschman, Mikra and Midrash, 10.

86 Jerome, Jeremiah, XL-XLIH. Hirschman suggested that Jerome has striking parallels to the later Eccles. R. Hirschman, Mikra and Midrash, 81. See also, Salvesen, Tradunt, 65.

87 Sage s with negative attitudes towards Jeremiah PRK 13 Section

| R. Abba bar Kahana?: 4th generation friend of R. Levi and teacher of R. Berechiah. Could be an anonymous addition. | 1 |

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While more than prolific in noting the abandonment of Israel by God in his Psalms commentary, some parallels to PRK are present in Jerome’s commentary on Jeremiah. Jer. 17:1 states: “The sin of Judah is written with an iron pen; with a diamond point it is engraved on the tablet of their hearts, and on the horns of their altars.” Jerome states like Eusebius above that the sin of killing Jesus is recorded forever. However he then adds how the Jews understand the verse (in bold):

Namely, so it might not remain as eternal judgment against them... The Jews read this passage as directed against themselves and all the while the church does not recognize what is in its own interests! Therefore, let us who are children of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commentator</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R. Phinehas and R. Jeremiah</td>
<td>3-4th gen. citing R. Samuel bar R. Isaac</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Aḥa</td>
<td>3rd or 4th gen.</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>R. Joshua of Silnin, citing R. Levi, R. Abba bar Kahana, Rab.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R. Samuel bar Nahman</td>
<td>2nd, 3rd gen.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Judah bar R. Simon</td>
<td>3rd-4th gen.</td>
<td>6 indirectly negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Tanḥuma in the name of R. Eleazar who cited R. Berechiah and R. Menahema and R. Beba, in the name of R. Eleazar, citing R. Meir, agreed in saying: Mostly 4th gen.</td>
<td>7 not negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In another comment.</td>
<td>8 mixed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown.</td>
<td>9 somewhat positive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Jose bar Halafta</td>
<td>4th gen. Tanna. Probably anonymous.</td>
<td>10 negative monologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Jonathan</td>
<td>4th gen. Tanna</td>
<td>11 neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonym.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Samuel bar Nahman</td>
<td>2nd, 3rd gen.</td>
<td>12 positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Berechiah</td>
<td>4th gen.</td>
<td>13 monologue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonym.</td>
<td>14 mixed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not about Jeremiah.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Negative:** 4th gen.: 1, 13, 4; anonym: 10, 8; 3-4; gen 6, 3, 2; 2nd-3rd gen: 5. **Positive:** 2nd-3rd gen.: 12; anonym: 9, 8. **Mixed-neutral:** anonym: 8, 14-15; 4th gen. Tanna: 11; older or 4th gen.: 7 Overall: positive and mixed- mostly anonymous and older materials (7/15- half the chapter). Negative- 3-4th gen.: 3; Older: 1. 4th gen.: 3. Anonym: 4. (8/15 of those; half are 4th gen. onwards). The editorial comments and the 3-4th generations of Amoraim seem hostile to Jeremiah thus making a dating of 310-340 C.E reasonable for the core traditions and later for the piska as a whole. According to the sages mentioned, Eccles. R. is the closest to PRK, but I have found it to be more ambivalent, as seen in the review section above. It seems then possible that PRK 13’s redaction chose the negative views almost exclusively and may have been closer in time to Jerome’s actual period. The dating is based on the sages as mentioned by Hyman, Toldot. Possible inaccuracy is not crucial, since Jerome is also paralleled by much later midrashic texts.

88 Jerome, Jeremiah, 35-6. Jer. 5:7: God rejecting Judaism. Ibid, 63. Jer. 9:15-16, 63: the Jews are endlessly divided and subjugated, which confounds unity and leads them to expect the antichrist as their savior. Jer. 12:7-8: common Patristics, the Jews roared against Jesus the lion and were cast out, see above. Ibid, 115-6, Jer. 18:17: the Jews are forever scattered and their prayers in the “synagogues of Satan” ignored. Ibid, 119. Jer. 19:10-11a: the Jews will never recover Jerusalem. For this late commentary’s reliability on Jewish exegesis, see Newman, Judaizing, 436n57 also 441n72, 452.
apostles remember the sins of the former people, and let us testify that they were afflicted justly\(^9\).

Jerome argues that the Jews viewed the recording of their sins in Jeremiah, as a permanent record of iniquities and the Church should be aware of the Jewish view to use it against them. Jerome is surprised by the similarity of his polemics to the Jewish view. This view is part of the syllogism of PRK 13 as I have described it\(^9\).

In summary, PRK 13 initially accepts Christian polemical rhetoric as part of its impression of the book of Jeremiah as a proof text for Jewish sins, only to reject its overall validity as proof by attacking the prophet in myriad ways, including a portrayal of his selfish nature. Whereas Christian sources limited their polemical discourse to Jeremiah’s prophecies. PRK’s polemical argumentation would not be possible without a radical shift in the understanding of how a character is related to its biblical text as its author-transmitter, and by association a sage to his Torah.

2.3 Pesikta Rabatti 26: A Late Midrash Biography of Jeremiah

PR 26 is different from most parts of PR, but closer to other late compositions. Joseph Heinemann described PR 26’s main peculiarities\(^9\). First, it opens with an ancient piyut unrelated to the verse of the day. Second, PR 26 is holistic and uses reoccurring

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\(^9\) Jerome, Jeremiah, 104-5.

\(^9\) Also note the comment on Jer. 15:17-18: The Hebrews think that these things were spoken out of the persona of Jerusalem... Jerome, Jeremiah, 98 (note 184 there suggests=Sifrei Deut. 356, PRK 15:2, lam. R. Proem 3). A possible allusion to PRK 13:14 might also be found in Jerome. Jerome, Jeremiah, 122 (= PRK 13:14 and PR 26 1/2=) comment on Jer. 20:7-8: The prophet says that the Lord has deceived him. Because at first he heard, “I appointed you a prophet to the nations,” and “See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant,” he did not think that he was going to speak against the Jews but against the various surrounding nations which is why he so readily accepted the task of prophesying. But it turned out quite differently in that he proclaimed the captivity of Jerusalem, and as a result he suffered difficulty and persecution... However, this interpretation has much stronger ties to PRK 26 as discussed in the next sections.

\(^9\) Heinemann, A Homily, 27-8. One of the hallmarks of late Midrashim, Tanhuma and onwards, is the use of repetition to connect diverse units by reusing certain phrases. See, Kugel, Potiphar’s house, 34-5. The use of themes in PR 26 is no different from the use of type scenes in the editing of PRE. On this type of editing see, Elbaum, Melitza, 125.
themes and motifs to extensively rework previous versions of accounts. It also has a unique biographical structure centered on Jeremiah and so warrants our attention.

These features place PR 26 in the later strata of late Midrashim, according to Jacob Elbaum’s taxonomy. This classification makes PR 26 stylistically comparable specifically to PRE and Seder Eliyahu. Thus, the biographical nature of PR 26 bridges late Midrashim and Hebrew medieval rewritten biblical prose, comparable to how Joseph Dan views some sections in PRE.

PR 26’s suggested compositional history supports this hybrid view. Texts in PR which are missing the formula and form of typical rabbinic homilies were added later to provide homilies for the full yearly prayer schedule. These suspected later interpolations include 4, 10, 20 and 26. Tzvi Novick mentions that manuscript tradition does not unanimously include PR 26 at all. Likewise, Rivka Ulmer noted that the canonization of PR occurred in 13th-14th century manuscripts and still continued in its print forms.

William G. Braude describes the oldest known manuscript (Parma 1240) in which PR 26 appears. The colophon names its scribe as Menachem bar Yakub and its date of completion as the 22nd of Tammuz (13 of July) 1270 C.E. The writing and expressions in the colophon such as “to strengthen” argue for a Franco-German

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92 The more liberal a Midrash editor is with reworking his sources, the later he is. There is also a tendency to write complete flowing narratives out of past fragments, Elbaum, Late Midrash, 58-9.
93 The growing independence of narrative in the Middle Ages is part of the separation of different disciplines, a broader process in the Midrashim. In PR 26, this involves collecting and combining fragments from a number of texts into biographies such as in PRE. By choosing not to use certain materials, the author is basically expressing his attitude towards a subject or a character. One of the hallmarks of Rewritten Bible in the late Middle Ages is a tendency to flesh out the lives of important paradigmatic characters in epic style. See in Dan, Hebrew Story, 16, 140. PR 26 seems to fit this style.
94 See in Reizel, Introduction, 249-53. However, note that there is some thematic continuity between PR 26 and PR 27 and 29. Either the editors of PR 26 shaped it to better fit within PR, or the similar elements are earlier materials which inspired 26. Hence not all of PR 26 need be very late.
95 Novick, Between, 357.
96 Ulmer, Redaction, 111-2.
97 Braude, Piska, 2-7.
Rhineland provenance. Plena spelling also suggests a German vorlage. Thus, PR 26 should at the very latest be dated to 13th century Germany, but an earlier date for some of PR 26’s accounts more in line with the 10th century seems reasonable.

The first argument is that the 12th century Northern French exegete Josef Kara on Jer. 28:6 exhibits partial knowledge of PR 26; namely the description of Jeremiah insulting Hananiah for being a Gibeonite is unique to PR 26 and Kara’s Jeremiah commentary (2.3.2). Amos Geula identified several thematic and stylistic ties between PR 34 and PR 2698. These ties are strengthened by an affinity between PR 34’s non-Karaite “mourners of Zion” and 2Baruch described by Philip S. Alexander. His 10th century dating of PR 34 could also apply to PR 26, since 2Baruch is also related to some of PR 26’s accounts as we shall see below99.

Moshe Zucker identified PR’s “mourners of Zion” with the Karaite ”mourners of Zion“(avelim; aveley ziyyon), namely the specific group among the Karaites who settled in Jerusalem during the 9th – 11th centuries and had their distinctive ideology, hence Zucker dated some parts of PR to the late 9th century100. He noted the antagonism in Seder Eliyahu towards motifs and expressions used in PR accounts, suspected of being interpolations by the “mourners”101. Accordingly, I found that Eliyahu Zutta 9 contains a very unflattering description of Jeremiah, an oddity compared to most other late sources (2.1). This hostility may be a form of polemic

98 Geula, Lost Aggadic Works, 304-7. There are similarities between the end of PR 5, which is identified with “mourners of Zion” and these compositions in terminology and in custom. The connection raises the possibility that an Italian group composed them. He also identified the use of comforting endings in Abakir, PR and the Tanhuma, which are all similar to the Scroll of Aḥimatz.
99 Alexander, PR 34, 154-7. The name was adopted by other ascetic Jewish groups throughout the ages such as in Qumran. Like in PRE, the odd Baruch materials in the PR should be seen as part of the revival of apocalyptic Judaism, but also as part of the more inclusive nature of Gaonic Judaism in its drive for widespread authority.
100 Zucker, Responses, 378-85. Also see Erder, Mourners of Zion, 81-109, 378ff.
similar to Zucker’s examples, regardless of the Karaite context\textsuperscript{102}. PR 26 could predate Eliyahu Zutta.

The themes of pregnancy and motherhood which echo in PR 26 are consequently comparable to PR 27 and to the central themes Ulmer identified in PR as a whole\textsuperscript{103}. The opening homily of PR 26 was even known in some form to Jerome\textsuperscript{104}. Hence, while it is hard to separate PR 26’s dating from its individual accounts, there is ample evidence to view these as older than the Parma manuscript.

PR 26 thus cannot be dismissed as a marginal outlier of late Midrashim. It is an important example of late Midrash poetics. Heinemann showed how PR 26’s Jeremiah viewed his prophecies as final efforts to save Jerusalem\textsuperscript{105}. The next sections examine how this message, which was designed to display Jeremiah’s psyche, is a case study of consciousness in late-midrashic rewritings of accounts.

\textbf{2.3.1 Jeremiah’s Inner Voice in PR 26}

The key difference between PR 26’s presentation of Jeremiah and the other midrashic versions of the character is the emphasis on qualitative experience of destruction. PR 26 uses Jeremiah’s state of mind to engage its audience. As shown by Herman, all plots describe how the status quo of their fictional world is unmade, while revealing

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{102} The Eliyahu text might to be compatible with the bulk of the Rewritten Bible section in PR 26, see below. God is evidently opposed to Jeremiah’s constant cursing, Eliyahu Zutta 9: בְּעֵינַיָּךְ פֶלֶל הָדַעַת. הָיָה יִרְמְיָה הנביא מתנבא על ישראל, והא נפלו להומת, והיה לו נפשו הлибо הרה, והיה לו נפשו הлибо הרה, והיה לו נפשו הлибо הרה, והיה לו נפשו הлибо הרה. ונִפְלָלָה מִלְּחָדָה, וְנִפְלָלָה מִלְּחָדָה, וְנִפְלָלָה מִלְּחָדָה, וְנִפְלָלָה מִלְּחָדָה.

\textsuperscript{103} Even though Jeremiah is presented as the ordained prophet who is best aligned with his presentation in PRK 13, it is worth inquiring whether this unit inspired the authors of PR 26, since the fact that he was able to speak in the womb is a joint tradition that is still more sympathetic than PRK 13, in that Jeremiah does his best not to speak. This position suggests a middle stage between the two texts. Note the simile of “the woman giving birth” concerning Jeremiah’s inability not to prophesy found in PR 27. My hypothesis is further supported by the metanarrative of the PR. Ulmer argued that the apocalyptic coming of the last temple is one of the organizing narratives of the PR, which allows the whole midrash to be read in sequence. Thus, the continuity of PR 25-27 could equally be the work of an editor or the creators of older chapters and thus implies that PR 26 is integral to the body of the current PR. See Ulmer, Temple Apocalypse, 227-9, 258-9.

\textsuperscript{104} See 2.3.1.1 below.

\textsuperscript{105} Heinemann, A Homily, 35-7.
\end{footnotesize}
the different approaches of characters in that world to the changes. Forster claimed that the visibility of the secret mental life of a character, one of the major traits of the novel, makes a character and by extension its whole fictional world more comprehensible. PR 26 uses Jeremiah in this epistemic way.

Heinemann noted that PR 26 favors the use of surprise and irony in its accounts. One aspect of this focus on surprise is meant to clearly and repeatedly show Jeremiah’s shock and awe at the destruction so as to exonerate him of any accusations of callousness, such as those in PRK 13. This effect is achieved by using a device common to ancient literature and beyond as recognized by Dorrit Cohn. PR 26 employs different kinds of monologue that suggest that Jeremiah genuinely believed the destruction could be averted and had sympathy for his people.

Quoted monologue, as described by Levinson, is uncommon in the Bible. It is used in classical Midrashim as a way of revealing the disparities between the Bible and its interpretations and raising moral and theological questions through the voice of the characters. Levinson argues that to use monologue unambiguously and non-ironically, as we encounter in PR 26, is one of the hallmarks of late Midrashim.

Likewise, Anisfeld, when reviewing PRK, found that one of the main functions of monologue structures in it and in Amoraic texts in general is to prompt sympathy for a character, notably through expressions of immediacy and intimacy between Israel and God. PR 26’s use of monologue is different from PRK’s in that

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106 Herman, Basic Elements, 134-6.
107 Forster, Aspects, 46.
108 Heinemann, A Homily, ibid.
109 Cohn, Minds, 64-6.
110 Levinson, Twice Told Tale, 178-85.
111 Ibid.
112 Anisfeld, Sustain Me, 58-61.
it is centered on the consciousness of the literary character of Jeremiah, more than it expresses a theological message of sympathy\textsuperscript{113}.

2.3.1.1 The Cup of Wrath Tricked Jeremiah

One repetitive message in PR 26 is that Jeremiah was tricked by God from his very dedication as prophet, as he never intended to prophesy doom. God asks Jeremiah to take the cup of wrath and make the Gentiles drink. However, as soon as Jeremiah takes the cup thinking he should let Gentile city drink, he is immediately ordered to curse Jerusalem and the cities of Judah. At once Jeremiah laments his mistake:

1/2... The Holy One blessed be He, said: Before I formed thee in the belly of thy mother, I designated thee to prophesy to My people. In answer Jeremiah spoke right up to the Holy One... Take this cup of wrath and make the nations drink. Jeremiah took the cup and asked: Whom shall I make drink first? Which principality shall drink it? God replied: Jerusalem and the cities of Judah make them drink first, for they are the chief of all earthly kingdoms. When Jeremiah heard this command, he opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth, as is written Cursed be the day where I was born (Jer. 20:14)... \textsuperscript{114}

This account creates a causal immediacy between disparate biblical texts\textsuperscript{115}. It connects Jeremiah’s lament (Jer. Ch. 20:14 ff), the prophecy of the cup of wrath (Jer. 25: 15ff) and his dedication (Jer. 1), thus showing that Jeremiah was displeased with his mission of destruction from its inception. Unlike his self-doubts in the biblical text (Jer 1:6, 18), Jeremiah’s lament is transformed into a lament for having been tricked.

\textsuperscript{113} See the greater focus on character in Meir, Homiletical Narrative, 261*-3; Elbaum, Melitza, 99.

\textsuperscript{114} Braude, PR, 526-7.

\textsuperscript{115} Contrast this account with a parallel where the day is tragic in a way unrelated to Jeremiah’s mission; namely, Gen. R. 64:8, a day when Jezebel had prophets killed. PR 26 shows Jeremiah’s care for Jerusalem forcibly by inserting him into that account.

\textsuperscript{116} This argument retells Jer. 1 differently by noting how 1:10 mentions generic kingdoms, but 1:15 foresees the destruction of Jerusalem. This allows the homilist to equate the situation with the similar Jer. 25:15 compared to 25:17, first appears Jerusalem then other nations.
and serves at once as proof text and monologue. Biblical Jeremiah mostly laments the personal difficulty of his mission (Jer. 20:8 ff) and not the need to facilitate destruction. Jerome seems to have known of this account’s monologue.

Hence, PR 26’s Jeremiah is shaped as more nationally-minded. The following monologue repeats the same idea, Jeremiah being forced to let an unwanted party drink, but associates it with another motif, the sotah (Num. 5:11-31). The sympathetic aim is very similar:

1/2 ...He was thus one of two men who cursed and reviled the day on which they were born- Job and Jeremiah. Job said: Let the day perish wherein I was born (Job 3:3). Jeremiah said: Cursed be the day wherein I was born (Jer. 20:14). Jeremiah went on: I say, with whom may I be compared? With a High Priest who was chosen by lot to give [a woman suspected of adultery] “the water of bitterness” to drink. They brought the woman to the High Priest. He bared her head, disarrayed her hair, held out the cup for her to drink- and saw that she was his mother! Thereupon he cried out, saying: Woe unto me! Mother, I sought ever to honor thee, but now behold me abashing thee! Even so Jeremiah said: Woe unto me because of thee, Mother Zion! I thought I was to prophesy good things and consolations, and lo, I prophesy for the infliction of punishment!

116 This is a rather unique use of Jer. 25 in rabbinic literature. See Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 582. Ibid, Sotah, 201, 215. This theme does appear in Lam. Zu., but it might be dependent on the PR, see Braude, Piska, 11. Similarly, only version B of Alfa Beta Deben Sira seems to connect Jeremiah with the cup in a birth scene, Yassif, Ben Sira, 200. Thus, this might be another case of PR 26’s influence. The connection between Jer. 1 and 25 might be based on the “nations” in Jer. 1: 5, 7. Compare with the Targum as well as Wieder’s suggestion. Wieder, Jeremiah, 154n10-11.

117 Targeted against Jeremiah’s comparison between himself and Moses in PRK 13:13.

118 Jerome even rejects a Christological reading in favor of this homily in Jerome on Jer. 1:10, Jerome, Jeremiah, 4-5: Many interpret this passage as relating to the person of Christ...There is no doubt, however, that this text applies to the person of Jeremiah, since we read in the following chapters that he receives in his hand a cup filled with wine and is commanded to make all the surrounding nations drink it. As in PR 26, Jerome repeats this line of thought, when noting that this use of the cup of wrath is why Jeremiah laments his fate. Jerome on Jer. 20: 7-8, Jerome, Jeremiah, 122:

The prophet says that the Lord has deceived him. Because at first he heard, “I appointed you a prophet to the nations,” and “See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant,” he did not think that he was going to speak against the Jews but against the various surrounding nations- which is why he so readily accepted the task of prophesying. But it turned out quite differently in that he proclaimed the captivity of Jerusalem, and as a result he suffered difficulty and persecution... This connection to the cup returns in Jerome on Jer. 25:18. There is even a parallel to PR 26’s use of monologue (underlined). Jerome, Jeremiah, 154: The prophet says, “I thought that I would make only the nations drink this cup, and so I offered myself gladly to this ministry. But along with the other nations, or rather before the other nations, I gave the cup to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, its kings and princes, to make them an astonishment and a desolation, a hissing and a curse,” as is demonstrated in the present case. Thus, he said earlier: “O lord you have misled me, and I was misled. You have prevailed and overcame”.

119 Braude, PR, 527-8.
While inspired by older sources such as 2 Bar. 3:1-2\textsuperscript{120}, this account is unique in its use of epic motifs identified by Eli Yassif and its emphasis on a deceived Jeremiah\textsuperscript{121}. The gap between Jeremiah’s good intentions and his actions that undermine them is tragic, because it is dependent upon revealing his shock and not on actual events\textsuperscript{122}.

Jeremiah addresses the reader directly: once through a parable and twice through its interpretation (underlined above). Only the opening is in the third person. Nonetheless, the parable is not an elucidation of a verse, but rather is similar to the concluding paragraph of psycho-narrations in modern novels that use a simile to

Wieder notes that this scene compares Jeremiah to his harlot-like mother who represents his nation, and that this might be a development of the Jeremiah as Benjamin to Rachel concept in PRK 13:14, Wieder, Jeremiah, 17-20. If so, Jeremiah is presented as being superior to his mother=nation.

\textsuperscript{120} Charles, Apocrypha and Pseudoepigrapha, vol. 2, 481-524. 2Bar. 3:1-2: 1 And I said: “O LORD, my Lord, have I come into the world for this purpose that I might see the evils of my mother? Not (so) my Lord. 2 If I have found grace in Your sight, first take my spirit that I may go to my fathers and not behold the destruction of my mother. 3 For two things vehemently constrain me: for I cannot resist you, and my soul, moreover, cannot behold the evils of my mother. 4 But one thing I will say in Your presence, O Lord. 5 What, therefore, will there be after these things? For if you destroy Your city, and deliver up Your land to those that hate us, how shall the name of Israel be again remembered? 6 Or how shall one speak of Your praises? or to whom shall that which is in Your law be explained? Or shall the world return to its nature of aforetime), and the age revert to primeval silence? And shall the multitude of souls be taken away, and the nature of man not again be named? And where is all that which you did say regarding us”? “Blessed is he who was not born, Or he, who having been born, has died.7 But as for us who live, woe unto us, Because we see the afflictions of Zion, And what has befallen Jerusalem”.

Unlike 2Baruch, PR 26’s emphasis is upon tragic irony and not the foretelling of the future. The reinsertion of suppressed materials from the apocrypha is part of the revival of the Hebrew narrative in the Middle Ages, see Dan, Hebrew Story, 20-3. I found a curiously similar passage in Cyril of Jerusalem. He argues that John the Baptist was greater than all other prophets including Jeremiah. John: ...feeding upon honey, and speaking things both sweeter and more salutary than honey: clothed with a garment of camel’s hair, and shewing in himself the pattern of the ascetic life; who also was sanctified by the Holy Ghost while yet he was carried in his mother’s womb. Jeremiah was sanctified, but did not prophesy, in the womb... Browne, Charles Gordon and James Edward Swallow, NPNF2-07, 15-6. Note the juxtaposition of being sanctified in the womb, speech and sweetness as opposed to Jeremiah’s bitter waters and similar traits in PR 26. Perhaps Cyril is arguing against some proto version of PR 26:1 also known to Jerome.

\textsuperscript{121} The miraculous nature of infant Jeremiah speaking seems to suggest he is presented in PR 26 in the frame of a legendary hero. See Yassif, Ben Sira, 30-1. PR 26 is possibly connected to Alfa Beta Deben Sira or even the Qur’an, ibid, 32-9. Wieder considers the fact that there are no stories in rabbinic literature detailing Jeremiah’s childhood as a sign of inferiority, compared to other figures such as Abraham. Wieder, Jeremiah, 25. This might be connected to Jeremiah’s treatment in Amoraic literature. See also, Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 589; Ibid, Sotah, 256-7.

\textsuperscript{122} Compare PR 26 to the presentation of Shakespearian characters, Hochman, Character, 125-32.
express hard-to-verbalize pathos\textsuperscript{123}. The use of this device shows that PR 26 was not interested in exegesis, but rather was bent on expressing Jeremiah’s state of mind.

The account is designed to make Jeremiah’s lament less personal (Jer. 20:14ff). The parable states that Jeremiah is similar to a high priest who only discovered he needed to put his own mother through the sotah ordeal after he had already begun. Hence, the cup is utilized to show that Jeremiah thought his mission would be to spell out the punishment of wrongdoers, but not that of his mother; i.e., Zion. Jeremiah states clearly that he thought that he would prophesy good things for Jerusalem. The same message is also present in an extensive dialogue in PR 26:1\textsuperscript{124}. PR 26:1/2 then constantly has Jeremiah express his disdain with prophesying doom.

### 2.3.1.2 God Tricked Jeremiah to Make Him Leave Jerusalem

The following section shows how Jeremiah’s inner monologue (in bold) is invoked twice in its most direct form to demonstrate that he believed Jerusalem could be saved up until its very destruction. Hence he was not only interested in abetting destruction, but Jeremiah literally believed this was a reasonable outcome \textit{ad absurdum}:

\begin{quote}
6...\textit{In that time the Lord said to Jeremiah: “Rise, go to Anathoth and buy the field from thine uncle Hanamel.” Thereupon Jeremiah thought in his heart: Maybe God means to turn Jerusalem over to its inhabitants and allow them to carry on their living as usual within it. Hence, [to assure them of His intention], the Lord says to me: Go, buy the field for thyself. As soon as Jeremiah left Jerusalem, the angel of the Lord came down from heaven, set his feet against the walls of Jerusalem, and breached them. Then the angel cried out, saying: Let the enemies come and enter the...}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{123} See the examples in Cohn, Minds, 36-46 and 88 for a use of the first person similar to above.

\textsuperscript{124} This is the same message as in the opening account, especially when compared to the opening unit which presents the sotah as well as mother Zion. PR 26:1, see in Braude, PR, 525-6. The strong voice which might be an allusion to the birth of Moses is consistent with the comparison of the two figures; for this motif see Exod. R. 1:24. PR 26:1’s paraphrase seems to suggest an attempt at biblical stylistics by utilizing double addresses and an imitation of Jeremiah’s laments. The scene is grotesque, and has Jeremiah accusing his mother. This narrative has several similarities to the start of the medieval Alfa Beta de-Ben Sira, and might be inspired by Jer 20:14, as indicating an anomalous insemination. See Yassif, Ben Sira, 27-9. Even if one assumes that the Alfa Beta predates PR 26:1, it still means that PR 26 can be dated to the early10\textsuperscript{th} century, correlativey with Yassif’s dating of the composition of the Alfa Beta in Persia, which fits the dating above. Conversely, Wieder argues for the reverse timeline since Ben Sira alludes to Jeremiah speaking, while being born in one version of the Alfa Beta. Wieder, Jeremiah, 143n24. Thus, PR 26 might be older than the Alfa Beta.
House, for the Master of the House is no longer within. Let them despoil and destroy it. Let them go into the vineyard and cut down the vines, for the Watchman has gone away and left it. And to the enemies he said: Do not boast that ye have vanquished the city. Nay, a conquered city ye have conquered, a dead people ye have killed... 

As Heinemann notes, the homilist does not even shy from contradicting the Bible itself, to depict Jeremiah as blameless and naive. The biblical Jeremiah does not leave the city until the destruction takes place and his cousin comes to visit him to sell him the field. This contradiction underscores the author’s need to generate a situation, where Jeremiah’s surprise could be voiced convincingly.

As Menahem Kister and Braude show, this description of the destruction (underlined above) and its various episodes is known from other sources. PR 26’s special contribution is its inner monologue. An innocent Jeremiah, possibly identified with the “watchman”, was tricked by God to leave the city so it could be destroyed. God seduces him with talk of the field so he would leave. Jeremiah mistakenly thinks that the city might be partially spared, because the inhabitants will take care of it.

Ronnie Goldstein sees this tradition as modelled on 2 Bar. 2:1 and inspired by the

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125 The watchman is could be understood as Jeremiah and not as God, since Jeremiah leaves later and so might have inspired the combination of this account with Jeremiah being tricked to leave.

126 Braude, PR, 534-6.

127 The tradition that the city could not be destroyed while Jeremiah was still in it may also be part of the endeavor to exalt biblical figures and present them as heroic protagonists. Goldstein believes that this trend is already found in recensions of the book of Jeremiah itself, such as the tension between seeking to escape from the city (Jer. 37:11–16) and being thrown into a pit (Jer. 38:1–13). Goldstein, Post Biblical Traditions, 438. Thus, PR 26 is merely retracing older developments of the character by implementing new poetic devices.


129 A motif also known from Muslim sources, see for example in Al-Tabari, History, Vol. 3, 658 ff; Al-Thalabi, Lives of the Prophets, 56-8; and others.
accounts of Abraham interceding for Sodom (Gen. 18–19), as Jer. 5:1 states that not one person in Jerusalem could be found “who acts justly” 131.

Just as PR 26:1-2 previously doubled its account of the cup of wrath, the theme of trickery resonates twice with Jeremiah’s thoughts 132. The homilist takes pains to highlight Jeremiah’s innocence repeatedly. Upon returning, Jeremiah again mistakenly thinks the burning temple was rife with sacrifice (bold):

6...In the meantime, the prophet Jeremiah left Anathoth to come back to Jerusalem. He lifted his eyes and saw the smoke of the Temple rising up. So he said in his heart: Maybe Israel has returned in penitence to bring offerings, and now the smoke of incense is rising up. But when he climbed closer and stood upon the wall, he saw the Temple overturned into a heap upon heap of stones and the wall of Jerusalem broken down. Thereupon he cried out to God, saying: Thou hast enticed me, and I was enticed. Thou hast overcome me, and hast prevailed, etc. (Jer. 20:7) 133.

2.3.1.3 Mother Zion and Jeremiah

The final homily of PR 26 (26:7) reuses most of the motifs found in the opening accounts to argue that Jeremiah meant to prophesize good tidings for Jerusalem. It ends on him doing just that. Jeremiah addresses the reader in a monologue quoting a lengthy dialogue between himself and a figure recognized as mother Zion 134. This is an instance of what Cohn describes as “self-quoted” monologue, which blurs the time and place of its narration 135. This mode serves the eschatological purpose of the ending, but also has Jeremiah finally taking the place of the first person narrator, completing a melding of their personas, a phenomenon I describe in detail below.

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132 A late editing technique of earlier sources, see Rubenstein, Talmudic Stories, 259-60.
133 Braude, PR, 536. שמא בליבו אמר, עולה המקדש בית עשן והראה עיניו נטל, לירושלים לבאה מענותות יצא הנביא ירמיה... חזרו ישראל בתשובה להקריב קרבנות, והיה עשן הקטרות עולה, אב על הכהנים בנות המקדש ועשו לה יהיה נזיר מחר. שמא בלפון שמו, במדים זר חזרו ישראל בתשובה להקריב קרבנות, והיה עשן הקטרות עולה, אב על הכהנים בנות המקדש ושווי לה ירידה והיה נזיר מחר Ngheresh, אל אמא חזרו ישראל מסגוריה, המלך צוהו והתא פרנסיין מיל אפסף מבטולה (רשמה כ)...
134 Prijs identifies an irregularity in the style of some versions. There is a shift in the versions between the first and third person addresses. MS. P, is phrased all in the third person and thus differs from the effect described in this chapter and alludes to its novelty of form. Prijs, Die Jeremia-Homilie, 76.
135 Cohn, Minds, 165.
As Novick claims, the encounter between Jeremiah and the woman bears a striking resemblance to the conversation between Ezra and mother Zion in 4 Ezra. This is hardly surprising. Goldstein found that Jeremiah’s fate after the destruction is probably the most fluid part of the biblical book and its recensions and hence is a favorite topic for post biblical additions, of which PR 26 is no exception. However, whereas PR 26:7 and 4 Ezra have general thematic similarities in terms of the vision of the woman as well as the mode of delivery via first person narration, PR 26’s Jeremiah is far less terse as regards to the unknown woman’s suffering and thus is more sympathetic than Ezra (compare the bold sections):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR 26:7</th>
<th>4 Ezra 9-10 (NRSV)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Jeremiah said: [After I left the exiles] and was going back up to Jerusalem I lifted my eyes and saw at the top of the mountain a woman seated, clothed in black, her hair disheveled, crying and pleading for someone to comfort her. And I was crying and pleading: “Who will comfort me?” I came near her and spoke to her, saying: “If thou art a woman, speak to me, but if thou art a spirit, depart from me.” She answered me, saying: “Do you not recognize me? I am the woman who 9:38 When I said these things in my heart, I looked around, and on my right I saw a woman; she was mourning and weeping with a loud voice, and was deeply grieved at heart; her clothes were torn, and there were ashes on her head. Then I dismissed the thoughts with which I had been engaged, and turned to her 40 and said to her, “Why are you weeping, and why are you grieved at heart?” She said to me, “Let me alone, my lord, so that I may weep for myself and continue to mourn, for I am greatly embittered in spirit and deeply distressed.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

136 Novick, Between, 357. I suggest more parallels. See 4 Ezra: 1:32, 40; 2:2-6; 3:1; 4:40. 5:18, 35, 46; 6:26-27; 9:38ff; 10:22, 40ff; 12:40ff. Note the womb motif is also found in the parables of PR 26. Parallels to other post biblical compositions are also possible: see for instance, Syrian Baruch: Ch. 2-3, 9-10, 3-8, 33, 80, 18ff. The epistle of Baruch: 2:3; 4:8.


138 Braude, PR, 537-8.

139 Modelled on Jer. 31:14.

140 Compare to Boaz addressing Ruth similarly on the thrashing floor in Ruth 2:8.
had seven sons\textsuperscript{141}. Their father went away to a far city by the sea. Then a messenger came and said to me: “Your husband has died in the city by the sea.” As I was going up to lament him, behold a second messenger came and said: “Your house has fallen on your seven sons and slain them.” And in my distraction I know not for whom I am to cry or for whom I am to disarray my hair. I replied, saying: “You are not more deserving of comfort than mother Zion who has been made into a pasture for the beasts of the field.”\textsuperscript{142}

...5 Then I broke off the reflections with which I was still engaged, and answered her in anger and said, 6 “You most foolish of women, do you not see our mourning, and what has happened to us?... 7 For Zion, the mother of us all, is in deep grief and great distress. 8 It is most appropriate to mourn now, because we are all mourning, and to be sorrowful, because we are all sorrowing; you are sorrowing for one son, but we, the whole world, for our mother… 15 Now, therefore, keep your sorrow to yourself, and bear bravely the troubles that have come upon you. 16 For if you acknowledge the decree of God to be just, you will receive your son back in due time, and will be praised among women.

Hence even if PR 26 is inspired by 4Ezra, Jeremiah in PR 26 is easier to relate to and more amiable. This effect is furthered by the unspoken analogy between Jeremiah and mother Zion\textsuperscript{143}. First by emphasizing their similar wails of suffering and need for comfort (underlined above), and second by a mutual analogy to Job (Bold):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR 26:7</th>
<th>PR 26 1/2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She replied, saying: “I am thy Mother Zion, the mother of seven, as Scriptures say: She that hath born seven Languisheth” (Jer. 15:9)\textsuperscript{144}. Jeremiah said: Thy chastisement is like Job’s chastisement. His sons and daughters were taken from Job, and thy sons and daughters were taken from thee.</td>
<td>...He was thus one of two men who cursed and reviled the day on which they were born- Job and Jeremiah. Job said: Let the day perish wherein I was born (Job 3:3). Jeremiah said: Cursed be the day wherein I was born (Jer. 20:14)…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{141}This description melds Job and the unhappy mother of the seven, possibly alluding to the tradition of her martyrdom (Jer. 15:9; Lam. R. 1:50, for example). Jeremiah might be one of the allegorical messengers and if so, is again blameless as are the messengers in Job.

\textsuperscript{142}Modelled on Jer. 26:18.

\textsuperscript{143}It is worth mentioning that the sea, the ghostly adjuration and the garbage heap are possible references to many a rabbinic source, shaping Mother Zion and Jeremiah’s discourse as rabbinic, which is a common turn of events as far as characters are concerned and contrast with 4Ezra’s style.

\textsuperscript{144}Jerome on Jer, 15:9 might be expressing a similar view of mother Zion as the mother of seven, especially in light of his possible knowledge of some version of the first part of the frame of PR 26: Others refer this passage to the synagogue, which became weak so that the multitude of the church might grow, as it is written: “The barren has borne seven-” or “many”- but she who has many children is made weak.” Likewise her sun of righteousness goes down (in whose wings are healing). Therefore, she is covered with eternal shame, as she destroys her own people with a spiritual sword. Jerome, Jeremiah, 95-6.
His gold and silver were taken from Job, and thy gold and silver have been taken from thee. Job was cast upon a dung heap, and thou hast been turned into a heap of dung. But even as God turned back and comforted Job, so will He turn back and comfort thee. The number of his sons and his daughters was doubled for Job, and the number of thy sons and thy daughters will be doubled for thee. His silver and his gold were doubled for Job, and the same will be done for thee. Job finally shook the dung from his person; and so to thee it will be said Shake thyself from the dust; arise and sit down, O Jerusalem (Isa. 52:2). Flesh-and-blood built thee; flesh-and-blood destroyed thee. But in the time-to-come, [says the Lord], I will rebuild thee. Thus it is written The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, He gathereth together the dispersed of Israel (Ps. 147:2).

The analogy to Job serves to frame the entire PR 26. Jeremiah (PR 26:1-2) cursed his day like Job and the woman suffered like Job and will be reconciled like Job (PR 26:7). Thus, Jeremiah is once again part of the collective of Zion and by extension Israel and is not overly self-righteous like 4Ezra.

Mother Zion claims that her husband (God) prophesized her destruction and so clears Jeremiah of responsibility. She thus states a position I described above as common to late rabbinic texts such as the Tanḥuma. Furthermore as Heinemann noted, ending the biographical PR 26 with Jeremiah finally prophesying good, resolves his character “arc”. The conflicted prophet of doom now comforts others.

145 See for instance Samaritans insulting Jerusalem as a “dung heap” in Gen. R. 71:3.
146 Heinemann, A Homily, 35-7. Contra Wieder, Jeremiah, 120, who sees no development in the prophet’s character in rabbinic literature as a whole. My review section also disagrees with Wieder.
The actual details and fulfillment of this closing prophecy are of lesser importance than the fact that Jeremiah finally delivers it. Heinemann’s interpretation is also supported by the addition of an author or compiler identified by Leo Prijs, who ends the chapter with one of Jeremiah’s rare visions of comfort (Jer. 35:10) thereby fulfilling his new role: Amen. Soon, and in our days, may the Holy One, blessed be He, fulfill the verse that says of us: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, etc. (Jer. 35:10). This is also the reason why the chapter ends on this note and not with a more concrete discussion of the future as does the 4 Ezra parallel. The characterization of Jeremiah outweighs the importance of the future in the eyes of PR 26’s redaction.

Another source which contains an encounter between Jeremiah and mother Zion after the destruction is Kalir’s (7th Century) piyut: ‘az bimlat safeq ( trần khả nữ) 149

147 Prijs, Die Jeremia-Homilie, 26-7. He also connects the ending with the start of the next chapter PR 27, as well as with Kalir, see below, ibid, 76-7.
148 See Rosen-Zvi, Like a Priest, 589-90. See also, 4 Ezra 9-10 (NRSV): ...38 He answered me and said, “Listen to me, and I will teach you, and tell you about the things that you fear; for the Most High has revealed many secrets to you, 39 He has seen your righteous conduct, and that you have sorrowed continually for your people and mourned greatly over Zion. 40 This therefore is the meaning of the vision. 41 The woman who appeared to you a little while ago, whom you saw mourning and whom you began to console 42 (you do not now see the form of a woman, but there appeared to you a city being built) 43 and who told you about the misfortune of her son—this is the interpretation: 44 The woman whom you saw is Zion, which you now behold as a city being built. 45 And as for her telling you that she was barren for thirty years, the reason is that there were three thousand years in the world before any offering was offered in it. 46 And after three thousand years Solomon built the city, and offered offerings; then it was that the barren woman bore a son. 47 And as for her telling you that she brought him up with much care, that was the period of residence in Jerusalem. 48 And as for her saying to you, ‘My son died as he entered his wedding chamber,’ and that misfortune had overtaken her, this was the destruction that befell Jerusalem. 49 So you saw her likeness, how she mourned for her son, and you began to console her for what had happened. 50 For now the Most High, seeing that you are sincerely grieved and profoundly distressed for her, has shown you the brilliance of her glory, and the loveliness of her beauty. 51 Therefore I told you to remain in the field where no house had been built, 52 for I knew that the Most High would reveal these things to you. 53 Therefore I told you to go into the field where there was no foundation of any building, 54 because no work of human construction could endure in a place where the city of the Most High was to be revealed. 55 Therefore do not be afraid, and do not let your heart be terrified; but go in and see the splendor or the vastness of the building, as far as it is possible for your eyes to see it...”

149 In Kalir’s piyut, line 2 highlights a different situation for Jeremiah than PR 26. He came out of the palace and was not deceived to leave the city. Line 3 however, is extremely similar, the adjuration against demons. The piyut also emphasizes Mother Zion’s beauty as in Jeremiah’s remarks, which might hint at the architectural revival of 4Ezra, which is in turn missing from PR 26, if not the beautiful woman of Deut. 21:10-14:

When the measure filled for the Tirzan Beauty,
Novick argues that the verbal overlap between PR 26 and this piyut is insufficient to justify claims of direct influence. Shulamit Elizur claims with respect to this line that sometimes the pytanim created original homilies and at times late Midrashim might be based on a common third source and not on a parallel piyut.

PR 26:7 might be one of these cases.

Regardless, I view the piyut as a different synthesis of two older traditions. Unlike the possible melding of 2Baruch and 4 Ezra in PR 26, the piyut connects 4Ezra and a version much like Lam. R. Prom 28. Both piyut and PR 26 endeavor to portray Jeremiah more positively than before, in line with the above:

My temple hut, for my sins, tottered.
And my lover of old has fled and wandered.
My pleasant tent, against my will, was plundered.
Bustling with people, how she sits alone!
He prayed, pleading, before his master:
You, full of pity, pity as a father his son!
He shouted: Woe the father who exiled his offspring,
And woe to the son not at his father’s table!
Get up Jeremiah, do not hesitate.
Go call the patriarchs, and Aaron and Moses.
Let the shepherds come to raise lament,
For wolves of the desert have shredded the sheep.
So Jeremiah the prophet went roaring
Over Machpelah, growling like a lion:
Give voice with wailing, fathers of the gazelle!
Your children wander! They are in captivity!

Mother Zion’s discourse suggests that Jeremiah did not utter lamentations (1:1) but Jerusalem did. Novick considers this part of the piyut as referencing proem

Lo, the Erelites cried out abroad.
When Hilkiahu’s son from the Palace departed,
A beautiful woman, disgraced, he found.
I adjure you in the name of God and man:
Are you one of the demons or of humankind?
Your beauty appears as flesh and blood
But your fearsome terror like angels alone.

Also see Novick, Between, 370.
Elizur, From Piyut to Midrash, 383.
Novick, Between, 371-2.
24 of Lam. R., in which God argues that Jeremiah does not know how to cry. But the *piyut* (in bold) highlights Jeremiah’s efforts to amend this and thus is more positive than Jeremiah’s depiction in the proem. By contrast, Jeremiah’s dialogue in lines 9-10 is less comforting than in PR 26. It is more accusatory of mother Zion, as was 4Ezra: *Hear my argument: Make repentance, For you are so very esteemed, And delight suits you, and to rejoice in good. No longer be called rebellious daughter*.

Thus PR 26 goes further in exonerating Jeremiah than the *piyut*, which might show the beginning of this late trend. PR 26:7 is then one lengthy apology for Jeremiah that turns potentially older accounts into a favorable quoted monologue.

### 2.3.2 Jeremiah’s Authorial Discourse in PR 26

This section discusses how PR 26: 3-5 constructs elaborate dialogues between Jeremiah and secondary characters, not only as connective tissue between biblical quotations as is typical of late midrashim, but in order to characterize Jeremiah as sharing knowledge with PR 26’s redaction and depict Jeremiah as credible and confident. This trend complements the claims of innocence in his monologue.

Such devices are in line with Alexander Nehamas’ suggestion that “author” should be interpreted as referring to a reliable character created by a text that can actually intend what the inaccessible historical author could have meant. PR 26’s Jeremiah is thus fused into this type of author in what Cohn describes as “figural

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154 Ibid, 371.
155 This scenic structure is one of the main features of PR 26 Heinemann identified, as indicative of a rewritten biblical form, see in Heinemann, A Homily, 28-30.
156 Note that the overall repetition of objects and themes which characterizes PR 26 has a certain ‘inner consciousness’ ring to it. It is also typical of modern stream of consciousness, see Ewen, Character, 187-91. Similarly, Hochman notes that the word-fabric of a text can reflect the mental state of a single character. Hochman, Character, 70-4. Thus, the lucidity of PR 26 might be suggestive of Jeremiah’s conjoined perspective with its author and their joint voice at times.
The narrator and the secondary characters all use the same figures that are also employed to express Jeremiah’s mindset. This device associates the whole text with Jeremiah’s point of view.

This character-enhancing discourse is also evident in the late renditions of PRE discussed by Barth. The authors of the unknown texts wanted to exploit every angle to depict a conversation between their heroes and God or each other. Hence this discourse is a late midrashic technique shared with PR 26.

Some changes are subtle. PR 26:3 rewrites the biblical text of Jer. 37: 1-10 relatively closely. One possible difference is an emendation of 37:2: But neither he nor his servants nor the people of the land listened to the words of the Lord that he spoke through the prophet Jeremiah. It is rendered to emphasize the words of Jeremiah and not God: …Did not Zedekiah in fact turn upon and rebel against that Holy One, blessed be He, he together with his princes and servants, resisting the words of Jeremiah?... The change is suggestive of the higher status of Jeremiah.

PR 26:4’s preference for Jeremiah is more clear-cut and is also expressed in two innovative ways. These involve the midrashic retelling of Jer. 28 that presents a more confident Jeremiah, and the addition of a new taunting character, Jonathan the scribe. (See the bold for the original PR 26 contributions. I also divided the account into sections):

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158 See Cohn, Minds, 66, 70, 76 and also 130 for its use in first person narratives.
159 Barth, Eighth Trial, 127-8; Barth compared Cambridge ms. add. 1497 10 (late 14th and early 15th centuries) with PRE. Hence, such late techniques might also be part of PR 26’s tendency.
160 Braude, PR, 529. ...
161 Jeremiah’s response to the messengers in PR 26:3 is retold in a way that might make it snappier and immediate by abbreviating 37: 4-6. This frames Jeremiah’s separate prophecy in 37:7ff as an immediate answer, which shows PR 26’s preference for dialogue as mentioned above, as well as making Jeremiah seem surer of himself.
162 The oldest source to mention the narrative of Hananiah’s will is Mekhilta Deut. 13:3. On the problems associated with dating this source, see Reizel, Introduction, 93-4. The parallel account in b. Sotah 41b-42a lacks this narrative but not the accusation of flattery.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR 26:46</th>
<th>Parallel Accounts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. A. And it came to pass when the army of Chaldeans dispersed for fear of Pharaoh’s army, Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go up to Anathoth to partake with his fellow priests of the portion due to him as a priest. And as he was going forth through the gate of Benjamin, the man who was stationed there to watch those who came and went was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, the son of Azzur.</td>
<td>Jer 37 11-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Now when the Chaldean army had withdrawn from Jerusalem at the approach of Pharaoh’s army, 12 Jeremiah set out from Jerusalem to go to the land of Benjamin to receive his share of property among the people there. 13 When he reached the Benjamin Gate, a sentinel there named Irijah son of Shelemiah son of Hananiah arrested the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “You are deserting to the Chaldeans.”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Irijah was one of the descendants of the Gibeonites. Now [Irijah’s grandfather], Hananiah the son of Azzur, was a false prophet who had misled the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying; “Behold the vessels of the Lord’s house shall shortly be brought back from Babylon (Jer. 27:16). And so be not afraid.” When Jeremiah heard him, he had replied, “So be it. May your words come true and mine annulled. For I stand to win and you to lose. I, a priest, will continue to eat in the temple and you, a Gibeonite, will continue to be a heirer of wood and drawer of water for the altar.” In any event, as you prophesy concerning the House of the Holy One, blessed be he, prophesy also concerning yourself, for you will die this year and be buried next year.” (Indeed thus it befell Hananiah the Son of Azzur. He died on the eve of the Sabbath which fell on New Year.)</td>
<td>Y. Sanhedrin 11:7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

...said to him Jeremiah, “You say, ‘In two years I shall bring back...’ but I say that Nebuchadnezzar is going to come and take the rest of the people now here to Babylon: ‘They shall be carried to Babylon and remain there until the day when I give attention to them...’” (Jer. 27:22). He said to him, “Give me some sort of sign to confirm what you say.” He said to him, “I prophesy doom, and I cannot give a sign to confirm what I say, for the Holy one, blessed be he, may form a plan to bring evil, but then reverse it, “But you prophesy well, so you give a sign.” He replied, “No! You’re the one who has to bring a sign.” He said to him, “If so, lo, I shall give a sign and a wonder through that very person himself [namely, you].” In that year he died: Therefore thus says the lord: “Behold, I will remove you from the face of the earth. This very year you will die this year, and they will bury you this very year.” (Indeed thus it befell Hananiah the Son of Azzur. He died on the eve of the Sabbath which fell on New Year.)

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163 Braude, PR, 529-31.
166 Neusner, Talmud of the Land, v. 31, 380-1.
Year’s Day, and since he was buried at the end of the Sabbath he was in fact buried the next year).

When Hananiah the son of Azzur was about to die, he called Shelemiah his son and said to him: “Know that Jeremiah rose up and cursed me. See to it that you find an occasion against Jeremiah and get even with him.” Shelemiah kept looking for such an occasion, but could not find one. Finally, as he was about to die, he called Irijah his son and said to him: “See to it that you find an occasion against Jeremiah and get even with him for what he did to my father”. 165

C. So when Irijah saw Jeremiah going out through the gate of Benjamin, he went and took hold of him, and said to him: “You are going out to the Chaldeans to make peace with them.” Jeremiah replied: “You lie, I am about to join my fellow priests and take the portion which is due to me.” But Irijah kept hold of him and brought him before the princes, and said to them: “this man has done us much evil. And now I find him going out to the Chaldeans to make peace with them.”

The princes enraged at Jeremiah, struck him and imprisoned him in the house of the secretary Jonathan, for it had been made a prison. 167

165 This “trebling” of the dying father’s will (above in section B) is in line with Ashkenazi reception, which fits the possible dating and place of this chapter and is another sign of PR 26’s interest in monologue, since previous versions did not quote the actual exchange between Hananiah and son. PR 26 did so in a monologue, yet again. Adding the motif of obeying a father’s dying wish is common in Ashkenazi renderings of Eastern narratives, which PR 26 might be. See also the character of Jonathan the scribe below. Compare with Yassif’s findings in Sefer HaMassim, 423-4. On “trebling” see Propp, Morphology, 74-5.

167 This originally might be the Greek γλίττα, see Prijs, Die Jeremia-Homilie, 54-5. On the possible implications of this see below (2.3.4). He also notes Jonathan the scribe’s ironic speech to Jeremiah.
A midrashic account of Jer. 28 is fused into the Bible by clearly stating that Irijah is Hananiah ben Azzur’s grandson in section A. This allows PR 26 to elaborate on Jeremiah’s encounter with the false prophet in Section B. Unlike the Talmuds, Jeremiah is far more certain of himself and his answer is curt. He insults Hananiah for being a Gibeonite, a deduction unique to PR 26. Jeremiah is characterized as decisive, and shows none of the uncertainty surrounding Hananiah’s status found in the Talmuds. He is also not derided for flattering Hananiah (c.f. b. Sotah 41b). Jeremiah also echoes the biblical narrator (Jer. 37:12) in his response to Irijah (Section C, underlined), which is another way to confirm his honesty.

Jonathan the Scribe’s encounter with Jeremiah (end of section C) is another unique flourish, mostly contained in a monologue addressed to Jeremiah. The scribe is not a character in the biblical text but a place, a known house converted into a prison (Jer. 37:15). Still it is probably a fearsome place, since Jeremiah begs twice not to be returned there (Jer. 37:20, 38:26); thus PR 26 fills a gap about the torments suffered there at the hands of the prison’s warden. This has the effect of further dramatizing Jeremiah’s anguish, as well as showing PR 26’s fondness for monologue.

The continuation endows Jeremiah with knowledge of the redactor’s own comments:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR 26:4-continued</th>
<th>Jer 37: 17-21</th>
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<td>4 D. …In due course Zedekiah sent and had Jeremiah brought to him, and asked him: Is there any word from the Lord? (Jer. 37:17). Jeremiah said: “There is word. The king of Babylon will send you into exile.” Zedekiah’s face was agitated and he became angry at Jeremiah, whereupon Jeremiah, afraid that Zedekiah might slay him, tried to change the subject, saying: We have much to learn, for the</td>
<td>17 Then King Zedekiah sent for him, and received him. The king questioned him secretly in his house, and said, “Is there any word from the Lord?” Jeremiah said, “There is!” Then he said, “You shall be handed over to the king of Babylon.” 18 Jeremiah also said to King Zedekiah, “What wrong have I done to you or your servants or this people, that you have put me in prison? 19 Where are your prophets who</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This scribe is only mentioned elsewhere once, as a villain, in a list of evil sages in Midrash Hillel, whose dating is unknown. Hence, this Midrash might have been familiar with PR 26. See in Wieder, Jeremiah, 210 n57; Jellinek, Beit haMidrash.
wicked who do not take revenge until they find an occasion to pick a quarrel with the one they are after. All the more so should the just abide by this rule of conduct—particularly should you, whose name Zedekiah means “the just.” In what way have I sinned against the people [of Israel] that they put me into prison? Where are those who prophesied falsely? Saying: The king of Babylon will not go up against Jerusalem? I beg of you, I formally, petition you, Cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan (Jer, 37:20). Then Zedekiah gave orders concerning Jeremiah, and they put him in an ordinary prison and gave him daily a loaf of bread until there was no longer any bread in Jerusalem. And Jeremiah dwelt in the court of the guard.169

prophesied to you, saying, ‘The king of Babylon will not come against you and against this land’? 20 Now please hear me, my lord king: be good enough to listen to my plea, and do not send me back to the house of the secretary Jonathan to die there.” 21 So King Zedekiah gave orders, and they committed Jeremiah to the court of the guard; and a loaf of bread was given him daily from the bakers’ street, until all the bread of the city was gone. So Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.

Jeremiah’s plea to Zedekiah (underlined, section D) is modelled on the way Jeremiah was framed by Hananiah’s descendants, as expressed exclusively by the narrative in PR 26:4 (section B)170. Jeremiah seems to know Hananiah’s secret will.

Compare Jeremiah: until they find an occasion to pick a quarrel with the one they are after, with Hananiah: See to it that you find an occasion against Jeremiah and get even with him. Jeremiah similarly knows Zedekiah’s inner thoughts on the meaning of his name (found in PR 26:3). Jeremiah quotes the words of an authorial figure in these two instances, namely PR 26’s homilist. A similar effect is found in a description of Zedekiah’s torments (PR 26:6):

169 Braude, PR, 531-2. הָאָמַה הַשְּׁעָה שֹׁלֵלָה צְנִיטְקַת הַטָּבָא אֵעְלָה וַאֲמֵר לָלֵי (ךָל) לָבַּר וָאַל, אָמַר לְזָדְכֵה יא צַדְקָא, עַתְיוּ.

170 The name of Zedekiah homily might be a much older tradition, see Davis, Cave 4, 283.
6...Thereupon Zedekiah replied: “I beg you, slay me first so that I may not see\textsuperscript{171} the blood of my sons.” And his sons pleaded, saying: “Slay us first so that we may not see the blood of our father shed upon the earth”. And so Nebuchadnezzar did what they asked: he slaughtered them before Zedekiah. Then he gouged out Zedekiah’s eyes, put him in an oven of brass, and took him to Babylon. And Zedekiah kept crying out, Come and see, all you children of men, that Jeremiah prophesied truly about me when he said to me: You will go to Babylon and in Babylon will die, but your eyes will not have seen Babylon. I would not listen to his words. And here I am in Babylon, and my eyes do not see it\textsuperscript{172}.

Zedekiah’s words solve an exegetical problem inherent to Jeremiah’s prophecies. Zedekiah\textsuperscript{173} cannot see Babylon though he is exiled there\textsuperscript{174}. Jeremiah’s authority is enhanced by having Zedkaiah quote him. Jeremiah quoted the homilist and now Zedkaiah quoted Jeremiah. The voices of the characters intermingle with the author for Jeremiah’s benefit. PR 26 also fleshes out the characters of Jonathan the scribe and Ebed-Melech to shore up its message of Jeremiah’s great importance. It has them voice this importance (PR 26:5):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR. 26:5</th>
<th>Jer. 38: 1-6</th>
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<tr>
<td>5. [And it was there that] Shephtaiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashhur and Jucak the son of Shelmieah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah spoke unto all the people saying:... he that remaineth in the city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence (Jer. 38:1-2). Thereupon they came to the king Zedkaiah and said to him: “This man prophesizes much evil concerning us. He does not have in mind the welfare of this place.” The king replied: “Behold, he is in your hand; do to him what seems good to you.” They then took Jeremiah and cast him in a pit.</td>
<td>I Now Shephatiah son of Mattan, Gedaliah son of Pashhur, Jucal son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah was saying to all the people. 2 Thus says the Lord, Those who stay in this city shall die by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; but those who go out to the Chaldeans shall live; they shall have their lives as a prize of war, and live. 3 Thus says the Lord, This city shall surely be handed over to the army of the king of Babylon and be taken. 4 Then the officials said to the king, “This man ought to be put to death, because he is discouraging the soldiers who are left in the city.”</td>
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which belonged to Malchiah the king’s son, a pit full of water. But the Holy one, blessed be He, performed miracles for Jeremiah: first the water sank to the bottom, and then the mud came up to the top so that Jeremiah stood stuck in the mud. And Jonathan the scribe, reviling and taunting Jeremiah, kept saying; “put your head down in the mud, maybe you will have a good nap.”

PR 26:5 adds the miraculous to its report of Jeremiah’s survival in the pit. I suggest that the textual impetus is similar to Gen. R. 84:24, where the biblical assertion that Joseph’s pit had no water leads to the deduction that it was filled with something else (snakes and scorpions). Similarly, whereas the text (Jer. 38:6) insists that there was no water in the pit, PR 26 views this as a double miracle. Originally there was water which God needed to diminish so that Jeremiah would not drown. The remaining mud needed to support Jeremiah firmly so he would not drown from fatigue, as is evident from Jonathan’s taunt.

Prijs suggests that in this incident, Jonathan the scribe seems to be a character who mocks Jeremiah’s suffering in a way not too dissimilar to some stock types in Christian Hagiography. His taunt: Mayhap sleep will come to your eyes, is a reversal of Prov. 6:4: Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber, based on his nature as an evil scribe and shows the author’s choice of appropriate style. The

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175 Braude, PR, 531-2. He suggests that Bor (pit) and be’er (well), may have been confused.

176 Prijs, Die Jeremia-Homilie, 58. This suggest to me that Jonathan might be a later Ashkenazi addition to the text, as these scenes of religious doubt have echoes in Ashkenazi martyr literature; see for instance Cohen, Between, 452 ff.
scene heightens Jeremiah’s righteousness. Its continuation uses Ebed-Melech’s character to spout positive reinforcements of Jeremiah’s importance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR 26:5-continued</th>
<th>Jer 38:7-13</th>
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<tr>
<td>Now when Ebed-Melech the Cushite heard (Jer. 38:7), Ebed-Melech was one of four [personages who were called Cushites: Zipporah, Israel, Saul and Ebed-Melech. And why was he called Cushite? Even as a Cushite stands out because of [the color of his] skin, so in the palace of Zedkaiah Ebed-Melech stood out because of his good deeds. He came to Zedkaiah and said: know that if Jeremiah dies in the pit the city will be given to our foes. Zedkaiah answered; then take thirty men with you and bring up Jeremiah out of the pit. See what a severe affliction famine is! Even thirty men together did not have the strength so bring up Jeremiah from the pit. But finally, with great difficulty, they succeeded in bringing him out, [to begin getting him out of the pit], Ebed-Melech the Cushite had come into the king’s hose and thence had taken old clothes and rags. He had gone and stood at the pit and cried saying: “My lord Jeremiah, my lord Jeremiah!” there had been no voice and no answer, and so he had put his hand on his garments and rent them, and had gone forth weeping. Actually Jeremiah had heard him, but was afraid that it was Jonathan the scribe [who was wailing]. When Jeremiah heard a voice weeping, however, he asked: “Who is he that calls me and weeps?” the reply was: “It is Ebed-Melech the Cushite. By your life, I thought you were dead. Here is a rope. Put it round the rags under your armpits.” And so they took Jeremiah out of the pit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, a eunuch in the king’s house, heard that they had put Jeremiah into the cistern. The king happened to be sitting at the Benjamin Gate, 8 So Ebed-Melech left the king’s house and spoke to the king, 9 ”My lord king, these men have acted wickedly in all they did to the prophet Jeremiah by throwing him into the cistern to die there of hunger, for there is no bread left in the city.” 10 Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, “Take three men with you from here, and pull the prophet Jeremiah up from the cistern before he dies.” 11 So Ebed-Melech took the men with him and went to the house of the king, to a wardrobe of the storehouse, and took from there old rags and worn-out clothes, which he let down to Jeremiah in the cistern by ropes. 12 Then Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said to Jeremiah, “Just put the rags and clothes between your armpits and the ropes.” Jeremiah did so. 13 Then they drew Jeremiah up by the ropes and pulled him out of the cistern. And Jeremiah remained in the court of the guard.</td>
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177 Braude, PR. 532-3. כushi שנקראו אדם בני ארבעה אחד היה הוא ירמיהו לח ז (הכושי מלך ויאשע) (הכושי), לעבר המשוים המחスタートים של מלחים, או לאלפי מחים זר濢ים זר濢ים זר濢ים זר濢ים זר濢ים, ונכון ribi (מלך) הנושא בעבר המוש宏观 מקדש פקודים ומוכנים את מקדשAaron. אחר כל מחסטר הקאי ששלישים אנסים מעשה ד atoi וידיתו וידיתו. נכון ribi (מלך) הנושא במקדש המוש宏观 מקדש פקודים ומוכנים את מקדש Aaron. אחר כל מחstrstr הקאי ששלישים אנסים מעשה ד atoi וידיתו וידיתו.
This account repeats a well-known midrashic claim that the term *Cushite* is an epithet rather than an ethnic signifier\(^{178}\). In this version, however, the character is not identified specifically with Zedekiah or Baruch but is still Jewish in what might be a form of anti-Christian polemic\(^{179}\). PR 26 chooses to narratively demonstrate Ebed-Melech’s good deeds, left undetailed in other accounts.

This biblical rewrite endows Ebed-Melech with knowledge of Jeremiah’s importance to the fate of the city, instead of the fear that he will die of hunger (unlike Jer. 38:9). Ebed-Melech also cries for Jeremiah. These two facts demonstrate that Jeremiah’s importance was well known and recognized by other characters\(^{180}\).

Jeremiah’s ability or inability to recognize the voice of a character is a chivalric motif identified by Hannah Liss in Rashbam’s commentaries\(^{181}\). This again...
suggests Jonathan the scribe’s novelistic origins since this episode is connected to his previous taunts. This peculiarity is compatible with the different way in which Jonathan and Ebed-Melech characterized Jeremiah, when compared to the use of authoritative monologues. They might be the creation of an even later hand.

Regardless, PR 26:3-5 uses its secondary characters as it does its monologues to further Jeremiah’s confessions of innocence. This technique can also be seen in Philo, who shares some of his interpretations with his characters. This apology is then a sublimation of the use of verses, which are supplanted in late rabbinic literature by characters as proof. The characters’ testimonies have become proof texts.

2.3.3 PR 26’s Sympathy for Jeremiah in Direct Parallels to PR 13

2.3.3.1 Parallels in Pesikta Rabatti 26 and Pesikta deRav Kahana 13

The following section analyzes the only two possible direct parallels between PR 26 and PRK 13, to show how their different treatment of Jeremiah results in poetic changes in line with my findings thus far. This comparison is crucial due to Ulmer, who argued that individual units in the PR must be discussed alongside Tanḥuma related literature and PRK parallels, even if faint.

PRK 13:14 claims that Jeremiah was like Benjamin, because as long as he was in his mother’s (Jerusalem’s) womb she did not die. Jeremiah then says God seduced him to leave Jerusalem (Jer: 20:7). The seduction is understood as Jeremiah’s false

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182 Heinemann, Methods of Aggada, 39-42.
183 There may be two other parallels related to PRK 13 and PR 26. First, it remains unclear whether Tanḥuma (other) VaYerah 8, which mentions that God provides a lawyer to the wicked and clears his path, hoping he will defend the guilty and convince Him not to punish them. However, according to the proof text from Jer. 5, there was no such man for Jerusalem. Perhaps this connection between one lawyer and Jeremiah led to the assumption that his presence was critical but non-existent, which is why Jeremiah has to leave the city, in order for it to be destroyed in PR 26. Alternatively, Braude, Piska, 27, notes that Jeremiah’s departure spells doom in 2Bar, 1-2. The second possible parallel is a related but flowing biographic narrative centered on Jeremiah in BR VaYesalach, which echoes most of PRK 13’s materials directly, but as a narrative sequence about Jeremiah. Redaction concentrating on characters as the organizing principle is evident, even though not much else changes between PRK 13 and BR.
184 Ulmer, Redaction, 112-3. She argued that PR, PRK and the Tanḥuma all share a certain milieu.
hope that the destruction will not occur in light of the promise of future salvation inherent to purchasing Hanamel’s field:

...Another explanation of why Jeremiah’s portion was set in the land of Benjamin: as long as Benjamin was in his mother’s womb, she did not die, but as soon as he went forth from it, she died, as is written “and it came to pass as he went forth, her soul—it expired” (Gen.35:18). So, too, during all the days that Jeremiah was in Jerusalem, it was not destroyed, but when he went forth from it, it was destroyed. It was of this going forth that Jeremiah said: “‘O Lord, Thou hast enticed me, and I was enticed’ (Jer. 20:7)—Thou didst set out to entice me, and I let myself be enticed. Thou didst have me go forth out of Jerusalem, and then Thou didst destroy it. Yesterday, Thou didst tell me, ‘Behold, Hanamel, the son of Shallum thine uncle, shall come unto thee, saying: Buy thee my field’ (Jer. 32:7), and it was thus [that]’Thou didst overcome me, and didst prevail over me’” (Jer. 20:7)\(^{185}\).

PR 26’s treatment of Jeremiah’s character was heavily inspired by the conceptual metaphor equating a mother with Jerusalem, which permeates the chapter. However unlike PR 26’s dual seduction narratives (2.3.1.1), PRK 13:14 does not actually state that Jeremiah left Jerusalem to purchase the field. PR 26 thus creates a new narrative from one much like the one in PRK and Jerome (2.2.4). PR 26:6:

6...In that time the Lord said to Jeremiah: “Rise, go to Anathoth and buy the field from thine uncle Hanamel.” Thereupon Jeremiah thought in his heart: Maybe God means to turn Jerusalem over to its inhabitants and allow them to carry on their lives as usual within it. Hence, [to assure them of His intention], the Lord says to me: Go, buy the field for thyself...  

The major poetic difference between the two sources is that PR 26 focuses on Jeremiah’s inner voice (underlined). PRK 13:4 did not formulate this but rather used a one-sided spoken dialogue\(^{186}\). Jeremiah addresses God in the reworked verses (bold above) similar to simple proof texts. When PR 26:6 echoes this episode again upon Jeremiah’s return to the destroyed Jerusalem, it reuses an inner monologue. This double emphasis betrays PR 26’s purpose as a showpiece for Jeremiah’s innocence,

\(^{185}\) Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 352.  
\(^{186}\) Towner identified the replacement of dialogue with monologue as one of the markers of the late editing of Mekhilta de Rashbi. Towner, Enumeration, 42-6. Hence, this process might have earlier roots but seems to be a sign of lateness in the Midrashim.
This comparison, bolstered by the many additions of character monologue elsewhere in PR 26, thus suggests that monologue and notably inner monologue are PR 26’s favorite form of characterization, specifically as concerns the mind. PRK as Anisfeld posited, focused more on dialogue188.

Similar conclusions emerge from another parallel between PRK 13 and PR 26, the narrative of Jeremiah going into exile (for the sake of coherence I have divided one into numbers and the other into lettered sections):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PR 26:6189</th>
<th>PRK 13:9190</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6... I)... As he continued on his way, he kept crying out, saying: “What road have the sinners taken? What road have those taken who are going off to exile? What road have those taken who are about to perish? I will go forth and perish with them”. As he went, he saw</td>
<td>A. Another comment on the words of Jeremiah (Jer. 1:1) dibre “words,” being construed as dabray, “as to leading.” The Holy One said to Jeremiah: Either thou go lead them down to Babylon and I will remain here, or thou remain here and I will go lead</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

187 Inner monologue has two main functions in literature: characterization and plot advancement; the Bible favors the plot-centric aim. See, Polak, Biblical Narrative, 265. I have found that PR 26, prefers characterization.

188 Anisfeld, Sustain Me, 45-55.

189 Braude, PR, 536-7. "...הנהו חיו ואחרת חיו והهجوم והוכל חלך וב לדורות הדורות. והיה אל כת אל הائه אל כות הבנות עיניהן, עיריה, בלאה, ובו הלאירה said: "...and the people turn and the sinners give themselves as sacrifices. And as he went, he saw..."

190 Braude and Kapstein, Pesikta de-Rab Kahana, 344-6. "...ואימא על אה והי החמה ניווה ואביו קריר שלום והיה אל כת אל הائه אל כות הבנות עיניהן, עיריה, בלאה, ובו הלאירה said: "...and the people turn and the sinners give themselves as sacrifices. And as he went, he saw..."
the road covered with blood, and the ground on both sides soaked with the blood of the slain. He put his face close to the ground and saw the footprints of sucklings and infants who were walking into captivity. He threw himself upon the ground and kissed the footprints. When he caught up with the host going into captivity, he embraced them and kissed them. He wept, with them, and they with him. He then spoke and said: “My brethren and my people, all that has befallen you is the consequence of your not hearkening to the words of the prophecy that God uttered through me”

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2) When Jeremiah reached the river Euphrates, Nebuzaradan spoke, saying to him: “If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come (Jer. 40:4).”

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B. Nebuchadnezzar gave Nebuzaradan three orders concerning Jeremiah: “Take him, look well to him, and do him no harm” (Jer. 39:12). But when Jeremiah saw a band of young men tied by neck chains one to the other, he went and cast his lot with theirs. Then again when he saw a band of old men tied together by neck chains, he went and cast his lot with theirs. Thereupon Nebuzaradan said, “I see that you are one of three things: a prophet who thought he was telling lies, or a protester against the justice of the punishment that God inflicts, or a murderer. You are a prophet who thought he was telling lies—for many years you have been prophesying concerning this insignificant Temple of yours that it would be destroyed, and now that I have destroyed it, you are distraught. Or, secondly, you are a protester against the justice of the punishment that God inflicts—I do not wish to tie you up in chains, and, [when you choose to cast your lot with the others], the just apportioning of God’s punishment appears to have no meaning for you. Or, thirdly, you are a murderer. For if the king hears of what you have |

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191 Davis notices the similarity of the emphasis on this river to Q385a frg. 18 i a–b 1–114, which also highlights Jeremiah’s prestige in the eyes of the exiles as does PR 26. The Qumranic analogy between Jeremiah and Moses giving the law on the other side of a river, is absent. Davis, Cave 4, 135, 170, 247.

192 Inspired by the wording of Jer. 40:1, 5. As per Wieder, Jeremiah, 217-8n28.
### 3) So Jeremiah thought in his heart: If I go with the exiles to Babylon, there will no comforter for the captivity left in Jerusalem, thereupon he started to go forth from among them.

C. “Yet Jeremiah would not go back” (Jer. 40:5), until the Holy One disclosed to him what he was to do, whereof it is written “The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, after Nebuzaradan . . . let him go” (Jer. 40:1). The verse goes on to say “When [Nebuzaradan] had taken him—and he was bound in chains” (ibid.). [Should not the text have read “he,” not “and he?”] What, then, is implied by the phrase “and he”? R. Aha’s answer was that Jeremiah “and He,” if one dare say such a thing, were bound in chains. What was “the word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord?” On this point, R. Eleazar and R. Johanan differ. According to R. Eleazar, the word was “He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock” (Jer. 31:10). According to R. Johanan, It was “The Lord will ransom Jacob, and redeem him from the hand of him that is stronger than he” (Jer. 31:11).

### 4) When the exiles lifted their eyes and saw that Jeremiah was taking leave of them. All of them broke out weeping with loud lamentation and cried out, saying; “Our father Jeremiah, in truth, will you abandon us?” there they sat down and wept, for thus it is written By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Yea, we wept (Ps. 137:1). Jeremiah answered and said: “I call heaven and earth to witness that if you had wept even once while you dwelt in Zion, you would not have been driven out.” Jeremiah, weeping as he walked, said: “Alas for thee, Zion the most precious of cities”.

D. [Having been released by Nebuzaradan] and on his way back [to Jerusalem], Jeremiah saw fingers and toes [of captive Israel] that had been cut off and flung on the roadways. He picked them up, clasped them close, kissed them, and put them in his cloak, saying to them: O my children, did I not say to you, “Give glory to the Lord your God, before it grow dark, and before your feet stumble,” etc. (Jer. 13:16)—before words of Torah grow dark for you, before words of prophecy grow dark, [and you are brought to the fate that has now befallen you].
A and 3 are parallels. But PR 26’s Jeremiah dissuades himself from going to Babylon in an inner monologue (underlined), since he is worried about the people’s lack of comfort in his absence\(^1\). This emphasizes his personal sense of worth as a prophet. This is unlike the discourse between Jeremiah and God in PRK’s A, where he recognizes his limitations compared to God via dialogue. Elsie R. Stern views this text as focused on God’s leadership of Israel\(^2\). PR 26 replaces him with Jeremiah.

PRK’s B portion, which is critical of Jeremiah and casts doubts on his sorrow at the destruction, is absent from PR 26’s 2\(^3\). There is no room to criticize Jeremiah in PR 26, because it has already established his innocence and good intent\(^4\). Conversely, PRK’s C highlights God’s critical role in Israel’s salvation and also his sympathy for Israel through the numerous opinions. This is completely absent from PR 26. 4 opts instead to highlight Jeremiah’s importance to his people, which is expressed by using their own discourse, as was elsewhere done with Ebed-Melech.

The most striking change though, is the chiastic locations of 1 and D. These sections serve a similar purpose and contain similar scenes, but argue for different interpretations of the character. The kissing of the bloody toes/footprints is a shared sign of Jeremiah’s affection, but PR 26’s Jeremiah also demonstrates his compassion by crying with the people. He also does not perform the gruesome act of kissing when he returns vindicated as in PRK, but only on his way to the Euphrates. This replaces

\(^{1}\) This nationally-minded Jeremiah has ancient roots. See Goldstein, Post Biblical Traditions, 439-40, 445. The fragmentary Qumranic “Apocryphon of Jeremiah” already recounts that Jeremiah accompanied the captives on their way to Babylon, its context indicates that he did so as a free man. Thus, the accounts continue this heroic trend. See also, 2 Bar. 33:1-2.

\(^{2}\) Stern, From Rebuke, 132-7. Also note her analysis of PRK 13:11, which I argue prefers God to beseech Judah and not Jeremiah, again sacrificing the prophet in favor of divine intimacy.

\(^{3}\) The parallel in PR 27 also emphasizes that the captives wept because Jeremiah was leaving them. However, this account echoes PRK 13’s hinted criticism in Nebuzaradan’s words. Could this have been the inspiration for PR26’s account? PR 27 also lacks the ending-beginning sections found in Lam. R.

\(^{4}\) Prijs briefly notes some of the changes in this account. Prijs, Die Jeremia-Homilie, 73-4. There is an ongoing mix of motifs and transmutation of locations to better suit the homily.
vindication with solidarity. When Jeremiah learns of the destruction, he immediately suggests that he wishes to die with his people in a monologue (I, underlined).

Thus, while the ending of both versions contains a similar lament of the people’s reluctance to heed Jeremiah’s past warnings, PR 26 argues that Jeremiah is more worried about his people than himself. In summary, comparing PR 26:9 and PR 13:9 clearly follows this trend and bases PR 26’s preference for inner monologue as its way of expressing apology through character consciousness.

2.3.3.2 Conclusions: Character Monologue as a Sign of Lateness

Compared to PRK 13, PR 26’s Jeremiah is extensively characterized as sympathetic by giving much greater weight and expression to his state of mind in monologues and by occasionally having other characters acknowledge his importance and innocence. This preference for first person character narration of thought and action constitutes the strongest departure from PRK 13’s syllogistic characterizations of Jeremiah. It is vital to note that when PR 26 seems to be in dialogue with rabbinic or even post biblical traditions, it tends to engage in these by adding Jeremiah’s thoughts in the form of a monologue. This might a late midrashic sign of lateness in general.

Herman suggests that different literary genres can be differentiated by the importance they ascribe to a character’s consciousness. For instance, the expression of the unhistorical meditative and mental side of a character is one of the chief traits of the modern novel identified by Forster, which is very different from the folk tale’s disinterest in articulating character motives mentioned by Propp.

Thus when compared on the basis of the space devoted to Jeremiah’s consciousness, PR 26 and PRK 13 correspond to very different genres; respectively,

197 Herman, Basic Elements, 139, 142-3.
198 Forster, Aspects, 35.
199 Prop, Morphology, 75.
late and homiletic Midrashim. This distinction has the added benefit of hinting at
different historical circumstances which could better explain PR 26’s provenance,
beyond the semantic question of the negative or positive portrayal of a character. This
difference in turn might serve as a test case for all characters in late Midrashim, as I
argue in the conclusions (4.2).

Rimmon-Kenan warns that identifying which modes of characterization apply
to a given work is insufficient. Rather, the modes that repeatedly apply to the
characters should be noted, to ascertain period or genre tendencies. The following
section aims to do just that, using PR 26’s emphasis on inner monologue and the
narrator’s authority.

2.3.4 The Late Byzantine Characterization of PR 26

Pesikta Rabatti 26’s preference for monologue and for authorial identification with
Jeremiah is explained by the historical Byzantine context of late rhetoric. Bakhtin
claimed that the novel has always shown a dependency on rhetoric. David Daube
argued for this dependency regarding the Tannaim and their legal terminology. The
same is true for Midrash narrative; Arthur Marmorstein found that in a very broad
sense, diatribes are more frequent in Amoraic aggadic scenes. I suggest that this

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200 Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, 97-8.
201 Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 33-4.
202 Daube, Rhetoric, 240. For possible similarities, see ibid, 251-2, 257, 259-61. The use of diatribes in
Midrashim, without aggadic scenes, may be already present in halakhic Midrashim, see the examples in
Ulmer, Advancement, 69-91.
203 Marmorstein, Background, 60. Another aspect of Amoraic poetics is the humanization of the sages
in what Fischel hypothesized to be the reworking of Tannaitic chreia, due to the codification of cultural
materials during 150-250 C.E. This reworking inserted supernatural motifs as well as additional
biblical proof texts. Fischel, Story and History, 469-70. These additions show the textual understanding
of characters innate to these sources and to PRK 13’s treatment of Jeremiah as inverse, expressing a
reverse de-humanization and textualization of the character. Hezser found that this Amoraic treatment
of the chreia also contributed to the proliferation of dialogue in later Amoraic texts. Hezser,
Apophthegmata, 455-6. Abundant use of dialogue between biblical characters is especially
characteristic of 6th century Christian Greek homilies and thus parallels the similar preferences of
midrashic redaction in that period. Allen, Sixth Century Homily, 213-5.
rhetorical form is supplanted by the monologue in late Midrashim, as is evident in PR 26 and that this is an originally Byzantine development.

Geula examined three midrashic works which are known only from quotes in Ashkenaz, and noted their affinity for expanding biblical narrative through quoted monologue and dialogue mixed with extensive non-midrashic prose that is formally similar to Hellenic rhetoric, Pseudoepigrapha, medieval prose Hebrew literature and the above analysis of PR 26\textsuperscript{204}. In Midrash Abakir (as late as 985 C.E) in particular, whole issues in the Pentateuch are refashioned into dialogue scenes\textsuperscript{205}.

Geula argued that all three lost works are actually Byzantine in origin and date to between the 10\textsuperscript{th} to the 12\textsuperscript{th} century at the latest. These lost Midrashim are connected to some versions of Tanḥuma and related literature, including PR and its interpolations such as PR 26. The lost Midrashim form a network with other compositions known only from Ashkenaz, such as Midr. Ps. and PR. These share similarities in style and content. Geula hence suggests they were all redacted in similar environments, perhaps even in the same Southern Italian circles\textsuperscript{206}.

The only vernacular word found in PR 26 is indeed Greek and thus is compatible with this context. This raises the possibility that PR 26 is also Byzantine, like the lost works, as PR in general is connected to them. This assertion is greatly strengthened by noting certain compatible developments in Byzantine rhetoric in the 10\textsuperscript{th} to the 12\textsuperscript{th} centuries, the era these compositions were probably created.

\textsuperscript{204} Geula, Lost Aggadic Works, 288-9. The shift to prose can also be explained by connections with Tanḥuma and related literature. The poetics of monologue might have earlier traction on older Jewish texts which might also be Byzantine. “Toldot Yeshua” has all sorts of narrative expansions that go beyond the needs of the plot, including descriptions of mental states and emotions. In the book of Zerubbabel the characters are more important to the book than the plot. Consider the possible influence of Mary and the poetics so far described on the prominent role of the mother of the messiah described in Dan, Hebrew Story, 24, 36-9.

\textsuperscript{205} Geula, Lost Aggadic Works, 78-9, 112-3.

\textsuperscript{206} Ibid, 306-8, 318.
The character monologue known throughout Late Antiquity and beyond in rhetoric classroom exercise collections (“Progymnasmata”) as “Ěthopoeia”, has long been linked to Rabbinic midrashic stories\textsuperscript{207}. A type of dramatic monologue—“imitation of an underlying person” was part of common rhetorical practice. Such exercises teach budding students how to craft a speech worthy of a mythological, historical or everyday character, regardless of historical veracity.

The connection between “Ěthopoeia” and PR 26 seems unhelpful, since it is relevant to rabbinic and second temple literature as a whole, but monologues by Jeremiah are rare in rabbinic literature. “Ěthopoeia” and characters speaking in the first person were especially common in 10-12\textsuperscript{th} century Byzantium\textsuperscript{208}.

A comparison of earlier “Progymnasmata” with 10\textsuperscript{th} century textbooks shows a huge increase in the quantity of “Ěthopoeia”, as well as a renewed focus on mythical characters\textsuperscript{209}. Stratis Papaioannou notes that Basilakes’ “Progymnasmata” (1130-1140 C.E.) is mostly made up of narratives (16!) and personifications (27!). This is the most extensive concentration of character monologue since 6\textsuperscript{th} century manuals\textsuperscript{210}. A similar increase in monologue is present in the sermons of Gregory

\textsuperscript{207} Lieberman, How much Greek, 337. We do not know how much Greek the rabbis knew, probably not much ancient philosophy, since their main interest was centered on legal studies and methods of rhetoric. Therefore their study of rhetoric is likely to have involved Ėthopoeia. For one example see, Hallewey, Writers of the ‘Agada, 237-8. Where the Torah is silent regarding Joseph’s comforting his suspecting brothers, no pupil of rhetoric would pass up the opportunity to give Joseph a speech “that should have been said by himself according to the state of things”. He finds some of Joseph’s midrashic arguments in Greek speeches: Thucydides 1, 22 =Gen. R. 100;9=Xenophon Cyrus 8:7; 23.

\textsuperscript{208} The popularity of this mode might have increased gradually in Christian homilies from the 5\textsuperscript{th} century onwards, as well. See in Uthemann, Severian, 173-5.

\textsuperscript{209} I also found that John of Sardis’ (9\textsuperscript{th} century) comments on the chreia emphasize the importance of characters and their speech. These explanations which were not always present in earlier commentaries: The situations are appropriate to the characters. For in this aspect alone is plausibility considered… One should consider how plausibility originates from locales where the characters typically spend their time, from the language that naturally fits each character, and from situations that do not go beyond the essential nature of each character… we are not involved in what is said in a narrative, whereas in a Chreia elaboration we argue on behalf of what has been said or done. Hock, Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric, 43, 63 and note 8 there.

Nazianzen. Papaioannou shows that 16 of these sermons in mid-11th century Byzantium were central liturgical texts. Character monologue was thus exemplary and in use in Bible exegesis.

One of the most influential Byzantine rethors of the 11th century, Michael Psellos, worked in an era where intellectuals needed to glorify themselves to gain positions and publicity, since the study of rhetoric was on the rise among the elites.

As Papaioannou shows, Psellos’ lasting heritage was a renewed emphasis upon the rethor as kind of poet. He created authorial characters such as his depictions of Gregory Nazianzen, via first person narratives and displays of emotion, especially in apologetic texts. This in turn led to a renewed interest in characterization in general, from the author as a figure to characters in fiction in general.

This development is part of the so-called Byzantine “fiction” revival which reached its height with the composition of “new” Greek novels over the course of the 12th century. Four romances have survived from this period as well as examples of poetry and a Christian drama. The first person monologue is the dominant form of narration in one such novel, “The story [drama] of Hysmine and Hysminias”. First person rhetoric also proliferated in letter writing, prefaces and other fictional texts.

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211 See, for instance, uses of the first person in Oration XVIII:30, NPNF2-07; a lengthy dramatized dialogue in oration XXI:28, ibid, 272; paraphrases of verses, Oration XL:15, ibid, 364 and some paraphrases in the first person of other characters, Oration XLIII, ibid, 413-4.

212 Papaioannou, Psellos, 46-8.

213 Ibid, 136. Ἕθοποεία occupied a seminal position in later Christian reading practices of biblical discourse. Aspiring students learned rhetoric by staging first person speeches of stock characters, thus imagining themselves as another. Biblical exegesis promoted identification with the figures of biblical stories. The Bible was seen as “a mirror of the self”, since readers were asked to model themselves after biblical figures.

214 Papaioannou, Psellos, 43-6.

215 Ibid, 107, 234-5. Up to this time, the ancient and byzantine fictional pact demanded that an author would avoid presenting fictional narratives in his own person. This was done not to confuse fictional characters with the speaking subject. Authors of fiction remained to a large extent without a biography. However, Byzantine rethors and their students actually studied fiction, mostly Homer but also the novels of Achilles Tatius and Heliodorus. This eventually led to narration and imitation.

216 Ibid. Furthermore, these four romances present characters as expressions of the “self” and not as an imitation of the real. Thus they extend the late rhetoric trends mentioned above and might be comparable to PR 26, on these texts see Beaton, Greek romance, 28-9.
PR 26’s preference for Jeremiah’s monologues, which is not found in most of its Midrash sources, its one use of Greek and its preference for aligning Jeremiah with the nameless author/redactor in some remarks, thus all point to a late Byzantine background expressing current changes within rhetoric and fiction typical of that era.

Other poetical devices also link PR 26 with Byzantium. PR 26’s penchant for original parables such as the *sotah* as mother/ Jerusalem (PR 26:1-2), is also found in the three lost Midrashim. Geula noted that innovative parables were the form of expression most beloved by the authors of these Midrashim\(^ {217} \). PR 26’s use of irony and surprise as noted by Heinemann, is comparable to the importance of surprise and astonishment recognized by Panagiotis Agapitos to the above mentioned Byzantine novels and to later Greek vernacular novels\(^ {218} \).

Finally, the highly liberal reshaping of materials in PR 26 can also be also explained by a Byzantine model. According to Papaioannou, one of the main advantages Psellos attributes to Gregory as a model author is that he is “*self-similar*”, i.e., demonstrates an author’s consistency and agreement in content and style. This is one of the features other commentators such as Maximus the Confessor attributed to biblical and theological writing. At the end of every reading one should arrive at an image of the author.\(^ {219} \) Religious texts should be uniform and cohesive, as is PR 26 and its theming. This is a later Byzantine midrashic aesthetic when compared, for instance, to the Babylonian Talmud’s dialectic tendencies\(^ {220} \).

\(^{217}\) Geula, Lost Aggadic Works, 288-9. By contrast, they echo no new stories about sages, the classical form of classical Midrash narrative, and very few instances of midrashic narratives either. Hence, they reflect a preference for narrative for its own sake, like PR 26. The presence of such original parables containing narrative has been suggested as a sign of contacts between Northern French Jews and Christians, who also show a preference for this genre. See, Jacobs, Narrative Parable, 247-9. If so, this could be another sign of a Byzantine background for the phenomenon, see 2.5.

\(^{218}\) Heinemann, A Homily, 35-7; Agapitos, Poetics in the Byzantine Vernacular Romances, 38-43, 80.

\(^{219}\) Papaioannou, Psellos, 82-3.

\(^{220}\) For more on these, see Rubenstein, Talmudic Stories, 259-60 and the next chapter.
I have also identified a possible link between PR 26’s love of monologue and Byzantine Jews. Gershon Brin, who examined several anonymous 10th century Jewish Byzantine biblical exegetes, noted that one of their stylistic innovations was the paraphrasing of biblical verses as character monologue. This device is not dissimilar to a concise “Éthopoeia”.

Byzantine Jewry may have been familiar with rhetorical tradition and could have been exposed to the renewed interest in “Éthopoeia”, since the Karaite Judah Hadassi (mid-12th century Constantinople) compared the 13 rabbinic norms of interpretation to the six and six Greek norms. These, as Saul Lieberman shows convincingly, are based on familiarity with scholia on Hermogenes’ “Progymnasmata”. The 15th century Rabbanite Byzantine scholar, Mordechai Comtino also testifies that he “conformed to the methods of Christians” and had some Christian and Karaite pupils. The persistent presence of “Judaizing” Christian sects in Byzantine Anatolia, some of which had Jewish teachers as indicated by Philippe Gardette, might account for the circulation of innovations in rhetoric in earlier periods that may be more pertinent to PR 26.

221 Brin, Reuel. The commentaries cover the Pentateuch, some early prophets and mostly Kings, Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets. The Ezekiel commentary ends with the naming of Reuel as the possible author. The commentaries may hail from 10th century Byzantium, namely southern Italy, Asia Minor or Northern Greece. At times the exegetes tend to rephrase the verse as though the heroes of the narrative are attempting elucidation. It is worth noting that these Byzantine exegetes also like to incorporate rabbinic fables or parables, which might also be evident in the centrality of the parable to the lost Midrashim above. See the detailed argument below (2.5).

222 See Lieberman, Hellenism, 297-8. These six and six have nothing to do with rabbinic interpretation but everything to do with rhetoric. Geula, Yelamdenu, 244-51, argues for the Byzantine provenance of one homily, which uses the Letter of Aristeas as a model for an index, concerning the composition of the Torah. This shows Byzantine Jews legitimizing using Greek literary models. The preference for character monologue could be part of this climate.

223 Congourdeau, Cultural Exchanges, 712-4. This exchange is more typical of the end Byzantium.

224 Gardette, Judaizing Christians, 588-597. Since a great deal of the information on these sects is drawn from polemic tracts, which also argue that the Iconoclast Emperor Michal II was partially Jewish, one should tread lightly. Nevertheless the continued connection between these sects and sorcery could also link them with the themes of the lost Byzantine Midrashim, a topic I hope to pursue elsewhere.
If the poetics of PR 26 are Byzantine as argued, this also explains the reading of the chapter as a uniquely sympathetic autobiography. The uses of monologue as well as Jeremiah’s “pathos” fit with the function of similar devices in 10-12th century Byzantine autobiographical narratives described by Papaioannou. PR 26 thus transforms the author’s apologetic voice into the Jeremiah’s voice.

The anonymous nature of Midrashim in Gaonic society did not allow the author of PR 26 the luxury of a true first person oration. However by adhering to Jeremiah, the author fulfills his purpose in an acceptable fashion. Hence PR 26 reflects a distinct author persona like the one in Seder Eliyahu identified by Stein, a new voice responding to previous problems (PRK 13) through a new aesthetic. This literary process makes Jeremiah’s monologues key to the understanding of medieval Jewish Bible exegesis as well, as I show in what follows.

2.4 Jeremiah in Rashi’s Commentary

2.4.1 Introduction: Rashi on Creating Consistent Characters

As various scholars have pointed out, Rashi’s (1040-1105 C.E.) reworking of Midrashim in his commentaries had a variety of goals, but reworking accounts to enhance certain character traits is less documented. Michael Avioz and Temima

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225 PR 26 is quite different from classical rabbinic literature which eschews the more biographic Hellenic forms, Heinemann, Methods of Aggada, 142-5. For another example where Jeremiah is shaped as a biographical character in a Byzantine source, note Legah Tov on Lamentations, especially the introduction and a few paraphrases of Lam. verses as spoken by Jeremiah in Lam. 3.

226 Papaioannou, Psellos, 134. Autobiographies are sprinkled throughout hagiographic and historiographic texts, in poetic collections and even legal documents and wills.

227 On the forced anonymity of late Midrashim see Drory, Contacts, 64-75.

228 Stein, Poetics and Imagined Landscapes, 83-7. I have identified several instances of the previously described “figural contagion” in Eliyahu Rabbah, namely the author’s use of David to interject his views, such as in 2 and 18. God’s knowledge of the aggadic motif of “two tears” in 28 is also based on it being previously mentioned by the author. These instances suggest a similar authorial conception in Eliyahu Rabbah and PR 26, though future study is required.

229 For a detailed overview of Rashi’s life and works, see Grossman, Early Sages, 120-252. For Rashi’s different ways of using Midrashim, see for instance, Rachaman, Reworking, 261-8; Kamin, Rashi, 207-47; Signer, Rashi as Narrator, 107-10; Nevo, Rashi’s Way, 150*-5.
Davidovitz independently discussed this feature and showed that Rashi was familiar with certain modes of biblical characterization\textsuperscript{230}.

Avioz also showed how Rashi puts this insight into effect. Rashi directly characterizes Lot’s shepherds by modelling them after Midrashim\textsuperscript{231}. He also selects and redacts various Midrashim, to show how Lot is Abraham’s complete opposite. Scholars show that Rashi seems to have recognized the reoccurrence of opposing pairs of characters in Genesis. He then focused on the analogical nature of these pairs and “flattened” Lot and Esau to fill the biblical paradigm with midrashic content\textsuperscript{232}.

Below I show that Rashi’s treatment of Jeremiah is similar to his consistent views on Genesis characters\textsuperscript{233}. However, his sympathetic depiction of Jeremiah’s frame of mind draws on late-midrashic monologues described in previous sections\textsuperscript{234}.

Susan G. Sullivan argues that the style of Jeremiah historically lent itself to paraphrasing verses as monologues, due to the many monologic statements made by the prophet, as well as his lamentations and prayers\textsuperscript{235}. Medieval exegetes paraphrased verses as an exegetical device, which was used primarily to rewrite difficult syntax. Rashi on Jeremiah is no exception\textsuperscript{236}. Rashi’s monologic paraphrases also serve a more literary-apologetic aim than mere exegesis.

\textsuperscript{230} Davidovitz, Appraisal, 45-50; Avioz, Lot, 34-5 and also see Raffeld, Cain, 11-6.
\textsuperscript{231} Avioz, Lot, 20.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid, 34-5. Avioz’s findings fit with classic rabbinic characterization, as described by Isaac Heinemann in Methods of Aggada, 39-51. Rashi like Rashbam (1.8.1ff), was partially aware of character analogy.
\textsuperscript{233} I suspect that Rashi was more consistent than the Midrashim with regards to characters, because he took a more biographical interest than the sages. Wieder notes that Rashi used Seder Olam 28 to rectify Jeremiah’s chronology. This shows an interest in sequential history that might be translated into biography. Wieder, Jeremiah, 181. For character consistency, see Hochman, Character, 38-41, 97-103.
\textsuperscript{234} The translation of Rashi on Jeremiah is based on the online edition of the Judaica Press Complete Bible with Rashi attributed to A.J. Rosenberg: \url{http://www.mji.edu/library/bible_cdo/aid/63255/jewish/The-Bible-with-Rashi.htm}.
\textsuperscript{235} Sullivan, Complaints, 264-5. She also notes that Rashi’s Jeremiah is surprisingly positive.
\textsuperscript{236} On the idea that this exegetic paraphrase only adds a few words to the biblical verses, see Brin, Reuel, 118-9, 344-5, and contrast with the more literary implementations described above and in, Ibid, 84-5. For some of Rashi’s interpretive paraphrases that associate verses but do not characterize Jeremiah, see Rashi on Jer. 17:12, 17; 20:8-10; 28:7; 35:11 and 38: 22-23.
In all of the following examples, Rashi rephrases verses as Jeremiah's monologues to evoke greater sympathy for Jeremiah and stress that his care for the people of Jerusalem exceeded his sense of self-pity or self-interest. Much like PR 26, Rashi has no qualms about attributing deception to God to better acquit the prophet. The selection below highlight Rashi’s original characterizations, which owe very little to known midrashic materials and thus differ from his treatment of Genesis.

2.4.2 Expressions of Sympathy

2.4.2.1 Jer. 14: 7-9, 21 and 17:16: Rashi’s Jeremiah is better at Pleading

Several of Rashi’s comments on Jer. 14 and 17 are interconnected. They all contain pleads by Jeremiah for his people, even where the people is not clearly mentioned in the Bible. These monologues endeavor to convince God more forcibly than in the Bible (Jer. 14:7, note my numbering):

*Do for Your name’s sake: 1. Do what You will do with us for the sake of the great name that has spread about You 2. that You rule over all 3. and that we are Your people and the flock of Your pasture. 4. and it is not fitting that You give Your victorious name to the idols. 5. And the Midrash Aggada explains: for the sake of Your name that is inherent in our name.*

In Rashi’s paraphrase Jeremiah includes himself among the people by using “us” and “we”. This is influenced by the similar style Jack R. Lundbom identifies in 14:9, as well as by the plural articles in 14:7. Hence, Rashi phrases Jeremiah’s discourse to be similar to the Bible. However, Rashi’s Jeremiah adds four new

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237 See Lundbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 699-700, who indicates that several modern scholars read these verses as a parody of the people’s plea by Jeremiah. This could explain the need for Rashi’s apologetic emphasis. Lundbom suggests that the biblical “we” is a counter argument to the parody, which may also explain why Rashi chose this plural style. See the first chapter of Mizrahi, Witnessing a Prophetic Text, for the ways biblical redaction incorporated parodies of idolatry into another prophetic passage. It seems Jeremiah’s style was recognized as often parodic by readers, even when the book was still crystalizing. Softening his tone could be understood as a later reception (see 2.1).
arguments to save the people to the Bible’s sole argument recognized by Yair Hoffman.

Rashi also places much stock on the figurative nature of Judah as the flock of God’s pasture. This addition simulates Jeremiah’s figurative use of shepherds (Jer. 2:8; 3:15; 12:10; 23:1 and others) and presupposes the possible implication of the gravity of the situation, since there are no pastures remaining in verses 5-6. Rashi’s choice of style for Jeremiah is hence imitative of the biblical text.

Rashi also has Jeremiah state that it is unworthy of God to let idols triumph, probably as rain makers (v. 22). Rashi claims that the assertion that Jews are named after God comes from Midrash but includes this argument, because it suits his emphasis on Jeremiah’s efforts to persuade and its relationship to the next verse 240:

and Your name is called upon us: Therefore, by doing this, it is no longer an honor for you. Rashi’s treatment of Jeremiah’s supplication in v. 21 similarly incorporates an appeal to God’s mercy which is at odds with the actual biblical situation 241.

Your name’s sake: that you are called merciful 242.

Rashi reuses the shepherding semantic he added to Jer. 14:7 in Jer. 17:16 243. Jeremiah states that he was a good shepherd, who did not urge God to hasten to punish his people (17:16) 244: But I did not hasten: I did not hasten to urge You to

239 According to Hoffman, Jeremiah, v. 1, 353, there is but one argument. Allen, Jeremiah, 173, argues that vv. 17–18 provide a more emotional punch, which is lacking in v. 7. Rashi thus rectified this want.

240 For Rashi’s inspiration, see the use of the above verse in Mekhilta Deut. 26:15. Other midrashic readings use different proof verses for Jeremiah.

241 Hoffman notes that God’s name in the verse has to do with the fact that He is accused of weakness, not mercy, see Hoffman, Jeremiah, v. 1, 354 as well as Lundbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 700-1. Allen, Jeremiah, 174-5, notes that the biblical Jeremiah seems to ignore the fact that in the verses God is beyond mercy; hence Rashi’s claims are strained.

242 (למען שםך, לדרים, שנקראת את שםך). Rashi’s additional allusion to Midrash in Jer. 14:21, may also be phrased not as the commenter’s allusion but as Jeremiah’s allusion: the throne of Your glory: The Temple. And according to Midrash Aggada, Israel who is engraven on the throne of Your glory… This in turn might be based on PR 27. Also see, Spiegel, Rashi’s Commentary, 195.

243 The shepherding motif could be influenced by Jeremiah’s allusion to Moses in Midrashim (2.1). See also Lundbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 799. He notes that Jeremiah is saying that he did not wish for his office, but also that “shepherd” as a metaphor for prophet is bizarre in the Bible.

244 Rashi reads the stem R- Y in the verse. See also Lundbom, Jeremiah, ibid.
bring them (the bad days) because I am a good shepherd, who goes after You to beg mercy for them. Note that alternatives are possible, where Jeremiah’s efforts to beg for Judah are not emphasized, as Rashi himself recognizes. Regardless, Rashi still has Jeremiah state he did not wish ill for the people.

Rashi also adds that Jeremiah did not wish for the people’s illness. The people is absent from the biblical verse in question (ibid): and... the woeful day: The illness of their retribution I did not desire. Rashi continues his message of care by having Jeremiah fill in what he said to God, which is only alluded to in the verse (ibid): What came out of my lips was before Your face: to return Your wrath from them. Rashi’s Jeremiah begs for mercy, whereas Lundbom defines biblical Jeremiah’s plea in this verse as self-centered.

Hence, Rashi’s depiction of Jeremiah in all these comments added pleas for his people and thoughts about them. Rashi may be endeavoring to depict Jeremiah consistently as a “good shepherd” by continuing this motif, which was known from late Midrashim and thereby indirectly countering texts such as PRK 13:14. Rashi reuses this late-midrashic theme about Jeremiah’s struggle for his people, but shapes it using the Bible’s stylistic choices and the structure of his own commentary. Rashi treats Jeremiah’s apology far more systemically, by repeatedly embedding it in the biblical text in the form of monologue-like paraphrases.

For more on Rashi’s position, see Sullivan, Complaints, 261.
2.4.2.2 Rashi’s Jeremiah Suffers for his People

Rashi repeatedly transforms Jeremiah’s statements from complaints about his personal experiences into complaints about the tragic nature of his mission. Rashi thus portrays Jeremiah as sensitive to the people’s woes. First, Rashi transforms Jeremiah’s description of his sufferings as a result of idolatry, which may constitute an implicit accusation of the people, into suffering over the need to prophesy their doom. Jeremiah is not sick because the people’s conduct make him ill, but due to his difficult role (as underlined below) (Jer. 8:18):

Were I to suppress my grief: He, my suppression, (a noun, mes estenimenc in O.F.); that is to say, if I said, I will suppress and keep in my grief. my heart is sick within me: From the voice of the prophecies that are revealed to me of the coming retributions.

Rashi similarly explains Jeremiah’s biblical description that God’s holy words cause him to shake violently (a self-centered assertion in Hoffman’s opinion), as an outcome of God saying the people would face evil (Jer. 23:9): shake: sway like the wings of a bird who hovers over his nest, (trenblent in O.F.) tremble. because of the Lord: For I heard from Him this evil decree. Jeremiah’s mission causes him to suffer. He is not a stoic accomplice in what he believes to be “evil” (underlined) destruction. This stance conflicts with the actual biblical rendering: “holy decree.”

Lundbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 530-1. The actual Hebrew is difficult but better than the Greek, which Jerome preferred. The verse is a complaint that Jeremiah’s joy has been sapped.

Rashi thus has Jeremiah state his opinion on this decree, which is connected to Rashi on Jer. 31:25: Thereupon, I awoke: So said Jeremiah, “All this time I was sleeping deep while perceiving the prophecy of retribution, but with this prophecy I awoke from my deep sleep.” Hence, Rashi’s Jeremiah
Rashi on Jer. 15:17 adds that Jeremiah suffered because he had to prophesy the destruction of the temple (underlined): *because of Your hand: Because of the prophecy that came to me from You. I sat: alone and bewildered by mourning, for You filled me with a prophecy of fury concerning the destruction of Your House*.\(^{254}\)

The reasons are left unspecified in the Bible, but God’s “hand” and “fury” are probably not Jeremiah’s prophecies\(^{255}\). Jeremiah is thus mourning his role, a dramatization absent from the Bible, which Rashi felt a need to supply.

A similar apology is found in Jeremiah’s personal lament. Sullivan stresses that Rashi on Jer. 20:8 has the prophet complain that when he speaks to the people it is not “good for them but prophecies of violence and spoil” (20:8)\(^{256}\). This contrasts with another plausible interpretation that Jeremiah wails over his own oppression\(^{257}\).

In Rashi on Jer. 20:18, Jeremiah again states that the destruction was the cause of his grief and not any personal sufferings (Jer. 20:18)\(^{258}\): *toil and grief: The destruction of the Temple.*

According to Rashi, Jeremiah argues that he believed that his mission would sway his prosecutors and not that he felt pleased by the theophoric component in his name, or by knowledge of the upcoming punishment of his persecutors (Jer. 15:16, underlined)\(^{259}\): *Your words were found and I ate them: eagerly at the beginning, and they were a joy for me, for I thought that now they would listen to me.*

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\(^{254}\) מיי ידך - מעני נבואת הנבואה עלי, ישבתי יחידי ומשומם באילות, כי נבואת זעםملתני - בחורבן ביתך.

\(^{255}\) Allen, Jeremiah, 183; Hoffman, Jeremiah, v. 1, 377; Lundbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 744–5. Lundbom notes that Jeremiah is recalling his isolation from the people at their festival celebrating the finding of the new book of the Law. Rashi rejects such isolation as did late Midrashim.

\(^{256}\) Sullivan, Complaints, 262.

\(^{257}\) See Hoffman, Jeremiah, v. 1, 433.

\(^{258}\) See Hoffman, Jeremiah, v. 1, 433.

\(^{259}\) See Hoffman, Jeremiah, v. 1, 377; Allen, Jeremiah, 183.
In all these cases, Rashi’s Jeremiah repeatedly express sentiments akin to PR 26:1-2 (2.3.1.1-2). These findings are consistent with the analysis put forward by David Zafrani, who found that Rashi repeats interpretations in different places to counter halakhic or aggadic interpretations with which he disagrees. Rashi thus repeats monologues showing Jeremiah to be a “man of the people” to counteract negative midrashic portrayals that were familiar to his audience, as Rashi testifies.

Rashi chose the monologue form to defend Jeremiah. He could have simply used direct statements. This may have to do with Rashi’s view of suffering, where he suggests that suffering in one’s nephesh warrants an elegiac expansion of some kind. Therefore, Rashi felt comfortable expanding Jeremiah’s thoughts into monologues, so long as they were based, at their core, on Jeremiah’s own biblical expressions of pathos. The examples below show the places in Rashi’s Jeremiah commentary, where Rashi composed monologues in the absence of biblical precedent.

2.4.3 Jeremiah’s Personality as depicted by Rashi

2.4.3.1 Rashi on Jer. 17:13

Although Rashi generally endeavored to portray Jeremiah as sympathetic and less self-centered, his rewriting of Jer. 17:13 is an exception. It reveals a prophet rejoicing in his ties with God despite the sufferings of his people:

The Lord Who is the source of the hopes of Israel: sits upon it. Therefore, all that forsake You shall be shamed. and they that turn away from me shall be marked on the earth: Those who turn away from my words, who do not hearken to my message, will be marked out in the nether graves of the earth.

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260 Zafrani, Repeated Comments, 225, 231-7. Rashi repeats comments, without a local textual exegetic need to counter popular aggadic arguments, again suggesting Jeremiah’s negative portrayal in Midrash. 261 Rashi makes several comments suggesting that he censors less flattering depictions of Jeremiah, some of which are mentioned above. Compare the following: Rashi on Jer. 1:5 to PRK 13:4; Rashi on Jer. 37:13 to PRK 13:6 and especially Rashi on Jer. 40:1 to PRK 13:9. 262 See Rashi on Exod. 23:9; Hab. 2:4; Zec. 11:8, Ps. 16:2 and Job 3:21.
Not only will those who forsake God be punished but also those who forsake Jeremiah’s words (underlined). The first statement alone is a biblical paraphrase: “they that turn away from me shall be marked on the earth”. Rashi then rephrases this turning away twice as a monologue. This suggests that Rashi is expressing his original understanding of Jeremiah’s personality. He may have thought that Jeremiah had a strong sense of pride in the fulfillment of his mission, which he expressed mostly through monologue elsewhere (for example Jer. 15:16). Rashi then provided the kind of monologue he thought Jeremiah would have produced, based on his thoughts and on the divine threat in Jer. 17:13. In the following two instances it is not even possible to identify this tenuous connection with their associated verses.

2.4.3.2 Rashi Views Jer. 30:3 and 32:13 as Original Complaints

Rashi notes the biblical Jeremiah’s tendency to complain and uses this to interpret some of Jeremiah’s behavior. The prophet’s first statement in the book (Jer. 1:6) is interpreted by Rashi as: Alas: This is an expression of wailing (konpljnt in 0.F.).

The stylistic connection between Jeremiah and lament also allowed Rashi to consider that Lam. 4 and 5, were composed by Jeremiah after the pain of seeing his book burned. (Rashi on Jer 36:32): many words like those: At first, there were three alphabetical acrostics: (Lam. ch. 1) “O how... remained,” (2) “How... brought darkness,” (4) “How dim... has become.” And he added to it, (3) “I am the man,” in which every letter is tripled. A similar causal effect is evident in Jer. 20, where the beleaguered Jeremiah voices a lament after his release. Rashi has Jeremiah lament the book burning of Jer. 36 in Lamentations.
Rashi was also well aware of the creative power of paraphrase. His midrashic-inspired interpretation of Jer. 23:36 tells us that false prophets would paraphrase the holy speech of the true prophets, so as to subvert it:

...Another interpretation נישא : is an expression of prophecy, and the false prophet would ask the true prophet to tell him the word of the Holy One, blessed be He, in the language in which the expression came to him, and the expression did not explain the speech adequately. Therefore, the false prophet would pervert it to another meaning and would speak after the fashion of the true prophet in order that they should believe him. And so did Hananiah son of Azzur do. Therefore, he says, “Do not ask the prophecy of the Lord,” the language of the expression, but “What did He speak?” or “What did He reply?” The explanation of the words you shall ask the true prophet to tell you what the Holy One, blessed be He, says, and to what His words are inclined...

Hence Rashi paraphrases new complaints in the style of Jeremiah, being well aware of the efficacy of this method and based on Jeremiah’s use of lament. Rashi embeds his contributions in God’s discourse and thus also hints that God agrees with his characterization of Jeremiah. The exegetic impetus in both of the following cases is to link the context of differing verses. However, the actual effect highlights Jeremiah’s character as a complainer, rather than Rashi’s understanding of verses.

According to Rashi on Jer. 30:3, God tells Jeremiah that better days are coming, so that he will not complain about the pointlessness of recording his prophecies: For, behold, days are coming: And you shall not say, Why should I write it, since they all will perish, and no one will read it, neither will anyone remember it anymore, for, “behold, days are coming, etc.”. Jeremiah does not voice such a complaint anywhere in this chapter. Rashi may have felt that Jeremiah should have

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265 For more on this verse see Allen, Jeremiah, 273.
266 Also see Viezel, Formation, 28.
complained and phrased a new hypothetical complaint, so that he would remain “in character”\(^\text{268}\).

In Rashi on Jer. 32:14, God berates Jeremiah for complaining before hearing the end of his message (v. 15)\(^\text{269}\). Jeremiah must not protest against hiding the deed for Hanamel’s field: **So said, etc.: Do not say that I am concealing them for nothing since everyone is going into exile.** Jeremiah still voices this forbidden complaint in Rashi on Jer. 32:17\(^\text{270}\): **nothing is hidden from You: Nothing is hidden; hence You know that we are destined to be exiled, so why did You tell me to buy a field?**

Rashi is relying on Jeremiah’s explicit complaint in v. 25 and God’s reported answer to phrase an original compliant. In so doing, Rashi doubles Jeremiah’s complaints in Ch. 32 and shows that Jeremiah likes complaining so much that he ignores God’s warning. This strong show of character is created by instances of original character monologue dressed as mere paraphrase.

### 2.4.4 Summary and Conclusions: Jeremiah’s Apology

Rashi used his commentary on Jeremiah to formulate a softer version of the prophet’s character by altering biblical monologic expressions and embedding these alterations into his comments. The last examples were especially revealing of Rashi’s deliberate efforts to characterize Jeremiah. They showed that Rashi supported the rabbinic view that Jeremiah was always complaining, but did not agree with the sages’ more negative portrayals\(^\text{271}\). Rashi instead produced his own versions of Jeremiah’s confessions that reflected a concern for the people. Rashi worked with the themes of

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\(^\text{268}\) Contrast with Allen, Jeremiah, 345. She notes the hopeful nature of the verse.

\(^\text{269}\) Contrast to Jeremiah voicing his belief in the divine promise of the field in Allen, Jeremiah, 366-7.

\(^\text{270}\) For a similar reading, see Allen, Jeremiah, 368.

\(^\text{271}\) As in PRK 13:4 and others.
late Midrash by paraphrasing Jeremiah’s monologues as an apologetic message akin only conceptually to PR 26’s biographic apology.

According to Eran Viezel, Rashi argued that Jeremiah wrote his book retrospectively (Jer. 25:18): as of this day: As they are today. Jeremiah wrote his Book after the destruction. This conforms to Rashi’s position formulated in his commentary on b. Bava Batra 15a: prophets did not write their books except before their death. Rashi assumed that the delay in the stage of final redaction enabled Jeremiah to construct his book in a well-thought process, as is evident in Rashi on Jer. 25:13 and 40:1.

Rashi’s view that Jeremiah retrospectively defended himself, may have prompted him to enhance Jeremiah’s use of the first person so that it concurs with a primarily apologetic function, as known from late Byzantine rhetoric (2.3.4). Rashi’s use of monologue could thus also stem from Byzantine sources, as I consider below.

2.5 Indirect Late Byzantine Influences on Rashi

Sarah Kamin noted the difficulty in ascertaining why Rashi chose to interpret Jeremiah’s character or any character in a certain way. It might be easier however, to understand where Rashi’s use of monologue comes from. Brin suggested that one of the key features of the mostly anonymous Jewish Byzantine 10th century exegetes is their voicing of biblical characters through paraphrase. These paraphrases can be further differentiated into those that are a mere syntactical rewriting of the biblical text, and those that have a more literary function such as Rashi’s quoted monologues.

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272 Viezel, Formation, 28.
273 See Kamin, Rashi, 111-57.
274 Brin, Reuel, 85.
An analysis of the examples provided by Brin corroborates my distinction. Only four of the examples interpret syntax: Exod. 7:9 (Brin, Reuel, 106), Gen. 42:9 (ibid, 276), Ezek. 13:10 (ibid, 281) and Ezek. 14:18 (ibid, 416-7). There are many more paraphrases that have a literary dimension. These can be divided into two groups. The first is made up of additions to the biblical text that explicate thoughts of repentance alluded to by prophecies, or note the willing acceptance of rebuke by the audience. The anonymous Byzantine exegetes phrase such penitence as inner monologue: Hos. 4:4 (ibid, 275-6), 14:5 (ibid, 282-3) 14:9 (ibid, 176) Ezek. 6:8 (ibid, 77), 14:22 (ibid, 76) 16:7 (ibid, 282-3), 20:43 (ibid).

The second group is more original, in that it generates monologues for different characters such as God, Ezekiel and Pharaoh in various fictitious situations: Joel 4:2 (ibid, 277), Ezek. 21:26 (ibid, 416-7), 21:28 (Ibid, 295), 32:22 (ibid, 116), 32:31 (ibid, 175). One hyperbolic example is Hab. 2:11 (ibid, 301), where the exegete gives actual voice to the stone that in the text spoke only figuratively.

This more prolific literary group is concentrated in the commentaries on Ezekiel and the Minor Prophets. These are the same commentaries associated with Reuel himself and thus hint at a rabbinic precedent compatible with Rashi’s later approach. This is not surprising in light of the connection between monologue additions in late Midrashim and late Byzantine rhetoric explained above. Later Byzantine sources appear to endorse the technique of giving voice to a character as a legitimate part of the Bible exegete’s role.

Three comments by the Byzantine Karaite exegetes Reuben ben Jacob and Aaron ben Joseph on the Bible’s redaction collected by Brin, consider instances of inner monologue to have been added later by biblical redactors or scribes. These are

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275 On Reuel or the commentaries associated with him as Rabbinic, see Brin, Reuel, 10-3.
Haman’s thoughts (Est. 6:6), Saul’s thoughts (1Sam. 20:26) and David’s lack of knowledge (2Sam. 3:26; 15:11). The arguments suggest that later Byzantine exegesers assumed that reporting a character’s thoughts was part of a more advanced stage of composition and that these thoughts were not described in the initial revelation of Scripture. It is likely that Byzantine Rabbanite exegete, Reuel, in an earlier period also felt that it was his role to elucidate the text using monologue as part of its transmission. The same can be said of Rashi’s treatment of Jeremiah above.

The question of whether a Byzantine impetus drove all of Rashi’s exegetical endeavors is hard to answer. Israel Ta-Shma went as far as to argue that Rashi did not aim to harmonize Midrashim with the literal contextual readings fashionable in his milieu. Rashi instead aimed to enrich the dry and mostly literal Byzantine exegesis with traditional midrashic didacticism. Ta-Shma tried to base his argument on evidence for the mutual circulation of compositions between Ashkenaz and Byzantium, as well as on historical testimonies.

He noted that Rashi was familiar with two Byzantine-influenced sources. The first is R. Moshe HaDarshan’s “Yesod” that contains parallels to postbiblical literature known at that time only in the Eastern Church and thus possibly also to Byzantine Jewry. There are other such parallels. For instance, Shulamit Ladermann

276 Brin, Editing, 307-9. De Lange notes another monologue paraphrase of Jeremiah 30 as part of a Byzantine Jewish polemic against Christianity. Thus, the technique seemed to have been perceived as exegetic “fair game” even in interreligious discourse. De Lange, A Fragment, 97.

277 Contrast with the rabbinic position accepted by Ibn Ezra that the redactor of Esther knew what Haman thought by way of divine inspiration, Ibn Ezra A on Est. 6:7. His commentary B rejects this.

278 Ta-Shma, Studies, 248-50. Ta-Shma speculated that Reuel and his tradition, were connected with the Christian Antiochian School, due to the influential Jewish presence in the city. More research is required, though I am unable to follow this theory here and the Nestorians generally headed east.

279 Ibid, 177-87. One example is the similarity of Legah Tov and Rashi’s oeuvre on circumcision as identified by Perry, since both reflect a common Byzantine source, Perry, Byzantium’s Role, 651-3.

280 Ta-Shma, Studies, 179-80, 199-201, 266-7n25. The texts in question experienced a surge in popularity with the rise of the Cathars who are also connected to Byzantium and could have transmitted these texts to Northern France. Catharism was a revival of several dualistic and gnostic Christian doctrines, coupled with a rejection of the Catholic Church which sprang up in 11th century Languedoc, but later had several loosely connected centers in southern Europe. Some of its doctrines also
found surprising parallels between sections of R. Moshe’s works and the 6th century Byzantine “Christian Topography”\textsuperscript{281}. The second Byzantine composition Rashi might have been familiar with is the Byzantine compilation \textit{Leqaḥ Tov}. Additions from \textit{Leqaḥ Tov} were inserted into Rashi’s commentaries during his lifetime. Some of the comments were potentially added of Rashi’s own volition\textsuperscript{282}.

An agent of Byzantine influence could have been Rashi’s secretary and friend R. Shemaiah, who might have had Byzantine roots, as argued by Richard C. Steiner\textsuperscript{283}. R. Shemaiah’s knew some Greek, as evidenced by his vernacular glosses (noted by the Tosafists on b. Avoda Zara 8b). He also added a Greek gloss to his revision of Rashi’s commentary on the Pentateuch. Steiner identified the typically Byzantine “\textit{Lemma complement}” structure in all of these glosses\textsuperscript{284}.

Menahem Banitt even hypothesized that Rashi was personally related to the Jewish Byzantine exegetical tradition. First and foremost, the literal tradition Rashi studied in the Rhineland might have been connected to Lombardy and thus to Byzantium and its Jewry. Rashi, like R. Gershom, is said to have studied under one R. Leontine, a Greek name. Second, Rashi himself might have had Byzantine familial roots. Rashi has a known patronym \textit{Itzhaki}, which was unusual among French Jews of the period and its ending might be a Greek form\textsuperscript{285}. A Byzantine context could also better explain the few cases where Rashi chose to rule according to the common practice in Greece, against the tradition of his French and German Jewish mentors\textsuperscript{286}.

\textsuperscript{281} Ladermann, Parallel, Texts, 213-26.
\textsuperscript{282} Ta-Shma, ibid.
\textsuperscript{283} Steiner, \textit{Lemma Complement}, 377-9.
\textsuperscript{284} Ta-Shma, ibid, 182-3. At the very least, this suggests that knowledge of Greek had reached Rashi.
\textsuperscript{285} Banitt, Rashi, 132-4 and note 10 there; 167-8.
\textsuperscript{286} See in, Ta-Shma, ibid, 181.
Banitt’s other main point was to argue that Rashi inherited a lengthy but unattested exegetical tradition connected to the Greek and Byzantine translations of the Bible and was in fact continuing the work of the potrim such a R. Menahem bar Ḥalbo. Banitt compared Rashi’s use of the vernacular to its Hebrew and Greek cognates and found that Rashi attempted to go beyond simple Old French translations that might have been common at his time. Rashi chose words that lent themselves to sophisticated word and sound-plays to better harmonize Old French nuances with Hebrew. These choices have parallels with Greek translations.

Contrary, Avraham Grossman claimed that most of the evidence mentioned so far is too circumstantial and inaccurate. Rashi did not name Byzantine exegetes or sources. This goes against his practices, specifically if they exerted a pull on him. The Byzantines were also selective exegetes, whereas Rashi mostly employed a consecutive model. The manuscript evidence linking Rashi and R. Shemaiah to Leqah Tov is also not based on the right manuscripts and might still be attributed to Rashi’s independent insights, though Jacobs suspects common Byzantine sources.

In light of these different scholarly arguments, I would like to suggest that Rashi did not share actual material with Byzantine sources but rather the stylistic preference for character monologue, which he already knew from late Midrashim. Direct influence in this more specialized capacity is unnecessary, though hardly impossible. Rashi was without a doubt familiar with several compositions probably

288 Ibid, 6-9, 31.
289 Rashi’s use of comparative linguistics might be explained by his perception of Hebrew as the “ur-language” of all nations who built the tower of Babel. Bits of that one language were scattered and thus could be searched for. See Rashi on Gen. 11:1; Banitt, Rashi, 141, 144-5. While an update of Banitt’s work in light of the Byzantine exegetical materials, not to mention Judaeo-Arabic translations, seems to be necessary, it is sufficient to note this linguistic connection between Rashi and Byzantium, which is one response to the seemingly nonexistent parallels.
291 Ibid, 459.
292 Ibid, 464-7. See the findings in Jacobs, Leqah Tov, 237-41.
belonging to the midrashic side of Byzantium. Apart from the works of R. Moshe HaDarshan previously mentioned, Rashi on Psalms makes great and direct use of the Byzantine Midr. Ps., which is rife with character monologues. Rashi’s friend and pupil Joseph Kara was probably aware of PR 26 (2.3) and so was Rashi. Similarly, Hananel Mack found that Rashi’s comments on Lam. 3:51-4, some of which are close to PR, might be modelled on an Italian Byzantine source.

Thus, Rashi’s treatment of Jeremiah is an update of late Byzantine poetics whether direct or indirect, midrashic or exegetic. As is the case with all of his reworking of Midrashim, Rashi used late Byzantine poetics in a more contextual and consistent way than his probable sources. He anchored an apologetic rhetoric similar to the one found in PR 26, to the biblical verses where Jeremiah’s voice is heard. This approach leads to a more substantial character that is more consistent than the ones found in Reuel and his brethren’s cursory or piecemeal comments. They all used monologues exegetically, but Rashi created coherency by using repetition and highlighting the consistency of traits.

2.6 Jeremiah in the Commentary of Radak

2.6.1 Radak and Characterization

The Provençal exegete, R. David Kimhi (Radak) (Narbonne 1160-1235 C.E.) was aware of characterization in biblical texts. According to Ayelet Seidler, he was

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293 For some examples see Midr. Ps: 1, 3, 5, 7, 18, 19, 40, 52, 55, 118. For Rashi indicating that Midr. Ps. is his source and that these comments are compatible with the known version Midr. Ps., see Rashi on Isa. 30:29; Ps. 64:2; Eccles. 11:7; Ps. 23:2. There are many more instances.

294 Rashi does raise arguments via monologue that are similar to the Byzantine commentary on Jon. 2:3-10. See Brin, Reuel, 98-9. Compare these to Rashi’s comments on Jon. 2:3, 5.

295 See Mack, Mystery of R. Moshe, 85-6. This could again be Joseph Kara. Also see Spiegel, Rashi’s Commentary, 190, on such a source in the Jeremiah commentary.

296 As generally articulated in Kamin, Rashi, 57-110.

297 On consistency as a way to shape character, see Chatman, Story and Discourse, 117-20; Harvey, Character, 31-2 and Hochman, Character, 35-8 and the introduction.

298 For a general English survey of Radak’s life and distinct methodology, see the first chapter of Grunhaus, The Challenge, and references therein.
cognizant of the importance of biblical adjectives and pronouns used to describe characters and their inner worlds in biblical narrative, even though he was not systematic.  

Seidler found that in all his commentaries, Radak paid specific attention to the motivations and reasoning of biblical characters. He often deduces undisclosed motives from a character’s actions and speech. He even tends to invent additional motives when the text only provides a clear description of one.  

Radak often describes character motivation by way of quoted inner monologue and might have perceived thought to work in this speech-like fashion. This makes his work of particular interest to this study. Radak even has Jeremiah evaluating his audience’s state of mind, not unlike a Bible exegete of sorts.  

Nevertheless, Radak’s treatment of character seems to be rather selective. Itzḥak Berger found that Radak tended to disavow Midrashim which attributed defects to paradigmatic biblical figures. He did at times accept homilies in order to identify anonymous figures in narratives even when he felt these were unfounded.  

Seidler noted that Radak usually rejected homilies on characters anchored in biblical lists. This suggests some degree of awareness on Radak’s part of narrative prose as a genre that should be treated differently from other biblical genres.  

299 Seidler, Doubling, 560-4.  
300 Seidler, Inner life, 90-3.  
301 Ibid, 88-90.  
302 Radak tends to phrase his inferences of motive from characters’ speech in inner monologue, for example: Gen. 30:34; 1Sam 17:42, 22:6, 26:10; 1Kin. 1:6, 14:2; Isa. 40:21 and many comments on Ps. 10. Generally, Radak associates inner monologue literally: “speaking in one’s heart”, with actual speaking of an involuntarily nature, due to the perceived function of the heart, see his comments on Gen. 27:42 and Isa. 32:6.  
303 According to Radak on Jer. 42:20, Jeremiah already deduced from what the people had said that they will go to Egypt, regardless of his opinion. Thus, Radak has Jeremiah perform his kind of Bible exegesis as the explanation of how Jeremiah knew the people would not listen to him.  
305 Seidler, Doubling, 560-4.  
306 Another example of Radak’s awareness of genre with regards to prose is when Radak perceives the descriptions of the fall of Jerusalem as part of one literary complex, see in Perez, Exegetic Method, 318.
Radak’s treatment of PRK 13 and PR 26 seems to be equally selective. He does not address the indirect accusations of Jeremiah exemplified in PRK 13 in any form, not even as indirectly as did Rashi. Weider found clues that suggest Radak was acquainted with at least some parts of PR 26\textsuperscript{307}. I identified four more instances where such an acquaintance seems possible: Radak on Jer. 28:6, 32:17, 37:13 and 38:9. Only the first instance, however, is a direct quotation, marked as a *drash*, while the other three instances are inspired very loosely by PR 26. Therefore, it seems that Radak did not hold PR 26 in high esteem and barely used it. His inspiration must have come from elsewhere.

Radak’s view of Jeremiah might stem from his conception of prophets as exemplars as noted by Frank Talmage\textsuperscript{308}. Radak was influenced by Maimonides’ claim that the spiritual merit of the prophets was integral to their function. Thus, Jeremiah would not be fit for prophecy, if the negative midrashic insinuations had been true. Sullivan notes that this philosophical connection between Jeremiah’s impeccable moral character and his mission is evident in Radak (on Jer. 15:16-17)\textsuperscript{309}.

Further proof for this comes in the form of a rare case of direct characterization, where Radak declares unconditionally that Jeremiah and Baruch are righteous \textsuperscript{310}(Jer. 44: 26, 28): *on the lips of any of the people of Judah*—*on the lips of most of them for they had righteous among them such as Jeremiah and Baruch son of*

\textsuperscript{307} Wieder, Jeremiah, 148n5. See also ibid, 135-6. Radak may have had some unique Midrash sources connected to Jeremiah not found anywhere else, that argued for Hilkiah’s Zadokite ancestry and that Pashhur was the man who announced Jeremiah’s birth. While these might be original to Radak, consider instances of Radak’s acceptance of rabbinic identifications of biblical figures above, as evidence for Radak quoting such sources, rather than innovating. Maimonides’ approach is influenced by the notion of the “degrees of prophecy” prevalent in Islamic literature, see my above discussion on Yefet (1.6.3.1).

\textsuperscript{308} See Talmage, Rationalist tradition, 185-93.

\textsuperscript{309} Sullivan, Complaints, 269. Radak has Jeremiah on Jer. 15:16-17 declare that he prefers the joys of wisdom to those of the body.

\textsuperscript{310} Radak’s positive view of Baruch is contrary to his depiction in Rashi and rabbinic sources, for example, Rashi on Jer. 45:3, but fits nicely with Berger’s observation above.
Radak therefore chose to depict Jeremiah differently, since he mostly rejected the two major rabbinic versions of the character. Like Rashi, he tends to paraphrase verses containing monologue to introduce his Jeremiah. Unlike Rashi though, Radak paraphrases Jeremiah’s complaints in ways that empathize with his personal mental predicaments as a prophet of God, and less so with the people's predicaments.

2.6.2.1 Jeremiah’s Trauma after the Attempt on His Life in Anathoth

Radak views Jeremiah as a traumatized individual. Sullivan found that he rarely ever identifies Jeremiah’s adversaries with specific contemporaries. Significantly however, Radak chooses to focus on the men of Anathoth. The following section suggests that Radak considers Jeremiah to be traumatized by these townsfolk’s attempt on his life, akin to some modern readings. Radak’s theme of trauma is less evident in the biblical source texts, but he still chooses to enhance it. Unlike Rashi, Radak’s emphasis is not so much on Jeremiah’s sympathetic mindset but on his suffering psyche.

Radak initially notes that Jeremiah’s dedication was in Anathoth and played an integral part in his reluctance to prophesy. He was afraid to go to Jerusalem (1:7):

Sullivan, Complaints, 267-8. Conversely, Jeremiah’s unnamed biblical adversaries are repeatedly identified as the “men of Anathoth” or “his townspeople” by Rashi (Rashi on Jer. 11:20; 12:1, 3; 15:10; 17:18 and 18:18). By identifying Jeremiah’s adversaries repeatedly with the men of Anathoth, Rashi might be polemicizing against Christian polemics that identify these adversaries with contemporary Jews. Note that Jer. 18:17-22, is read in Christian “Adversus” literature as referring to all Jews, so identifying the attempt on Jeremiah’s life with only some Jews, could be an indirect refutation of Christian claims.

Sullivan, Complaints, 272.

O’Connor, Jeremiah: Pain and Promise, 81-92, especially, 83-4. Contra Elkan, Jeremiah, 42-4, who views Jeremiah’s main conflict as hopelessly seeking certainty and not coping with trauma.

See the references to alternative readings below.
and what he (God) said you shall go to all to whom I send you, since (it was) in Anathoth (that) prophecy came to Jeremiah at first and God wanted to send him to Jerusalem, the royal seat, to reproach the king and his people and promised him to fortify his heart to go to a place he was not used to and instill his words in his mouth to know how to speak words of reproach fearlessly...

Hence, Jeremiah may have felt safer in his home town than in Jerusalem. This sense of security was undermined by the events of Jer. 11. Radak captures this crisis by directly naming the method employed in the attempted assignation, inspired by the Targum and his father, as poison:

(11:18-19) It was the Lord who made it known to me- my lord, my father, may he rest in peace interpreted (with the next verse) thus: let me know that they thought to feed me the draught of death. Then you (God) knew, that I did not know, for I would not have imagined it, as I did them no evil. If I reproach them... for their own benefit I do (this). then you showed me their evil deeds- in this you showed me the evil of their deeds, if they wanted to do this to me, more so to others...

Radak’s paraphrase highlights Jeremiah’s own sense of innocence. Jeremiah would have never thought that the poisoners wished him ill, because he only thinks of their wellbeing. Moreover, if they wanted to murder the innocent Jeremiah, Jeremiah argues that they would do so to other less worthy people. Radak’s paraphrase of v. 19 again heightens innocence:

(11:19): The prophet said: “I was with them before the Lord made this known to me, like a lamb or ox being led to the slaughterhouse to be slaughtered and when he is being led he does not know that to be slaughtered he is being led, thus I- they were leading me, my relatives and acquaintances to eat with them (and) I did not know that to be killed I was being led and lo! If the Lord had not made in known to me, I would have..."
have been killed and what did they think about me and say? ‘Let us destroy with a tree within his food’” (updated according to the interpretation).221

Radak interprets the opaque animal simile of v. 19. The mention of Jeremiah’s sense of betrayal, “my relatives and acquaintances”, as well as the scene where he eats together with the assassins, have no direct biblical cognates in the verse and are all Radak’s doing.222 The emphasis on betrayal continues in his paraphrase of v. 20:

(11:20) But you, O Lord of hosts, who judge righteously- Judge me of them, for you judge righteously. who try the heart and the mind- for you tried their heart and minds and revealed to me their thoughts that I might be on my guard of them, let me see your retribution- meaning, (let me) not die until I have seen you avenge (me) of them, for to you I have committed my cause- I have no brother nor relative to commit my cause to, since they thought to kill me, to you I have committed my cause and you will perform my judgment on them.223. 

This paraphrase has interpretive qualities clarifying the first part of the verse by borrowing words from the second part. Nevertheless, the quadruple repetition of “of them” (underlined), which occurs only once in the Bible coupled with the added emphasis on Jeremiah having no kin but God, suggest that Radak is working to enhance Jeremiah’s sense of betrayal.

This is further accomplished when Radak emphasizes in v. 21 that Jeremiah did not take the direct threats on his person made by the townsfolk in the past, seriously. Radak could have easily interpreted this assertion as the divinely revealed thoughts of the poisoners or as new threats in the present.224 He instead chooses to summarize Jeremiah’s mental sense (underlined) of betrayal as follows:

221. See also Lundbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 636-7. Radak dispels this mundane description through an appeal to Jeremiah’s character.

222. Allen points out that the enemies in these verses show route psalm opaqueness, Allen, Jeremiah, 146-7. See also Lundbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 636-7. Radak dispels this mundane description through an appeal to Jeremiah’s character.

223. For alternatives to Radak’s reading of v. 21 as attesting Jeremiah’s innocence, see Allen, Jeremiah, ibid; Hoffman, Jeremiah, v.1, 322.
Therefore... or you will die by our hand, and how did Jeremiah say (11:18): “It was the Lord who made it known to me” as they would say this to his face, that they shall kill him should he prophesy? However, Jeremiah was not concerned about what they said in his face, since he thought that they (were speaking) in a manner of intimidation and hyperbole, as it is impossible that they would publicly kill him and he was not afraid of this...325

2.6.2.2 Reoccurrences of Jeremiah’s Trauma

Radak establishes Jeremiah’s sense of indignation in Jer. 11. His next comments view this feeling as ever-present in Jeremiah’s expressions in other chapters. Radak thereby characterizes the prophet’s mental trauma in wherever he identifies it. The first way is by indirect divine testimony. Jer. 14 for instance, has no mention of Anathoth or attempts on Jeremiah’s life326. In Radak’s view however, God’s words contain a reference to Jer. 11, which does contain these missing elements:

(14:11) The Lord said to me: Do not pray for the welfare - for he had prayed for the ill of small part of them and they wanted to kill him and he said (11:20): “let me see your retribution upon them” and he said (12:3): “Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter”, therefore he told him Do not pray for the welfare327.

God agrees with Jeremiah’s wish for revenge (Jer. 11:20 ff) and interprets the prophet’s vengeful conduct, as inspired by the previous attempt on his life (underlined)328.

Radak views Jer. 16 as a reference to the events in Anathoth (Jer. 11, underlined) and not Jerusalem. This serves as an explanation as to why Jeremiah was ordered (Jer. 16:2) not take a wife or have children there. Anathoth will be utterly ruined in retribution for the failed attempt on his life. Radak rejects the explanation.

325 Hoffman, Jeremiah, v.1, 355-6, relates this prophecy to the people who plead in the chapter. Allen notes the difference in fate, separating of Jeremiah from the hostile pleading community, Allen, Jeremiah, 181. Radak elegantly avoids such a divisive description.

326 Hoffmann, Jeremiah, v.1, 355-6, relates this prophecy to the people who plead in the chapter. Allen notes the difference in fate, separating of Jeremiah from the hostile pleading community, Allen, Jeremiah, 181. Radak elegantly avoids such a divisive description.

327 Contr. with Lunbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 706, who argues that God’s words are part of the usual calls for symbolic action on Jeremiah’s part.
that Jeremiah must remain childless in Jerusalem, since the children of a righteous
man like him would suffer in the coming destruction (Jer. 16:2-5):

And as to what I make of this, it is that **in this place**, meaning in Anathoth and in
Anathoth this prophecy was revealed to him and He warned him not to take a wife or
have sons and daughters there, for an (evil) decree was decreed on the sons and
daughters born in Anathoth and so He said above (Jer. 11:23): “and not even a
remnant shall be left of them. For I will bring disaster upon the people of Anathoth,
the year of their punishment” Lo! He said that no remnant will be of the people of
Anathoth, but in Jerusalem there will be remnant and refuge... 329

Radak portrays God as knowing that the wicked people of Anathoth would
interfere and would not allow Jeremiah to save his future children by fleeing (ibid):
their relatives, the people of Anathoth, would not let him (Jeremiah) (remain
unmarried), for they did not believe in the prophecy (about Anathot’s doom) or let
him refrain from having sons and daughters there, though they would perish due to
the inequity of the town... 330

Later, God does not want to disclose to Jeremiah that the people of Anathoth
would be forgiven. This could be due to Jeremiah’s past distress and comfort in God’s
promise of their punishment. God did not want to disappoint a vengeful Jeremiah, to
the extent that acknowledging this forgiveness was a sore subject (ibid):

And even though there was a (divine) edict against the men of Anathoth, that they
shall have no remnant, there was a remnant of them who repented when the country
was conquered, for we find when the Babylonian exile returns, he said (Ezra 2:23):
“of Anathoth, one hundred and twenty-eight”. Even so, God commanded Jeremiah of
their initial fate and did not reveal their repentance to Jeremiah, according to that
which God told him that their fate was (to be) so terrible, as to be ordered by God not
to take a wife in that place... 331

According to Radak, Jeremiah also recollects the events of Jer. 11 in the
monologue of Jer. 18:18. Here Jeremiah complains to God about the futility of his
mission, leading to being once more threatened with murder (underlined)332: (18:18)

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329 See also, Lundbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 638, who mentions Radak’s interpretation.
330 Allen, Jeremiah, 219.
Then they said- those are the words of Jeremiah spoken against God, meaning “I will reproach them with your words and they say to each other: ‘Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah’”. Plots- meaning, evil plots to kill him.

Radak interprets the seemingly unrelated imagery of the pit in Jer. 18:20 as another reference to the poisoning attempt described in Jer. 11 (underlined).

(18:20) Yet they have dug a pit for my life- the draught of death they wanted to administer to him which is like digging a pit for a man to trip him without his knowledge and lo! They repay me ill for good, for I spoke well of them before you and prayed for them until that time you revealed to me that they wanted to kill me...

The monologue in the latter part of the comment references Jeremiah’s words at the time of the attempt against his life in Jer. 11. Radak could have chosen to link the pit imagery with present attempts against Jeremiah, for instance Jer. 18:23.

Radak’s comment on v. 21 however, shows a Jeremiah reconciled with only punishing his past would-be killers. Note that Radak also views the repetition of the pit in v. 22 as referencing poison and thus Jer. 11 (underlined):

(18:21) Therefore- as of now I am allowed to pray for their ill as they wished to slay me...(18:22) For they have dug a pit to catch me... and the pit and the snares are the draught of death they thought to feed him.

In her analysis of Gen. 42 Meira Polliack showed how the occurrence of Joseph’s reminiscences as images is accompanied by volatile emotions. Radak apparently views Jeremiah's reminiscences and the imagery he uses as expressions of...
such a traumatic experience. The image of the pit serves Radak as a locus for
Jeremiah’s trauma, reminding him associatively of death and poison. Otherwise,
Radak would not feel that Jeremiah needs allegory to refer to an episode in his life.

Traumatic memory is also characterized by wordless imagery, such as the pit
depiction in Jer 18:22. The disparity between a verbal description of a past event and
a wordless recollection of the same event, can heighten the traumatic nature of the
recalled experience. Radak does have Jeremiah verbally repeat what was plotted
against him, but does so employing his commentator’s more distant tone: “and the pit
and the snares are the draught of death they thought to feed him”. Radak thus further
demonstrates Jeremiah’s painful recollection of the event; Jeremiah is actually unable
to verbalize what could have been done to him, due to its traumatic nature captured by
the pit imagery.

This characterization fits with Radak’s interpretation of Jeremiah’s
complaints in their lengthiest form in Jer. 20. This is where his development of the
traumatic theme reaches its peak. Radak on Jer. 20:7 states that Jeremiah’s assertions
are those of a man in anguish, so much so that under the circumstances God was
willing to ignore them, unlike Jeremiah’s complaints in Jer. 15 (underlined):

(20:7) you have enticed me- it is because Pashhur beat him and put him in the stocks
he called violence out of his sorrow and said: “You enticed me, o Lord, as a man who
entices his friend and I said: ‘Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I
am only a boy’ (1:6) and you told me: ‘Do not say, I am only a boy’ (1:7)”. And I
was enticed- And I was enticed by your words. You have overpowered me, and you
have prevailed- You overpowered me with argument(s) and You prevailed over me
and I did your bidding and lo! I have become a laughing-stock all day long for they
laugh and mock me… and this thing which Jeremiah said was not unfair towards
God, but words of sorrow for himself and so (God) did not consider these words an
iniquity as he considered as an iniquity what he said above: “Truly, you are to me
like a deceitful brook” (15:18), for that matter was sinful against God, therefore he
told him: “If you turn back, I will take you back” (15:19), as we have interpreted.

341 כ (ז) פתיתני – לפי שהכה אותו פשחא ואכית ממהפכת שעון מוסר עזרי. trouser, אבד בתרותו, אבד שני אביו
והיה מעוז עמי משלחתך והיהעלא כים ולא ביטל דבר כעון אכית ממהפכת נאסר לבא לאכית עמי.
אכית עמי – לא אכית בתרותו הדריך. תוקינו תוכלי – תוקינו תוכלי, זה תוקינו תוכלי תוכלי, תוכלי תוכלי תוכלי תוכלי
Radak’s rendering of v. 8 emphasizes Jeremiah’s abuse by his enemies, which is phrased differently by the biblical text, so as to connect it to the beating and incarceration he was subjected to, as described at the beginning of the chapter\textsuperscript{342}.

Moreover, Jeremiah is forced to renounce his prophecies and thus repudiate the word of God. Radak doubles the ordeals Jeremiah suffers in each part of the verse, by supplying another complaint (see my numbering):

\textit{(20:8) For whenever- every time I speak words of prophecy... he said “I shout and raise my voice to reproach them”. ... that they say to me words of 1) violence and destruction until they beat me and I must call 2) violence their evil things that they tell me. 1) For the word of the Lord has become for me a reproach and derision all day long... All the days I speak the word of the Lord, 2) it is for me reproach and derision that they deride me for it...\textsuperscript{343}}

Radak’s version of v. 9 heightens the prophet’s isolation by adding “to them” three times, not unlike the above Jer. 11:20, which is missing from the Bible:

\textit{(20:9) If I say- and if I think in my heart that I shall not mention him again and not speak in his name again, not mention him to them nor speak to them in his name, for I am despised because of him... I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot suffer (it) within me, as if it were fire and I am forced to pronounce it with my lips and tell it to them...\textsuperscript{344}}

Radak’s interpretation of v. 10 has Jeremiah recollect his traumatic brush with the poison, invoked by the mention of the people the prophet believed to be close to him actually scheming against him (underlined). The fact that this complaint is mentioned last, most probably makes it the worst offense in Radak’s view:

\textit{(20:10): For I hear many people whispering- lies (they) say about me. Terror is all around- they terrorize me all around this from here and that from there... All my...\textsuperscript{345}}

\textsuperscript{342} The forced connection between the two parts of Jer. 20 is also present in the style of the verses, see Allen, Jeremiah, 230-1; Lundbom, Jeremiah, v.1, 859.

\textsuperscript{343} כ (ח) כי מדי - בכל עת שאדבר דברי נבואה...אמר אני זועק ומרים קולי להם להוכיחם...הם אומרים לי חמס על דבריños...כל הימים שאדבר דברי 연בואה...אני גוזר על ודידי לא עזר לי כיßen...אתיה האל потому אם יושב דברי נבואה...אמר אני זועק ומרים קולי להם להוכיחם...הם אומרים לי חמס על דבריynos...כל הימים שאדבר דברי连בואה...אני גוזר על ודידי לא עזר לי כיßen...אתיה האלпотון אם יושב דברי נבואה...אמר אני זועק ומרים קולי להם להוכיחם...הם אומרים לי חמס על דבריynos...כל הימים שאדבר דברי连בואה...אני גוזר על ודידי לא עזר לי כיßen...אתיה האלпотון אם יושב דברי נבואה...אמר אני זועק ומרים קולי להם להוכיחם...הם אומרים לי חמס על דבריynos...כל הימים שאדבר דברי连בואה...אני גוזר על ודידי לא עזר לי כיßen...אתיה האלпотון אם יושב דברי נבואה...אמר אני זועק ומרים קולי להם להוכיחם...הם אומרים לי חמס על דבריynos...כל הימים שאדבר דברי连בואה...אני גوزר על ודידי לא עזר לי כיßen...אתיה האלпотון אם יושב דברי נבואה...אמר אני זועק ומרים קולי להם להוכיחם...הם אומרים לי חמס על דבריynos...כל הימים שאדבר דברי连בואה...אני 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close friends are watching for me to stumble - those that I would have thought of as my close friends, they watch and wait for when I will stumble and fail (even) in nothing. Perhaps he can be enticed and we can prevail against him - Perhaps he will be enticed by our words to eat and drink with us and will shall have our revenge for we shall lace him with the draught of death...  

Radak does not paraphrase Jeremiah’s words, but rather the thoughts of the enemies who wished to poison the prophet earlier in Jer. 11. Radak chose not to disclose these thoughts there, but instead later on in chapter 20, as part of Jeremiah’s recollections. The phrasing is traumatic, since it interrupts Jeremiah’s stream of consciousness, characterizing him as “reliving” the traumatic event, as if it were continually recurring in the present.

Thus, Radak interprets that Jeremiah was reliving the events of Jer. 11 in the prophecy of Jer. 20. invoked by his recent suffering. By verbalizing the utterances of men involved in the Anathoth plot, Radak turns the verse into a “flashback”. Similarly, the Joseph narrative uses a flashback technique to portray various characters’ thoughts, when they try to come to terms with their agonizing past.

Radak uses a similar “flashback” to highlight the traumatic nature of Jeremiah’s biblical portrayal as a prophet of God on the verge of breakdown (v. 11). Radak then has the traumatized Jeremiah claim that his past pursuers are still endangering his life in the present:

(20:11): But the Lord is with me- they mean to kill me and I will not fear this, since God promised me and said to me They will fight against you; but they shall not prevail against you (1:19) and he is with me like a dread warrior (20:11) that I will...
Another apparent feature that contributes to considering that a character has been traumatized, is the uncontrolled oscillation of feelings between indifference and active anger. The biblical Jeremiah’s mood changes in Ch. 20 can thus be seen as part of this pattern of behavior, since they oscillate between anger, sorrow and confidence. Radak sees these mood shifts as traumatic, because he argues that Jeremiah’s aggressiveness toward the messenger is typical of the bitterness of the psyche of the suffering righteous:

(20:14) **Cursed be the day**- from the bitterness of their soul do the righteous curse the day they were born in, even though no curse can reach it as it has already passed, and so said Job (3:3): Let the day perish on which I was born etc. ‘(20:15) **Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father**- and even though he curses from the bitterness of his soul one need wonder, nevertheless, how did he curse the messenger, for if he was alive the curse would reach him, and maybe the messenger was a good man and Jeremiah would be sinning by cursing him, and I (Radak) say that he was informed that Pashhur son of Immer was the messenger… and if my father had known my end, that my days will be toil and sorrow, he would not have been gladdened of me.

By enhancing Jeremiah’s biblical portrayal as a victim of trauma, Radak can dismiss some of Jeremiah’s terribly harsh words and his clear death wish. This aim is further supported by Radak’s suggestion (underlined) that the cursed messenger was Pashhur. There is no known midrashic source for this idea. Identifying Pashhur with the messenger also enables Radak and his readers to better understand Jeremiah’s mood swings in Ch. 20 as a whole. Alternatively, Radak is arguing that Jeremiah,

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Polliack, Joseph’s Trauma, 72.

350 Cursing an innocent messenger might be a moral failing, see Allen, Jeremiah, 234-5.

351 Cursing an innocent messenger might be a moral failing, see Allen, Jeremiah, 234-5.
perhaps twistedly out of his grief, wrongfully identifies Pashhur with the messenger of the good tidings of his birth.

2.6.2.3 Summary and Conclusions
The repeated references by Radak to the idea that Jeremiah’s sorrow stems from his betrayal by his townsfolk, prove that he is interested in presenting Jeremiah as a traumatized character to achieve the apologetic goal of having some of his harsher prophecies relegated only to Anathoth and thus excused. Sullivan noted that this apologetic aim is typical of Jewish systematic exegesis. Radak’s extensive use of monologues to portray Jeremiah as suffering from deep trauma, constitutes an innovation. However, Radak’s subtler interest in mental functioning in his monologues, especially when compared to Rashi and PR 26’s rhetoric, requires further explanation. How did Radak’s intellectual and cultural environment contribute to his psychological interest? Below I explore some avenues for comparison.

2.6.3 Troubadours and Provençal Piyut Impacting Radak
Late Byzantine rhetoric may explain Radak’s use of character monologue, but the influence of Rashi or late Midrashim upon Radak could account for it equally well. However, neither of these explanations deals satisfactorily with Radak’s intricate level of psychological portrayal. This suggests looking for the roots of his psychological conflict elsewhere. One avenue may be the milieu of medieval poetry.

355 Brin noted that of all classical medieval Jewish exegetes, Radak comes surprisingly close to the 10th century exegesis of Byzantium. Brin, Reuel, 446. The influence of Karaite exegesis is another possibility, due to some creative paraphrases in Yefet’s commentaries (for example 1.6.2.2), as well as the fact that Radak seemed to have known Yefet’s work, as noted in Pollack and Schlossberg, Hosea, 98-100. Mack believes that Karaite material reaching Northern Spain influenced R. Moses HaDarshan, which perhaps suggests that some of these interpretations were in circulation later in Provence and available to the Kimḥi line. See Mack, From Qumran, 99-100.
Eden HaCohen, Joseph Yahalom and Michael Sokoloff argue for the rarity of using lengthy monologue to paraphrase biblical scenes in Hebrew Byzantine piyyutim and in older Aramaic piyyutim. These preferred to give voice to multiple characters in a chaotic fashion. Thus, it is not surprising that late Byzantine and eastern piyyutim showed greater interest in dramatized dialogue or monologue, as HaCohen and Elizur discuss in relation to the works of R. Pinhas HaKohen (mid-8th century). These monologues are absent from the works of the most important of the Ashkenazi piyyutim, R. Simeon the Great (d. 1020? C.E.), arguing for a different context.

Benjamin Bar-Tikva finds that character monologue is rare but present in Provençal piyyutim because of Spanish influence. Radak’s father Joseph Kimḥi actually authored a few dramatized piyyutim. The following section shows that one of these piyyutim that places Esther in a rare first-person monologue, takes an interest in psychology much like Radak’s psychological expansion of Jeremiah’s character.

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356 HaCohen, Studies, 131-3. There are a few examples of such dramatization in older Aramaic compositions. Yahalom and Sokoloff note two: a first person lament by Zeresh over the death of her ten sons and a first person narrative from the mouth of Potiphar’s adulterous wife. Yahalom and Sokoloff, Aramaic Piyyutim, 312-4. The use of psycho-narration in summary appears to be more common in piyyutim, see examples from the Joseph story in Elizur, Biblical Story, 154-8.

357 Elizur, Pinhas Ha-Kohen, 158-9.

358 Elizur shows R. Pinhas’ lengthier and concentrated uses of monologue, compared to Yanai and R. Shimon b. R. Mags’s renderings of the Joseph story, Elizur, Biblical Story, 162-6. For a different example see HaCohen, Studies, 134-6; Elizur, Pinhas Ha-Kohen, 4-9. He may have been head of the Tiberias yeshiva. Ibid, 11-3. R. Pinhas created lengthy dramatizations of biblical stories, such as the death of Moses, Joseph’s reunion with his brothers and the binding of Isaac. Ibid, 160-3, 196-8, 253.

359 First person speech only characterizes the poet in the works of R. Simeon and not biblical characters. The biblical exegete Joseph Kara wrote lengthy commentaries on the works of R. Simeon. See Habermann, R. Simeon, 7-18. The piyyutim Huberman identifies with Rashi also show no dramatizations. Hence, character monologues in Rashi or Kara may not be inspired by contemporary piyyutim, which again suggests the impact of late Midrashim or Byzantium.

360 HaCohen, ibid.

361 Bar-Tikva, Provençal Piyut, 28-30. For examples, see ibid, 324-7, 356-7 and the arguments below. I chose to focus on Radak’s father, Joseph, since his brother Moses’ piyyutim as enumerated by Bar-Tikva, do not deal with biblical narratives.

362 R. Pinhas or his circle also authored some dramatizations of Esther and these piyyutim were still popular in medieval Europe. See Elizur, Pinhas Ha-Kohen, 161n125; HaCohen, Studies, 98-104; Heinemann, Fragments, 363-4. He notes that some older dramatic forms might be preserved in the Tosefta, ibid, 367-9.
Thus, there may be a connection between trends in medieval Hebrew poetry and its general milieu and Radak’s peculiar use of monologue.

2.6.3.1 Joseph Kimhi’s Piyut Yinaten Ly Beshelaty

Let Be Given Me That Is My Petition/Joseph Kimhi:363

Let be given me, that is my petition
My life and my people that is my request (Est. 7:3).

Ascended veteran, keeper of faith (Isa. 26:2)
Fondly remember (the) sons of the steadfast
And do safeguard me lord of the lords
And redeem from pit my spirit (Ps. 103:4)
My life
Pricking briar (Ezek. 28:24) with fire do light364
For still my despoiler deigns to divide
And my life’s enemy chases with stride
Like Amalek’s great grandson, break and eradicate
Day my prayer to you did bring (see Ps. 88:13)
My life
Abruptly, the hand of the enemy is flaccid
His heart broken, his bone outed (Job 33:21)
Carried and pushed, a head he has covered (see Est. 6:12)
You redeemed my soul
My life

Joseph Kimhi chose to phrase this plea for salvation as emanating mostly from the persona of Esther. He expands the plea to Ahasuerus (Est. 7:3), which opens the piyut via direct quotation. This monologue form is very rare. Bar-Tikva notes that this piyut draws its liturgical meaning by transforming Esther’s localized plea to the King, into a universal Jewish plea to God for salvation from current enemies365. The first stanza entreats God by invoking various divine titles. The end of the piyut describes Haman’s downfall as having been accomplished. Thus, like biblical hymns and

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363 This is my rough rendition. For the Hebrew original, see Bar-Tikva, Provençal Piyut, 356-7.
364 See Isa. 27:11 according to Radak.
psalms, the poet presents himself to as biblical Esther, transitioning from plea to thanksgiving\textsuperscript{366}.

This \emph{piyut} might be related to the tradition of phrasing Esther’s prayer to God (Est. 5) as a new monologue, as was done in the Septuagint, the BT, and Midr. Ps. 22 (3.3.3). Joseph Kimhi chose to do this to Est. 7, though. He views the salvation in the last stanza as related to the events of Est. 6. These are alluded to by the stanza’s phrasing and thereby serve liturgical needs\textsuperscript{367}. The \emph{piyut}’s shift from a “\textit{flesh and blood}” king to God, hints that Esther was really addressing God in Ch. 7 and seems inspired by the same ambiguity recognized in the Midrashim.

Esther’s style of speech in stanzas 1 and 3 is modeled after the author’s poetic tradition and biblical stylings, which was common in \emph{piyut} and thus is unremarkable, except for Esther quoting Est. 6:12: \textit{Then Mordecai returned to the king’s gate, but Haman hurried to his house, mourning and with his head covered}. This suggests he saw Esther as the actual author of the book bearing her name, since she is familiar with the biblical narrator’s phrasing (compare to the discussion in 3.8.3.2). This stylistic argument is consistent with what follows.

The second stanza is unique. Whereas the style of the other stanzas makes it difficult to discern any of Esther’s traits apart from Joseph Kimhi’s own expression, the second stanza does something remarkable. Esther begs God to burn her adversary and so bring the dawn of the day (lines 7 and 11), since Haman as her despoiler has chased after her and wishes to divide the spoils (l. 8-9). These descriptions are rote midrashic depictions of Esther herself. However, there is an added emphasis on Haman as her potential despoiler in a sexual sense. Midrashic Esther is described as

366 The common plea structure in this \emph{piyut} is of note, when compared to Jeremiah’s state of mind in Radak’s comments, since the Jeremiah’s laments also oscillate between despair and confidence.

367 The bones might allude to Balaam (Num. 23:3) a connection with Haman, which exists in Midrashim and a few other \emph{piyyutim} on the basis of their shared divination practices.
the despoiler of Haman’s property who chases after him. She is also the light of the Jews and daybreak (see both ideas in 3.4.2). Joseph Kimḥi describes both her enemy and savior as partial refractions of Esther’s persona.

In this part of her plea to God, Kimḥi’s Esther needs to humble herself. This is accomplished by indirectly waiving her midrashic depictions as a savior to enlist God’s assistance. Kimḥi hence alludes to an Esther who like in the Midr. Ps. knows her heroic worth (3.1), but also understands that she must humble herself before God (as in the BT). Esther’s biblical plea for her life and the lives of her people becomes a plea for her existence as a person. Esther surrenders herself to convince God to literally “give her, her nephesh”, herself.

Character monologue is thus used by Joseph Kimḥi to form a psychological portrait of desperation. To save her life and people, Esther and the praying public need to waive their selfhood and sacrifice. There was no need to characterize Esther in this way. It would have been enough to argue for Esther’s need to act regardless of her queenly status and relations with Ahasuerus, as Mordecai does in the Bible (Est. 4:8, 14), in Midrash and in piyyut. Joseph Kimḥi chose to articulate Esther’s sense of self and its loss. This is a similar move to that of Radak, when he heightens Jeremiah’s inner sense of turmoil, to the point of turning him into a traumatized prophetic figure par excellence.

The case for the influence of Joseph Kimḥi on his son with regards to mental depictions is not unfounded. As Talmage argues, Radak admits that he was influenced by his father’s teachings many times in his commentaries. This is especially true of

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368 For similar uses of nephesh see Joseph Kimḥi on Prov. 11:17; 28:17.
369 See “Yaga’ ati BeKirt’Lah”, which only uses a paraphrased form for its most dramatic rendering of Mordecai’s plea, in Bar-Tikva, Provençal Piyut, 324-9. Monologue hence serves as emphasis.
370 See Talmage, Commentaries on Proverbs, 36*–8.
poetic issues, as Mordechai Z. Cohen has shown\textsuperscript{371}. Like his father Radak might have been influenced by late developments in eastern *piyyutim*, which he knew from Spain.

The Kimḥis, by contrast, understood that monologues, specifically those addressed to God in sorrow, need to have a psychological dimension that connects the consciousness of the speaker with their phrasing. This linkage appears to be absent from R. Pinhas HaKohen’s *piyyutim* and similar texts, but is to be found extensively in Troubadour poetry (high medieval Occitania, Provence and more).

2.6.3.2 Troubadour Personas and Conflicted Characters

In the above *piyut*, Joseph Kimḥi successfully blurs the figures of Esther, God and Haman. This kind of fragmentation has also been observed in troubadour poetry. Sarah Kay examined the construction of subjectivity by the troubadours. She noted that especially in the works of Arnaud de Maruelh (c. 1180-1195 C.E.) and Peire Rogier (b. 1145), prolific users of internal monologue, different allegorical characters merge together as the poems progress\textsuperscript{372}. Rouben Charles Cholakian studied the psychological aspects of troubadour discourse and found that these figures typify different impulses, which depict emotional changes in the poet’s persona\textsuperscript{373}. This may be reminiscent Esther in the above *piyut*.

Cholakian also argued that the Troubadours’ penchant for their characters to be ambiguous and self-contradictory, must have stirred some emotional resonance with their audience\textsuperscript{374}. Kay suggested that the roots of this tendency stem from Augustinian Bible hermeneutics. The symbolized inner struggles of the poet’s persona are the “*sensus literalis*” of the poem, from which the audience is invited to draw

\textsuperscript{371} Cohen, Radak vs Ibn Ezra, 34-40. Specifically, notes 23 and 33 there.
\textsuperscript{372} Kay, Subjectivity, 59-60.
\textsuperscript{373} Cholakian, Troubadour Lyric, 103, 111.
\textsuperscript{374} Ibid, 181-3. For examples see ibid, 160-1, 178.
allegorical meaning using their own experiences. This is especially true of the works of Marcabru (fl. 1130-1150?) as well as late medieval iconography depicting suffering. That is also precisely what Hugh of St. Victor asked of the readers of biblical commentaries. Thus, the notion of what is literal was broadened to include the emotional state of the speaker in French poetry in Radak’s time.

Accordingly, the need to emphasize the expressions of Jeremiah’s psyche is an integral part of the literal meaning in Radak’s commentary on prophecy and the Psalms. Viezel claimed that Radak thought that the more a prophet’s self is expressed in his prophecy, the less divine it is. The articulation of Jeremiah’s psyche is thus a crucial part of Radak’s interest in differentiating between the divine message and the messenger. In some cases Radak accomplished this by noting the compositional process of biblical books. In the case of Jeremiah’s trauma, Radak may have had a parallel to the troubadour’s poetic self in the back of his head. He could perform such a reading due to an updated conception of the literal sense.

Kay, Subjectivity, 50-1. In the time of Arnaut Daniel (fl. 1180–1200) troubadours were debating the divide between simple and complex styles, which is another facet of the Christian literal and allegorical divide, see Cholakian, Troubadour Lyric, 117; Auerbach, Mimesis, 115-9; O’Kane, Artist’s Response, 55-7. This debate is also true to a degree of then current Bible exegesis.

And the audience of prophetic plays. See Regula-Meyer, Anti Judaism, 140.

Note that Radak’s criticism of Christological interpretations of the Psalms mostly considers the possibility that certain verses were spoken by Jesus, or as in Radak’s treatment of Jeremiah, Jesus’ state of mind when allegedly speaking these verses. See Radak’s closing comments on Ps. 2, 22 and 110 as well as his comment on Ps. 7:8.

Viezel, Revelation, 274, 278, 283.

Ibid, 267-8. Also see Radak’s introduction to his commentary on Chronicles. See also Perez, Exegetic Method, 313-4.

Like Christian exegetes, Radak was well aware of the possibility of interpreting the Bible allegorically, but only approved of it as long as it was tempered by context. Note that in Ps. 19:10 the Christian interpretation of the commandments is called Derek Mashal by Radak, which he rejects. This is also the terminology he uses to describe the allegorical readings of Proverbs, as well as Radak’s description of the Song of Songs and Ezek. 16 in his comment on Ezek. 16:7. Mental states are thus not part of this less literal layer. Talmage showed that Radak’s exegesis of Proverbs differentiates between the literal meaning which comprises most of his commentary, and a philosophical allegorical meaning he referenced, when mentioning verses from Proverbs in his other commentaries and when influenced by his father’s comments. Talmage claims that Radak did this knowingly, as supported by his introduction to his commentary on Proverbs, where he claims that he must rectify the neglect of the literal sense. See Talmage, Commentaries on Proverbs, 40*-2. For Joseph Kimhi’s allegorical comments, see ibid, 22*-23. See also Radak’s views on the importance of philosophy in his introduction to Genesis.
Hence, Joseph Kimhi’s rendering of Esther’s humility via troubadour-like fragmentation is meant to teach the praying audience to follow her example through similar hermeneutics, as was expected from an audience accustomed to troubadour poetry, which Jews are likely to have known\(^ {381}\). The same is true of Radak’s more psychologically-oriented depiction of Jeremiah using monologue.

Radak actually acknowledged troubadour poetry. In describing the genre of Isa. 5 he seems to have this form of love poetry in mind (Isa. 5:1)\(^ {382}\):

*Let me sing* the words of the prophet make a parable between God blessing him and Israel and calls Israel a vineyard and God the owner of the vineyard and calls this parable song and the gist of this parable (is) about the people of his generation, since it is about the praise of the lover and his love for the beloved and so is the song of songs of Solomon as it tells of the love of the desirer for the (female) desired and is a parable for God and the congregation of Israel, and the prophet calls on God to bless him, “my friend” and “my beloved” in the manner of (Ps. 91:14) “Those who love me, I will deliver”.

Radak compares the song of the vineyard to the Song of Songs, as two parables expressing God’s love for Israel, which is a common and ancient reading of the Song of Songs. This is hardly befitting the song of the vineyard and its harsh message of doom for Jerusalem if the city is the beloved, as Radak claims. Radak chooses to focus on the praise of Israel as beloved by God, an inversion of the more

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\(^{381}\) Avenary, Science of Music, 53-5. In 1225 C.E. Jacob ab ben Meri, Provençal sage and one of the teachers in the new Naples University, complained about the “lustful” Gentile songs that Jewish parents allowed their daughters to hear in their homes. Other evidence exists in *Sefer Hasidim*. While Provençal Jews might not have created faithful cognates of Troubadour poetry, some elements are shared, as much as in Radak’s notion of Jeremiah’s self. Hence, Provençal Jewish poets showed some admiration for their Gentile counterparts, see in Kfir, Center and Periphery, 184n192. Habadrashi in 1375 C.E. praises the Troubadours Flouquet de Marsstilei and Piere Cardenal in his poem “*Herbe Mitapekhet*”. Moreover, there is a relationship between the *vidas* of the Provençal troubadours and the works of Isaac Ha-Gorni, ibid, 198n217. For other examples of Jews actually working as Troubadours, see Ben-Shalom, Jews of Provence, 391-9. See also Rashbam’s references to troubadours in Liss, Fictional worlds, 26-9; S. Yefet, Song of Songs, 255-60. Brener describes how Ha-Gorni adopted an actual vagabond troubadour persona of “*jongleur*”, in his poems to comply with Gentile troubadours’ *vidas*, see Brener, Troubadour Persona, 87-90. While they do not create biblical personas per se, historical figures are encoded as biblical ones in some of Ha-Gorni and Badrashi’s poems, for instance, poem 15 in Kfir, Center and Periphery, 314.

\(^{382}\) אשתו, גם אשתו של שלמה, אשר בו נשתלם בני ישראל. קוראים ליורם 깻 גם לישראל, 깻 קוראיםjal כרב ולך חבר, קוראים

משם שיר. כבש זה השער, כבש זה השער, בשכבה של ברוך חדש הליל, מקראشهادיך, מקראשדריה, מקראשלמה, מקראשלמה, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראשלום, מקראshalla. קוראים גם לברוך, קוראיםgambar, קוראיםjal לברוך, קוראיםjal לברך, קוראיםjal לברך, קוראי
divine focused typical interpretation of the Song of Songs and a theme mostly foreign to Isaiah. The praise of the woman and her love by the poet God through allegorical characters, as it is described by Radak only lacks a third speaker to conform to typical troubadour format (underlined above)\(^ {383}\).

My reading is supported by Radak’s statement that at the end of days both the Gentiles and the Jews will be welcome to compose songs, as long as both are educated. This view hints that educated Gentiles are good at poetry as God admits, and Radak can appreciate this. Radak could hypothetically indulge in some of their stylings in his commentaries, as he does by characterizing Jeremiah (on Ps. 47:8)\(^ {384}\):

7-8) A Psalm (maskil)- the interpretation of maskil is each and every scholar, whether of Israel or the nations, sing praises, even though he ordered all nations to sing, as he said (v.2): Clap your hands, all you peoples, if educated if not. Clapping and shouting loud songs of joy, are for every man, but composing song and poetry is but for the scholars...

In summary, the growing popularity of the poetic rendering of mental conflict goes hand in hand with the more popular nature of Radak’s commentaries Talmage describes\(^ {385}\). Radak’s use of psychology is comparable to Peter Ablered’s (d. 1142) choice to adopt a dramatic literary frame of speech for the prophets in his polemical “Adversus Iudeorum Inveteratam Duritiem” in light of popular plays\(^ {386}\). Radak gave his audience what they expected from their characters, which was mental conflict as part of the literal meaning of the Bible, as is also evident in his father’s poetry.

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383 See Kay’s introduction in Subjectivity. Note also the mental human love described by Radak in Ps. 91:4, as the reason for Israel’s salvation. God’s part is actual love, which might be poetic.

384 פירוש משכיל, כל משכיל ומשכל, בין ישראל בין באומות עולם, וצר לו, עדיף, ישכל השכל זוה. ולעם, כמיה אמר, כל העמים זמור, כל משכלו ומשכלו, והנה הוא מס醪 מה הוא הזמר, כמו שאמר, כל העמים תקעו כף, בין משכילים בין אינם משכילים, תקיעת הכף ונשיאת הקול ברנה הוא שוה לכל אדם, אבל לחבר שיר וזמרה הוא לא משכלו אף ירה. ומי אמר, כל משכל שמיים יורה, כל משכלו ומשכלו, והנה הוא מס醪 מה הוא הזמר, בין ישראל בין באומות עולם, וצר לו, עדיף, ישכל השכל זוה. והנה הוא מס醪 מה הוא הזמר, בין ישראל בין באומות עולם.

385 Talmage, Commentaries on Proverbs, 14*-6.

386 As argued in Regula Mayer, Prophetic plays, 226.
2.6.4 Conclusions: Enhanced Authorship as Character Forming

Jeremiah as depicted by the not-so-innocent paraphrases of Rashi and Radak, shares another key feature with the emphasis of the troubadour upon his own expressed lyric self, namely the manipulation of created characters to better express one’s persona\(^{387}\). The exegetes’ Jeremiah draws close to this sort of fictional representation.

Rina Drory described how the pseudo epigraphic constraints of late Midrashim forced their authors to hide behind old models and personas, regardless of their poetic innovations\(^{388}\). A prime example of this is found in the radical but anonymous Jeremiah-author persona of PR 26 I presented. HaCohen described the fear of the classical *pytanim* of voicing characters, to avoid being perceived as combining profane words with the holy words of prayer and by extension the Bible\(^{389}\). These same fears were also part of the so-called “*Byzantine pact of fiction*”, which dissuaded authors from using the first person for characters until the late Middle Ages\(^{390}\). Late Midrashim and systematic medieval exegesis exhibit the waning of these fears.

Thus, beyond any of the cultural influences mentioned, whether Byzantine or Provençal, poetry or polemic, all represent different periods in a universal shift to humanism in the late Middle Ages. The impetus to write romance literature and its poetics were shared by Byzantium and France during the 12\(^{\text{th}}\) century and might have stemmed from mutual contacts\(^{391}\). I argue that the character monologues that appear more frequently in late medieval Jewish religious texts from France and Byzantium are a related phenomenon, spurred by contact with new Christian models, but grounded in uniquely Jewish models known from *piyyutim* and Midrashim.

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\(^{387}\) Cholakian, Troubadour Lyric, 13, 28-9, 54-5, 85, 105, 107. For the creation of female voices, Ibid, 26, 61, 64, 72-4, 156, 168, 178. In Mirash see Cordoni, The Emergence.

\(^{388}\) Drory, Contacts, 55-78.

\(^{389}\) HaCohen, Studies, 134-6.

\(^{390}\) Papaioannou, Psellos, 106-7.

\(^{391}\) See in Beaton, Greek Romance, 18-20.
As Richard W. Southern argues, placing a greater emphasis on the author as was done in Christian biblical exegesis, could lead to the creative freedom of expressing one’s real self through one’s characters as the Troubadours did\(^2\). By ascribing a less holy status to their biblical commentaries than what Midrash presented, Rashi and Radak were able to allow themselves greater creative freedom in presenting a deduction of Jeremiah’s historical motivations.

The commentaries are all in the exegete’s own voice, his “quoted monologue”. Expressing character consciousness via greater degrees of monologue is not that different from simply commenting on a verse. The exegetes as authors expressed their Jeremiah without worrying about the truth value of their statements. Interpreting character’s minds became part of the literal exegesis of scripture in Christian Europe in the High Middle Ages. This allowed Rashi to systemize late-midrashic themes surrounding Jeremiah, whereas Radak improved on this model by sketching Jeremiah with more poetic sophistication\(^3\). They chose to question and express Jeremiah in quoted monologues. The major sources in this part of the thesis therefore, ultimately exemplify a continuity between medieval Bible exegesis and late Midrashim that is paralleled by changes in Medieval Christian rhetoric and literature.

\(^2\) A similar process might be suggested with regards to Christian Western exegesis, see Southern, Medieval Humanism, 32-6; Minnis, Authorship, 5-6, 28-9. In a sense, other developments also led to such poetical tendencies in Karaite exegesis’ emphasis on individuality, see 1.7.3.

\(^3\) The same partial love triangle found in Radak on Isa. 5:1 coupled with mental conflict is also described as “Troubadour-inspired” in one of Jacob ben Elazar’s love stories. See, Scheindlin, Love Stories, 19-20. Radak is a more indirect receptacle for these same ideas.
Part Three: Esther as a Protagonist

3.1 A Review of Esther in Midrash: Debated Importance

Most of the midrashic portraits of Esther are found in Amoraic and late Midrashim. Leila L. Bronner claimed that the midrashic renditions of the book of Esther are centered on heightening the rabbinic-style Jewishness of Esther, and are thus uniformly uncritical. While this is true, the sources are divided regarding Esther’s importance. The differences are not based on a moral judgement of Esther, as in the cases of Balaam and Jeremiah, but rather on the level of attention invested in her characterization.

Esther is barely characterized in Tannaitic sources, even via the indirect method of characterization by midrashic lists previously discussed (1.2.1). The few sources in existence highlight her unremarkable highly rabbinic righteousness. Amoraic sources focus on Esther’s role in the salvation of Israel. They fluctuate between Esther and God as the centers of the Esther narrative. Esther’s contribution is both established and questioned by these accounts.

This vacillation is particularly evident in the Babylonian Esther Midrash (b. Megilla 10b-16b). Eliezer Segal argues that Esther’s characterization in the BT achieves two aims. It emphasizes God’s miraculous assistance, and also shows Esther’s personal failings necessitating this assistance. This presentation is accomplished by way of quoted monologue and direct statements. Nevertheless,

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1 Bronner, Esther Revisited, 177, 197.
2 An index in Sifrei Zutta 6:25=Sifrei Num. 41 argues for some similarity between Esther and Joseph= Panim Aḥerim b 2:2, 2:15=Aba Gurion 2, 2:15. The latter versions favor Esther with more grace.
3 M. Abbot 6:6 notes that Esther transmitted Mordecai’s warning faithfully, as an exemplum for accurate transmission of rabbinic materials= Gen. R. 39:3; Aba Gurion 2 2:7; Panim Aḥerim b 2 1:2. This does not actually characterize Esther. Also see her description in MekhY. Amalek 2=Est. R. 6:6.
4 See Esther’s confidence in asking the Sages to preserve Purim in Y. Megilla 1:5 and Ruth R. 4:7.
5 Segal, Esther Midrash, iii, 263-5. God assisted Esther by stoking Ahasuerus’ anger (b. Megilla 12b), thereby granting her grace to seduce Ahasuerus, as well as miraculous and ideal sexual circumstances (ibid 13a, contra Exod. R. 15:6, which argues that Esther was as the moon in fairness. The lunar
Esther is shaped to be righteous and her relationship with Mordecai is used to dramatize her personal sacrifices. The Babylonian Midrash thus ultimately renders Esther more positively than Mordecai.

In comparison, the early, Amoraic portion of Esther Rabbah (proems to ER 6; hereafter: ER I), marks a significant downplay of Esther’s role. This trend continues in some later Midrashim. ER I excludes some accounts focused on Esther extant in parallels and introduces Mordecai into accounts which referred solely to Esther elsewhere. This espouses a disinterest in Esther, save perhaps her sexuality.

The same is true, to a lesser degree, of PRE. Whereas its retelling of Esther (PRE 49-50) highlights Esther’s centrality to the biblical narrative, this is accomplished solely via the incorporation of biblical quotations highlighting the immediacy of events. Hence, PRE’s redaction does not cite midrashic traditions about Esther, but only about Mordecai. The late strata of ER (ER 7-10; hereafter: ER II) is an even more extreme example of Esther’s diminishing status. ER II shares multiple

connection might know of the Ishtar connation of Esther’s name and so in favor of her being beautiful without God’s aid). God in b. Megilla also sent angels to compel the King to spare Esther (ibid, 15a= Panim Aḥerim b 2:5, 5:1). God stopped Esther from brazenly denouncing Ahasuerus instead of Haman (ibid, 16a) and forced Ahasuerus to grant the Jews another day of reprisal (ibid b= Midr. Ps. 22:27).

6 See most of the interpretations of her name (b. Megilla 13a), the tragic circumstances of her birth (ER 6:5=b. Megilla 13a= Lam. R. 5:3, Panim Aḥerim b 6, 2:7, argues that Esther is the messianic redeemer born on the eve of the destruction of the first temple), her halakhic conduct in the harem (b. Megilla 13a-b= Panim Aḥerim b 2 2:9, but note Panim Aḥerim’s heightened dramatic sense), her myriad reasons for inviting Haman to her banquets (b. Megilla 15b=Midr. Prov. 9:2, which only emphasizes her deadly wisdom) and contrast to criticism of Mordecai (b. Megilla 16b).

7 On ER see 3.4. The Targum Sheni takes a moderate position that extolls Mordecai and Esther, in keeping with its possible late Amoraic provenance that could place it between ER I and b. Megilla, see Grossfeld, Targum Sheni, 181-2. A cursory analysis suggests that this Targum is slightly closer to Panim Aḥerim than to ER, according to the reasons mentioned for Esther inviting Haman (Targum Sheni on Est. 5:8, HaKeter, Five Scrolls, 285); as well as based on Esther’s age and initial avoidance of the King’s officials (2:8-9, ibid, 280). Also see Targum Sheni on Est. 2:7, 11 that emphasizes Esther’s role in bringing about salvation and that Mordecai only went into exile to facilitate this (ibid, 280). Esther’s national sympathies expressed in fast and prayer also parallel Panim Aḥerim (Targum Sheni on Est. 4:16; 5:1, ibid, 283-5). Nevertheless, Esther’s Targumic plea hints at a lower status than in Panim Aḥerim (Targum Sheni to 7:5, ibid, 285). She is blamed by the King for not revealing her Jewish origins beforehand to prevent the tragic events. This is unique (Targum on 8:7, ibid, 288).

8 For a partial list of sources, see ER proems 3, 9; as well as ER 4:9, 5:4, 6:1,8, 13.

9 See in ER 3:15, 6:5, 9= Aba Gurion 2, 2:15 3; Panim Aḥerim b 2, 2:15; ER. 6:10, 11= Panim Aḥerim b 2, 2:17; Aba Gurion 2, 2:17; PR 15.

10 Atzmon, Old Wine, 197-200.
accounts with the more popular late Midrash Aba Gurion, but has little to say about Esther, compared to Aba Gurion\(^\text{11}\).

Nevertheless, other late Midrashim take the opposite approach. They characterize Esther extensively and repeatedly, noting her importance or heroism. Midr. Ps. 22 is a lengthy interpretation of Ps. 22 as Esther’s prayer (mentioned in Est. 5). Esther is characterized by way of a myriad of quoted inner monologues, as befitting not only the first-person nature of the Psalms but also a possible late Byzantine provenance of this part of Midr. Ps\(^\text{12}\). Esther is depicted as vastly self-assured while also tormented by her sexual exploitation at the hands of Ahasuerus\(^\text{13}\). This suggests her centrality. Another unique theme Midr. Ps. 22 uses to highlight Esther, is a repeated analogical contrast to the collective choir-like character of Haman’s sons\(^\text{14}\).

Panim Aḥerim b, another of the late Esther Midrashim, is similarly in awe of Esther\(^\text{15}\). It mostly uses the indirect assertions of other characters to depict Esther as a paradigm of heroism, self-sacrifice and chastity\(^\text{16}\). This technique suggests an older

\(^{11}\) Reizel, Introduction, 214-5. For examples see ER: 7:4; 7:18, 10:12-14= Tanḥuma WaYehi 14, Gen. R. 99:3. Inclusions from Josippon, as in ER 9:1, further weaken Esther’s disposition. A few examples of parallels with more expression of Esther’s personality do occur in Aba Gurion: Aba Gurion 1, 1:9, 1:11, 1:19; 2:20 =Panim Aḥerim b 2:1:2; Aba Gurion 4:4:1.

\(^{12}\) The early Midr. Ps. is Byzantine, but could be Palestinian or Italian. See Reizel, Introduction, 282-4.

\(^{13}\) See Midr. Ps. 22: 1, 3, 6, 16, 19, 23, 25, 26=Gen. R. 58:1, Panim Aḥerim b 1, 1:1. For a discussion of Esther’s suffering in Midr. Ps. 22, see Menn, No Ordinary, 317-27. The composition’s assured Esther is tempered by Midr. Ps. 22:5. It asks Esther to turn to God, lest she thinks that she cannot fail because she is a queen= Eliyahu Rabbah 1, Panim Aḥerim b 4, 2:20.

\(^{14}\) See extensively in Midr. Ps. 22:2, 10, 21, 24-27. Collective characters might be further dramatization borrowed from piyut or theater, but this is beyond the scope of this study.

\(^{15}\) Panim Aḥerim b seems to be some kind of late Tanḥuma in parts. See Reizel, Introduction, 216-7.

\(^{16}\) Esther’s miraculous beauty in her old age (Panim Aḥerim b 2, 2:7), hatred of jewelry (ibid 2:9, 15, 17) and disinterest in being a queen are unlike other women (ibid, 1:20, 2:2 2:16). These themes are reminiscent of Ruth R. 4:9 and so might attest to a source for some ideas in Panim Aḥerim b 2, as per Reizel, Introduction, 216. I suspect some possible monastic undertones, but proof goes beyond the scope of this study. Other unique themes include Esther overcoming trials to highlight her merit, her willingness to die for Israel (Panim Aḥerim b 2, 2:17, 4:2, 4:9, 4:4 compared to b. Megilla 15a, 5:5) and her and Mordecai’s prophetic powers (Panim Aḥerim b 4, 4:4, 5, 7, 22).
provenance for some of its accounts and underscores the extreme nature of ER’s dismissive treatment of Esther, as these two compositions share some traditions.

In summary, Esther’s character is not associated with any special method of characterization in any midrashic layer, but the question of her importance, separates some compositions from others. The following sections contrast two major midrashic sources on Esther that are further divided with regard to her centrality; the Babylonian Esther Midrash representing a classical source and the complete ER, being extremely late. The comparison examines whether the differential assessment of the importance of a particular character, Esther, presupposes some concept of ‘protagonist’. I also examine the types of poetic devices that might be used to express this concept.

3.2 Esther as Protagonist: Babylonian Esther as Greek Novel

3.2.1 Esther as Hinted Protagonist in the Bible and in Babylonia

Biblical Esther is characterized as a protagonist on the basis of several of her innate qualities. Vladimir Propp argues that the folklorist protagonist feels the community’s “need” the most and agrees to cancel this “need”\(^7\). Esther’s actions from Est. 4 onwards all express her willing acceptance of the repealing of Haman’s decree against the Jews. Cecelia Sivapalan similarly identifies “fosterage” as a common occurrence in the early life of folk heroes\(^8\). Est. 2:7 depicts Esther as such an orphan. Yaira Amit argues that the protagonist of a biblical story is the center of attention, present in most of the dramatic scenes. Esther conforms to this definition\(^9\).

The Babylonian Esther Midrash is dependent of course on Esther’s established centrality to biblical events and yet several Talmudic comments independently mark

\(^{7}\) Propp, Morphology, 50, 84-6. By which he means the initial calamity that drives the plot.
\(^{8}\) Sivapalan, Epic Protagonists, 74-5.
\(^{9}\) Amit, Reading, 93.
Esther as more prominent than Mordecai. This suggests Esther being identified by the sages as the genuine protagonist or at the very least as a more interesting character. Below I argue that this recognition is expressed through themes akin to those of the Greek novel and that Esther is likened to its female protagonists.

The expression of centrality through allusion to characters of other genres is also common to the characterization of female protagonists of “Apocryphal Acts”, who share some novelistic themes with BT Esther. Before demonstrating the Talmudic incorporation of these novelistic elements, however, I need to establish the possibility that such motifs actually appeared in Sassanid Babylonia in the first place.

### 3.2.2 Greek Novels in Babylonia?

There is some evidence that the Greek novel was known in Jewish Babylonia. The tone of Talmudic aggadah might reflect a general reception of novelistic themes. This tone as described by Boyarin is “seriocomical”, that is a mode Bakhtin views as a sign of the development of the novel in Late Antiquity, after the decline of the classic Greek novel. Boyarin likewise identifies Menippean elements in this Talmudic tone and especially in the ambiguous presentation of Talmudic figures such as Esther. He argues that the BT is thus part of the general cultural milieu of Petronius, with possible Syriac Christian intermediation.

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20 Here is an overview of Esther and Mordecai in b. Megilla that supports Esther’s centrality: The Proems of the Babylonian Esther Midrash (b. Megilla 10b-11a) mention Esther and Mordecai. One of the comments on Est. 1:8 inserts Haman and Mordecai into Est. 1 (b. Megilla 12a). Esther and Mordecai’s names and origins are both discussed to celebrate both characters’ merits in b. Megilla 12b-13a. Ibid, 14a and 15a discusses and dismisses Esther’s beauty. Ibid, 14b has Esther gaining prophecy. Ibid, 15a has Mordecai as prophet well. 16a has a narrative portion modelled on of Est. 6 and 7, touching upon both Mordecai and Esther. Thus, both characters are generally discussed, but Esther is more prominent and positive in more accounts.

21 In the “Acts of Paul and Thecla”, the latter is the clear female protagonist, if not the only protagonist, see Lapp, Chaste Women, 40-1. This is unusual but argues that is not inconceivable for a female like Esther to be rendered as a protagonist of a theologically inclined text in Late Antiquity.

22 Boyarin, Fat Rabbis, 208.

This view is further supported by Richard Kalmin who notes that the Babylonian Amoraim of the mid-4th century, were exposed to greater amounts of Palestinian materials as a result of the clashes between Rome and the Sassanid Empire. Babylonia and Persia were influenced by the Roman near east, as greatly evidenced in Christian Armenia. Kalmin believes the nature of these reactions seems to suggest written sources of transmission, such as Josephus24.

The surviving fragments of Greek novels attributed to multilingual Syrian immigrants, such as Iamblichus “the Babylonian” and his earlier Seleucid counterpart Berossus, suggest the circulation of the written novel into Babylonia before the BT25. These authors’ ability to compose novels and their insistence on reimagining the Persian-Babylonian sphere in novelistic terms, argues for a measure of Audience pre-acquaintance with the Greek novel and suggests that such works trickled from Syria into Babylonia not just into Rome. This multicultural background might have impacted Sassanid works of fiction that crystalized alongside the BT26.

There is however no need to for a full-fledged written transmission of Greek novels, just the transmission of novelistic motifs. Boyarin suggests viewing Babylonian Judaism, even before the 4th century, as akin to trans-Euphratian Christian Hellenism. Namely, it was not directly influenced by texts, but by the circulation of

24 Kalmin, Jewish Babylonia, 149-50, 184-6. This might have been accompanied by other social changes, such as the weakening of strict Persian social barriers and a lessened emphasis on genealogical purity. Ibid, 177-84.
25 See Whitmarsh, Companion, 10-1; Haubold, Berossus, 105-6. Josephus might have even had access to Berossus’ lost original, ibid, 107-8.
26 Scenes of royal recognition, one of the Babylonian Esther motifs, are present in some Sassanid texts and so are a possible parallel to the reception of novelistic motifs in the BT. For example, see the possibly oldest Zoroastrian novel, Darab Dastur Peshotan Sanjana, trans. The Kârnâmâg i Ardashîr i Babagân: Ch. 1 and Ch. 9-10. A love triangle reminiscent of “Esther” where a woman passes between a king and another man repeatedly, is also mentioned in the novel in passing in Ch. 2. This is the other motif I discuss below. For the impact of “Esther” on story telling in that region in the Muslim period and beyond, see Silverstein, Veiling Esther. An analogy to Abraham becomes on important factor, ibid, 79-91.
motifs and ideas common even among alleged opponents of all things Greek. Novelistic motifs in the Babylonian Esther Midrash could have benefited from these oral channels that also shaped the Greek novels themselves, as shown by Kim.

Johannes Haubold demonstrates convincingly how Berossus’ older depiction of Nebuchadnezzar uses Greek motifs to color Nebuchadnezzar as a historical protagonist for a Syrian or Babylonian Hellenized audience. Kalmin claims that the Babylonian sages’ interest in Esther’s character is similar to their interest in Ezra, namely an effort to glorify national “Babylonian” exilic heroes. Their interest makes Esther a Jewish equivalent to Berossus’ Nebuchadnezzar as protagonist. The following sections present Esther’s possible association with Greek novel heroines in the BT, but also the ways this association is subverted.

3.3 The Inversion of Two Major Greek Novel Themes

3.3.1 Tragic Self: A Love Triangle

The most exceptional Talmudic depiction of Esther’s character is a hinted love triangle involving herself, Mordecai and Ahasuerus. This idea, as far as I can tell, has no parallel in any other midrashic source. This love triangle is never presented straightforwardly, but it lingers in the background of three comments, which come together to hint at a larger narrative. This suggests the motif is the intentional work of

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27 Boyarin, Fat Rabbis, 133-5; Cohen, Hellenism, 235-6. For the inverse phenomenon of Persian or Babylonian customs reflected by Palestinian sages, see ibid, 231-5 and note 85 there.
28 For examples, see Kim, Orality, 306-11. Motifs traveled with actual travelers, ibid, 315-6.
29 Haubold, Berossus, 112-6.
30 Kalmin, The Sage, 18. The search for Jewish heroes could be a reflection of the decentralized Sassanian feudal structure.
31 Segal, Esther Midrash, ii, 49-52. Josephus might acknowledge the tradition of Esther as Mordecai’s wife, but one could explain Josephus’s view, in light of his utilization of the Septuagint.
the redactors. Moshe Zipor shows how the triangle is introduced at first as a simple reading variant, attested also in the Septuagint (Megilla 13a):

“When her father and mother were dead, [Mordecai] took for his own daughter” (Est. 2:7). {A baraita} teaches in the name of R. Meir: do not read “for his own daughter” [LeVat] but ‘as a home’ [LeVayit]. And thus does it say: “But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did drink of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter” (2Sam. 12:3). Do not read “as a daughter” [KeVat]. Rather: “as a home” [KeVayit]. So too (in Esther)- ‘as a home’.

Esther is Mordecai’s daughter by way of analogy (gezerah shavah), in the same sense that the ewe lamb was Uriah’s wife in Nathan’s parable. The BT amends both verses to read “home” as “wife” (KeVayit) instead of “daughter” (KeVat)35.

“Home” is occasionally a rabbinic Aramism for wife36.

As Zipor notes, the inclusion of marriage, could be seen as the Septuagint accepting the prevalence of the love triangle motif in the Greek novel37. Segal likewise focuses on the attribution to R. Meir, a known scribe prone to textual emendations, who also did not believe that daughters could be a source of happiness and thus was motivated to reject reading an adoption in the verse38. Thus, R. Meir might have been cognizant of the Septuagint reading Esther as “wife” and used it to explain Mordecai’s reason to adopt her.

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32 The intended creation of a narrative by including older complementary sources can be attributed to Stammaitic BT layer. Even if no love triangle narrative existed before being hinted at by b. Megilla, the redactors could have created the impression of one, as per the findings in Rubenstein, Talmudic Stories, 244-5, 255-6, 262-5. Alternatively, Segal notes that the Babylonian Esther Midrash’s redaction truncates lengthier narratives, Segal, Esther Midrash, iii, 47-8. Perhaps that is the case above. The narrative has been omitted and only traces remain. Regardless, its presence is significant.


34 Segal, Esther Midrash, ii, 48-9. All the translations in this chapter follow Segal’s edition.

35 The sages might retroactively alter the phrasing in the lamb parable so that it will support that the lamb is the wife.

36 See Jastrow, Dictionary, 772 (5), 168. Also see ibid (6) for a euphemism for sex in general.

37 Zipor, When Midrash, 85-6. This is also the opinion of C. Boyd Taylor, with regards to the LXX.

38 Segal, Esther Midrash, ii, 49-52. Zipor, When Midrash, 848-5. Conversely, Segal argues that the Talmudic interpretation solves no actual difficulties in the verse, but might stem from an older desire to give textual basis for the Pharisaic custom of niece marriage and thus might be an ancient rabbinic reading. cf. M. Nedarim (8:7). See Segal, Ibid.
Nevertheless, the Babylonian Esther Midrash reinforces this marital theme. It imagines how Esther’s amorous relations with Mordecai could have continued after her marriage to Ahasuerus (b. Megilla 13b):

“For Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, etc.” (Est. 2:20). Says R. Jeremiah bar Abba: that she used to show blood to the sage. “Like as when she was brought up (Omna) with him” (Est. 2:20). Says Rava bar Lema: She stands up from the bosom of Ahasuerus and goes and immerses herself, and sits down in the bosom of Mordecai

The passage interprets half Est. 2:20 by subdividing it in two. Both readings depict Esther’s obedience of rabbinic purity laws and thus assume that the biblical comment “did the commandment of Mordecai” does not point to Esther keeping her Jewishness a secret, but rather to Esther obedience to Mordecai’s halakhic instructions.

Segal claims that this depiction of Esther is part of the broader rabbinic tendency to anachronistically depict biblical characters as obeying the sages. Menstrual purity then might be a synecdoche of rabbinic law at large. But, what does Esther routinely “switching bosoms” mean? Segal dismisses the possibility that Esther and Mordecai have adulterous intercourse as a married couple.

Segal points to the verse’s “omna” (also Est. 2:3) and to b. Yevamot 108a, which describes a female orphan minor called a mema’enet that was married by her brother or mother, but terminated the arranged marriage, as is her right. He suggests identifying Esther as a mema’enet that annulled her prearranged marriage to Mordecai. Hence, the BT comments on Esther’s ritual purity but does not bother to...
comment on Esther’s implied adultery with Ahasuerus, since she preemptively annulled her marriage to Mordecai.\(^{44}\)

Barry Dov Walfish suggests an alternate view\(^ {45}\). Sitting in one’s bosom as Esther does, might be a rabbinic sign of filial affection, such as Rahabam sitting in David’s bosom (b. Yevamot 77a), but it is also mark a distinct pleasure (b. Sanhedrin 100b, b. Yevamot 63b). Esther is emphatically beautiful,\(^ {46}\) and hence may better fit the less innocent sense.

Furthermore, should Esther be a young girl sitting playfully in her uncle’s bosom, she is most definitely not perpetrating the same act in Ahasuerus’ bosom. So why choose the same terminology for both? This choice of phrase, ‘sitting in x’s bosom’, could equally be informed, not by one specific mema`enet mentioned in passing by the Talmud, but by the adjacent reading (LeVat) that claims that Mordecai and Esther were married. The ewe-lamb/wife of Nathan’s parable was retroactively described by the BT as “lay in his bosom”, while simultaneously noting that the lamb is analogous to Esther.\(^ {47}\) I thus argue for a continuity between these two accounts.

The only other Talmudic comment attributed to bar Lema, who suggested this “bosom swapping”, b. Rosh Hashanah 4a, also deals with whoever is sitting in men’s bosoms. He suggests that the Shagal sitting in Darrius’ bosom (Neh. 2:6) is a female dog. Rashi explains that bar Lema is arguing that the dog is not acting in an innocent capacity. Thus, it is likelier that bar Lema viewed Esther’s similar act in b. Megilla in a sexual light.

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\(^{44}\) Ibid, Segal emphasizes the linguistic similarity between Esther, sitting in men’s bosoms and ritually bathing to the conduct made by R. Eliezer’s mema`enet in b. Yevamot 108b.

\(^{45}\) Walfish views this reading as enigmatic, see Walfish Kosher Adultery, 208-9. Note my additional evidence above and the overall argument of this section.

\(^{46}\) See in b. Megilla 13a, 15a. There is an opposite view found in BT, ibid.

\(^{47}\) See also Zipor, When Midrash, 88.
Bar Lema transformed the ‘wife of Mordecai’ theme into an erotic narrative.

Esther is sleeping with both men at the same time and so needs to immerse herself for her renewed contact with Mordecai. This claim indirectly characterizes her not only as loyal to rabbinic purity laws but also as resourceful and dynamic, for she is capable of engaging both men undetected at constant risk. This scandalous message fits with the Boyarin’s view of Talmudic aggadah as a hidden “trickster script”, wherein acts of coercion are transformed into the willing cunning manipulation of one’s conqueror.

Had this love triangle depiction been limited to the above two comments, it could be a result of the BT views on intercourse. However after it establishes Esther’s sexuality, the Babylonian Esther Midrash also describes her thoughts on the situation. Rosen-Zvi’s compatibly argues that the BT needs to describe a character’s sexuality before describing its inner self. A quoted monologue describes the tragic overtone of Esther’s need to forgo her intimate relations with Mordecai. This comment assumes the reader knows she has such relations in the first place (b. Megilla 15a):

What is “which is not according to the law”? Says r. Abba bar Kahana: Which is not according to the law of every day. For on every day it is by compulsion, but today it is done willingly. “And if I perish, I Perish” (Est. 4:16). Just as I have perished from my family, so shall I perish from you.

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48 The Tosafists (ibid) understand this passage as sexual, but not Rashi who emphasizes cleanliness.
49 Boyarin, Tricksters, 145-8. He also names Esther as an explicit example.
50 Perhaps Esther continues a love triangle with Mordecai as her husband, since as Satlow argues the BT is more stringent than the YT with regards to premarital sex. If Mordecai only intended to marry her, the intent would not be a sufficient excuse to sleep with her. See Satlow, Tasting the Dish, 122.
51 Rosen-Zvi, Sexualizing the Evil Inclination, 277-9. Satlow notes that Babylonian sources tend to be more apologetic with sexual indiscretions by biblical characters, however no direct apology is made for Esther above, nor are her relations with the Ahasuerus directly vindicated. See Satlow, Tasting the Dish, 108, 326. Esther is no exception to Babylonian “hyper sexualization”. B. Megilla 13a has her miraculously satisfy Ahasuerus as both a virgin and an experienced woman intermittently. B. Yoma 29a likens Esther to a gazelle by the pleasurable narrowness of her womb.
52 R. Aba bar Kahana also provides a parable, which describes Israel as a woman abandoned by a God (the husband) who went to sea. She is teased by the nations (neighbors) who wish to seduce her (Lam. R. 3:21, PRK 19:4). This parable may also reflect the wider midrashic reception of a Greek novel theme (see 3.3.2).
53 Segal, Esther Midrash, ii, 256-8.
Segal notes the difference between these comments and the Bible. Biblical Esther warns against her potential execution for violating the law of not to come unbidden before the King. Talmudic Esther though, is lamenting being forced to seek the King and thus show willingness for intercourse with him. The word “law” (Dat) is read as Jewish law.

The dual repetition of “perish” is interpreted as two different metaphorical kinds, she will be ostracized from family and community. As Esther has been lost to her family, by being taken by the King, so she will be cut off from Mordecai. However, why would Esther, be cut off from Mordecai more so than before, after a voluntary approach to the King? The solution to this conundrum, is the emphasis on Esther’s will. By showing willingness to sleep with Ahasuerus she will forever after be prohibited sexually to Mordecai.

Esther is depicted as a captive woman who willingly accepts her captor’s advances. Esther will be lost to Mordecai as an adulteress. This is also how Rashi reads the account. Sagit Morr likewise shows how the BT (b. Ketubot 51b) highlighted a captive’s willingness to comply with rape in captivity as the deciding factor of her status. Ahasuerus’ search for a wife is one of the cases mentioned there, in passing, suggesting that Esther was perceived as this sort of captive.

Esther’s depiction as Mordecai’s wife in b. Megilla is hence a dramatization of the issue of captive wives. The account is actually depicting the end of Esther’s

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54 Ibid, 257-9; Walfish, Kosher Adultery, 309-10.
55 The Tosafists (ibid) even suggest that Mordecai could have divorced Esther before she willingly sought Ahasuerus, so he could take her back into his bed later. That would have required witnesses that might have informed the King and thus would have them killed.
56 See Morr, Captive Woman, 219 -23. The BT was more liberal in its definition of duress.
57 See the Tosafists there as well. The seriousness of such a situation with regards to one’s marital status, is also why Adler speculates that b. Avoda Zara 17a endows Beruriah with the character of a sister to be captured in a brothel instead of herself. See extensively in Adler, Virgin.
58 This is not unlike the novel form used in “Joseph and Asenath”’s dramatization of the issue of proselytism. See Johnson, Mirror Mirror, 209-14.
relations with both men alluded to by bar Lema. She, and not Mordechai however, must decide her fate. The focus on Esther’s personal conflict thus indirectly marks her as a protagonist, as per similar uses of conflict identified by Woloch⁵⁹.

The love triangle is further echoed in Esther’s possible relations with Haman. Ahasuerus suspects that such an affair is taking place and so fears for his life. In b. Megilla 15b Rava says: The sleep of Ahasuerus, literally. A worry fell into his heart. He said: What is special that Esther invited Haman? They are conspiring against “that man” (himself) to murder him...⁶⁰. Esther invited Haman to her banquets to seduce him so they will both die (ibid)⁶¹: ...R. Joshua ben Qorḥah says: She treated him graciously in order that he and she would be killed⁶². This option is then repeated by R. Eleazar HaModʿai: ...she provoked against him (Haman) the jealousy of the King, and she provoked against him the jealousy of the princes⁶³.

In summary, the Babylonian Esther Midrash paints a consecutive if sketchy picture of Esther’s romantic relations with Mordecai from their inception to termination. The Bavli fashions a hinted narrative around Esther’s figure out of disparate episodes. This is in line with Meir’s conclusions that the Babylonian representation of R. Judah the Patriarch’s relations with Antoninus is another piecemeal construction focused on creating a coherent character⁶⁴. The BT

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⁵⁹ Having the scene depict Esther as torn between Ahasuerus and Mordechai, enhances her protagonist status as the main focused character, as in Woloch’s analysis of Pip’s main conflict in Dickens’ “Great Expectations”. See Woloch, One vs Many, 216-8.
⁶⁰ Segal, Esther Midrash, iii, 48-9.
⁶¹ R. Joshua b. Qorḥah who suggests this line of reasoning is also credited with the idea that the serpent wanted Eve all to himself after he saw her sleeping with Adam and so plotted against them, see Gen. R. 18:25. Hence, R. Joshua might have an affinity with sexual intrigue in aggudah.
⁶² Segal, Esther Midrash, iii, 30. Segal also notes that some Genizah fragments convey Palestinian parallels to Esther’s would be martyrdom. See ibid, n149-152.
⁶³ Ibid, iii, 31.
⁶⁴ See the conclusions in Meir, R. Judah, 291-2. This is unlike the Palestinian versions, suggesting the BT redaction has a tendency of assembling more sequential stories. This fact could be related to some Amoraic developments, see 4.1.
representation of Esther as married to Mordecai accomplishes the similar aim of depicting her character, but is more reminiscent of a Greek novel as I will now argue.

3.3.2 The ‘Failed’ Novelistic Reunion of B. Megilla

Love triangles can be evocative of the Greek novel. The genre as outlined by Bryan P. Reardon has an international flair, representative of an elite that reasserts their place at home after (mis)adventures in the vast alien world of Late Antiquity that constantly conspires to separate them:

...A well-to-do and handsome youth meets a beautiful girl in the daily round of a bourgeois existence. The two fall in love. They plan marriage, but a series of obstacles is put in their way by circumstance and opponents. They succeed, however, with the assistance of friends, in overcoming all difficulties; the girl turns out to be herself of bourgeois origins, the couple are united, and presumably live happily ever after in their home town, among their friends... Now this outline of New Comedy is not very far from summarizing the standard plot of the Greek novel... In the novel, the obstacles that circumstance puts in the way of a happy union are those consequent upon extensive travel in the Eastern Mediterranean and its hinterland—from Sicily to Babylon, from the Bosporus to Ethiopia; and the tribulations encountered by hero and heroine are no longer petty and bourgeois, but capital, violent, and above all exotic. New Comedy, though apolitical, is still a city-state form; the novel is a Mediterranean form...⁶⁵

Scholars have noted that the biblical book of Esther already has novelistic undertones. Clinton J. Moyer associates the character of biblical Esther with the Greek novel type of a beautiful heroine who replaces a queen⁶⁶. The Persian court setting is also a common exotic locale in these novels⁶⁷. But the love triangle inherent to the Babylonian Midrash accentuates these biblical novelistic undertones.

For example, in what is possibly the oldest extant Greek novel, Chariton’s “Callirohe”, the pseudo historical character of Xerxes who could very well be Esther’s Ahasuerus, functions as an obstacle for lovers. There, Xerxes clandestinely

⁶⁵ Reardon, Greek Novel, 292.
⁶⁶ “Callirohe” might share many structural themes and devices with Esther and thus is an apt choice for generic comparison as in Moyer, Beautiful Outsider, 607-12, 617-9.
⁶⁷ Ibid.
desires the heroine and tries to elicit her affections through the intrigues of his eunuch. This is the same role the Persian king plays in the Babylonian Midrash’s love triangle: complicating Esther and Mordecai’s relationship.

Moreover, the “bosom switching” Esther performs (b. Megilla 13b) is less scandalous when considered as an expression of the Greek novel theme of “just adultery”. Moyer describes how in one scene Callirohe imagines that it is her first husband (Chaereas) that is leading her to the bed chamber of her new bridegroom (Dionysius). To remain faithful to the man she loves (Chaereas), she gives in willingly to the other. This depiction can also be applied to Esther’s BT conduct. She must surrender to Ahasuerus to remain faithful to Mordecai.

Lawrence M. Wills views biblical Esther as a counter text, a Jewish answer to that anticipates the Greek novel. This “Jewish novella” anticipates themes and structures apparent in the Greek novels, but expresses a different kind of tension. It asks not how to preserve an elite Greek family, but how to live a Jewish life parallel to that of the Greek elite. Wills also notes several key structural differences between the genres, as the Jewish novel focuses on one major misadventure experienced by one protagonist. At stake is not personal happiness but the fate of the whole Jewish people. His analysis can also be applied to the BT version of Esther, but there it is bolstered by novelistic themes that demonstrate a correlation between Esther’s protagonist status and the heroines of a Greek novel.

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68 Wills, Ancient World, 111.
69 Wiersma, Heroines, 118.
70 Wills, Jewish Novellas, 153-5; Greek and Roman, 153. Biblical Esther can be classified, together with other second temple novellas, such as “Joseph and Asenath”, as well as “Judith”, as embryonic Greek novels. They exhibit shared traits and interests, such as narrated chastity. Chastity is threatened, questioned and ridiculed, but it is a central concept of the Greek novel. The Babylonian Esther Midrash transforms this chastity to an emphasis on ritual purity in addition to its other manipulations.
71 Ibid.
Herman notes that some protagonists are recognized by subverting their types. The BT rendering of Esther’s infidelity, falls in with such protagonists. She is like a Greek novel heroine who must willingly forego relations with her beloved (b. Megilla 15a). Ahasuerus, the “strong barbarian captor”, stands for a common novelistic “obstacle”, and actually wins.

The BT preserves Esther’s message as a Jewish novel but updates the themes to a more defined type of character. She is a protagonist because she is characterized like a heroine of a Greek novel. Esther is then much like the self-sacrificing female protagonist of “Apocryphal Acts”, an update of the Greek novel in service of a different worldview; eschewing personal gratification for spiritual and national considerations.

My analysis of the novelistic nature of the BT love triangle is in accord with other instances of midrashic inversion of elements of contemporaneous novels. Boyarin views the structure of the Babylonian accounts of the relations between R. Akiva and his wife (b. Ketubot 62b-63a; b. Nedarim 50a) as an adaptation of the Greek novel endorsing the very different Babylonian ideal of the “married monk”.

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72 Herman, Sciences of the Mind, 200-1.
73 The Talmudic emphasis upon the sacrifice of personal affection is actually representative; rejecting the growing importance of love in later Greek novels described by Reardon. See Reardon, Greek Novel, 299-300, 306-7.
74 See in De Temmerman, Crafting Characters, 31-2, 156.
75 Esther’s BT presentation is also very unlike that of women in the “Apocryphal Acts”. Lapp has found that these, with the exception of Thecla, are passive beings whose only willful act is the avoidance of their husbands’ sexual advances. See Lapp, Chaste Women, 234-9 and specifically in the “Acts of Andrew”, ibid, 109-10. The Babylonian Esther Midrash has rendered Esther active and forced her to accept the advances of her husband, it is then culturally opposed to the acts in a general sense.
76 Also see Sivapalan, Epic Protagonists, 61-6. Sivapalan describes the Homeric protagonist as a man of noble birth, superhuman courage and ability. He dies young for fame and avoids the woes of old age. Aristotle added ethical nobility to these qualities. She associates a more national bent with Virgil, who was the first Roman source to construct a hero as the totality of his people. Thus, the rabbis are still closer to a Roman rather than a Greek conception. This is unlike the sentiments voiced by the Alexandrian Jews of the Septuagint as argued in Zipor, When Midrash, 86.
77 Such inversions of the core Hellenic elitism of the Greek novel are not unique to rabbinic Judaism. De Temmerman notes that later Greek novels such as the “Ethiopica”, actually adopted a more marginal ‘other’ perspective. De Temmerman, Crafting Characters, 113-6. In this sense, the rabbinic subversions of the Greek novel, might actually be typical for a marginal Hellenic entity.
78 Boyarin, Married Monk, 89-90, 95-6; Carnal Israel, 45, 83.
Esther and Mordecai’s BT relations might share this dimension, since, as shown by Boyarin’s analysis, the “willing” side, that is Esther in b. Megilla, is the more rewarded and important character in the narrative.

Levinson analyses Lam. R. 1:46 as another case of an intentional inversion of the Greek novel. The narrator uses a reunion scene, a novel’s usual climax, as the focus of his narrative. He inverts the reunion into the ultimate trial and the depiction of suffering becomes the culmination of the tale. It uses the novelistic allusion to dramatize the collapse of the Hellenic life style in the Jewish exilic life. In my opinion, b. Megilla shares this inversion, most vividly seen in the ultimate separation of Mordecai and Esther.

3.3.3 Analogical Devices: Esther’s Royalty and Lack of Self-Control

The Babylonian Esther Midrash indirectly but repeatedly compares Esther to the regal nature of both Saul and Ahasuerus. This is not wholly positive and so manifests itself in a defiant and even contrary streak in her character. This theme is also evident in some Greek novels.

An indirect analogy in the form of an index, notes that Rachel (and her descendant Saul) and Esther share the ability to conceal information and were rewarded for it (b. Megilla 13b). This is interpreted as a form of humility. Saul’s humble royalty led to the royalty of Esther. Contrary, the parallel versions in Gen. R. 71:35, Tanḥuma VaYetze 6 and ER 6:12, do not mention royalty or humility.

Levinson, Tragedy of Romance, 236-41.
See examples in Moyer, ibid and in the next section.
Saul’s behavior in some BT readings is not unlike the above Esther characterizations, thereby strengthening their association. He was punished for not caring for his own royal honor, cf. b. Yoma 22b and David did not kill him for his humility-modesty, b. Berakhot 62b, for instance. The Babylonian Pitron Torah Balak, p. 203 (see 1.1) notes that Esther was highly respected. Its unique homily might suggest a Babylonian emphasis of Esther’s royalty. Conversely, Esther likened to Saul’s heroic self-sacrifice is a theme more typical of Palestinian sources, see Liss, Innocent King, 251-2.
opting for silence and mystery instead. The emphasis on royalty is unique to the Babylonian Midrash.

A similar emphasis on royalty is achieved, by presenting Esther’s royal lineage as publicly announced. Esther reveals her lineage at the crucial moment of impeaching Haman (b. Megilla 16a). Esther’s lineage leads to Ahasuerus abandoning the use of a translator and speaking directly with her. Parallel sources suggest the inverse interpretation, namely being Jewish leads to being spoken to indirectly. The Babylonian Midrash puts great faith in royalty.

Other accounts suggest Esther’s similarity to Ahasuerus (b. Megilla 16a). Esther wished to point the finger at Ahasuerus (Est. 7:6): A foe and enemy, this wicked Haman!’. R. Eleazar interprets “this” as gesturing at Ahasuerus. Only divine intervention in the form of an angelic slap points Esther’s finger at Haman. Esther cannot control herself and God must intervene: ...Says R. Eleazar: This teaches that she would point in the direction of Ahasuerus, and an Angel came and slapped her hand in the direction of Haman... Segal suggests that this reading is meant to portray Esther’s suicidal despair another theme common to Greek novels.

Ahasuerus’ reaction to the news of the Jews killing their enemies is described in very similar terms (b. Megilla 16b). Est. 9:12 reads: The King said to Queen Esther, In the citadel of Susa the Jews have killed... the homilist identifies a seeming pause in the Hebrew syntax after this assertion. He expects the King’s angered reply, which an angel prevented by slapping him: ...Says R. Eleazar this teaches that an

82 For example, Lev. R. 26:8.
83 Esther’s defiant streak is also apparent in Esther’s hint to Mordecai that the Jews might have transgressed against the commandments and thus are worthy of annihilation (b. Megilla 15a). The Talmud marks this as a wrongful accusation not meriting an answer.
84 Segal Esther Midrash, iii, 104-5.
85 Ibid; De Temmerman, Crafting Characters, 21-5.
Angel came and slapped him on the mouth...  

Again, physical divine intervention is needed to keep a royal figure in line. Esther and Ahasuerus are similarly hapless. This is another pairing of accounts unique to the BT.

Esther’s defiant royal nature also needs to be divinely checked in the Talmudic version of her going to see Ahasuerus in Est. 5:1ff (b. Megilla 15b):

...She stood to pray, and she said: “Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog” (Ps. 22:21). Says R. Levi: When she arrived at the house of images the Shekinah departed from her and she said: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Ps 22:2)? Art thou far from my help at the words of my cry? Perhaps you judge the unintentional like the deliberate and what was done under compulsion like that which was done intentionally. Or perhaps it is because I called him a Dog, as it says “Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog” (Ps. 22:21). Instead she called him a lion, as it says “Save me from the lion’s mouth; Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen do thou answer me” (Ibid).

Segal suggests that the description of Esther stopping and standing before approaching the King (Est. 5:1), was conceived as the dramatically appropriate place to enclose a prayer. The homily reads Ps. 22 as Esther’s prayer to God and is also a quoted monologue. The desperation conveyed by the psalmist is taken to be an expression of Esther’s desperation for having the divine presence leave her. Esther suggests two reasons for her predicament that echo themes already noted. The first reason is Esther initiating an approach to the King, even though she is compelled to do so (underlined, above). This line of thought might very well have Esther as the wife of Mordecai in concert with the terminology in b. Megilla 15a.

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86 Segal, Esther Midrash, iii, 166-7. Printed editions name R. Abahu.
87 Compare the above to the partial parallels in Est. R. 8:7; Panim Acherim b 4 4:16. Segal also notes that whereas slapping angels are not uncommon in Midrash, the above instance seems to be unique to the BT. See Segal, ibid, n83. Moreover, the angelic slap is also necessary to silence Nebuchadnezzar and so bolsters the unflattering analogy of Esther and foreign power, see b. Sanhedrin 92b. Also see the angel slapping Pharaoh in b. Zebahim 102a. Slapping royal figures might be a Talmudic nuance.
88 Segal, Esther Midrash, iii, 1.
89 Ibid, 2-3. See note 9 there, which claims that the unusual biblical phrasing “beit hamalkhut” was interpreted as a house of images.
90 For the mutually inspired Christian and Jewish treatment of Ps. 22, see Tkacz, Esther, 712-22. She notes that the anti-Christian nature of Purim in late antiquity caused Esther to be initially rejected as a Jesus type by the Church. She assumes the rabbinic association of Ps. 22 with Esther is also polemical. If so, the Babylonian rejection of Esther fainting could be seen as part of this polemic.
The second reason as Segal notes, is influenced by the phrasing of Ps. 22:21-22\textsuperscript{91}. A dissonance was felt between the dog and lion imagery in those verses. Esther thus needed to apologize for insulting the royalty of Ahasuerus. Esther’s defiance of royalty is prevented by God. This bolsters her image in the Babylonian Esther Midrash as one of defiant royalty. A similar preference for dangerous truths instead of clever lies, separates royal heroines in Roman literature from plebian counterparts\textsuperscript{92}.

Esther’s desperation has lengthier cognates in Midr. Ps. 22 (Midr. Ps. 22:6, 16). These however treat the “dog” and “lion” imagery differently (ibid 24-28). They call Haman’s sons “dogs” or tell a tale concerning David and a lion\textsuperscript{93}. Hence, the emphasis upon Esther’s defiance is again Babylonian. Segal views this emphasis on royalty as part of the Babylonian Esther Midrash’s reverence for authority\textsuperscript{94}. But Esther’s defiant acts—threatening to foil the canonical biblical plot—also mark her as the protagonist of the Babylonian Midrash, in accord with Bakhtin’s conception of the protagonist showing independence of the author\textsuperscript{95}. The midrashic rendering of Esther’s defiant acts establish independence. She tries to do her own thing and must be reined in by God’s authorial intent.

In summary, Esther in the Babylonian Midrash is analogically characterized as royalty, though most of her royalty is associated with degenerating Ahasuerus’s status and with defying God’s ambitions. Esther is a high status character, with limited self-control. This is another novelistic feature unique to the Babylonian accounts. The royal nature of the female protagonist is one theme common to many Greek novels.

\textsuperscript{91} Segal, Esther Midrash, iii, note 10.
\textsuperscript{92} See the conclusions in Montiglio, Thou Shall not Lie, 244-6.
\textsuperscript{93} Only in the Septuagint addition C (Prayer of Esther v. 13), Esther calls Ahasuerus a lion, but she does not outwardly describe him as a dog and laments having to sleep with him (ibid, v. 15).
\textsuperscript{94} Segal, Esther Midrash, iii, 5-6. The emphasis on authority is also apparent in b. Megilla on Est. 1.
\textsuperscript{95} Bakhtin, Problems, 47-60. His insights are mostly confined to Dostoyevsky’s characters. Another criterion is that the story world be shaped to accommodate the protagonists’ mental space.
However, as in its adoption of the love triangle, the Babylonian Esther Midrash subverts the theme (see next section) while highlighting Esther’s role as a protagonist.

Tim Whitmarsh identifies a fascination with royalty and especially eastern or “other” royalty in the Greek novel, as a response to more domestic issues regarding the legitimacy of the godhood of the Roman emperors and the rejection of the “barbarity” of the foreign elites. The novels not only portray the problematics of monarchy but also show the international nature of elite society, by having the Greek and “other” characters recognize their mutual virtues.

Such mutual acceptance is not uncommon, Chariton for example indirectly equates Callirhoe with the captured Persian Queen (8.3.8). Callirohe is hinted to be queenly herself by releasing the Queen. The royal status of the Persian King and Queen in Chariton configures them as analogs to the protagonists, much like the treatment of Esther and Ahasuerus in BT accounts.

Ahasuerus respected Esther’s connection to Saul (b. Megilla 16a). This idea fits well with Feldman’s view of Josephus’ similarly positive version of the scene as Greek novel inspired. Royal descent remains undisclosed until a key moment in the plot. Nevertheless, the Babylonian Esther Midrash uses the royal theme not only to mark Esther as a heroine but also to subvert its rote use. Esther does not develop in line with her royal status and so requires divine assistance. This is part of the midrashic subversion of expectations in narratives. God was necessary in the beginning of the plot and remains crucial at the end of events. Esther does not gain self-control.

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96 Whitmarsh, Identity, 56-7.
97 Wiersma, Heroines, 118-9.
99 Feldman, Studies, 511-2. See his examples taken from the “Ethiopica”.
100 Levinson, Twice Told Tale, 224-7.
3.3.4 Esther’s ‘Failed’ Development

While protagonists of modern novels are recognized by character development, in other words, the change of their attributes throughout the plot, the same is much less evident in Greek novels. Bakhtin maintains that the heroines of Greek novels remain mostly unchanged in spite of their experiences, their trials merely affirming what they already were. He explains this as Aristotle’s influence on the ancient biographical forms. A person’s character is revealed by his actions; thus one’s growth does not reflect change, it is rather the expression of one’s innate nature, as revealed by circumstance. The concept of a revealed nature is echoed by Talmudic characterizations, as well. Meir found that in the BT a positive character is merely disclosed as such and does not change.

BT’s Esther, conversely (3.3.3), is prone to self-destructive outbursts and is thus revealed to be innately flawed, as are most female characters in the BT. Esther’s outbursts are of the very kinds she would have eventually been freed from as a heroine of a Greek novel. De Temmerman shows how protagonists of Greek novels develop almost exclusively in their rationality, which materializes in an increased ability to control their emotional outbursts. They manipulate others instead of being manipulated. The Babylonian Esther Midrash inverses this model of growth; by

101 As in Harvey, Character, 56-68.
102 Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 106-7.
103 Ibid, 140. See also Clements and Gibaldi, Anatomy of the Novella, 62-5. The character in most novellas is mostly static. The narrator establishes their traits in the exposition and enhances it throughout the tale. Thus, character development is rare and takes the form of spontaneous conversion.
104 See Meir, Changing Character, 61-4. In this sense the character dynamics of the Greek novel and the Talmudic legend are compatible and should be viewed as part of the wider paradigm of character as a decision, as fitting ancient biographies. See in Gill, Question of Development, 469-76, 481-7. See also, de Temmerman, Crafting Characters, 7-18 and Sa’adiah below.
105 As Rosen-Zvi argues, in rabbinic legend only men can overcome the yetzer, we have no rabbinic tales of women overcoming desire. Women are always the seducers and never the seduced. Aggadah is very different to the Greek novel in this respect, despite the fact that both forms interact with female desire to control it. See Rosen-Zvi, Do Women, 30-2.
106 De Temmerman, Crafting Characters, 19-25.
retaining the initial character flaw. Ahasuerus and Esther are actually encumbered by their royal sense of worth and strength, not by its absence. Rabbinic protagonists, unlike their novelistic counterparts always need divine intervention. Esther might be a heroine, but her part remains smaller than God’s.

### 3.3.5 Summary: Protagonist by Allusion

The heroines of the Greek novel partially resemble protagonists in a modern sense. De Temmerman describes the dual protagonists of the novels as never symmetrical in character, with the women often outweighing the men in importance. The heroines often lead the men and are morally superior to them.

Utilizing the themes of love triangle and royalty to connect Esther to Greek novel heroines is productive as it accounts for her rather than Mordecai’s, centrality to the Babylonian Esther Midrash. The BT alluding to the qualities of the heroines of a female dominant genre, leads to some measure of dominance on Esther’s part.

The Bavli’s uses of the novelistic themes are typically midrashic as they are inversions of the Greek novel’s messages. Without any reflective conceptualization of the idea of the ‘protagonist’, the sages alluded to a central character type found in a contemporaneous genre, where the female characters are the often more important and

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107 This is unlike the physical weakness and emotionality in the Septuagint addition D, as well as in the fragments of the novel “Ninus” (frag. A.IV.20-V.4). The “eastern” heroine is described as flustered and fails to speak in both sources. See in Wills, Jewish Novellas, 161-4.

108 See Midr. Ps. 22:5. Lapp found that the heroines of the later Greek novels, are more self-motivated than in the pre-second sophist compositions. See Lapp, Chaste Women, 242-7. Mayhap the BT undermines this character dynamic with Esther. The BT is also unlike Artapanus’ much earlier adoption of novelistic motifs to extoll the personal achievements of his heroes. The rabbinic reception of the novel then is much more ambivalent in its conception of capable individuals and so could mirror the more pious outlook of later novels such as the “Ethiopica”. See Johnson, Mirror Mirror, 190-7.

109 De Temmerman, Crafting Characters, 316-7, 320-1. The heroines are also not ever completely relegated to their type often subverting it in small ways, but are not individualized in a modern sense.

110 Wolff, Greek Novel, 131 -2, 152-7.
fleshed out. They argued for Esther’s protagonist status by allusion to another kind of literature\textsuperscript{111}. This could be part of a broader aspect of characterization in Midrash.

3.4 Esther Rabbah: An Introduction

Esther Rabbah is a late amalgam of two compositions, as discussed in Yosef Tabori and Arnon Atzmon’s critical edition\textsuperscript{112}. The first half of Esther Rabbah (ER I, ER 1-6) is older and a variant of an even older Amoraic exegetic Midrash on Esther. ER I was available to the authors of the later second half (ER II), as well as to authors of the Midrash Aba Gurion, which shows familiarity with ER in its entirety.

The second half of Esther Rabbah (ER II, ER 7-10) refers to the Babylonian Talmud, to a lost independent Rewritten Bible source dealing with Haman and Mordecai, and inserts passages from the book of Josippon. These inserts date ER II to the 10\textsuperscript{th} century at the earliest\textsuperscript{113}. ER II was probably European in origin and has been linked to the circle of R. Moses Ha Darshan (3.5.1). ER II might not have been originally intended to be combined with ER I and could have circulated independently for a time. ER II was intended to be an exegetic Midrash, although its contents are closer to Rewritten Bible\textsuperscript{114}. The editorial decision to combine the two parts of ER may have taken place as late as the 13\textsuperscript{th} century in Spain. Earlier evidence of a complete ER exists in the form of partial quotations that also link ER to Northern Spain or Provence\textsuperscript{115}.

\textsuperscript{111} Byzantine authors in the 11\textsuperscript{th} and 12\textsuperscript{th} century reimagined classical tragedy as focused on delivering pathos through monologue. Their Greek novels thus contain more monologues and less action and so reimagine their protagonists as the heroes of classical tragedies. See Agapitos, Narrative, Rhetoric and Drama, 141-3, 146-54. Talmudic Esther also seems to have been characterized based on identifying her by allusion to the protagonists of another genre.

\textsuperscript{112} Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *21, *53, *101. See also Tabori, Proems to ER7, 16-8. Also note that Aba Gurion’s greater emphasis on biblical word order, when compared to ER II, suggests some Northern French permutations. This emphasis is central to Rashi, Joseph Kara and their Christian counterparts (see 1.9.2). Might this show that ERII is Spanish whereas Aba Gurion is French or German?

\textsuperscript{113} Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *31, *97.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, *42-6, *112-3.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, 43-58*.

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Tabori and Atzmon briefly touch upon characterization in ER. They argue that the majority of these are analogical in that they are indirect comparisons. This is true for both parts\textsuperscript{116}. The analogies mostly cast Mordecai and to a lesser extent Esther as paradigmatic figures (contrast with 3.6.2.2). Mordecai is the main figure meant to inspire the audience in ER I\textsuperscript{117}. He serves the same purpose in ER II, but in a slightly different capacity. The larger narrative of ER II describes Mordecai’s rise as a mirror image of the downfall of a possible Jesus substitute, in the form of Haman\textsuperscript{118}.

The main theme of ER is the “double causality” inherent to Mordecai’s efforts and their divine equivalents\textsuperscript{119}. These themes suggest that the redactors chose their sources carefully to turn Mordecai into a protagonist, whereas in other Midrashim Esther tends to be favored, when she and Mordechai are not depicted as equals\textsuperscript{120}. Such intentional editorial changes are in line with Tabori and Atzmon’s general findings\textsuperscript{121}. This section compares ER to other late parallels and its possible older sources, to better understand the systematic preference for Mordecai over Esther. I show that the subtle changes in ER are not random but rather serve to underline an editorial conception of Mordecai as the protagonist of the book.

3.4.1 The Favoring of Mordecai over Esther in ER I

A few accounts unique to ERI focus subtly on Mordecai’s virtues whereas other sources tend to praise Esther. Propp claimed that a folkloristic protagonist is the character that suffers the most directly from the villain’s action in the “complication”

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid, *85-6, *108.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid, *90, *108.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid, *95, *112.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid, *110-2.
\textsuperscript{120} Ibid, *23-5. See also the review section (3.1).
\textsuperscript{121} Ibid, *98, *104. Tabori and Atzmon describe certain obvious editorial contributions (mostly in ER II), as small changes meant to better incorporate the sources into the intended sequence. These go so far as to insert references to other newly inserted accounts. The role of redaction in ER is doubly important, since we have little way of knowing what the untouched ER I was like.
and best fills the plot’s “need”\textsuperscript{122}. The homily below shows an intuitive understanding of these qualities and uses it to replace Esther by Mordecai.

ER 5:4 is an index indicating that whenever a reward is mentioned, the seemingly unrelated character next introduced by the Bible, merits the reward or will solve the related problem. This list includes Mordecai as the character, who on the surface merits being chosen as Ahasuerus’ most satisfactory girl (underlined).

Obviously the phrasing does not suggest that Mordecai will be queen, but that he deserves to benefit from having Esther’s chosen. However, Esther is not mentioned:

\textbf{And let the maiden that pleaseth the king, etc}, (2:4) \textit{Who was the right man for this occasion? Mordecai; and the text continues There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai} (ibid, 5)… \textit{it is written he mightily oppressed the children of Israel} (Judg. 4:3) \textit{What is meant by mightily? R. Isaac said: with insults and blasphemies; your words have been too strong [mighty] against me} (Mal. 3:13). \textit{Who was the right person for this occasion? Deborah; and so the text goes on, Now Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, etc.} (Judg. 4:4)\textsuperscript{123} …

Esther’s absence seems even more striking, when compared to the other characters named in the passage such as Moses and Saul. These characters always face and overcome the mentioned strife and thus fulfill the unstated biblical requirements. Mordecai, by contrast, is incompatible with the verse which makes his inclusion artificial. Deborah is the only other example in the list, where the connection is also slightly tenuous. She is introduced separately by the almost unknown R. Joshua b. Abiram. Even so, Deborah is still more appropriate contextually to the distant verse that is cited than Mordecai’s inclusion.

\textsuperscript{122} Propp, Morphology, 50, 84-6

\textsuperscript{123} Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 108-9. The English translation of ER in this chapter is based on the Freedman and Simon translation, updated according to Tabori and Atzmon’s critical Hebrew edition.
Thus a redactor may have altered an existing index to glorify Mordecai, though there are no exact parallels to this homily elsewhere\textsuperscript{124}. Even if this list is a result of reading “king” as God (as per b. Megilla 15b) and assuming that God is conducting a different search for a leader and not a queen, Mordecai’s inclusion is odd. Panim Ḯerim b 2 2:3 shares this theological reading of the verse, but does not eliminate Esther when Mordechai is mentioned. Hence, ER I went to great lengths to glorify Mordecai alone. Other ER I instances in fact do the same.

Another account that shifts its focus from Esther to Mordecai is ER 6:8, where Mordecai is rewarded for inquiring about Esther’s wellbeing (shalom). Every day he made himself available to check Esther’s menstruation and make sure she had not been bewitched: \textit{And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women’s house} (Est. 2:2). \textit{To inquire of her blood stains and separation. To know how Esther did} (lit. the welfare of Esther): to see that they do not practice witchcraft against her...

This interpretation is based on the auditory play on words of reading “walked” (mithalekh) as accomplishing halakhah. However as Tabori and Atzmon themselves note, the version in ER I differs considerably from other such readings (as in b. Megilla 13b), which tend to emphasize Esther’s independent efforts to adhere to the commandments of halakhah and is simply aided by Mordecai\textsuperscript{125}. Thus ER I makes Esther passive, in order to bring Mordecai and his reward to the forefront\textsuperscript{126}.

\textsuperscript{124} See also Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *84. A partial parallel is found in a 15th century version of Targum Shen. See Grossfeld, Targum Sehni, 177.

\textsuperscript{125} Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 117.

\textsuperscript{126} Contrast to Eccles. R. 8 1:5, which has Esther and Mordecai each demonstrate their worth differently in these events.
ER I accounts contain more praises for Mordecai than in some of their parallels. ER 6:1 reads Ps. 106 as describing Esther and Mordecai, who is an example of someone who “kept justice” (Ps. 106:3) by raising Esther. David also asked God to be remembered when Mordecai and Esther save Israel together (underlined):

...Another explanation: Happy are they that keep justice (Ps. 106:3): this is Mordecai. That do righteousness at all times (ibid): in bringing up an orphan in his house. David said before the holy one blessed be He: “Sovereign of the universe, Remember me, O Lord, when thou favorest thy people; O think of me at thy salvation (Ps. 106:4).” Viz. when thou wilt work salvation for Israel by the hand of Mordecai and Esther...

Note that this account has two close parallels in Midr. Ps. 106:3-4. Mordecai “keeping justice” is nowhere to be seen there. Midr. Ps. 106:3 is nearly identical to the opening of ER 6:1, but lacks the underlined section on Mordecai128. Thus as Tabori and Atzmon argue, this specific ER homily seems to be a unique editorial contribution meant to connect two older sources, but I stress that it chose to focus on Mordecai129.

ER I’s disinterest in the character of Esther is also evident in the phrasing of some of its proems, which tend to be an introduction to the complete Midrash and not just Est.130. Hence, a virtual lack of Esther might be deliberate and not just the result of focusing on Est. 1 where she is absent.

Proem 9 and some of the variants of proem 3 avoid calling Esther by name and refer to her as “his (Ahasuerus’) wife”131. Thus Proem 3:...as Ahasuerus tells his

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127 Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 110.
128 Midr. Ps. 106:4 has some “salvations” accomplished by Mordecai, but there is no mention of him in Midr. Ps. 106:3. These sections are according to Cambridge University Library, OR. 786.
129 Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *74-7.
131 Ibid, 9, the omission of Esther is possibly an error, but is known from the oldest prints.
wife, behold I have given Haman’s house to Esther…; Proem 9: This is Ahasuerus who showed his godlessness by slaying his wife on account of his friend and afterwards slaying his friend on account of his wife. The parallel to proem 9 in Aba Gurion 1, 1:1, does name Esther. Hence these two ER I proems suggest a degree of dismissiveness, which complements the emphasis on Mordecai in ER I.

In summary, ER I heightens Mordecai’s role in events, bestows praise on him, and occasionally ignores Esther. Most of these alterations are subtle and stylistic, which suggests they are the work of the redactors. However since the original ER I has been lost and some of this focus on Mordecai is to be found in Targum Sheni, these conclusions can only be tentative. Mordecai’s dominance is far more apparent in the later ER II, as shown below.

3.4.2 The Favoring of Mordecai over Esther in ER II

ER II contains several accounts that view the book of Esther as a tale of Mordecai’s success. One such account is ER 7:13-18. As Tabori and Atzmon note, these are all pieces of an independent rewritten biblical source dealing with Mordecai’s reaction to Haman’s decree. This story emphasizes Mordecai’s active role in saving the Jews, his rabbinic sage-like knowledge and his similarity to Moses. Note that the segment is juxtaposed with Esther’s reaction to the decree, which is less flattering. As Tabori notes, this indirect comparison might be modelled after the character contrast found in

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132 Ibid, 15.
133 Targum Sheni, which might correspond to the earlier dating of ER I, has a historiographic focus on Mordecai and Haman as the archetypical conflict between Amalek and Saul and thus is less about Esther in general. See Ego, History, 131-4. In fact, the major original theme of ER I might be the dismal national state of Jews ruled by foreign despots and thus shows less interest in the characters of Esther and Mordecai, as compared to both Targum Sheni and ER II. See, Neusner, Esther, 59-64.
134 Such constructs are typical of late Midrashim, see Meir, Homiletical Narrative, 260*-1. Abba Gurion seems on occasion to be a reworking of an older lost version of ER as argued in Tabori, Proems to ER 7, 17-8. The above unattested description is also different from the parallel in Panim Aḥerim b which compares Mordecai to Moses and even Abraham but not to the detriment of Esther (Panim Aḥerim b 6 [2,5] ff).
PRE\textsuperscript{135}. I only present the relevant ER II characterizations of Mordecai and Esther, since the accounts are quite lengthy and deal with other issues:

...When the letter was signed and delivered to Haman, he and all his associates went in rejoicing. As it happened Mordecai was just then walking in in front of him... when Mordecai heard this (the biblical divination of three school children) he smiled and was exceedingly glad... Moses said to him (to Elijah who is trying to cancel a divine parallel decree of destruction brought about by Satan) “Is there a virtuous man in that generation?” “There is”, he answered “and his name is Mordecai”... what did he (Elijah in response to Moses’ request) go and tell Mordecai? As we read Now when Mordecai knew all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes (Est. 4:1). When they told Esther, straightaway, The queen was exceedingly pained (wa-tikkalkhal) (Est. 4:4). What is the meaning of wa-tikkalkhal? This word signifies that she became menstruated\textsuperscript{136}.

Redaction, as Atzmon and Tabori argue, breaks up the story and reorders the narrative to better fit the order of biblical verses\textsuperscript{137}. However, the mention of Esther is not merely the next piece of material the editor had available and coincidently used. There is a gap of two verses until Esther’s reaction is reported\textsuperscript{138}. This argument is bolstered by the seeming repetition of Esther’s reaction in a more natural place in ER 8:3: And the queen was exceedingly pained (wa-tikkalkhal) our Rabbis there (in Babylonia) say that she became menstruous, but our teachers here say that she had a miscarriage, and having a miscarriage never bore again...\textsuperscript{139}.

According to the rabbis there, i.e. Babylon, Esther indeed menstruated\textsuperscript{140}. According to the rabbis here, she miscarried and never again conceived (=Panim Aḥerim b 1 4:4). Aba Gurion 4, 4:1 also has a parallel to the same independent

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\textsuperscript{135} See Atzmon, Old Wine, 192.

\textsuperscript{136} Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 143-8.

\textsuperscript{137} Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *105.147-8. For the participation of the Jews in the feast as their sin, see Megilla 12a. ‘Not written in blood’ is a word play on לאבדם = לא + בדם. This whole unit is probably based on a lost Rewritten Bible-type Midrash that is attested to by several sources and was incorporated in part into ER II. Again all of this content including the lost source, is late. Ibid, 104. Also compare to Lekhah Tov.

\textsuperscript{138} Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 157. נערות אסתר וסריסיה ויגידו לה ותתחלחל המלכה מאד, רבנן דתמן ותבואנה (ח ג):אמרין שפרסה נדה, ורבנן דהכא אמרין הפילה עוברה ומשעה שהפילו שוב לא ילדה, ר' יודן בר' סימון אמר במוך היתה משמשת, "ר' יודן ברבי סימון דריוש האחרון בנה של אסתר היה טהור מאמו וטמא מאביו ה' נדה%."

\textsuperscript{139} Compare this illness to b. Megilla 15a which also adds needing to defecate as an alternative.
Mordecai narrative superimposed on Esther’s reaction in ER II\(^{141}\). Aba Gurion adds an emphasis that Esther’s reaction was not cowardly (=Panim Aherim b 2:5-6).

Hence, these sources could have been presented differently without sacrificing Esther.

Not only does ER II’s redaction artificially compare Esther and Mordecai, it also chooses the least favorable editorial option available. While Mordecai was busy praying and acting heroically, she menstruated and thus was an “ineffectual” woman.

Mordecai alone canceled the divine decree against the Jews.

This view also affects the way the overarching plot of Esther is presented in ER II. A known rabbinic homily connects Esther to the dawn and is part of a larger body of traditions that connects Ps. 22 and Esther, possibly to the detriment of Christian connections to Jesus\(^{142}\). ER II’s version is peculiar. As Tabori and Atzmon point out, it only describes Mordecai’s success\(^{143}\). ER 10:14:

R. Hiiya the elder and R. Simeon b. Halafta were once walking through the valley of Arbel when they saw the dawn come up. Said R. Hiiya the elder to R. Simeon b. Halafta: Like this is the greatness of Israel; it commences almost imperceptibly, but becomes continually more and more powerful. What is the proof? Though I sit in darkness the Lord is a light unto me (Mic. 7:8). So, at first Mordecai sat at the king’s gate (Est. 2:21); then Mordecai returned to the king’s gate (Est. 6:12); then Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king (Est. 8:15); and finally, the Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor (Est. 8:16).

R. Hiiya notes that the greatness of Israel appears gradually like the dawn. His proof texts all relate to Mordecai and not to the actual salvation of the Jews. This hints at some coarse redaction. In fact this account is related to one found in Y. Yoma 3:2; however, it might not be original, nor is it the only version of the account\(^{144}\).

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\(^{141}\) Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *101.

\(^{142}\) See the disputation in Tkacz, Esther, 714-26.

\(^{143}\) Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 184.

\(^{144}\) See Leiden, Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit Scaliger 3. The YT account seems to be partial, hinting at its alteration.
The parallels in Midr. Ps. 22, and Exod. R. II 15:6 testify to this. Midr. Ps. 22:10 describes Esther’s success in similar terms. Midr. Ps. 22:15 describes Mordecai in dawn-like terms but is shorter than ER 10:14. Midr. Ps. 22:13 is the closest to ER II, but its verses describe Mordecai and Esther’s success. Exod. R. 15:6 views Esther not Mordecai as the moon-like source of light. ER II’s redaction thus alters older accounts to favor Mordecai. It views the plot of the book as centered on Mordecai and acts accordingly. The following are other more piecemeal alterations.

Atzmon remarks that generally ER II’s redaction and its purposes are gleaned from how it reworks one of its main sources; namely, PRE. According to both ER and PRE, Mordecai was crowned king of all the Jews. ER 10:12:

*And Mordecai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel etc.* (Est. 8:15). R. Pinhas says: Mordecai was the king of the Jews. A king wears purple and Mordecai wore purple; a king has a crown encircling his head and Mordecai was arrayed with a great crown of gold; the fear of the king was over all the land and so the fear of Mordecai was upon them, as it says because the fear of Mordecai had fallen upon them (Est. 9:3); a king’s coinage is current throughout the land, and Mordecai’s coinage was current. What was the coinage of Mordecai? It had Mordecai on one side and Esther on the other. Why all this? Because he was a good man and a man of peace and he sought peace...

The fact that Mordecai was dressed in royal garb indicates that he was like the king of the Jews. Thus the account makes an analogy between Mordecai and a king since both wear purple and a crown and both terrify the land. Mordecai was

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145 See Atzmon, Old Wine, 188-9.
146 Also note that Esther in Midr. Ps. 22:27 is also mentioned as wearing purple as one of her signs of superiority and not Mordecai’s. See, Menn, No Ordinary, 325.
147 Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 182, argue that the connection between “why all this” and its immediate context is odd. See a suggestion in the following notes that might explain away this oddity.

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depicted on his coinage like a king\textsuperscript{149}. This coin was honored throughout the land and had a picture of him on the one side and of Esther on the other.

I suggest that this account’s “\textit{why all this}” refers only to Mordecai’s coin.

Thus Mordecai’s peace-loving nature caused him to also have Esther’s likeness embedded on the coin’s obverse. While this discussion parallels some of PRE 50’s content, ER coin is unique\textsuperscript{150}. PRE instead has: \textit{What was Mordecai’s reputation}\textsuperscript{151}? \textit{(it was) that of a respectable man and he would stand on one the side of the king and Esther would sit on the other side (of the king)}\textsuperscript{152}. Needless to say, this is a more egalitarian depiction of Esther and Mordecai’s relations than in ER II’s coin\textsuperscript{153}.

A similar minute change is in an account found in Esther Rabbah 10:13, an unusual variant of an allegorical interpretation of Jacob’s blessing of Benjamin\textsuperscript{154}:

\begin{quote}
שאול היה בקרן של ח認め דב, וישלבו ישראל על Dzięki מרדכי ואסתר...
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{149} Sokoloff, 295. monit.

\textsuperscript{150} Subtle changes such as those described here are consistent with Atzmon’s description of the relationship between ER II and PRE, Atzmon, Old Wine, 139-41.

\textsuperscript{151} Original- Shim’o. It is possible that ER II had a version of PRE which read “\textit{monitin}” instead and that became \textit{Moniton}-coin. However, the changes could still be attributed to ER II. See Jastrow, Dictionary, 744, monitin. In Simon, ER, 121, note 1 mentions that Mordecai’s coin is described in Gen. R. 39:11 as not having his or Esther’s countenance, but rather a crown on one side and sackcloth and ashes on the other. Hence ER II might have changed this account to be about.

\textsuperscript{152} The above is based on Higger’s Ashkenazi manuscript, which might be closer to ER’s milieu than more accurate manuscripts, such as the Yemenite New York (JTS), EMC, 866. This Yemenite version is close to ER’s version, but has an additional section detailing Mordecai’s reputation, following the underlined above. Only ER II suggests that Mordecai gave Esther permission to appear on his coin.

\textsuperscript{153} Note that PRE omitted many Midrashim on Esther, and mostly preserves material that deal with Mordecai. Generally speaking, PRE characterizes Esther solely by biblical paraphrases, which hints at her lesser importance, caused by the lessened authorial contribution to such innovation-less quotations. Hence, PRE is more preoccupied with characterizing Mordecai but its techniques are different from his treatment in ER II. Atzmon argues that ER II’s treatment of Esther is indicative of disinterest in her implied character development in PRE. It prefers material that can only relate to ER II’s other accounts probably from Gen. R., and interweaves these into the narrative. Atzmon, Old Wine, 197-200; Ma’aseh Esther. ER II then, is still less about Esther than PRE.

\textsuperscript{154} Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 183-4. The unit shares a frame story structure with the proems. 27 \textit{dov} is Aramaic for wolf, thus Benjamin will devour the wolf, but “\textit{in Babylonia- there, they interpreted (b. kiddushin 72a) as a bear}.”

\textsuperscript{149} Sokoloff, 295. monit.

\textsuperscript{150} Subtle changes such as those described here are consistent with Atzmon’s description of the relationship between ER II and PRE, Atzmon, Old Wine, 139-41.

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And as even he divideth the spoil—this refers to Mordecai and Esther who championed Israel in their exile which is like the shadows of evening and divided the spoils of Haman who is compared to a wolf. For God raised him up to oppose the wolf, namely the kings of Media and Persia who are compared to a wolf. As it is written and behold another beast. A second, likened to a wolf (Dan. 7:5). In Babylon, however, they say: this refers to the kings of Media and Persia who eat like a bear and are restless like a bear and are shaggy like a bear. God raised up to confront them Mordecai and Esther from the tribe of Benjamin who is called a wolf that raveneth…

Saul was the fulfillment of the morning imagery when Jacob likens Benjamin to a wolf (Gen. 49:27). He was historically early, thus marking the rise of kingship in Israel, whereas Mordecai and Esther together are the fulfillment of the blessing during the figurative exilic night/evening, when they defeat Haman.

Mordecai and Esther divide the wolf’s (Haman) spoils just as the Persian kings in Daniel are symbolized by bears, and not wolves. Another interpretation explains that Mordecai and Esther were prophesized to be a match for the bear-like Persian kings, since they themselves are like wolves. Earlier parallels of this passage, more often than not, present Esther as the only character fulfilling Jacob’s blessing in exile. Tanḥuma WaYehi 14 for instance, argues that Esther feasted like a wolf in the morning with Haman, but caused his hanging in the evening and then took his house and possessions. ER II thus yet again demotes Esther.

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155 This could be Haman, but might only be Mordecai, see Simon, ER, 123n1.
156 The exile is also likened to night or evening in Midr. Ps. 22 and in LXX addition A.
157 Gen. R. (Albeck, manuscript Waw) 100:27, only describes Saul as the Benjaminithe King and Esther, as the queenly equivalent who ravished Haman:
158...ER II thus yet again demotes Esther.
159 Mordecai is the only redeemer in a different midrashic list in ER 6:3.
ER 10:13 does not innocently preserve a lost version that mentioned Mordecai and Esther. Bereshit Rabatti WaYehai 49:27, which might be connected to ER II (3.5.3.1.2), has no less than three versions of this account describing Mordecai alone as the redeemer and only one mentioning Esther\(^\text{160}\). Thus, ER II might be part of a larger late trend to modify this Amoraic account to favor Mordecai\(^\text{161}\).

Lastly, ER II includes a few direct quotations from Josippon 9, which in turn mirror the Septuagint additions and their Latin counterparts. Linda Day noted that these additions, such as Esther approaching Ahasuerus (ER 9:1), also weaken Esther's character\(^\text{162}\). Thus, it is possible that ER II's redaction included these segments not mentioned...
only to comment on other verses in Esther, but also because of the prophetic

Mordecai and physically weak Esther they describe. ER 9:1 paints a much frailer

Esther than the Babylonian Esther Midrash chose to do (3.3.3) or even the composite
description that uses Josippon and Bavli found in Leqa Tov Est. 5:1. ER II is no mere compiler163.

3.4.3 Summary: Esther is Marginalized by ER’s Redaction

This section showed that ER is subtly different from other midrashic representations

of Esther by favoring Mordecai over Esther. This tone is achieved by small,
systematic changes or by the inclusion of versions that have already made such
changes. The prevalence of this theme in both early and late ER suggests that the

And on the third day, Esther put on her apparel of beauty and jewels of splendor. And she took her two
maids with her. And she put her right hand on the one maid and upon her she leaned
as required by royal decree. And the other maid followed, bearing up her jewels lest the gold upon her touch the
ground. And she made her countenance cheerful and covered the anguish in her heart. Then she came
into the inner courtyard, before the king, who sat upon his royal throne, clothed with robes of gold and
precious stones. Then lifting up his countenance, he saw Esther standing before him, and his wrath was
kindled very much for her breaking his law and coming before him unbidden. And Esther lifted her
countenance and saw the king’s face and lo! his eyes were like fire burning from the abundant wrath in
his heart. And the Queen acknowledged the king’s displeasure and was very terrified
and her spirit

wavered and she bowed herself upon the head of the maid to her right.

And God saw this and had
pity for his people and turned to the grief of the orphan who trusted in him and gave her grace before
the king and added beauty to her beauty and grace to her grace. Then the king in fear leaped from his
throne and ran to Esther and embraced her and kissed her, and put his arm on her neck
and said

"Queen Esther, why art thou scared? Our commandment does not apply to you, for you are my wife
and companion.” And he told her, “why when I saw you did you not speak to me?” Then Esther said

“When I saw thee, my spirit was terrified of your majesty”. The Josippon version is more nationalistic and less focused on Esther than either of the Greek versions, as presented by Day, Faces, 194-9. Note the bold sections denoting Esther’s weakness above.

163Another aspect of the status of the protagonist is the repeated reflection of some of its traits by
second characters. For instance in Harvey, Character, 52-6; Hochman, Character, 66-9. Meaning,
that these characters embody dilemmas or individual traits of the protagonist. B. Megilla 12b as well as
16a, introduces the character of Haman’s daughter. Among the Esther Midrashim it seems that ER is
significantly enamored with her (ER 4:6; 10:5, 7). This might relate to ER’s focus on Mordecai, since
highlighting Haman’s daughter furthers the similarities between Mordecai and Haman as the key
figures in the narrative. ER 4:6 even argues for Haman’s wish to make his daughter queen.

Unsurprisingly, a parallel to ER 10:5 in Aba Gurion 6 6:10, is different in several ways such as the
absence of Haman’s daughter. B. Megilla 16a has her throw her chamber pot at Haman after mistaking
him for Mordecai. Panim Aljemrin b 6, 6:10, has her just die of shame. ER 10:5 though, describes her as
being eager to see Mordecai crucified. Leqa Tov Est. 2:23 has the scheming ministers envy Esther’s
success since it means that their daughters failed and so possibly argues for the latenteness of this theme.
Also note that ER II and its parallels all introduce Esther as one of the parties speaking Ps. 30 verses in
parallel to Haman’s daughter (ibid).
theme was identified and emulated by later readers. This implies a folkloristic if unstated conception of the protagonist as the main character, who resolves the intrigue driving the plot.

The bulk of the presentation in ER presents Mordecai as the protagonist leaving Esther sidelined. This version of the character is radically different from the subverted novelistic heroine of the Babylonian Esther Midrash, which takes greater interest in Esther’s personality and sacrifices. By contrast, ER barely quotes or paraphrases Esther’s words or thoughts. This change is suggestive of different historical circumstances, which separate the literary qualities of the Babylonian Esther Midrash from the redaction of ER. I describe these circumstances below.

3.5 The Character of Esther and the Context of ER’s Redaction

3.5.1 Neo-Classical Midrash and Misogyny

Esther Rabbah (ER II) is part of a larger group of High Middle Ages Midrashim Atzmon dubbed “late neo-classical”. These Spanish and Provençal compositions return to the verse-by-verse form of exegetic Midrashim, and aim to fill lacunae in existing midrashic compositions, to better represent whole biblical sections with corresponding midrashic material. These stylistic and poetic tendencies result in the deconstruction of the narrative focus of late Midrashim. Atzmon speculates that these late compositions mirror the verse-bound structure of the contemporary systematic Bible exegesis genre and preempt the crystallization of Midrash yalkutim.

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164 Ruth Zutta underwent a similar selective redaction befitting its suggested late provenance (10-12th century), as its seemingly independent narratives all share the theme of poverty as crucial for spirituality. See Shinan, Ruth Zuta, 134-6. Hence, ER’s editorial focus on Mordecai is not outlandish. Late-midrashic editing can be theme-centric.

165 Atzmon, Old wine, 183, 186, 202-3.

166 Ibid.

Shalem Yahalom considers that the neo-classical Num. R. I, Exod. R. I and the Spanish recension of Deut. R. all have links with materials associated with R. Moses HaDarshan (fl. first half of the 11th century). All these compositions also share a similar distribution route from Provence to Northern Spain or vice versa. This geographical area is also associated with the genesis a popular sub-genre of medieval literature dealing with women’s bad qualities.

Judith Dishon surveyed this misogynic subgenre and found that the most exemplary compositions of this kind are from the early 13th century Spain and later Provence. Tales expounding on the negative nature of women were however popular prior to this time and considered entertaining. This is apparent in versions

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167 Atzmon also mentions Midrash Prov. which he considers to be loosely related to this group, even though it may be older. See Reizel, Introduction, 292-4. This claim may be supported by. Midr. Prov. 9:2, Visotski edition, 65-6, manuscript.-7 Vatican Ebr. 92, 2 fol, 1-28, which has an older 14th century manuscript that says “sorrow by Mordecai” instead of the more common “in the days of” in prints, thus denying his positive effect. Midr. Prov. 11:27 also denigrates female advice. It argues that Haman’s plan failed since he listened to his wife (for more on this theme see below). Est. R. 9:2 and its parallels insist on Zeresh’s wisdom instead. Legah Tov Korach, has a unique homily composed by the author noting likewise that: all who follow their wife’s advice fall into hell. This demonstrates the relative novelty of the theme. Tabori and Atzmon also suggest that a different version of ER I was known to the redactors of Exod. R. I. See Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *69-71.

168 Atzmon, Old Wine, 201 and his note 31 in particular.

169 Yahalom, R. Moshe, 144-9. See also, Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *53. However, NR I apparently does not use Exod. R. I or the Spanish Deut. R and thus might be older. See Mack, NR I, 35-6. Most of the ties to R. Moshe are found in NR Naso’, ibid, 185, 230-8.

170 Dishon, Good Woman, 13-21. Rashi’s tale of the sad fate of Bruria in b. Avoda Zara 18b can be viewed as a late tale, in light of the above literary tradition. See extensively in Adler, Virgin.

171 Dishon, Good Woman, 56. These might have impacted the negative reception of the Matriarchs in some Bible commentaries, see the conclusions of Aran, Image.
of stories in compositions from the 10th and 11th centuries, including R. Nissim’s *Hibbur Yafeh meha-Yeshu’ah, Midrash Aseret ha-Dibrot* and in the 12th century, Ibn Zabara’s “*Book of Delight*” and the Spanish rendition of “*Kalila wa-Dimna*” some of which are Hebrew adaptations from Arabic and/or Judeo-Arabic works.

Dishon connects this misogyny to portrayals of women in Greek philosophy and *Adab* literature. Matti Huss, by contrast, notes that direct influences are impossible to identify, but points to Christian pro-monastic propaganda in the High Middle Ages as a likelier candidate. Thus, the topic of women impacted the cultural and geographical context of neo-classical Midrashim as a whole, since some of these themes were in circulation in collections of medieval tales. Hence ER’s dismissal of Esther is part of this specific cultural milieu, paralleling other compositions engrossed with ridiculing or belittling women through their presentation of female characters.

### 3.5.2 Esther’s Heightened Sexuality in ER as Misogyny

One prominent feature of Esther in ER is the presence of sexualizing elements in some accounts. ER 6:5 explains that Esther’s other name Hadassah hints at the events of the plot: …*And he brought up Hadassah* (Est. 2:7). *Just as the myrtle (Hadass) has a sweet smell but a bitter taste, so Esther was sweet to Mordecai and bitter to Haman*… The parallels in b. Megilla 13a and Midr. Ps. 22:3 are different. BT argues that Esther is like myrtle because she is young looking in old age, since myrtle

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172 These connections are more thematic than formal, see Huss, Minhat Yehuda, I, 1-29, 36-47.
175 Ibid, 32-5.
176 Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 115.
does not dry out in winter or summer. Midr. Ps. describes Mordecai and Esther through comparisons to myrtles akin to ER 6:5 above, saying that Mordecai and Esther were darkness for the nations and a light for Israel like the divergent smell and taste of myrtle. In these accounts there is no reference Esther’s actual taste.

There are some sexual connotations to rabbinic uses of $M·T·K^{177}$. This may imply that something of the Babylonian wife of Mordecai tradition (3.3.1) shaped this description of Esther, since the redaction of ER used the Talmud$^{178}$. Tabori and Atzmon state that this is the case for other name etymologies found in ER$^{179}$. The same cannot be said of the other Esther Midrashim. These facts suggests that the sexual connotation was deliberately preserved by redaction.

A more straightforward case is ER 6:10: 6:10 So Esther was taken unto King Ahasuerus (2:16). She was put up to auction, as it were. One said, “I will give a hundred dinars to go in with her”, and another said, “I will give two hundred to go in with her”$^{180}$. When Esther was taken to the king, the privilege of accompanying her was auctioned, if the $L·Q·H$ (take) is interpreted in a rabbinic mercantile sense$^{181}$. Marcus Jastrow however was convinced that ‘going in’ has a more playful “sporting” meaning$^{182}$, indicating they might have auctioned for Esther’s virginity. Tabori and Atzmon note that this use of Mishnaic Hebrew is very unorthodox in ER, which argues for redaction$^{183}$. The parallel in Panim Aḥerim b 2 2:16 chooses to heighten Esther’s modesty in the same situation.

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177 See Jastrow, Dictionary, $M·T·K$, 864. It could denote pleasuring, for instance.
178 Reizel, Introduction, 209.
179 Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *81.
180 וַיַּקְרָא אֶתְנָכֵיהּ אֶת הַמְּלֵךְ אַחֲשָׁרוּשׁ, מַהֲלֵלוּ בָּלוּקָדוֹתָהּ, דַּי אָמֵר אֶל בְּנֵי דִּיְמָר בָּלוּקָדוֹתָהּ דַּי אָמֵר אֶל בְּנֵי דִּיְמָר מַשֶּׁל בָּלוּקָדוֹתָהּ.
181 Simon, ER, 78n1.
183 Tabori and Atzmon, ER, *80.
There are also hints that ER II or its redaction liked to discuss Esther’s sexuality and thus continued the above trend. The first such indication is found in ER 7:4: *...A calculation took place. Who calculated? R, Judah said: Haman calculated. He thought to himself: If Esther is a Jewess, she is my kinswoman from my ancestor Esau as it says, was not Jacob Esau’s brother? (Mal. 1:2). And if she is a Gentile, all the Gentiles are akin to one another*.184

This interpretation is based on several possible phonetic or graphic manipulations of the text: “*After these things (devarim)”* (Est. 3:1). For example, *devarim* suggests (*hirhorey devarim*) “calculations”. By contrast, it is unclear what Haman actually wanted, compared to a parallel in Aba Gurion 3 3:1. In Aba Gurion he wanted “*to get a promotion from Esther*” (ראוי אני לטול פרוקפי מתחת ידה). ER II though, leaves the favor unexpressed and suggests that Haman harbored sexual thoughts about Esther, encouraged by their alleged familial proximity. “*Calculations*” have sexual connotations in many Midrashim185.

Sexual intentions on the part of Haman are suggested by the biblical narrative events in Est. 7:8. However, ER II’s version of events adds that Esther falsely accused Haman of attempting to rape her, whereas the Bible leaves this assumption to Ahasuerus (ER 10:9): *...What did Michael do? He pushed him (Haman) unto Esther, who cried out “My Lord the king, behold he is violating me in thy presence”...*186. The parallels in b. Megilla 16a and Panim Aḥerim b 6, 7:5, contain no such cries.

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184 Mar hamn harhar amir ef an after these things (devarim) (Est. 3:1). For example, devarim suggests (hirhorey devarim) “calculations”. By contrast, it is unclear what Haman actually wanted, compared to a parallel in Aba Gurion 3 3:1. In Aba Gurion he wanted “to get a promotion from Esther” (ראוי אני לטול פרוקפי מתחת ידה). ER II though, leaves the favor unexpressed and suggests that Haman harbored sexual thoughts about Esther, encouraged by their alleged familial proximity. “Calculations” have sexual connotations in many Midrashim.

185 See Jastrow, Dictionary, יירה, Hirher 2, 366.

186 מיכאל המלאך התחיל מקצץ את הנטיעות לפניו והוסיף חמה על והמלך קם בחמתו ממשתה היין... The parallels in b. Megilla 16a and Panim Aḥerim b 6, 7:5, contain no such cries.

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185 Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 125.

186 Tabori and Atzmon, ER, 178.
Themes associated with women in medieval misogynic compositions include disloyalty, physical and emotional weakness and cowardice and ‘false’ physical female beauty compared to male ‘inner’ beauty. Another common trope is a wife’s bad advice and her husband’s punishment for obeying her.

We have seen how ER emphasizes Esther’s beauty and sexuality, and mitigates Esther’s heroism compared to her peers. These qualities fall naturally into this misogynic sphere. Moreover, Esther’s possible prophetic nature (b. Megilla 14a) could account for Mordecai’s greater role in ER. Esther prominence left unchecked, might suggest to a Spanish audience that the men of her time were all sinners.

The next section shows that the above recognized medieval misogynic themes, are present in other neo-classical compositions apart from ER. I focus on potential examples of such themes unique to neo-classical midrashic accounts. It is difficult to ascribe materials without other parallels in these compositions to their redactors and not to older lost sources. Nevertheless, the accumulation of examples below goes some way to underline the proposed connection to misogyny.

3.5.3 Examples of Pervasive Misogyny in Neo-Classical Midrashim

3.5.3.1 Parallels in Compositions Familiar with ER

3.5.3.1.1 The Possible Connections between Num. R. I and ER II

Mack describes Numbers R. I (NR I- on parashot BaMidbar and Naso’) as unlike other passages in Num. R., since NRI’s parashot are longer, original and divergent from the Tanḥuma on Numbers. They display sophisticated proems and insert original accounts into a vast reworking of older sources. Num. R. I was probably redacted.

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187 Dishon, Good Woman, 47-9
188 Ibid, 102-4. Zabara viewed Haman’s downfall similarly, caused by listening to his wife, ibid, 197.
189 Dishon, Bible Exegesis, 176-7.
190 Mack, Openings, 41-4, 54-5. The NR I parashot might be modelled after a lost older Tanḥuma version that was also highly redacted. See Mack, NR I, 67-8.
as late as early 12th century Provence, since it was in use there and in Northern Spain later that same century\textsuperscript{191}.

Mack notes two possible passages that suggest similarity between Num. R I and ER\textsuperscript{192}. The first is that Num. R. I might also harbor some of ER’s pro-Mordecai leanings. Num. R. 10:2 argues that Haman was hanged as an example of \textit{lex talionis}, but this appears right after a description of Sisera’s death and focuses on Mordecai and not Esther\textsuperscript{193}. This is similar to ER 10:13 (3.4.2).

There is also a general emphasis on eroticism and misogyny in Num. R. I. This is true of both its versions of older accounts as well as its original tales\textsuperscript{194}. Dishon finds that these tales emphasize female sexuality\textsuperscript{195}. This is significant since there are not that many tales attributed as original to Num. R.\textsuperscript{196} Num. R. 9:2 contains a narrative rebuke of female adultery as part of its reference to the \textit{sotah}. The tone is more severe than in the corresponding passages in the halakhic Midrashim and Tan.

\textit{Naso`} 1\textsuperscript{197}.

\textsuperscript{191} Mack, Printers, 38, 44-5. He notes that one of the original Constantinople printers of Num. R. was Provençal and might have supplied the defective manuscript of that version, further showing Num. R.’s Provençal provenance.

\textsuperscript{192} Mack, NR I, 40-1.

\textsuperscript{193} Mack, Num. R. and Midr. Samuel, 303-4. Num. R. 10:2 notes that death by a woman’s hand is the most accursed. This view is also present in Aba Gurion 3 3:8.

\textsuperscript{194} Num. R. 12:7 has a royal parable describing God and Israel as king and queen. God gave his oft complaining queen something to keep her occupied, by having her make his purple garment. When she finished, he was mortified to discover she went right back to nagging. Other versions of the parable have the queen defend herself, which is missing in Num. R. (see in Tan. Naso` 12 and PR 5). Thus Num. R. I views female complaints as an unmitigated evil. Num. R. 14:7 contains a lengthy homily on the \textit{lex talionis} of Joseph’s rewards for refusing the advances of Potiphar’s wife. He is praised for not kissing her or “riding” her. Other accounts fail to mention this. See b. Yoma 35b, where Potiphar’s wife only tries to bribe Joseph. See also Tan. VaYeshev 6.

\textsuperscript{195} On these stories, see Dishon, Good Woman, 122 and her note 6 there; 144-5. Num. R. 9:5 has echoes in Rashi on Num. 5:13. These however could pertain to older Tanûma layers.

\textsuperscript{196} For a list and characteristics of the stories of NR I, see Mack, NR I, 154-8.

\textsuperscript{197} ל"כ לשנים היא必要な צ"פ שהיא משמשת לא איש איש שאע"ל אישתו מה ת"ל אלא איש כי תשטה זה, ב לא היה צ"שה היא כופרת ב السياسيות ושנה (שמות כ"יב) לא תנאף ואומר (ויקרא כ"י) מות יומת הנואף והנואפת ומנין שהקב"ה נקרא איש כ"שה נאמר (שמות טו"ג) ה' איש מלחמה וגו' ולכך כתיב בסוטה ומעלה בו מעל לפי שהיא כופרת בפקדון כמה דתימא (ויקרא ה"כא) נשיא כי תחטא ומעלה מעל בה' וכחש בעמיתו וגו' והרי דברים ק"ו מה ממון הקל כל הכופר בפקדון כאלו כופר בהקב'ה שנאמר ומעלה מעל בה' וכחש הכופר בפקדון הגוף עאכ"ו וכל הכופר בו כאלו כופר בהקב'ה לכן נאמר איש איש על שהוא כופרת בשני אישים בהקב'ה שנקרא איש ובעלה הוא איש וכן הוא אומר (משלי ב"ייז) העזו תאלוף נועריה ואת ברית אלהיה שכחה, ד"א איש איש לימדה אותך התורה
Num. R. 14:20 contains a lengthy description of the altercation between David and Michal after the transport of the ark (2Sam. 6). Its emphasis on punishment is clearer than other versions, but it is utterly different from the positive description of Michal in Midr. Samuel 25:6. Mack shows how Num. R. 14:20 carefully follows the Y. Talmud and not Midr. Samuel’s conjugal description even though Num. R. I seems to have borrowed from Mid. Samuel on other occasions. This omission is thus intentional and bent on rebuking Michal for accosting David.

Shimon Fogel highlights the original character of Manoah’s wife in Num. R. 10:5. His conclusions are ambivalent. Whereas the narrative stresses her righteous nature it also shows her falsely accusing her husband of being infertile, paralleling the Biblical Antiquities. The message might be aimed at women who also accuse their husbands in this fashion, a common misogynic theme. In summary, Num. R. I is close to ER’ presentation of Esther and women in general.

Similarly, Num. R. 9:3 contains a unique anecdote pertaining to female promiscuity.


Fogel, Samson’s Birth, 222-6, 232-6, 242-4.
3.5.3.1.2 Distinct Misogyny in Bereshit Rabatti

The possible misogyny of most neo-classical compositions pales in comparison to several variants of older traditions in Bereshit Rabatti. This composition is associated with neo-classical Midrashim by virtue of geography, period and content, as well as its connection to some of R. Moses HaDarshan’s materials. Mack likewise isolates ER as one of Bereshit Rabatti (BR)’s sources.

He argues that BR as a whole cannot be attributed to R. Moshe HaDarshan, only its core, since the date of its completion is unknown. It was already in use in “Pugio Fidei” in the late 13th century and by Rashi much earlier. Hence, BR might have originated in the late 11th to the early 13th century, somewhere from Northern France to Northern Spain and is relevant to the hypothesized redaction of ER.

Mack warns that it would be ill advised to present compositions that use R. Moses’ materials, such as NR.I and BR, as expressing his opinions. After reviewing dozens of homilies, which Mack argues can be attributed to R. Moshe, no clear theme of misogyny surfaces. Thus, the accounts below are likely the work BR redactors, who might have also had a hand in neo-classical Midrash compilation.

BR abhors women’s seductive nature. One such admonishment is found in a parallel to the Testament of Reuben 5:6-7, itself a more misogynic version of 1Enoch 7-9. BR Bereshit 6:2 and the testament are unique in assigning blame to the women

201 See Mack, NR I, 103-4, 153-4.
202 Ibid. NR I, 41n21.
203 Mack, Mystery of R. Moshe, 190-4.
204 Ibid.
206 Ibid, see his lengthy addendum.
207 Mack notes one example of women as the downfall of men rooted in a version of Midr. Prov. Mack, Mystery of R. Moshe, 283.
208 Just like Abraham Ibn Ezra in his “Hayy ben Mekitz” (3.9.2). Levin, Hayy ben Mekitz, 22, 55. See also Ibn Zabara’s comments on female beauty in ibid, Book of Delight, 134-7.
209 On the misogyny of the Testament of Reuben and its treatment of the “watchers”, see extensively in Rosen-Zvi, Bilhah the Temptress, 74-7 and the notes there. The testament also shares an aversion to looking at women with BR, see below. BR’s similarities to the testament might be part of its
for the seduction. BR portrays a woman as the one who seduces the fallen angel Shamazi so as to learn witchcraft from him, whereas multiple women plot the seduction and bewitch the watchers in the Testament. BR also focuses on women’s illicit jewelry compared to a single mention in 1Enoch, an emphasis that is also apparent in the Testament narrative (5:3)\textsuperscript{210}. The theme of illicit female seduction is equally prevalent in BR in general\textsuperscript{211}.

Another aspect BR has in common with Abraham Ibn Ezra, Spanish maqama literature and other neo-classical Midrashim is the greater stress on seeing female beauty\textsuperscript{212}. A similar emphasis is that of actively avoiding seeing female beauty. BR Lech-Lecha 11:12 states that Abraham did not see Sarah’s face for years until they entered Egypt\textsuperscript{213}.

In a few cases BR argues directly against all women, even to the extent of greatly deviating from known homilies. BR Va’eira 18:12 contests Y. Pe’ah 1 and its parallels. It argues that Sarah outwardly complained that Abraham was too old to sire children and thus she was punished by dying at a younger age than he. The more implementation of versions of postbiblical accounts in light of Byzantine recensions, though this question is too broad to be broached here.

\textsuperscript{210} This could be modelled after the lost Byzantine Midr. Abakir, per Mack, Mystery of R. Moshe, 252-3. Women’s jewels are Azazel’s only craft in BR, but in 1Enoch 8:1 he teaches many others.

\textsuperscript{211} BR Noah 6:19 criticizes the harlotry of women pursuing men. BR VaYesalach 36:2 explains the names of several dubious biblical women such as Eda and Basmat as referring to their preparations to prostitute themselves by wearing jewels or perfume. The possible inspiration in Gen. R. 67:7 argues for a more spiritual meaning for their names. BR Chayei Sarah 24:34 argues that Rebekah, a princess, was divinely motivated to leave her house to encounter Eliezer. A woman going outside is only justified by such a miracle.

\textsuperscript{212} See (3.9). BR Bereshit 2:21 has a matron emphasize her beauty and ugliness. BR VaYesalach 34:1-2 is based on PRE 37 but has an additional didactic message criticizing Dinah’s conduct and that she desired to display her beauty. BR VaYeshev 39:21 is a variant of many older accounts, for instance Aba Gurion b 2:15. Conversely, BR adds that Esther was given more grace than Joseph, since Joseph was only surrounded by “ugly” Egyptians and Esther was female. Compare this to Ibn Ezra’s emphasis on Esther’s grace as derived from beauty (3.8.1.1). BR VaYechi 49:22 is an adaptation of Gen. R. 99:22, but it adds the fact that the seductive women threw jewels at Joseph so he would gaze at them.

\textsuperscript{213} This passage also has a chronological formula that is highly reminiscent of Joseph Kara. The homily is paired with the tale of a pious man who did not notice that his wife only had one hand for a dozen years, he looked at her so infrequently. BR Chayei Sarah 24:34 has R. Judah the Patriarch’s unnamed grandson enter heaven without dying for not ever looking directly at his wife. None of these accounts have parallels elsewhere in Midrashim, though pietistic writings might prove different.
common claim is that God defended Sarah’s honor and deliberately lied on her behalf. BR then makes an accusation that women always age or wear out their men. BR Va’eira 18:15 accuses Sarah of lying in this incident and mentions that this is what all women do. BR Chaye Sarah 23:1 is an index of 22 “kosher” women in the world. Its phrasing hints that these are the only righteous women ever to have lived.

BR also employs a late-midrashic device encountered in PR 26 (2.3.1). It supplies the detrimental inner monologue of some female figures that is unknown from its parallels. BR Va’eira 19:17 and 26 portray Lot’s wife as looking back at Sodom for covetous and lustful reasons. A parallel in Midr. Tan. Buber Va’eira 8 has none of these thoughts. BR Chaye Sarah 24:64-5 wonders why Rebekah fell off her camel upon seeing Isaac. In Gen. R. 60:62 she sees Isaac’s “hand flat in prayer” and so joins him. In BR though, she sees that “his hand was flat” and then an anonymous comment notes that she was pondering sleeping with him. This comment reads the “hand” of older accounts as a euphemism for disappointment with his measurements.214

Thus overall, BR and its redactional portrayal of women is compatible with the negative treatment of Esther in ER and so strengthens the possibility of their shared cultural heritage. Other Spanish neo-classical compositions present themes associated with the importance and dangers of female beauty.

3.5.3.2 Spanish Neo-Classical Themes of Beauty

3.5.3.2.1 Harsher Comments on God’s Wife in Deut. R. (Lieberman)

214 BR VaYetze 29:32 similarly argues that Leah complained that Jacob stopped sleeping with her based on accounts such as Mekhita Deut. 26:7. These accounts do not mention such feelings. BR, ibid, 29:33 even argues that Leah did not pray that Jacob would sleep with her but shouted this out loudly. BR VaYeshev 39:13 also seems to be a scholastic dramatization of the Joseph and Potiphar’s wife incident. It emphasizes her scorn and wrath at Potiphar’s reaction.
Deut. R. has two main versions, which differ mostly in their opening and closing parashot, while the main part of the composition is based on theTanḥuma. As Myron Bialik Lerner pointed out, the Spanish version published by Lieberman was probably the completion of an earlier defective manuscript of the non-Spanish version by neoclassical redactors. As a result, the unique parashot in Deut. R. (Lieberman) are as part of neo-classical Midrashim as is ER. They were completed at the same estimated time and place.215

Lerner describes the Wathaenen and Akav portions of Deut. R. as probably based on the lost Yelamdenu on Deuteronomy as evidenced by Genizah fragments; thus it is less likely to be the original work of these redactors.216 This leaves parashat Devarim as the most original and pertinent part of the Midrash.

Zahava Keller Neuberger compared the two versions of a parable found in this parasha (Deut. R. 1:2). She claimed that the Spanish recension was a later revision that has a more verbose style, a less clear structure and a harsher, more negative tone as regards the King’s wife (symbolizing Israel).217 This feature translates into added rebukes and negative epithets and suggests a much less tolerant approach to women overall. The redactors took pains to blacken the Queen even if this resulted in the further blackening of Israel. Hence a greater emphasis on beauty in Deut. R. I identify, could also be consistent with ER’s emphasis on Esther’s sexuality218. This physical angle can also be found in Ibn Ezra’s commentaries on Esther (3.8.1)219.

215 Lerner, New Light, 421-7 and note 62 there.
216 Ibid.
217 Neuberger, King’s Ire, 141-4.
218 See Dishon, Good Woman, 49-50. I found one example of anxiety over female traits in Deut. R. Wathanen. 2:2, which describes the land of Israel in a parable as a most beautiful (Moses) or an ugly woman (the spies). This is based on Tan. Watahenan 2 and is probably different from the Yelamdenu and might still be original. The non-Spanish Deut. R. also does not use this parable at all. The Spanish recension contains an inversion of this very parable that describes a very ugly daughter of a sage, and her groom to be (Moses) that doubts her beauty because of the insinuations of others (the spies).
219 Beauty also comes up in medieval renditions of Judith, see Dishon, Good Woman, 116-7.

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3.5.3.2 Rebukes of Female Lack of Self Control in Exod. R. I

Atzmon, based on Avigdor Shinan, describes Exodus R. 1-14 (Exod. R. I) as a neo-classical dissection of a Tanḥuma version to better match biblical verse order. The complete Exod. R. seems to have circulated from Provence to Spain. Some of its unique accounts center on Miriam’s insolence. Exod. R. 1:13 contains a unique etymology of Puah as Miriam, who opposed Pharaoh and her father. This comment is exceedingly negative, since Miriam needs to be rescued by her mother and is also described as “stretching out her nose against him”. This colorful negative rebuke of female challenge of authority is not unlike Ibn Ezra’s comment (commentary B) on Est. 5:14 and Leqaṭḥ Tov on Est. 8:3.

Beauty is another reoccurring theme. Exod. R. 1:15 has a unique description of the midwives who beautify themselves figuratively to worship God and to enliven the Israelites. Moreover, Exod. R. 3:4 contrasts a Cushite handmaiden with a lady-like one, and the general use of “matron” in rabbinc literature suggests that the contrast between the two figures is not qualitative but rather physical and thus has to

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221 See Jastrow, Dictionary, kashat, 1429-30.
do with beauty and ugliness\textsuperscript{223}. Hence, Exod. R. I might take an interest in beauty that exceeds its sources\textsuperscript{224}. This interest also corresponds to Ibn Ezra and his Spanish milieu and suggests a thematic connection between neo-classical Midrashim and Spanish or Andalusian Bible commentaries (see extensively below).

### 3.5.4 Summary and Conclusions: Allusion or Compilation

The main midrashic depictions of Esther I considered in this section have a completely different stance on Esther’s importance, but still demonstrate two non-conceptual but concrete understandings of a protagonist’s role. The Babylonian Esther Midrash used analogy associating Esther with Greek novel heroines to make her as important to the plot as they are to their respective novels, but it also subverted some common novelistic themes in favor of a rabbinic message.

Esther R. displayed an indirect neo-classical “nudging” that systematically collected and altered accounts to highlight Mordecai. This belies an understanding of how repeating accounts that highlight a character’s importance contributes to strengthening its central status. This was done in a specific Northern Spanish and Provençal milieu, which would have had difficulties with Esther as the protagonist. Such redaction necessitates an intuitive understating of who the protagonist is so as to alter its characterization.

Medieval Bible commentaries like their possible contemporary ER II, focus on collecting and repeating characterizations. They however do not share ER’s poetics, opting for different philosophical concepts informed by their cultural contexts.

\textsuperscript{223} See Jastrow, Dictionary, מָטְרוֹנִית Matronit, 770-1.

\textsuperscript{224} Also see Exod. R. 15:6, which is not part of Exod. R. I and thus might be older. It argues that Esther’s beauty had to do with salvation via allegory based on the Song of Songs.
3.6 Esther in Medieval Systematic Exegesis: Paradigmatic Protagonist

3.6.1 Sa‘adiah Gaon’s Esther: An Idealized Locus for Identification and Sympathy

Sa‘adiah’s Judeo-Arabic commentary on Esther, one of the last books he wrote, is the first known Jewish programmatic commentary on Esther (933-934 C.E.)\(^{225}\). One of its key features is an egalitarian depiction of Mordecai and Esther, which contrasts with the conflicted trends in late Midrashim that occasionally accentuated Mordecai\(^{226}\). The two characters are deliverers/redeemers, whose joint cooperation is necessary for successful divine supplication:

> [The] fifth section concerns the operating of Mordecai and Esther and their striving for the deliverance of the (Jewish) people, as it says, and to charge her (that she should go in unto the king), etc. (4:8), lest one suppose that after fasting, prayer, and petitioning (God) we have completed what is required of us, (or that) if He- the Sublime- wishes to deliver us, He will then do so. On the contrary, we are to know that our deliverance is frequently affected through the agency of human beings, and therefore it is incumbent on the individual to do all that he can in cooperating for the interests of the (Jewish) people, that he might be of benefit to them as well as benefit by them, both in this world and in the next.\(^{227}\)

Sa‘adiah similarly argues that the anonymous editors inserted the letters of Esther and Mordecai, in order to document the cooperation that ensured the survival of Purim: [... As to the meaning of the statement, as they enjoined] upon themselves and upon their progeny, (etc.) (Est. 9:31a)- (it is that) the transmitters of tradition combined [...] the proclamation of Mordecai and Esther...\(^{228}\).

Cooperation with Esther is also one of the main reasons for Mordecai’s success: Mordecai’s meriting this robe of honor and the crown was due to the prestige of Esther, though it may also have been due to the wisdom he was demonstrating to (the king)- especially in his wording of the letters (in such a way) that they would not be considered shameful...\(^{229}\).

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\(^{225}\) Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 4-5.

\(^{226}\) See 3.1. Yefet is even more egalitarian than Sa‘adiah, as per Sasson, Gender Equality, 58-9.

\(^{227}\) Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 105.

\(^{228}\) Ibid, 410.

\(^{229}\) Ibid, 353-5. Note that Sa‘adiah’s claim that Mordecai was honored because of Esther is the direct opposite of PRE and ER II’s emphasis on Mordecai’s independent prestige (3.4.2).
Hence, Sa‘adiah views Mordecai and Esther as role models that should be emulated by his readership. The readers should follow the characters’ mourning practices as well as other actions undertaken throughout the plot (underlined):

As to the three actions attributed to exceptional individuals. (these are) the rending of one’s clothes, crying out and trembling... For the trembling designated as חלחלה occurs in the loins, as it says, and trembling is in all loins (Nah. 2:11). Thus the exceptional individual will reach[...] throughout the breadth, length, and interior of the world\(^{230}\). And now the fifth section, which is a depiction of how one who has ability and authority takes initiative when (a decree of persecution) befalls the people; it (accordingly) talks about Mordecai and Esther, presenting them both as role models\(^{231}\).

However apart from the above statements, it is Esther and not Mordecai, whom Sa‘adiah systematically characterizes as the important role model and sage. I show that the occurrence of these two themes in relation to Esther suggests that Sa‘adiah perceived Esther as the sole protagonist\(^{232}\).

3.6.2.1 Esther as a Symbol for Diaspora Jews

Sa‘adiah’s generally portrays Esther as a highly paradigmatic role model with very little elaboration of her actual character traits, biblical or otherwise. He interprets Esther’s attributes as referring to all Jews. This is even true of her childhood:

...As to (Scripture’s) specification concerning Esther, for she had neither father nor mother (v.7)- this is to encourage the lowly and orphans, as if to say to them, “Do not despair! How many are those (in similar circumstances) to whom God has shown favor?! Have you not considered the sons of Judah? Er and Onan were born in his presence, whereas Shelah was born when he was away- as it is said, and he was at Chezib when she bore him (Gen. 38:5)- yet is was (Shelah) who endured. And Hiram was the son of a widow (1Kings 7:14), yet he attained the skill to prepare the essential components of the Sanctuary. Jeroboam, too, was the son of a widow (1Kings 11:26), yet he reigned as king over the ten tribes. (All of this), moreover, is consistent with what Scripture states in a more general vein: so that He set on high those that are lowly, | and those who mourn are exalted to safety (Job 5:11).” Hence also (Scripture) adds to the particulars of Esther’s situation, for she had neither father

\(^{230}\) Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 262-3n35. Sa‘adiah does not endorse various rabbinic renderings that have Esther suffer from bodily ailments. He seems to suggest that there is a need for sorrow to reach her inner core for her prayer to succeed.

\(^{231}\) Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 265.

\(^{232}\) For more on protagonists in literature, see (3.2.1; 0.2.1).
nor mother, here in connection with the initial description of her beauty, in view of what will go on to relate concerning Ahasuerus’ selection of her.  

Sa‘adiah does not interpret Esther’s orphan-hood as an explanation for her relationship with Mordecai or as a call for empathy. He mainly sees Esther as an example for all other orphans. Since God can choose to venerate whomever he wishes, orphan readers of the book can take comfort in Esther’s success. Sa‘adiah presents an original homily to hammer this in. He includes Esther in an index of biblical orphans that rose to elevated stations. Thus, Esther does not possess a biography as a character, but the particulars of her life are a universal paradigm.

Sa‘adiah’s views Esther’s adoption as equally exemplary and denounces Esther’s beauty as the direct cause. The tale is an example of the merits of adoption, since Mordecai was later rewarded by his adopted protégée:

As to the meaning of the expression יפת תואר – this refers to her physical form, whereas the expression ותקשה מראה refers to her mien. And by the statement לקחה לו מרדכי לבת, Mordecai took her to himself as a daughter, (Scripture) is urging us on the care of orphans, who will in turn benefit us when it comes to (our) reward in the hereafter – and sometimes they may even impact (our) standing in this life.

Esther’s success in the harem is also reimagined as a specific exemplum of God’s bestowal of grace on all Jews in the diaspora:

From Esther’s bearing, moreover, we perceive (her) contentment with (her) provisions and deliberation in (the management of) her affairs...As to the statement, And Esther found favor (in the eyes of all who saw her) (v. 15b) this characterizes the state by which we in the Diaspora have been blessed by God- namely, that our basic necessities are fulfilled either due to fear or due to favor. Indeed, even before the days of our nationhood our Lord continually blessed us with favor, as it is said (concerning Joseph), (the Lord) extended kindness unto him and gave him favor (in the sight of the chief jailer)(Gen. 39:21); and concerning the Patriarchs in Egypt, And the Lord gave this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians (Exod. 11:3). Then, when the days of our nationhood arrived, He established fear and dread towards us, as it is said, This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the peoples (Deut. 2:25)...Then again, when (our) nationhood ceased He

233 Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 186. Esther’s beauty is mentioned by the Bible to anticipate the fact that she will be chosen to be queen.
234 As in Midr. Ps. 22: 23, see Menn, No Ordinary, 326-7.
235 As suggested in b. Megilla 13a.
kept careful watch over us such that He blessed us with favors, as it is said, Now God granted Daniel favor and compassion (in the sight of the commander, etc.) (Dan. 1:9); and as Ezra says, He hath extended compassion unto me before the king and his counselors (Ezra 7:28); and (so here), And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her; and concerning all of us collectively it says, He hath granted them compassion in the presence of all their captors (Ps 106:46).

Sa'adiah argues that Esther’s divine grace is the natural state of the exiled Jewish people; namely, to be divinely provided with the bare necessities for survival. Sa‘adiah frames Esther’s success as the latest biblical anecdote in a line of similar cases stretching all the way back to Joseph in another midrashic list. Esther is not characterized as an individual but rather as a symbol for all Jews. Thus, Sa‘adiah does not end this homily with Esther, but with a proof text of God’s mercy for the captive Jewish people as a whole that includes Sa‘adiah’s current readership.

Sa‘adiah highlights Esther’s continued success in hiding her Jewishness by drawing attention to the biblical dual emphasis on the fact that she does not disclose her people. He does not present this silence as a sign of Esther’s individual heroism. Sa‘adiah instead views Esther’s secretiveness and adherence to the tenets of her faith as a precedent for the correct conduct of Jews and Christians in the service of Muslims in his day:

As to (Scripture’s) saying, And when the virgins were gathered (a second time), etc. (v.19) and then following it with (the statement), Esther would not make known her kindred (v.20)- this is consistent with what I would describe (as follows): that these virgins would have been presented a second time so that they might identify themselves- each one with her country and her people. Thus Esther was also presented, yet she did not tell (the king) anything, for the first remark, Esther had not made known her people (v.10), is intended only with reference to Hegai, whereas this second one, Esther would not make known her kindred (v. 20), is intended with reference to Ahasuerus. Likewise, the juxtaposition of (the clause), Mordecai was sitting in the king’s gate (v.19b) with, Esther would not make known her kindred, 

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238 Sa‘adiah views the success of the pre-exilic Jewish nation as rooted in God inducing fear of it in the Gentiles. Perhaps the fear of the enemies of the Jews at the end of Esther (Ch. 8-9) could be interpreted as another example of his view. If so, Sa‘adiah equates nationhood with a fearsome reputation, which is a reversal of the reputation Judaism enjoyed in his time.
239 See in version A of Joseph Kara’s commentary on Est. 2:12-15.
240 Compare to version B of Joseph Kara on Est. 2:19-20.
means to say that, even though Esther had provided Mordecai with an official position in the ruler’s household, she still did not reveal the identity of her people. Indeed she conducted herself just like many Jews and Christians whom we see devoting themselves to the service of Muslims; it is thus that one must view her…(Finally,) the statement, and Esther undertook the command of Mordecai, refers collectively to all commandments and religious obligations (as undertaken by Esther) without any neglect, per (Scripture’s) following affirmation: in the same manner as when she was being reared by him.

Sa‘adiah turns Esther’s problematic union with Ahasuerus into another example of the rabbinic exemption of distinctly uncooperative raped women from the penalty of death. He thus goes beyond the midrashic highlights of Esther’s personal circumstances. He first responds to polemic arguments as to why a raped woman, as he views Esther, should be extolled forever in the Bible:

Some of the ignorant among the Gentiles may censure us over Esther’s getting into a predicament with King Ahasuerus- especially in view of how we extol her and have continued to hand down the record of her affair over the course of time, an even more so for our saying, and the king loved Esther (v. 17). We would aver, however, this if the occasion for (such a person’s) censure of us proceeds from a secular perspective, then this is not a basis of censure, but rather of honor, for everyone connected to royalty is held in honor… in fact, with respect to (our) religion it becomes evident vis-à-vis the Oral Law that as handed down to us in the Oral Law, when unbelievers demand of believers to break some aspect of their religious creed, yet it is not the intention of the one demanding this that (the believer) actually foreswear his religious creed, but rather it is intended primarily for the benefit of (the unbelievers) themselves- and the believers are truly afraid that, should they not acquiesce, they may be put to death-, it is acceptable in such circumstance for them to acquiesce and so prevent the shedding of their blood, at the same time remaining free from any basis of censure. In this same vein, since he did not know that Esther was a Jew, (the king) was not intending by the demands that he placed upon her that she foreswear her religious creed, but rather his objective was primarily his own benefit- nor, indeed, can there be any doubt that, had she refused (to go to the king), she would have incurred the fear of being put to death.

241 Sa‘adiah’s stress on the commandments might have been inspired by the similar Talmudic assertion that focuses solely on Esther’s observance of ritual purity. See b. Megilla 13b.
242 Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 205-7. Esther is not only an example of unwavering religious loyalty, but also of not showing undue favor for one’s kin, as embodied in Mordecai’s current status.
243 See b. Sanhedrin 74a-b.
244 As in b. Megilla 15a.
Sa'adiah responds to both secular and theological criticisms of Esther’s conduct\(^{246}\). The fact that Esther becomes queen is an honorable story of Jewish success in the diaspora, regardless of its theological implications, given the magnificence of royalty. He then responds to halakhic criticisms of Esther sleeping with a Gentile. The sages argued that apart from committing fornication, murder or idolatry, Jews can violate the minor doctrines of Judaism to save their lives. Sa’adiah uses an exception to this principle to justify Esther’s conduct. The sages also stressed that if a Jew is forced to commit minor acts as proof of foreshewing faith, a Jew should die and do no such thing\(^{247}\).

Sa’adiah performs a double negation of the Talmudic argument in the following way\(^ {248}\): ‘If a minor offense committed to demonstrate the foreshewing of one’s faith is punishable by death, then a major offense (fornication) should not be punishable in this way, provided it also is not meant to foreshew faith’\(^ {249}\). The King did not force Esther to commit fornication as an affront against Judaism knowingly, since Esther’s Jewishness was hidden. Thus, Esther was right to have acquiesced, since she would have been put to death otherwise, only to avoid committing a lesser offense not at all connected to her Judaism.

Sa’adiah’s second and third derivatives from his summary of this section of the commentary, transform his apology of intimate relations into a general exemplum for the Gentile rape of Jewish women:

\(^{246}\) Ibid, 25. Wechsler notes that the 13th century Syrian bishop, Gregory Bar Hebraeus, criticized Esther and Ahasuerus’ union on the basis of some of the arguments Sa’adiah rejects. Hence, Bar Hebraeus might be preserving some older Christian polemic known to Sa’adiah.

\(^{247}\) See also, Ratzaby, Exodus, 200*. Sa’adiah (on Exod. 32:14) argues that God does not care what people think of him, but that Jews must always praise and elevate God in the eyes of the Gentiles.

\(^{248}\) See b. Sanhedrin 74a-b. Sa’adiah adds a deduction concerning the needed leniency given Esther’s circumstances and in so doing sides with Rava’s view, see Walfish, Kosher Adultery, 310-2.

\(^{249}\) Wechsler, Seven Guidelines, 211-4n35, compares Sa’adiah’s explanation to his exegesis of Abraham claim that Sarah is his sister. Abraham did not sin, since his description was ambiguous, rather the offence was on the part of the Egyptians who took Sarah. Esther’s conduct is similarly ambiguous, so only Ahasuerus is the one considered to be fornicating.
Included in the second section were ten derivative points:...(2) that if the women among us perceive that (the unbelievers’) intention is not (the women’s) foregoing of their faith, but rather the fulfillment of their own passion, they should not submit to death; (3) that the men amongst us should not think badly of this...(8) that deliverance does not come about except by means of a righteous individual who upholds all the commandments ...\(^{250}\).

Michael Wechsler argues that Sa‘adiah repeats that Jewish women should not die rather than be raped, provided the rape is not meant as an affront to Judaism\(^ {251}\). Sa‘adiah emphasizes that Jewish men must not judge raped women (like Esther) harshly. Hence, Esther’s conduct becomes a paradigm for all Jews, male and female alike. Sa‘adiah also directly characterizes Esther as “a righteous individual who upholds all the commandments” and thus indirectly encourages piety for all.

3.6.2.2 Esther’s Thoughts and Actions Mark her as a Protagonist

Sa‘adiah’s exemplary use of Esther’s character is a microcosm of his view of the book. Sa‘adiah sees her character as encapsulating the entire tale and its purpose. He views Esther as a criticism of assimilation in all ages:

*It is the (following) third view, consequentially, that I consider the most likely-namely, that the underlying cause of their (affliction) was assimilating to the Gentiles and their intermarrying with them, as it is in fact related in (the book of) Ezra that they did during the seventy-year exile, as it says, For they have taken daughters as wives for themselves and for their sons, and have mingled the holy seed with the peoples of the lands; and the hands of princes and rulers has been first in this unfaithfulness (Ezra 9:2). Thus, because a portion (of the people) undertook this and the rest did not reprove them, they were tormented by this (decree of Haman), upon which they were humbled and repented- and in the course of which many Gentiles became Jews!*\(^ {252}\)

Sa‘adiah believes that the Jewish sin meriting Haman’s persecution must have been intermarriage with Gentiles, which is also attested to by an allegedly concurrent Ezra. Sa‘adiah bases his claim on the conversion of many Gentiles during the later


\(^{251}\) Ibid, 28.

\(^{252}\) Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 257-8. Sa‘adiah views the unraveling plot of Esther, as the mirror image of the expository situation described by Est. 1.
reversal of fortunes (Est. 8-9). In line with this reversal, Sa‘adiah deduces that in an unspecified past, many Jews must have become Gentiles.

Esther then is a cautionary tale against assimilation, which was pertinent to Sa‘adiah’s readership and is symbolized by his characterization of Esther. To do so, Sa‘adiah does not develop Esther’s biblical characterizations, but rather confers them upon his readership, in an attempt to maximize reader identification with Esther to combat assimilation.

In this case as in others, when Sa‘adiah endeavors to further his characterizations of the Jews, he reverts to analogical characterization through midrashic lists. His leadership-oriented message against assimilation is phrased in a traditional midrashic form\textsuperscript{253}. Robert Brody found that Sa‘adiah usually masked innovations addressed to his readership, in seemingly traditional Midrash forms\textsuperscript{254}. Sa‘adiah thus may only be interested in Esther’s character as far as he can elicit empathy towards her as a protagonist.

Ewen made the point that a literary character is influenced by the psychological interpretations in vogue during an author’s era and by the clichéd psychological assumptions shared with the intended readership\textsuperscript{255}. I argue that Sa‘adiah’s psychological assumptions prompt him to pay less attention to Esther’s traits, while viewing her as important. Eliezer Schweid describes Sa‘adiah’s ethics as typical of medieval Jewish thought that emphasized the “golden mean” partly known from Aristotle’s “

\textit{Nicomachean Ethics}”. However, Sa‘adiah’s ethics are unorthodox in that they do not espouse the notion that an ideal righteous person possesses all worthy traits. He instead judges a person by the measure of his active adherence to the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{253} See the two cases discussed above. For midrashic lists, see 1.2.\textsuperscript{254} Brody, Rav Se‘adya Gaon, 88-9. Sa‘adiah sometimes combines several known homilies and proof texts to create his own original homilies.\textsuperscript{255} Ewen, Character in Fiction, 13-5.}
commandments. Sa’adiah emphasizes actions not traits and like Aristotle in his “Poetics”, actions establish character.

Character traits are of less interest to Sa’adiah’s Aristotelian view. Sa’adiah repeatedly shows that Esther’s righteousness is not a trait, but a result of successful religious observance. Sa’adiah has no difficulty rendering Esther as relatively featureless by virtue of her exemplary status. This status becomes the surest mark of Esther’s centrality to Sa’adiah’s narrative and also marks her as a perfect character.

Sa’adiah’s translation of Est. 4:16 makes Esther’s words hint at “complete exertion”. Wechsler shows that Sa’adiah does not only compare Esther to Jacob as is linguistically possible, but presents her as a true believer and would-be martyr:

...As to the translation of סכתא אבדתי אבדתי as “Thus, if I perish, I will perish while fully exerting myself” - I have adduced this from implicit notion, which is (her) perishing while in this state, and I have stated this expressly in terms of “fully exerting oneself”. Similar to this is the statement of Jacob והני אבדתי אבדתי (Gen. 43:14), (by which) he is saying- likewise according to what is implied- that if he should be bereaved of Benjamin, he will already have been bereaved of him in the course of fully exerting himself- that is to say, (he will already have experienced the pain of bereavement) by dint of the distress endured as he consoles himself and receives consolation regarding all that might happen to (Benjamin); and were he to hold back (from so exerting himself), he would neither forgive himself nor let himself be forgiven.

As Wechsler notes, Esther is an example of preemptive martyrdom that God inflicts upon the righteous to eventually reward them. Schweid shows that Sa’adiah views the choice to believe and the choice to act as different from the physical act,
which thus merits a separate reward\textsuperscript{262}. Sa’adiah’s Esther shows how a Sa’adiahan exemplary ethical subject should behave. His Esther is the perfect ethical subject for all Jews in what she does, rather than in what is said about her\textsuperscript{263}. Thus, Esther’s lack of unique traits, actually marks her as a literary fulfillment of Sa’adiah’s concept of willful action. Sa’adiah’s protagonist is designated by the paradigmatic nature of thought and action, rather than by elaborate personal traits\textsuperscript{264}. Esther’s discourse also suggests her importance to Sa’adiah in that it is strongly marked by rabbinic argumentation, as the following shows.

3.6.3 Esther’s Rabbinic Discourse as an Anti-Karaite Polemic

\textsuperscript{262} Schweid, Sa’adiah’s Ethics, 19. This depiction of Esther is also consistent with Averroes’ view on suffering in eulogistic poetry. The suffering of the righteous is meant to reward them and captivate the listener. See Averroes, Commentary on the Poetics, 92-3. A similar approach to exertion is attested by Mordecai: \textit{How, moreover, are we to construe Mordecai’s admonition, Do not think as regards yourself (…whereas you and your father’s house will perish) (vv. 13-14a) Did he really suppose that the (Jews’) enemies would assault her in the king’s own residence and kill her? This is inconceivable! Rather, he was remonstrating with her by saying, as it were, “as for yourself, moreover-, have you truly attained security? Do you really know whether you will remain in the king’s residence (even) for a year, or is it not within the realm of possibility that you may be expelled from his residence and come under the same peril facing the rest of the (Jewish) people?”

As to his saying, “if you hold back, (etc.) you and your father’s house will perish” (v.14)- it is not that her kinsfolk had committed any sin, but rather, we would say, (Mordecai) is referring to himself, and (his point is that) just as she would perish if she did not strive on behalf of her people, so too would he perish if he did not petition her to do so. This is comparable to the saying of the patriarchs, \textit{Let us go, please, for a three days’ journey into the wilderness, (and sacrifice to the Lord our God, lest he fall upon us with pestilence or the sword) (Exod. 5:3)} i.e., “if we do not petition you for this, (He will fall upon us, ” etc.). (Mordecai) then juxtaposes you shall perish with the statement relief and deliverance will arise for the Jews from another place, from which it is made clear that by this (phrase) from another place he is alluding to God- His majesty be exalted!- for it is He who brings relief to the oppressed, and it is He who causes the merciless to perish; and the one to whom He grants the opportunity to champion the oppressed- should he not do so? It is for this reason that Mordecai combines (the promise of) relief and deliverance with (the threat), you shall perish. Even more, he says, \textit{And who knows if you will reach (this time), for Haman had not written that the (Jewish) people were to be destroyed immediately upon the letters’ arrival, but rather towards the turn of the year; it is with reference to this, therefore, that he says, if (you will reach) this time, by which he means, ”many things may (still) happen during this year similar to what happened in connection with the expulsion of Vashti”}. Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 279-82. Note 56 there, compares this view with those of Rashi and Kara, which do not employ Sa’adiah’s terminology.

\textsuperscript{263} The notion of Esther’s jihād is not unlike the one Helewa identifies in Ṭabarî’s exegetical work, \textit{Jami’ al-bayān}, where he extends the meaning of jihād to acts of charity that further God’s dominion (\textit{fi sabīl Allāh}). Helewa, Advisory Function, 252. Contrast with Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 273, 286-8.

\textsuperscript{264} Sa’adiah even describes how Haman slandered the Jewish people by using Mordecai as a negative exemplum, again illustrating the hold of the exemplary function on his thought. See Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 251-2.
Another feature of Sa'adiah’s exemplary Esther is the rabbinic nature of her discourse. Although indirect characterization is typical of Midrash as noted by Isaac Heinemann, Sa'adiah uses this method to achieve a strikingly different effect. He indirectly highlights Esther’s protagonist status as a way of also attacking the Karaites. Esther is not only pious and observant as in b. Megilla 13a, but is also well versed in both scripture and the Oral Torah. Hence, Sa'adiah’s model believer must be educated in both fields (underlined):

That Esther in fact responded with these statements indicates that she is well versed in the (divine) commandments and their (attendant) regulations, and that her royal position did not cause her to neglect them. Also, her statement I too, with my maidservants, will fast accordingly indicates that she ensured that all of her maidservants and anyone else who attended her were monotheistic believers, for would they have fasted to an idol she would not have required them to fast for the (Jews’) deliverance, since such would at that point have constituted an act of defiant impiety... Sa'adiah presents the way Esther denounced Haman (Est. 7) in a similar vein of scholarly merit:

Now regarding the statement, But if we had been sold for bondsmen and bondswomen, I would have been silent (v. 4), it may be asked, “How is that a free person should be taken and sold into slavery, yet remain silent?” In order to dispel this perplexity one may explain that she would have endured this, first and foremost, because it was consistent with what the Lord had decreed in His Law: and there you shall be presented for sale to your enemies for bondsmen and bondswomen, yet no one shall buy you (Deut. 28:68); yet she would not endure annihilation because He had not decreed this- in fact, He had decreed the opposite: And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, (I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them so as to annihilate them, etc.) (Lev. 26:44). She would have endured slavery because it would have been something remedial; yet she would not endure execution because it would not have been something remedial. And she would also have endured slavery because she would have been in a position to purchase a large number of them (therefrom); yet she would not endure execution because there would be no purchasing (therefrom). These, therefore are three explanations and the fourth explanation is represented by the statement, כי אין הצר שוה בנק המלך - כיאין הצר שוה בנק המלך (the import of)

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265 Isaac Heinemann, Methods of Aggada, 38–42.
266 Sa'adiah also remarks that the Book of Esther should be a precedent for the idea that transmitted traditions were accepted as divinely inspired in biblical times, which is thus a vindication of the Oral Torah. See on Est. 9:23, Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 396. This is probably aimed at the Karaites.
267 Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 287, compare to Yefet, in ibid note 69.
269 Compare Sa’adiah’s above comment to Kara’s dramatization in Kara A on Est. 7:4.
which, we would say, is: “(for) this adversary is not worth any bit of the king’s annoyance due to mentioning him or being wary of him. For this reason, had we been sold into slavery, I would surely have refrained from annoying the king by complaining to him about (this adversary) on account of the enslavement of myself and my people; yet we have been sold for execution, and this is what induces me to burden the king with annoyance and worry”.

Sa’adiah presents four possible reasons for Esther’s insistence that had she and her people been threatened solely with slavery, she would have remained silent. The key reason he provides (underlined) is that Esther is well versed in scripture, and thus knew that slavery was consistent with the fulfilment of the curses of Deuteronomy, whereas mass genocide contradicted the promises of salvation at the end of the curses of Leviticus. Hence, Sa’adiah assumes that Esther is well-versed in scripture but also in its exegesis. She harmonizes the two arrays of curses on her own accord and her conclusions reveal facts pertinent to her current reality. In short, Esther is presented as a kind rabbinic homilist.

Sa‘adiah similarly presents a Midrash on the polysemic nature of Haman’s animosity as a paraphrase of Esther’s words. Wechsler notes that Sa’adiah tends to silently embed rabbinic content in his exegesis to emphasize the importance of rabbinic literature to a correct understanding of the Bible. However in this case, Sa’adiah’s midrashic embedding also completely associates Esther’s mind (underlined) with the traditional homiletic rabbinic voice:

*Esther’s intention in attacking Haman in the first part of her response as an adversarial man and an enemy* (v.6) was to present the matter as insulting to the king himself as well as to provoke him against (Haman), that he might say (to himself) “If this is his attitude towards the Queen, how much more towards me?!” - and perhaps that he might repent of exalting (Haman) and say (to himself), “had I known that he would comport himself in this way towards others, I would not have promoted him!”

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270 Wechsler, The Book of Conviviality, 327-9. Note 67 there, mentions that the juxtaposition of Esther with these Pentateuch passages is known from Midrashim (b. Megilla 11a, ER I proems: 3-4).
271 This approach is also consistent with Sa’adiah’s exegesis of Isaiah, see Ratzaby, Isaiah, 331. Reversing the sale of Israel to its enemies is common enough in its relationship with God.
272 Compare Sa’adiah’s depiction with that of the Midr. Ps. 22 (briefly described in 3.1).
273 The closest parallel to Sa’adiah’s polysemic rendering of “enemy” is Exod. R. II 38:4.
The sense of the (words) הָרְעָדָה וְאָוֵיב, moreover is, is layered—(to wit: he is) an enemy adversary to the (Jewish) people and an enemy to Esther; also: and adversary to her and an enemy to the king; also: and adversary to the king and an enemy to the Lord of the Universe; and also: an adversary to the people (generally) and an enemy to himself—were it not so he would not have entered into (the predicament) that he did. So too the expression הנמי הרע, may be understood with reference to his wickedness. As it says, Deliver me, O Lord, from the wicked man (Ps. 140:2); and with reference to his concealing his grudge, as it says, who devise wicked things in their heart (ibid. 140:3); and with reference to slander, as it says. They have sharpened their tongue like a serpent (ibid. 140:4).275

Sa’adiah reworks the Talmudic elaboration of Esther’s possible reasons for inviting Haman (b. Megilla 15b) in a similar act of rabanization. Whereas Sa’adiah and the Talmud conclude that Esther was motivated by all the reasons suggested for her actions, Sa’adiah emphasizes that she did so by the exercise of her own worthy intellect (underlined).276:

Now, among those thing for which a reason must be sought is Esther’s invitation of Haman, for insofar as she had in mind the deliverance of her people, why then did she invite their enemy to her reception?277... Such, therefore, is what we have presented of...
the possible reasons for the reception, and it may be that it was for some of these, or for all of them— and (ultimately) for that which would prove most fitting— such that Esther deemed it right to invite Haman. Indeed, it is one of those commonly-understood things that a person may undertake an action and it be deemed right by him for many reasons, as (in the case of) one who says, “I consider it right that I go forth to Jerusalem in order that I might acquire merit, and that I might meet the scholars, and that I might [...], and that I might amass its sweet fruits, and that I might exhibit my reliance on God to keep me safe during the journey, and that I might be absent for a time from those who annoy me; and so too, (that) if I should die, then I will be buried there”— and for whatever else he might add to these exemplary reasons and others like them,278.

Sa‘adiah compares Esther to someone who decides to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This type of person can find many reasons to go on this pilgrimage, all of which are worthy and not mutually exclusive. Wechsler argues that this reworking of b. Megilla 15b focuses on presenting midrashic opinions as psychological considerations that fit with Sa‘adiah’s realia,279. Sa‘adiah then makes this Midrash correspond to the point of view of Esther and interchangeably any pious Jewish pilgrim. Esther is made to be clever in a rabbinic way.

The 10th century Karaite exegete Yefet ben ‘Eli’s depiction of Esther supports this reading of Sa‘adiah, in that Yefet highlights her independence and not traditionalist rabbinic views. Yefet’s Karaite conception of Esther’s personal excellence is polemical and hinges on older Karaite views that could have also influenced Sa‘adiah’s commentary,280. Yefet highlights Esther’s intelligence and her capacity to save her people by herself (underlined,281):

(6:14 ff): …Now we would maintain that she possessed merit and forethought and had no need for the advice of another; for do you not see that she says to Mordecai, Go,

in mind the annulment of the [...] [...] (8) Another possible reason was because the king was fickle and she wanted to be sure that he would respond positively to her [...], whereupon (the king) would demand of him [...], and so she ensured that (Haman) was present so that the blow might fall upon him at the same time the king gave the order...

279 Wechsler, Esther’s Invitation, 9-10.
280 Evidence for earlier piecemeal Karaite interpretations of Esther exists, see Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 123n5-7.
281 Compare to Yefet’s similarly dynamic rendering of Sarah and Hagar in Zawanowska, Literary Approach, 79-80.
gather together, etc. (4:16); though if we would say that God prompted her to it in a dream, it is possible. On the first day, therefore, she wanted to invite the king as well as Haman to the banquet - the king, in order to that it might be made clear on his part whether there was any consideration of her in his heart or not, for with drink it would become quite clear, and (if so inclined) his heart would also be opened to hearken to what she would request, and would fulfill her desire; and she invited Haman in order to keep him close to her, for if he had not been present with her he might have been able to slip out of her hand... from the first day to the second day... she did not deem it proper to present (the king) with two requests in one day. Thus, on the first day she invited him, and when he inquired of her she said to him, as it were, “if the king is content, I will relate my desire to him tomorrow”, (the intention of) which was also that the king’s heart might become preoccupied with fulfilling her desire. Such is the case if she undertook this on her own counsel... 

Yefet directly characterizes Esther as wise and confident to act on her own accord. His evidence; namely, that she was the one who instructed Mordecai (Est. 4:16), might suggest that he rejects an interpretation that would credit Mordecai with Esther’s actions. Alternatively, Yefet discounts the need for divine inspiration inherent to Sa’adiah’s Talmudic reading. Yefet might be attempting to divorce Esther from Midrash as a response to Sa’adiah endeavoring to associate the two.

Yefet’s depiction of an independent Esther goes a step further. Unlike Sa’adiah, Yefet highlights Esther’s national sympathies and her state of mind in an intertwined fashion by using a different poetic device. Specifically, Yefet shows that Esther is moved by rational arguments that focus upon the national wellbeing of the Jews and also employs such rhetoric herself. Yefet more predominantly uses psychonarration and not Sa’adiah’s more silhouette-like rendering of an exemplum.

Yefet does this as early as in the expositional part of chapter 2: (2:8):...

Mordecai initially concealed her. Though in the end he prompted her so that she took to heart the matter that God had in mind concerning his people... Whereas

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282 Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 271-3.
283 See also Ibid, 25-6.
284 Wechsler, Esther’s Invitation, 15-7.
285 Yefet’s rendering of Esther is closest to Panim Aḥerim 2, which might attest to its primacy.
286 Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 198.
Midrash and the Septuagint hold that Mordecai realized that Esther’s fate had national
divine significance but kept this to himself\textsuperscript{287}. Yefet sees it fit for Mordecai to share
his views with Esther and thus render her an active participant in her fate\textsuperscript{288}. Yefet
similarly uses Esther and Mordecai’s strong bond, to describe how Mordecai’s actions
pushed Esther to save her people of her own free will\textsuperscript{289}.

Yefet’s commentary also suggests a different solution to the problematic
relations between Esther and Ahasuerus (3.6.2.1). He hints at a convivial relationship
between them, more akin to the Septuagint\textsuperscript{290} and Josephus\textsuperscript{291}. Hence, Yefet assumes
that Ahasuerus would not have been prevented from loving Esther if he had known
about her Jewishness beforehand\textsuperscript{292}. Unlike the BT, Yefet also assumes that Esther

\textsuperscript{287} For example, MekhY. Amalek-Beshallah II; LXX addition A.
\textsuperscript{288} See Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 26.
\textsuperscript{289} Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 241: (4:4):...When, therefore, (Esther) learned that he was unable to
come to her, having sackcloth upon him, she sent to him clothing that he might put it on and remove
from himself the sackcloth and come to her in order that she might accurately gather information about
the affair from him, for she was certain that he would not have done this over a trifling matter. Yet he
refused. Instead continuing wholeheartedly with his (wearing of) sackcloth and his crying out; and he
did so for two reasons, the first of which was that his soul was compelling him to stick to it
wholeheartedly until the decree passed. And the second was in order to increase Esther’s alarm that
she might apply herself as earnestly to the matter as was necessary.

According to Yefet, Mordecai adheres strictly to his mourning practices, since he recognizes
that they are necessary to counter the decree, hence Yefet is “karaizing” Mordecai, as Yefet tends to do
with such exemplary figures. He portrays Daniel similarly. Elsewhere, Mordecai knows that his refusal
will distress Esther and push her to act with vigor. Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 25. Compare to Yefet’s
exegesis of Dan. 10: 3 in Margoliouth, Daniel, 52. Whereas Yefet’s detailed description of Daniel’s
dietary observance reflects the practices of the mourners of Zion but is biblically sound, Yefet
anachronistically adds that Daniel always wore clothes fit for mourning such as sacks. This addition
portrays Daniel as an exemplar for the Yefet’s mourners. See also Yefet’s on Hosea 6:12 in Polliack
and Schlossberg, Hosea, 36-7.

\textsuperscript{290} For instance, Day, Three Faces, 183-4.
\textsuperscript{291} Josephus omits the mention of Esther’s hatred for the “bed of the uncircumcised Gentile”, as well as
the mention she has not eaten or drunk anything forbidden. This is meant to avoid depicting Jews as
misanthropes and Jew and Gentile at odds with each other, as argued in Feldman, Studies, 530.
\textsuperscript{292} Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 247-8.
Now, on the matter of Esther the (rabbinic) sages have disagreed, some of them maintaining that she
was like one who is raped, for she had come under the hand of the king, and therefore, even though she
would have given her life, it would not have been permitted her- even had she revealed her religion;
indeed, nothing would have availed her (to this end), since the king would not have put her to death
because he loved her. Nonetheless, that which was (still) incumbent upon her to do was that to which
she could (feasibly) attain of (the obligations of her) religion, until (such a time that) God would
relieve her. Do you not see, moreover, that she did not embellish herself like the (other) women, and
that God- the blessed and Sublime!- does not reprove her on account of the fact that the uncircumcised
unbeliever (sleeps) with her, for it had already been achieved by her that she would not eat anything
except what she wanted, and (she also observed) the Sabbath and (every) festival, seeing that she had
no (other) work to do, for (the mudawwin) makes clear that she ceased from her work (upon entering
was not raped. His interpretations primarily focus on Esther’s excessively pious acts in the harem, which suggests that Yefet’s Esther is an exceptional character rather than a representation of an ideal “every-Jew”\textsuperscript{293}.

Yefet viewed Esther as proof of the potential heroism of individual independent-minded Jews such as the Karaites, who lead their people in spite of the legacy of rabbinic Judaism. His view goes against Sa‘adiah’s version of Esther as a paradigm for the excellence of the Jewish people. The Karaite upholding of Individualism in learning and conduct leads to Yefet’s individualization of Esther. Sa‘adiah characterization of Esther stems from a traditionalist, as opposed to a radical conception of the individual’s place in exegetic tradition. Sa‘adiah’s Esther is an exemplary rabbinic theological construct, who employs a modified rabbinic discourse\textsuperscript{294}. Yefet conversely presents Esther’s mind as mirroring his sectarian readership and its view of itself as breaking away from accepted collective norms.

\textit{the palace); and this is a likely assertion. Others say, however, that the king did not approach her at all... Compare the views mentioned to b. Megilla 15a, b. Sanhedrin 74a-b and Panim Aherim b, 2 (2:10). Yefet holds all of Megilla 13a-b’s suggestions as true (observing the Sabbath, eating kosher and ritual immersion) and even adds observance of other festivals. Wechsler notes that Yefet also excitedly entreats his readers that God does not reproach Esther for sleeping with the king. This shows that Yefet is answering claims that view Esther as sinful. Yefet’s agitation is also evident in his self-contradiction that claims that God does not reproach Esther, whereas Yefet admits that God is not found in the book at all and so such a reproach is impossible. See Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 71n433. 

\textsuperscript{293} See the above note.

\textsuperscript{294}Sa‘adiah could also be targeting a more educated female audience, as hinted at by his separate address to “the men among us”. He might be responding to certain developments in the education of girls. Female acquaintance with homilies was facilitated in late antiquity and up to the 6th century by some women serving as “leaders” in synagogues mostly in Byzantine territories, but also later in Egypt and Libya, see Brooten, Women Leaders, 1-5; Goitein, Position of Women, 179. Later Gaonic Genizah fragments show that a Jewish daughter’s education by her father included reading Hebrew so that she could pray and thus could potentially grasp some homiletic sermons, as Sa‘adiah has Esther do. However, since marital age was very young, it was rare for women to have had time to learn much. See Horowitz, The Daughter, 163-4. Female education was more involved than it might seem, since girls had to read the entire parashah correctly and the study of the Bible involved all biblical books. Girls sometimes studied with boys and encountered other materials, for instance commentaries such as those by Sa‘adiah. See Goitein, Gaonic Education, 54-6, 63-6. Günther describes how views on education in Islam benefited from but also influenced certain Jewish and Christian practices. Ibn Sahnun’s (d. 870 C.E.) “Book of Teachers” advises teachers not to instruct boys together with girls, which suggests that such practices were common to other faiths. Günther, Advice for Teachers, 90-5. About a century after Sa‘adiah, Rav Hai Gaon in his moralistic poem, “Shir Musar Haskel”, urges the listener for the sake of his sons and daughters to “buy books as much as you can afford” and to “place them under the care of a tutor from their youth”. See Weiss, Shir Musar Haskel, 55. Note that in Rav Hai Gaon’s panegyric to Rav Yehuda Rosh Haseder, the latter marries his son Dunash to Rabbi Jacob Ibn Shahin’s daughter.
3.6.4 Summary and Conclusions: Main Exemplum

While Sa‘adiah ‘s focus on Esther as a learned rabbinic role model for all Diaspora Jews translates into a protagonist status it also limits the materialization of character traits. Sa‘adiah’s Esther has more in common with the Babylonian Esther Midrash than with ER’s dismissal of Esther, but Sa‘adiah relegates the divine assistance the BT emphasizes to the confines of Esther’s mind.

Hence, in Sa‘adiah’s opinion (and also in Yefet’s opinion, 1.7.3) a character’s importance is expressed by the fact that its rationally-inclined mind informs its actions, more than by any merit of divine assistance. Sa‘adiah establishes Esther’s character in line with medieval psychological and theological norms, rather than with the aid of novelistic midrashic typology. Only Esther’s discourse remains typically rabbinic as an anti-Karaite polemic. The following shows that this didactic approach is characteristic of Sa‘adiah’s treatment of biblical characters and biblical prose in general.

3.7 Characters as Exemplars in Classical Muslim Literature

3.7.1. Pervasiveness of Exemplars in Sa‘adiah’s Commentaries

Sa‘adiah is in favor of a didactic conception of biblical tales as apparent in his short introduction to his translation of the Pentateuch295:

... and the third way (of scripture) is that of notifying the ordered and the warned good (with) reward for his obedience, (Scripture) will tell him what happened to persons who obeyed this call and were successful; and with warning him of the severe punishment for his evil, will tell him of persons who committed the same sin and were punished. And this way is more important than the first two (namely: (1) stating the

because of her father’s great learning, despite of unremarkable financial circumstances. Hence, the prestige of Torah study did impact females, see Fleischer, Rav Hay Gaon’s Panegyric, 460-2, 469-70, 477-8. Thus, as in Rav Hai’s later poem, Sa‘adiah ‘s portrayal of Esther as learned in scripture, homilies and some law may be an updated female exemplum. An emphasis on Esther’s learned psyche is also apparent to a lesser extent in Midr. Ps. 22, which might even be contemporary with Sa‘adiah in parts. See its dating in Reizel, Introduction to Midrash, 282-3.

295 Qafîh, Sa‘adiah on the Pentateuch, 10. Other versions of Sa‘adiah’s short introduction to his translation also repeat the above arguments, see Ben-Shammai, New and Old, 201-3, 210-1.
mitzvoth as in “do” and “do not”, or (2) stating a clear punishment or reward in connection to the mitzvah), as experience and tale adhere to the listener’s heart and are as if (the listener) has seen (them)...

In this statement Sa’adiah clarifies that biblical stories are essentially a means of conveying God’s commandments in a more amiable and effective way than stating them directly (as in the Decalogue). Remnants of Sa’adiah’s commentaries are consistent with the spirit of this introduction and his treatment of Esther. The following is a very partial enumeration of the paradigmatic treatment of other biblical characters, which suggests that Sa’adiah is likely to have so viewed other characters.

First, the story of Sodom is a moral lecture meant to dissuade the reader from acting like the Sodomites or despairing from prayer\(^{296}\). Second, Rebekah’s courtship is mentioned since it demonstrates the just reward for due reverence to God and honors Eliezer’s wit\(^{297}\). Third, the plagues in Egypt are mentioned in Exod. 11:10 to prove that they were all produced for Pharaoh’s educational benefit\(^{298}\). Jethro rightly understood these as exemplary punishments\(^{299}\). Sa’adiah also regarded Pharaoh’s daughter as exemplifying the traits her father lacked\(^{300}\).

The exemplary approach to characters often leads Sa’adiah to cite apologetic arguments to negate the possible sins of biblical characters. He does so in his depiction of Esther and Ahasuerus’s relations (3.6.2.1), but this is emblematic of many other cases\(^{301}\). Haggai Ben-Shammai showed that Sa’adiah’s didactic view even

\(^{296}\) Zucker, Genesis, 390.
\(^{297}\) Ibid, 416.
\(^{298}\) Ratzaby, Exodus, 34*.
\(^{299}\) Ibid, 75*.
\(^{300}\) Ibid, Exodus, 8*.
\(^{301}\) Abraham did not lie when presenting Sarah as his sister (Gen. 12:11ff). He wanted to save the Egyptians from sin. The fact that Isaac repeated this type of act (Gen. 26) proves its favorability. Sa’adiah believes sinful acts would not have been recorded by the biblical editors, thus showing an exemplary conception of biblical prose. Furthermore, the story of Esau selling his first-born status to Jacob is not meant to show Jacob’s cunning, but rather Esau’s disregard, see in Zucker, Genesis, 391-2. Sa’adiah also argues that Aaron only created the golden calf to expose the real idol worshippers hiding amidst the Israelites, see Ratzaby, Exodus, 195-6*. In a similar vein, the remnants of Sa’adiah’s
holds true for his reading of midrashic interpretations. Sa'adiah reworked certain midrashic sources to demonstrate the theological reasons for God’s acts. I now show that Sa’adiah’s paradigmatic approach is rooted in medieval Islamic intellectual norms, despite the traditional garb in which he occasionally envelops it.

3.7.2. Exemplars in Classical Medieval Muslim Literature

3.7.2.1 The Qur’an and Muslim Receptions of Aristotle’s “Poetics”

The Muslim reception of Aristotle’s “Poetics” might have informed Sa‘adiah’s view of characters. Characters in the “Poetics” are generally defined by their actions. A character’s being does not emanate from an inner nature: namely, you are what you choose to do. A character’s choices define its nature. Sa‘adiah’s conception of choice is close to this view. Accordingly, only choice defines mental observation.

Sa‘adiah could have been exposed to the “Poetics”. Since, as Yoav Rinon mentions, it was translated into Arabic around a century before Sa‘adiah’s time and was popular among Muslim philosophers in his period and areas of activity. There is indirect evidence for this connection in various works contemporary to Sa‘adiah that take similar views of narrative. These Arabic versions of the “Poetics” interpretation of 2Sam. 24 question David’s own assertion (v. 10) that he sinned. The victims of the plague were all past supporters of Absalom who merited death, see Shtuber, New Excerpts, 114-5.

Ben-Shamai, Rabbinic Literature, 53-5. In one hyperbolic example, Sa‘adiah uses Midrashim on the Egyptians’ death in the Red Sea to emphasize the didactic reasons for various story details, including the Egyptians’ need to learn something from their own deaths.

Sa‘adiah’s exemplary intent in his Esther commentary is also demonstrated by the presence of a concise enumeration of each section’s “derivative points (shu‘ab/furūʿ)”. Wechsler notes that this is an adoption of the terminology of Islamic usūl al-fiqh. Wechsler, Esther’s Invitation, 1-2.

Rinon, Poetics, 24-7, 101-3.

See the definition of Sadik, Psychology, 93, 96-100.

Ibid, 108-10; (3.6.2.2).

Rinon, Poetics, 118-21.

See the cases in Alhelwah, Emergence and Development, 104, 108, 110, 115, 201.
however, have some unique features not present in Aristotle. Among these is an
emphasis upon character exemplum, not unlike Sa‘adiah’s own views.

According to Averroes’ (d. 1198) middle commentary on the “Poetics”, which
is dated later than both Aristotle and Sa‘adiah, the goal of good characterization is not
mimesis but the fostering of identification or aversion. The audience must identify
with the righteous and disapprove of the villainous to an extent that will induce them
to act upon these feelings and emulate the characters. Positive characters should also
be depicted according to Aristotle’s “golden mean”\(^{309}\). Hence, Averroes’s “Poetics”
stresses exempla as the central function of a character in a way reminiscent of
Sa‘adiah’s portrayal of biblical characters and narratives.

Averroes is too late to have influenced Sa‘adiah, but he provides a glimpse as
to what earlier Muslim reception of the “Poetics” might have been like. Charles
Butterworth mentions another major feature that impacted Averroes that he could
potentially share with Sa‘adiah; namely, the Qur’anic emphasis upon warning and
praise\(^{310}\). To remain within the scope of this study, I limit the brief illustration of this
Qur’anic exemplary emphasis to its longest narrative, Surah Yusuf (12).

Shalom Goldman considers the enhancement of didacticism to be the greatest
Qur’anic addition to the underlying motifs of the Joseph story and its ancient Near
Eastern parallels\(^{311}\). This is exemplified by the Qur’anic stress on the fact that Yusuf
was destined for imprisonment even after he was publicly proven innocent of rape.
His motives are unquestioned nor are they ever negative and are thus comparable to
Sa‘adiah’s more apologetic view of characters\(^{312}\). Ayaz Afsar found that Qur’anic

\(^{309}\) Averroes, Commentary on the Poetics, 12-3, 65-8, 75-6. This treatment is very much like Sa‘adiah’s
short introduction to the Pentateuch presented above.

\(^{310}\) Ibid, 30-1, 92-3.

\(^{311}\) Goldman, Joseph Story, 83-5.

\(^{312}\) Ibid, 86-7. Goldman argues that the Qur’an moved from the more ambiguous modes of the epic to
the didactic holy man, an exemplary but ultimately simpler figure. This is demonstrated by Joseph’s
renditions of biblical figures are generally more paradigmatic and uniformly positive, due to the assumed blamelessness of prophetic figures\textsuperscript{313}. Focalization in Qur’anic narratives, like Sa’adiah’s Esther commentary, connects exemplary characters to the status of the protagonist\textsuperscript{314}.

The Qur’an influenced how characters could be described before Sa’adiah’s time\textsuperscript{315}. Sa’adiah defended the role of biblical narrative in Qur’anic terms of behavioral “praise and warning” to his audience, in his previously cited introduction to his Pentateuch translation\textsuperscript{316}. Sa’adiah gives a uniquely rabbinic Jewish expression to medieval Muslim exemplary poetics that encompassed the “tales of the prophets”\textsuperscript{317}, oral pious storytelling\textsuperscript{318} and even the more sensationalist “Arabian nights”\textsuperscript{319}. The medieval Arabic genre of Adab (“belles-lettres”) seems to more accurately account for the ways in which this Muslim exemplary poetics impacted Sa’adiah’s reception of Esther.

\subsection{Sa’adiah’s view of the Book of Esther as Adab}

characterization in the form of Qur’anic dialogue. According to Q 12:4 he does not voice his dreams insensitively before his brothers. He openly rebukes Potiphar’s wife (Q 12:23, 33). Q 12:37-40 has Joseph praise his monotheism at length. Joseph’s direct characterization by the narrator as well as other figures directly documents his great worth (Q 12:20, 22, 24, 31, 46, 55, 78). Joseph also provides readers with the obvious meaning of his story and his dreams (Q 12:100-1). This is not unlike Sa’adiah’s didacticism.

\textsuperscript{313} Asfar, Comparative Study, 188-91, 229-32.

\textsuperscript{314} Ibid, 209-11.

\textsuperscript{315} Averroes, Commentary on the Poetics, 30-31, 92-93. Note that Averroes used mostly Qur’anic examples of characters, such as the above Joseph and Abraham. He also transforms Aristotle’s “tragic flaw” into a divine ordeal meant to reward faith. Thus, bad things happen to strengthen faith.

\textsuperscript{316} Compare Sa’adiah’s “third way” above with Q (9: 112, 10:57, 16:90, 31:17) and many others.

\textsuperscript{317} Helewa, Advisory Function, 124. 10-11\textsuperscript{th} century Sunnis saw their self-identity as intricately dependent on the history of the prophets. There is a pedagogical connection between Adab and these qisas since both cast pre-Islamic virtues into a Muslim context by their characters and thus integrate Qur’anic themes with new ethical values. ibid, 43-4, 48-9, 56.

\textsuperscript{318} Faik, Storytellers, 29, 45. Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 1200 C.E.)’s “Kitab Al Qussas” emphasized the strong exemplary dimensions of storytelling. He believed that such activities should be targeted at eliciting good from people. Storytelling gave warnings and examples, using the characters of the past to teach society how to act. Biblical themes were completely incorporated into the aims of this storytelling. It was allegedly introduced by converts, like Ka’b al-Ahbar. For an extended and rare “historical” example of such storytelling as “bad”, Ibid, 113.

\textsuperscript{319} Hámori, Art of Story Telling, 164. He notes that many tales of the “nights” have starkly different world views, but still display a moral educating prerogative.
Sa‘adiah viewed Esther as primarily educational. Wechsler argues that Sa‘adiah’s introduction to Esther basically states that he intends to educate the reader on how to live among the Gentiles by using introspective principles gained from the book of Esther. Sa‘adiah’s works and his comments on Esther in particular could be considered a part of the Adab literature of his period. Even one of Sa‘adiah’s fiercest Karaite literary opponents, Salmon ben Yeruḥam, acknowledges this (Judeao-Arabic commentary on Est. 5:14): in his (Sa‘adiah’s) commentary there is indeed benefit for those who are educated. Salmon views Sa‘adiah’s words as Adab. Although the nature and limits of Adab are a complex question, there is sufficient similarity between Sa‘adiah’s Esther and its court setting and classical Adab works.

One influential example of the genre are the works of In Ibn al-Muqaffa (d. 759). His al-Adab al-saghir consistently emphasizes the didactic value of considering oneself and others as paradigms for one’s improvement: The man of intellect must study the good traits of other people and make his soul remember them, thus committing it to the method of improving bad qualities which we have described.

All characters are paradigms in this world view.

Ibn al-Muqaffa indirectly claims in his Adab al-kabīr that the reader should learn from stories about people. He argues that gossip and shocking stories are important, not for their content but to learn about their authors. To Ibn al-Muqaffa, stories and people should both teach us about ourselves. This is not unlike Sa‘adiah’s

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320 Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 95-6.
321 Wechsler, Esther’s Invitation, 15.
322 Sa‘adiah also fits the eclectic image and areas of interest of an Adib as described by Helewa, Advisory Function, 46.
323 For the myriad problems in identifying what Adab is, See Leder, Conventions, 34-7. In general, however, it corresponds to the French (and English) concept of “belles-lettres”, namely, literature, which may be fictional or light, but is held in esteem for its aesthetic and humanistic properties.
324 See Kaufmann, Subjectivity, 172, 180.
325 Ibid, 176 see another pertinent example in ibid, 188.
326 Ibid, 233.
views. Below I illustrate some striking parallels between Sa‘adiah’s commentary on Esther and Ibn Muqaffa’’s compositions in light of their somewhat similar poetics and courtly setting. These parallels explain how Sa‘adiah may have viewed Esther and opted for an especially paradigmatic approach.

Haman’s undoing was caused by his ignorance of Esther’s Jewish origins, and Ibn Muqaffa‘ warns against precisely this situation in his *al-Adab al-kabīr*: *When you are with a group of people, never vilify or denigrate entire lineages or peoples. You never know: you could be mistakenly discussing one of the groups who are present there with you in the assembly*. Moreover, some of the reasons Sa‘adiah presents as motivating Esther’s invitation to Haman echo in the *Adab al-kabīr*.

There are other parallels to Sa‘adiah’s remarks on Esther’s character. Kathryn Scott Kaufmann notes that Ibn Muqaffa‘ uses his *Adab* works to alter the criterion for social excellence from an ethnic Arabic one to one of linguistic accomplishment. He does so to promote non-Arab secretaries such as himself, who wanted to integrate the Abbasid administration. It is possible to imagine that Sa‘adiah viewed Mordecai and Esther in this professional light, considering his references to them as non-Muslims in the service of Muslim officials.

Kaufmann also presents *Adab* literature as an attempt by learned subordinates to temper the brutality of their rulers. Sa‘adiah describes the relationship between Ahasuerus and his advisors in these exact terms. He also mentions this very goal as one of God ‘s aims when he rewards foreign kings. Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ also warns of

327 Ibid, 209, 238. Contrast to Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 331-3, in which Sa‘adiah does not mention this argument, but emphasizes the wise way in which Esther condemned Haman.
328 Helewa, Advisory Function, 232-5. Examples include the need to keep the enemy close, as well as to come between him and his allies. Compare to Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 297-9.
329 Kaufmann, Subjectivity, 65-6, 71-3.
330 See Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 192, 206-7.
331 Kaufmann, Subjectivity, 104.
333 Ibid, 149.
the fickle and irrational king who exerts too much force when angry and too much haste when content. This leads to disproportion in punishment and reward. This depiction is much like Sa‘adiah’s descriptions of Ahasuerus.\footnote{Kaufmann, Subjectivity, 208. Compare to Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 332.}

### 3.7.2.3 Summary and Conclusions: A Rabbinic Qur’anic Concept
I did not mention parallels between Sa‘adiah and Ibn al-Muqaffa‘ to argue that Sa‘adiah read the *Adab al-kabîr* or any other specific work, but rather to show that he considered the book of Esther and his interpretation of it in light of the *Adab* genre and its great emphasis on the exemplary nature of people, stories and arguments.\footnote{Presenting Esther as *Adab* would have captivated some of Sa‘adiah’s audience, as Jews in Iraq and Egypt studied how to emulate rejected courtly petitions. See Rustow, Petition to a Woman, 21-3.}

Sa‘adiah combined this identification with a rabbinic twist on Muslim mediated Aristotelian poetics and an anti-Karaite agenda. Esther was his choice for the main exemplar and by extension the closest he came to depicting a protagonist. This concept is part of Sa‘adiah’s broader didactic approach to biblical characters, in his Judeao-Arabic exegetical enterprise, at large.

### 3.8 Abraham Ibn Ezra on Esther: Flawed Dynamic Protagonist
Abraham Ibn Ezra wrote two commentaries on Esther at different times and places.\footnote{The Hebrew excerpts from Ibn Ezra’s two commentaries in this chapter are all taken from *HaKeter*: Five Scrolls, 214-69. Unless noted otherwise, the English translations are all mine.}

Walfish notes that the first commentary (A) was written in Italy, possibly in Rome (1142 C.E.). The second longer commentary (B) was written in Rouen, France (late 1155 or early 1156 C.E.) following a second Daniel commentary.\footnote{Walfish, Two Commentaries, 324.}

Ibn Ezra composed commentary B to replace A, as he no longer had it in his possession. Commentary B generally stresses Esther’s piety and intelligence and relies to a
greater extent on Yefet’s Judeao-Arabic Esther commentary. Ibn Ezra’s main midrashic source appears to be the Babylonian Esther Midrash.

This section deals with two specific features of Ibn Ezra’s two Esther commentaries; namely that both value Esther’s beauty far more than any other quality and that both insist that Esther underwent character development. I also consider the impact of these two features on Esther’s potential role as protagonist. Since Walfish maintains that the commentaries are generally concordant, I discuss the most conclusive comments, relegating minute differences to the notes.

3.8.1 Beauty in Ibn Ezra’s Esther Commentaries

Ibn Ezra presents what may be called “the desire for beauty”, as the greatest motivator of the book of Esther’s characters. He refers to this desire more often than the Bible. For instance, he reads Memukan’s description of a worthier queen as indicating that Esther outstripped Vashti in both beauty and conduct. Superior obedience to the king is not enough in his view (version B): *If it pleases the king (1:19)- my words. So*

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338 For some instances see Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 27-8. For others, see the next note.
339 According to Zipor, Sa’adiah’s influence is more evident in version A of the commentary, whereas Yefet was more indirectly influential on version B. See Zipor, God’s Name, 6-66. Ergo, Zipor wonders whether Ibn Ezra sometimes mildly confused Yefet with Sa’adiah. This seems to be consistent with Yefet’s greater prominence in the longer “French” version of Ibn Ezra’s commentary on Exodus, in Davidovitz, Two Commentaries, 82-4, 212, 268. Yefet’s influence may in fact have been stronger in commentary B, see 2:15, 20; 5:6. In these two instances Ibn Ezra’s motivations were closer to Yefet than in the rest of the commentary. In the latter comment (5:6), Ibn Ezra’s deduction of two gifts offered to Esther by the King based on a parallelism suggests borrowing, since this method of exegesis is atypical of Ibn Ezra. He views Esther’s dramatic pause in v. 7 as a hint that she is about to ask for something extremely consequential and so delays her request.
340 Walfish, Two Commentaries, 328-9. The commentaries maintain the major lines of interpretation, but conduct similar inquiries in different places. See my analysis below for some differences (3.8.3.2).
341 The biblical text (Est. 1:19) does not explain how Vashti’s replacement should surpass her.
342 A on Est. 1:1 suggests that Vashti might have refused the summons since she hailed from a land where women must modestly remain unseen. Alternatively, she may have believed the King was drunk and thus not serious about his intentions. See also, Feldman, Studies, 504. Josephus claims that Vashti did not want to be seen, since this was against Persian customs.
that it may not be altered (ibid) or removed, this edict and the king does not have the ability to alter it. Who is better than she (ibid)- in beauty and morals. Beauty thus plays a central role in Ibn Ezra’s depiction of Esther’s character to the exclusion of most other qualities.

3.8.1.1 Ibn Ezra’s Objectification of Esther as a Response to Yefet ben ‘Eli

Ibn Ezra repeatedly describes how Esther’s beauty defined her relations with all the men of Est. Ch. 2. His claims indirectly refute the possibility that Esther’s charisma was not merely physical. Initially, Beauty alone motivates Ahasuerus to seek a new bride, because Vashti’s looks are the only thing he remembers about her (A, underlined):

he remembered Vashti (2:1) by [word of] mouth; and it is possible that he remembered her beauty, therefore: the vav (and) of and what she had done.

344. Rashi on Est. 2:1 also suggests that it was Vashti’s beauty that Ahasuerus remembered.

345. The occurrence of “mouth” means that the King mentioned Vashti orally to his servants. The assertions hinge on v. 2 where the king’s servants assume beautiful virgins would be a balm for his lowly spirit:

Beautiful (2:3)- in his eyes or Beautiful- their whole shape; or the eye's image of all the body. And let the girl who pleases (2:4)- and was not very beautiful.

346. And also (Version B):
Ibn Ezra suggests that Esther was favored in the harem, because of her beauty rather than her graces. This may go against the explicit biblical wording (B): *The girl pleased him and won (Heb. carried) his favor* (2:9)- She is the carrier of favor, it shall not part from her; as though she does a favor to all those who look upon her.

“Carrying” favor is metaphorically ‘doing a favor’ to all those who gaze upon Esther. They are rewarded by deriving pleasure from her beauty.

Ibn Ezra (B) also explains BT’s suggestion that Mordecai married Esther as motivated by the description of Esther’s beauty mentioned in the verse:

**as his own daughter** (2:7)- if she were not a virgin, Mordecai would never have risked [letting] her [be taken], for he would not count upon a miracle. Perhaps the derash “Le-Bayit” (b. Megilla 13a): [is based on] that [idea that] he thought about taking her as wife because of her beauty.

Davidovitz suggests that Ibn Ezra views the homily as interpreting vs. 7, namely as a description of Mordecai’s thoughts, spurred by the textual proximity of Esther’s adoption to the description of her beauty. Hence if Mordecai harbored marital thoughts about Esther, it was due to her beauty. He wanted to marry her, but

Commentary B provides some new explanations for Esther’s names in the Midrashim compared to A. Her beauty counters the claim that she was seventy four years old. Lakkahu is another hint at the impetus for the homily about Mordecai’s wishes to marry Esther. Esther was only called good-looking and not beautiful. Perhaps this explains the view that her complexion was greenish. Also note how Esther’s universal appeal in b. Megilla13 is similar to Ibn Ezra’s above description.

Brown, Driver and Briggs, English Lexicon, חסד I, 338.

Ibn Ezra argues that Mordecai would never have risked sending Esther to the King if she had not been a virgin, as a cautious Mordecai would not count on miraculous salvation. This claim undermines several midrashic assertions, including that Esther was Mordecai’s wife and that Mordecai anticipated a miracle. However, commentary B differs:

The mention of “wives” is the inspiration for the Midrash that claims Esther was not a virgin. Ibn Ezra thinks that virginity or the lack thereof are both possible. Thus, he might actually accept the wife of Mordecai interpretation he rejected in A. Therefore, if she were not a virgin, Mordecai would never have risked sending her to the King, for he would not count upon a miracle.
failed to act in time\textsuperscript{350}. Ibn Ezra equates Talmudic Mordecai’s reasoning to that of Ahasuerus presented above. The two men covet Esther’s beauty.

Accordingly, Ibn Ezra suggests beauty as the reason why Mordecai ordered Esther to conceal her Jewish origins, and as the explanation why she would be taken to the King regardless of her hated Jewish identity (B 2:10)\textsuperscript{351}.

\textit{In my opinion, all the Jews were contemptible (Heb. nivzim) in the eyes of the throne as can be seen from Belshazzar's statement to Daniel calling him “one of the exiles of Judah” (Dan. 5:13). It seems to me that Mordecai realized that the king was not interested in noble birth, but only in a beautiful woman regardless of her country of origin. He knew that Esther was very beautiful and feared that the king would find no one like her, and if she were to refuse to eat the king's food he would force her [to do so]. But if she were queen she would be able to conceal herself}\textsuperscript{352}.

Ibn Ezra claims that Esther’s beauty was renowned in the palace, since she and Mordecai lived there. Her beauty was so well known that the king’s servants made sure she could not hide from them. She was taken as soon as the decree was issued, because her lodgings were close to the palace (B 2:8):

\textit{So when the king's order was proclaimed and his edict given in writing, the [palace officers put guards around Esther so that she could not hide. Her beauty had already been noticed, since she was living in the king's palace with the king's servants...and the text says taken, for she was taken against her wishes and against the wishes of Mordecai}\textsuperscript{353}.

\textsuperscript{350} Davidovitz, Attitude to Midrash, 229-30. See also Walfish, Two commentaries, 340; Kosher Adultery, 312-3.

\textsuperscript{351} Alternatively, it would have been easier for Esther to hide, but officials prevented her from doing so. These comments are aimed against Rashi (2:10), who was sure Esther's Jewishness was a sign of desirability, since Ibn Ezra follows the structure of Rashi’s argument very closely. See Walfish, Medieval Garb, 125-6.

\textsuperscript{352} The idea of Esther concealing her identity is stronger in commentary A: \textit{In my opinion, the real reason that Mordecai did this was to enable Esther to observe God's Torah in secret so that she would not eat non-kosher meat (nevelot) and would observe the Sabbath without the servants' knowledge. For if the matter became known, the king might force her to transgress or even kill her since she was taken against her will. Ibn Ezra might be following Yefet when presenting Esther as a crypto Jew, see Walfish, Medieval Garb, 124-5. Walfish notes that Esther and the Fast of Esther was crucially important in the converso religious calendar. The fast was observed on the full moon of February and even kept by some for three consecutive days.}

\textsuperscript{353} According to Walfish, Ibn Ezra envisioned the palace itself as Shushan HaBira, situated within the walled city of Elam, where Jews lived outside the palace walls. This depiction may have been influenced by the palace of the Caliphs in Cordoba, which was built at some distance from the city, or by the Jewish city of Lucene where Jews only lived within the walls. Walfish, Medieval Garb, 98-100.
Commentary A marks the Talmudic view that Esther had a greenish unattractive complexion as *drash* and explains that it relies upon the botanical undertones of Esther’s Hebrew name (Myrtle): *And derash “greenish” (b. Megilla 13a)- because of *Hadassah* (2:7)*. Ibn Ezra believes that Esther’s charm must stem from beauty, thereby making the greenish complexion unrealistic. His emphasis on Esther’s beauty has the effect of weakening her other possible merits and might undermine her centrality to the plot or the very least weaken the extent of her characterization.

Ibn Ezra’s position thus far is a reversed mirror image of Yefet’s position\(^{355}\), since the latter downplays beauty in favor of Esther’s intelligence and conduct. According to Yefet, Ahasuerus was not only looking for a beautiful virgin, but also for an intelligent one: *By the statement he remembered Vashti, (the mudawwinn-editor/redactor) means that he remembered her intellect and her beauty, as well as his love for her*\(^{356}\). Yefet similarly endeavors to demonstrate that Esther’s intelligence governed all her actions\(^{357}\). He states that Esther’s humble nature and demeanor are

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\(^{354}\) *...וּדרש (ראה ב. מגילה יג ע) ‘ירקרוקת’- מטעם הדסה....*

\(^{355}\) Compare Yefet to Ibn Ezra’s comments regarding Vashti’s memory and Esther’s success in Est.2, as well as to Esther’s appeal to the King in Ch.5. Ibn Ezra is purposely polemicing against Yefet’s views by interpreting as he does in these instances. He considers beauty as the sole factor in all the instances, whereas Yefet cites other reasons for Esther’s success. Yefet’s stress on Esther’s humility might have been transferred by Ibn Ezra to Mordecai in both his commentaries on Est. 10:3.

\(^{356}\) Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 190 and his note 152, Vashti is not considered intelligent by either Ibn Ezra or Rashi.

\(^{357}\) Yefet marks positivity by highlighting a rational thought process and vice versa. Yefet thus characterizes both Sara and Hagar as rational, but Hagar’s downfall stems from irrational considerations, see Zawanowska, Literary Approach, 75-9. He does the same for Esther.
what drew the king to her. Yefet also extensively illustrates Esther’s intellect in his description of her interactions in Est. 5 and 8.

The stark differences between Yefet and Ibn Ezra are not just indirect polemics on part of Ibn Ezra, against the perceived weak interpretations of his predecessors. In my view, he is motivated by his Andalusian views on beauty that are different from those of his predecessors. I now examine the traces of these views in his comments.

Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 205: After having described the general situation of the young women, (the mudawwin) mentions the situation of Esther, indicating that Hegai presented to her the clothing and jewelry which she should wear, though she herself requested nothing due to the humility of her soul... (The mudawwin) then indicates that when she went in to the king, and he saw her and examined her demeanor, he was drawn to her more than to anyone else...

Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 249-50: (5.5:1-4): It is possible that (Esther) wore the sackcloth under her (royal) apparel and so, when she went to him, she went in with the clothing that she had (previously) been wearing...He had just woken up and sat down on his throne, and was sending out to summon whom he wanted, when in came Esther before anyone else had come in; and she stood in the place where it was proper (for her) to stand and did not rush audaciously into the house... Thus, when Esther entered without having been summoned the servants were unquestionably dismayed, and when (the king) looked at her and extended to her the scepter, there is no doubt that they were happy for it... Yet in reply, she requested that he and Haman attend her banquet, and nothing else. This indicates, moreover, that she had prepared the food and the drink and the rest of what was necessary for her set in order before her entry unto him...

Yefet speculates that Esther might have worn sackcloth underneath her garments. He bases this claim on 4:16, where “WuVekhen” might be read “as in this state”; thus Esther approached the king in a similar state of fasting. Yefet assumes she wore sackcloth when fasting and thus would also preserve this apparel. He is “Karaizing” Esther as an exemplary figure for the mourners of Zion. Ibn Ezra could have been inspired by Yefet’s comments to highlight Esther’s renunciation of beauty below.

Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 281-3: (8: 3-7)…And so once Haman’s remembrance was cut off, (Esther) looked for a time at which it would be suitable for her to address the king concerning the matter of the letters which had been dispatched by Haman. She therefore returned (to the king) and on this second occasion exceeded the first occasion in that she fell upon her face at his feet and wept and entreated him... On the first occasion, however, it says, and she stood before the king- she arose and stood, all of which served to underscore the pressing need and petition. She likewise drew out the preface (to her petition), saying first. If it be pleasing to the king, after which she said, and if I have found favor in his sight, then, and the thing seem right before the king, and then, and I be pleasing in his eyes, by which, in every clause, she intends to say, “Since the time of my (initial) entry unto the king, he has found nothing in me which he has disliked. May he therefore fulfill my request that the letters which Haman devised and in which he wrote concerning the annihilation of the Jews be revoked”. She then said, For how can I endure to see, (etc.), showing that she did not want to live and behold the death of her people or her kindred.

Yefet illustrates Esther’s intelligence above and beyond her worry for her people. He adds that Esther waited for an opportune moment to address the King and chose to wait after Mordecai’s promotion in Haman’s stead, was less fresh in the king’s mind. She thus avoids seeming ungrateful. Yefet also highlights Esther’s national sympathies by illustrating the differences between her personal plea in Ch. 5 and the national one in Ch. 8.

Ibn Ezra is wont to polemicize in his introductions (see for the Pentateuch and Lamentations).
3.8.1.2 Esther as a Poetic “Gazelle”

Ibn Ezra not only highlights beauty as the main motivation for the events in Est. 2, but also revels in describing Esther’s beauty in detail (version A): *fair and beautiful* (2:7) - all her organs are fair; *beautiful* - the sight of all of her or about her eye[s] (Color?). In other words, Esther's whole body is beautiful. Ibn Ezra reads this assertion as repeated twice by the verse or as accompanied by a statement that Esther’s eyes were an attractive color. The beautiful eye is a known poetic trope for an attractive maiden in medieval Arabic and Hebrew poetry. Judah HaLevi’s piyut “Mi KaMokha VeEn kaMokha” describes Vasthi and Esther’s eyes in this very way: …The King Said to the beautiful of Eye… Ibn Ezra is thus conveying a prevalent Andalusian preconception of Esther’s beauty.

According to poetic conventions also expressed by Ibn Hazm, Ibn Ezra is probably thinking of dark eyes. These are the eyes of the female beloved that are likened to those of the gazelle in medieval Arabic and Hebrew poetry, as Ibn Ezra himself states on SoS. 2:7 (version A, literary sense) and more overtly in his commentary B (SoS. 2: 3-7; underlined):

*She said: Like an apple* (2:3). If the verses adhere to the word *delight* (2:3): she was delighted [she coveted sitting] to sit in his shadow (2:3) and be brought by him to the banqueting house (2:4) and put his intention towards me (2:4); and the crux of the

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362 For the importance and continued impact of this piyut on North African Purim Liturgy, see Hazan, Mi KaMokha, 68-73.  
363 This context has other ramifications, see Walfish, Medieval Garb, 158-9. Ibn Ezra's depiction of the court is subtly influenced by his Spanish origins. He claims that to leave the court would only be on pain of death. This is similar to the Caliph’s court Ibn Ezra knew. The caliphs had absolute authority in making all appointments and these could be revoked at will. The personal officers of the king’s household had to remain in the palace at all times. The chief of police, a lesser official, sat at the gate surrounded by subordinates who left only to carry out specific orders. Mordecai is comparable to him.  
364 An alternative is that Esther had blue eyes as was common to the blood lines of the Umayyad Caliphs of Spain, along with blond hair. This was a result of a large number of Frankish and Slavonic captives; see Ibn Hazm, Ring of the Dove, 14, 17. Ibn Hazm confesses a fondness for these features. This fondness might also have been fashionable enough to be considered a possibility for Ibn Ezra’s description of Esther, especially within the harem setting and the existence of the “Slavic” faction of ministers and eunuchs identified with the royal household, Ibid, 102. Consider the possible influence of Ibn Hazm on the troubadours of Provence, which suggests a shared conception of beauty. See Ibid, 4. Thus, light eyes and hair could apply to commentary B’s setting.
matter is: in public; show his love and place his left hand under my head (2:6), and I adjure the daughters of Jerusalem (2:7) that they not awaken me until (2:7) it is time [that he] desires love (2:7). And this [specific] adjuration, is [used] for he likens his desire to a gazelle; and so “a lovely deer, a graceful doe” (Prov. 5:19) — for their beauty, cleanliness and the blackness of their eyes. As if she says: I adjure you (2:7) by those similar to you in beauty366.

Ibn Ezra thus expands on Esther’s appearance to a greater degree than the biblical text by speculating about her eyes. He similarly reimagines the harem as a place busy in making her figure full and so attractive:

(A)and he quickly (2:9) as in speedily. her portion (2:9)- parts; like one portion (1Sam. 1:5); of the things of eating, to make her plump. Seven maids (2:9)- to serve her. Chosen - this expression is known from the teachings of our sages (b. T’anim 20b). and he advanced (2:9) her portions to do her good. And the reason the harem (2:9) [is mentioned] is joint with [the mention] of advanced (2:9), for he altered both her portions and [those of] her [harem] maids (2:9) while she was in the harem with her companions367.

Hegai made sure that Esther quickly received her allotted portions of food to fatten her up. Similarly, the girls could ask for whatever they wanted for their trial night with Ahasuerus, so that they would not worry and lose weight loss (A): [with that] (2:13)- with that thing, for she has permission to ask for whatever she wants; so she does not ponder (think worrying thoughts) and [so] become gaunt368.

These comments disclose a conception of beauty as volupptuous and thus too veers towards certain stereotypical depictions in Andalusian erotic poetry. Carmen

The girls would come before the King with whatever they requested so that they would not worry and anxiety would not undermine their beauty. For a similar effect as a cliché of unrequited love in Andalusian poetry, see Pagis, Secular Poetry, 258-9.
Caballero-Navas noted that in Judah HaLevi and Moses Ibn Ezra’s poems, women are thin gazelles, whose waists are like that of a palm tree and whose eyes fire arrows at the poet\(^{369}\). However, Dan Pagis pointed out that many other descriptions, like those of Ibn Hazm, endow women with generous thighs and bosoms\(^{370}\).

Thus, Ibn Ezra’s view that Esther was chosen primarily because of her physical beauty and was deliberately made voluptuous, is in line with medieval Christian and Jewish scholars’ overall treatment of texts like Esther and Daniel as documents of historical courtly realia\(^{371}\). Ibn Ezra’s emphasis on beauty nevertheless echoes the images of harems and palaces of his Andalusia and its erotic poetry as is also evident in Judah HaLevi’s similar depictions of Esther\(^{372}\).

\(^{369}\) Caballero-Navas, Women Images, 12-6.

\(^{370}\) Abraham Ibn Ezra, like Moses Ibn Ezra, belonged to the Hebrew Andalusian poetic tradition, whose many motifs were already established in Hebrew and Arabic poetry. A detailed distributor and demonstration of these motifs is ibn Hazm’s the Ring of the Dove, as argued by Pagis, Secular Poetry, 269. Categorically, according to Ibn Hazm as well, even the most moderate man would desire a woman who had a rounded bosom, which would hint at a need for some adipose tissue, see his memoir in Ibn Hazm, Ring of the Dove, 176; the verses of poetry in ibid, 193. Alternatively, SoS. 7:6, sees Ibn Ezra (A literary sense) emphasizing the various sensual qualities of women’s hair, namely color and softness. He does not consider this trait in Esther, though. See also, Pagis Secular Poetry, 258. Ibn Ezra is undeniably thinking about plumpness, see Ibn Ezra on Deut. 32:15. "שְׁמַנְתָּךְ יִכְוֹב קָרָה לִפְנֵי: שְׁמַנְתָּךְ יִכְוֹב קָרָה לִפְנֵי..."

\(^{371}\) Wills, Jewish Novel, 164.

\(^{372}\) Esther’s beauty (underlined) is greatly emphasized in Judah HaLevi’s retelling in his “Who is Like You and No One is Like You” (“Mi Kamoka VeEn Kamoka”), where Ahasuerus is so affected by Esther as to renounce all that he has. Here is my translation of some key portions:

…כְּלַשְׁתֶּה מִתֵּאָלָבָא נָלַה
וְכָלַת הַפְּלַשַׁת הַיָּפָה בְּמֶלֶךְ
וְכָלַת אֲשֶׁר יַכְּלָה הַמֶלֶךְ
וְהַכָּלַת אֲשֶׁר יִכְוֹבּ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶלֶךְ

…טֶרֶם כְּלוֹת מִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן
אָמַר הַמֶלֶךְ אֶל יְפַת הָעַיִן
שַּאֲלִי כִּי הַכֹּל לְנֶגְדֵךְ כְּאַיִן
…

...She wore grace on the third day and went
And was very precious in the eyes of the king
And he despised all that he governs
And all that he has

“most beautiful of women, pleasant plant.
What is your petition, for all is (at your) behest?”

Ere ended the banquet of wine,
The king said to the [one] beautiful of eye:
“Ask! for all is naught compared to thee”…
The emphasis on the merits of Esther’s physical appearance rather than on God’s intervention (BT), or Esther’s own wisdom and modesty (Yefet/Sa’adiah), might lead to the assumption that Ibn Ezra undercuts Esther’s role as a protagonist. This is not so. Rather, Esther’s beauty allows Ibn Ezra to introduce a dramatic change in Esther’s mind in chapter 4, which counteracts the very “physical” Esther of his comments on Est. 2. She renounces her beauty in favor of faith in God.

3.8.2 Esther’s Character Development

Ibn Ezra does not shy away from suggesting that Mordecai seriously accused Esther that she selfishly believed she will be exempt from Haman’s decree in the harem (Est. 4:13-16). He mentions that the perfect tense in v. 16 shows that Esther is sharing her thoughts with us and is thus candid in her cowardly responses:

(A): Do not think (imagine) (4:13)- think, similar in stem to “as I thought” (Num. 33:56); both are from the weak stem ‘imagination’, meaning in the thought of the mind. The strong Tsade of deliverance (4:14) [is] because of the missing Nun. And the point is that relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews (4:14) by another way and not by you. And if you think you will escape- you will perish (4:14) with all of your father’s family (4:14)... and if I perish, I perish (4:16)- that I do not live (sit) with my people, I will [now] perish completely. A perfect verb is used instead of an imperfect verb, to indicate: [that these are] her thoughts. Such as “if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved” (Gen. 43:14).

Unlike Ibn Ezra, Yefet defuses a negative reading by having Mordecai deny it:

(4: 12-14): (The mudawwin) then says And they told Mordecai because (Esther’s) maidservants went out with Hatach in order that the situation might be thoroughly disclosed to Mordecai, that he might not become angry with her, for the habit had never overtaken her that, when Mordecai would charge her to do something, she would bandy words with him about it. And even though she responded to him in this fashion, she still desired of him that he would bear patiently with her until another

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373 To the “male gaze”, a woman can either be beautiful or clever (not both). For the genesis of this dichotomy as principal for representation in cinema, see Mulvey, Visual Pleasure, 11ff. This limitation could also be connected to the medieval body/soul dichotomy (3.9) but is a form of misogyny.
time, whereupon, perhaps, the king would request her and it would then be possible for her to speak. However, when Mordecai heard this, he sharply sent back to her his reply, not because Esther was really saying to herself that the Jews would perish while she and all the Jews who were in the king’s residence would be spared, or because she was (only) concerned about the family of her father’s house, but rather because he wanted to greatly provoke her. And he then says, as it were, “There is no doubt that God will relieve his people from this hardship, whether such comes by your hand or by the hand of another; yet such is more incumbent upon you than upon another because your attainment of royalty was for this very time” - so per the statement, and who knoweth, etc 375.

Yefet uses psycho-narration. Esther did not want to anger Mordecai, because she always obeyed him without hesitation. Yefet deduces this from his exegesis of Est. 2:20. Yefet negates any possible selfish motives, by directly describing Esther’s state of mind, which is undisclosed in the Bible. He uses Mordecai’s opinion on the matter (underlined above) as a rhetorical ploy to completely denounce readings such as those found in Ibn Ezra 376.

Ibn Ezra (B 4:16) uses quoted monologue to voice Esther’s frame of mind and theological woes, only after she has been rightly rebuked by Mordecai (underlined):

as I perish ('avadety) - ‘as I lost ('ibadety) the way of the Torah, as to not keep it.
Selah”, as “and you will perish in the way” (Ps. 2:12)- lost (perish) from the world.
And the meaning (of Esther’s expression) is: “If I die, I am not afraid” 377. These comments on the end of Est. 4 are somewhat like the Septuagint additions. Ibn Ezra A accordingly psycho-narrates a changed Esther who comes to rely upon God (underlined) 378.

375 Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 244. The importance of wisdom and intellect to a woman is further attested to by Yefet’s assertion that Zeresh was wise. The Bible does not state this. ...and his wife Zeresh for she was wise…, Ibid, 253.
376 This apologetic trend is in line with Zawanowska’s description of Yefet’s treatment of the patriarchs. He tends to actively embellish biblical heroes; hence, his presentation above is very different from that in Midrash. Even Yefet’s translation at times contains apologetic elements to further idolize the patriarchs. See Zawanowska, Border-land of Literalism, 180-91.
377 Davidovitz, Two Commentaries, 38. She argues that Ibn Ezra’s Midrash sources were confined to the BT and some version of ER. Hence, Ibn Ezra’s connection to the Septuagint could be explained by the presence of addition C in ER.8:7 via Josippon (3.4.2).
Esther showed her confidence in God, by approaching Ahasuerus after a three
day fast. Even such a short fast impacts the face, and the appearance of the faster in
general, for the worse. Ibn Ezra assumes that Esther’s beauty would have naturally
swayed the King, perhaps as a result of his past behavior. Thus, Esther undermines
her beauty as proof of the strength of her new-found faith.

Esther’s transformation in Ibn Ezra constitutes a departure from earlier Jewish
apolectic portrayals of Est. 4. It suggests a different conception of character. The
suddenness of Esther’s transformation is consistent with patterns of character
development in later medieval and early renaissance novellas identified by Robert
Clements and Joseph Gibaldi. Character development tended to be an all or nothing
affair of sudden and dramatic conversion. Therefore, Ibn Ezra’s Esther undergoes a
similar conversion, though his inspiration is more philosophical.

Masha Itzaki notes that Ibn Ezra’s Yom Kippur piyyutim tend to dramatize
the conflict between mind and body. The collapse of the body is not the death of the
sinner but the soul’s release. If the soul is not the speaker in the piyut, the character of
a distant sage recapitulates the problems of the present. Ibn Ezra’s comments on
Est. 4 show Esther undergoing a similar conflict recapitulated by Mordecai, the
distant sage. Ibn Ezra does not dramatize Esther’s body/soul dichotomy in a *piyut*, but rather by commenting that Esther chose God over her corporeal beauty\(^\text{385}\).

Ibn Ezra’s enormous emphasis on beauty in Est. 1-2 serves to underscore Esther’s transformation. He enforces Esther’s new-found piety with a suggested reason why she avoided speaking during the first wine banquet (commentary A):

*tomorrow* ... *and then I will do as the king has said* (5:8): to voice my request. And in my opinion, Esther was late to speak (delayed speaking) during the first wine banquet, for she did not see any sign from God in response to Israel’s fast; and when she saw during the second day the greatness [bestowed upon] Mordecai (Esther 6:11), her heart was fortified\(^\text{386}\).

Esther held a second banquet and did not state her request during the first, because she waited for a divine response to Israel’s fast. When she saw that Mordecai had been honored, she knew it was the right time to act. Hence, this instance of psycho-narration (underlined) points to Esther’s religious consciousness\(^\text{387}\). This narration should be compared to the extended and dramatized presentation of the issue of the second banquet in Ibn Ezra’s other commentary (B):

*Hurry Haman* (6:14)- to bring him swiftly. And one should ask: why did Esther not tell the king during the first banquet what she told him the second day? The answer is: she was so afraid because of Haman’s high status and was afraid she would harm herself and do no good for her people. And Lo! She saw that the Jews who were in Susa fasted and that God did not heed their fast; for she saw no sign of heeding; and

\(^{385}\) Other examples are apparent in Ibn Ezra’s depictions of female speakers in the Song of Songs. Ibn Ezra on SoS. 8:3 (A literary sense) rephrases the verse by adding the explicit feelings of the woman who now possesses her beloved. In the allegorical sense of SoS. 1:1 (version A), he argues that the daughters of Jerusalem are actual daughters, whereas the “mother” (Jerusalem) is also the female speaker of the Song. He equates her with the personified Jerusalem of Zec. 12:6 and Ezek. 16:2. The interactions with her daughters are in his view “like a person speaking with his thoughts”, namely introspection. A similar argument presents SoS. 1:2 as “the girl talking to her spirit with all her desire” (Version B literal sense). Ibn Ezra (version B, literal sense) on SoS. 8:12 rephrases the verse to have the female speaker state that being with her beloved is more pleasurable to her than any fortune. See also Davidovitz, *Two Commentaries*, 37.

\(^{386}\) Ibn Ezra appears to discount the supposition that Esther “wore” something other than royal clothes, such as prophecy in b. Megilla 15a. His comment that the guards could not say anything to Esther might also be taken from Yefet on these verses. See Wechsler, *Yefet on Esther*, 249-50.

\(^{387}\) Ibn Ezra might have reused one of the reasons (the sixth mentioned) from b. Megilla 15b.
she delayed speaking (late to speak), for she said: “maybe God will still heed our prayer”. And when she saw the beginning of Haman’s downfall (6:13), her fear left her and she said: “this wicked Haman” (7:6).

In addition to searching for a divine sign, Haman’s rank prompted Esther to be cautious, so that she would not aggravate the situation by accusing him. Ibn Ezra adds these thoughts by means of a quoted monologue (underlined). In both commentaries, he reserves literary techniques of mental characterization exclusively for Esther’s religious acumen. It was important for him to show Esther’s pious mind. One of Ibn Ezra’s main dramatic devices in his poetry, as identified by Israel Levin, is rephrasing Midrash in this way. Ibn Ezra dramatizes for emphasis in his Esther commentaries.

In summary, Ibn Ezra reserves mental characterizations for the latter parts of Esther, and so contrasts them with an introduced emphasis on beauty in the first part of the commentaries. He uses his commentaries to dramatize Esther’s renunciation of the physical, by choosing when to express her mind and when to remain silent. These themes are unique to his comments and suggest that Esther was rather important to him after all.

Conversely, Yefet does not fully conceptualize the idea of a protagonist, but also specifically focuses upon Esther’s mind. This suggests that Esther was designated as a protagonist by Yefet. Ibn Ezra’s conflicted rendering of Esther is then proof of

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390 Yefet chooses to describe Esther’s motivation to a greater extent than Mordecai’s reasons. Compare the numerous instances explaining Esther’s thoughts against the only four instances related to Mordecai, in Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 215-6, 241, 285, 317. In other more mutual cases, Yefet prefers to explain Esther’s and not Mordecai’s feelings though he is present, ibid, 198, 209. Yefet also does not use Mordecai’s parades in Chapters 6 and 8 to comment on his thoughts. Thus, Yefet was more interested in Esther. Accordingly, Ibn Ezra appears to use Esther as a focalizer more than Sa’adiah, though this could be a result of differing poetic devices.
391 Zawanowska, Literary Approach, 71.
392 Whoever’s considerations are fleshed out among the characters of Esther, tends to be the most important to that reader or exeget, see on the reception of Esther in Wills, Jewish Novel, 93-4, 103-4.
her protagonist status given the similarities to Yefet’s mode of characterization.\(^{393}\) Below, I show how this claim is supported by Ibn Ezra’s use of character analogy.

3.8.3 Esther and Other Characters in Ibn Ezra

3.8.3.1 Zeresh: Esther’s Negative Double

Ibn Ezra’s depiction of Esther above (Est. 5:8 and 6:14) also indirectly compares her to Zeresh, whose typical traits are in line with the possible misogynic conceptions informing ERII (3.5.1), but Esther is singled out by Ibn Ezra and is exempted from this type casting as an inferior female. The special treatment suggests that Esther, for him, achieves the status of a full-legged protagonist.\(^{394}\)

At first Zeresh and Esther seem alike, in that they do not wish to speak ill of Haman (commentary B): *Told…to his wife Zeresh* (6:13)- *First, for she advised him to hang Mordecai; and his advisers spoke—before the woman, for the woman is afraid and would not wish to bode (speak) ill*.\(^{395}\)

However, Ibn Ezra subtly presents Esther as Zeresh’s opposite (commentary B): *said to him* (5:14)- *Zeresh began to speak, for it is the custom of women to act according to their desire and not accommodate for (foresee) the future*.\(^{396}\) Esther is implicitly not like Zeresh or other women. Esther demonstrated self-control by not speaking until the second banquet. She is also able to foresee the future by

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\(^{393}\) See also Levin, Hayy ben Mekitz, 15, 20. Levin found that Ibn Ezra’s *Hayy* is far more mimetic than Avicenna’s character. Ibn Ezra focuses on the sense perceptions, the thoughts of the narrator and on self-reflection. This emphasis was mostly appended to Avicenna later by his commentators. Thus, Ibn Ezra consciously privileged the mental mode in his novelistic epistle as he did with Esther (3.9.1).

\(^{394}\) See the model suggested by Herman, Sciences of the Mind, 200-1.

\(^{395}\) This opinion and the following seems to suggest that Ibn Ezra accepted Rav Nachman’s claims (b. Megilla 14b). He was inspired by the “**ג**” reversal of order in v. 13. Zeresh is the first person mentioned as being told but is the last in the line of speakers.

**ג** (יד)  ותאמר—החלה זרש לדבר, כי מנהג הנשים לעשות תאותן ואינן רואות את הנולד. גבוה חמשים אמה—שהיה נראה לחוץ מחצר המן. ויתלו—התולים; כמו **ויאמר** (ב) "**ל**" האומר—הלתות זרש אשתו—אישיא,>({לשתות אשתו} שומר היא). העץ—גבוה ככתוב.
understanding what Haman’s downfall means. The emphasis on Esther’s remarkable “unwomanly” nature is also hinted at by the following:

(B) When the king returned (7:8). Some say that an angel pushed him (Haman) and he fell; others say that he fell before her (Esther) [in prostration]. And that is true, for when he saw that the king returned, he fell before her out of fear and asked Esther for mercy, for women are more merciful than the males...

Esther’s behavior throughout the narrative undermines Haman’s misogynic assumption about female mercy, especially her calculated Ch. 9 plea to continue the killing of the enemies of the Jews, on which Ibn Ezra unfortunately does not comment, maybe as to not portray Esther as cruel.

3.8.3.2 Mordecai: The Wholly Positive Counterpart

Ibn Ezra’s characterization of Mordecai is wholly positive throughout both commentaries, in contrast with Esther’s development. This fact supports the Spanish-Andalusian context of ER II, where Mordecai is unquestionably the protagonist (3.4). Overall, Ibn Ezra's commentary A, which is slightly more interested in Esther’s beauty also contains more positive characterizations of Mordecai.

Ibn Ezra may have marginalized Esther for Mordecai’s benefit in three different ways. First, he indirectly characterizes Mordecai’s qualities. Second, he

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397 This comment may counteract the focus on Zeresh’s wisdom in Esther R. 9:2.

398 Ibn Ezra repeatedly highlights Mordecai’s selflessness, wisdom and status. Ibn Ezra A (Est. 2:10) notes that Mordecai was a dignitary since he was mentioned as the third minister accompanying Zerubbabel (Neh. 7:7). He also argues that Mordecai came to the King’s gate to inquire about delays in the restoration of the Temple, thereby hinting at his nationalistic character. This is in line with the rest of the commentary (A 2:10), where Ibn Ezra rejects the possibilities that Mordecai asked Esther to hide her nationality to improve her chances of being selected as queen, or since he had prophetic foreknowledge. Ibn Ezra instead argues that Mordecai wanted Esther to remain observant, which would have been impossible had her Jewish nature been known. Mordecai is again concerned with the Jewish faith. Ibn Ezra B (on Est. 2:21) similarly accepts the midrashic assertion that Mordecai was a member of the Sanhedrin but rejects his Talmudic knowledge of languages (b. Menaḥot 65a). However, in Ibn Ezra B (on 5:13) Haman confesses that Mordecai’s high rank as a judge at the palace gate irks him. In so doing, Ibn Ezra indirectly elevates Mordecai’s status. Ibn Ezra A on 8:8, openly praises Mordecai’s
rejects possible negative midrashic views of Mordecai. Third, he also suggests Mordecai’s sole authorship of the book of Esther. This last point could be interpreted as indicative of Ibn Ezra viewing Mordecai as the protagonist. Yefet, on the other hand, specifically viewed Esther as the sole author of the book of Esther:

... other people say that the mudawwin [i.e., the authorial-editor] copied it from the text which Esther wrote, and that in Esther’s letter there was no mention of the name of God, for she disdained the idea that the scroll might fall into the hands of a people other than Israel and they would attribute the work of God to the work of another (god)... 

Polliack has shown that Yefet views biblical narratives as collections of tales or traditions centered on certain biblical characters that were incorporated into the milieu of the Pentateuch by anonymous editors, with some similarity to the redaction of Islamic Hadith. Ulrich Marzolph describes the presentation of narrative materials in Muslim medieval sources, showing they attribute formerly unknown narratives to suitable individuals. Hence, Muslim medieval authors seemed to have thought of wisdom, since he understood the king’s hint to order the deaths of the enemies of the Jews, as the only way to revoke Haman’s decree. Commentary B lacks this direct praise. 

400) Ibn Ezra rejects various Midrashim which could discredit Mordecai’s motivations. Ibn Ezra B on Est. 2:6 stresses Mordecai’s old age at the time Esther was taken. Ibn Ezra notes that Mordecai could conceivably be ninety years old. This might be addressed against the Esther as “wife of Mordecai” narrative, which he (B on 2:7) acknowledges as a mere homily. Additionally, Ibn Ezra (A and B) on Est. 3:2 addresses possible concerns as to Mordecai’s selfish reasons for not bowing before Haman. He openly accepts the midrashic assertions that Haman had pagan images on his clothing or hat (E R. 7:5, for instance). Ibn Ezra A further clears Mordecai from any suspicion of vanity. He specifically notes that Mordecai could not ask Esther to be relieved of his post and thus avoid Haman, since only the king could order his removal from his post and on pain of death (A and B). Walfish notes that this reading is influenced by the realia of ministers in Cordoba. See Walfish, Medieval Garb, 158-9. B. Megilla 16b on Est. 10:3 argued that Mordecai was justly unpopular amongst some of the Sanhedrin. On the other hand, Ibn Ezra A on Est. 10:3 notes that Mordecai was envied by his brothers and so the fact that he was only liked by some of them is natural. Moreover, Ibn Ezra compares Mordecai to Moses in humility. Mordecai spoke kindly, despite his high rank. Commentary B stresses Mordecai’s wisdom and replaces envy with the fact that certain Jews asked Mordecai for things they did not deserve. Both commentaries show Ibn Ezra’s approval of the character and indirect disapproval of BT arguments. 

401) The “other people” could be Sa’adiah, who in what fragments remain, claimed that Esther and Mordecai were responsible for the book of Esther. 

402) Wechsler, Yefet on Esther, 272-3. Contrast this with Sa’adiah whom Yefet may have drawn on. On the Mudawwin see more in 1.7.1. 

403) The editing of the Hadith was the model the Karaites used in a chronologically inverted way to authenticate biblical redaction See Polliack, Inversion, 286-99; Ibid, The Conceptualization of Narrative, 116-9, 133-5. Moses’ narrative and the narrative of the Exodus were combined into one story, for instance; Unseen Joints, 195-7 and Ben-Shammai, Mudawwin, 76-92.
characters as “focusees” of narrative as did the Hadith transmitters. Yefet might have shared this view; thus his attribution of the Book to Esther, could be hint at a view that the protagonist of a specific tale is its reliable/original author.

Does Ibn Ezra view Mordecai as the author-protagonist in another polemic against to Yefet? The way Ibn Ezra connects the text and Mordecai is not as strong as it might at first seem. Ibn Ezra B on Est. 4:14 notes that Sa'adiah stated that Mordecai was ordered by the king to write the book, which would be translated into Persian. Mordecai was forced to omit he name of God, to avoid having it replaced by the names of Persian divinities. As Ilana Sasson remarked, the versions of Sa'adiah does not explicitly state that Mordecai was the actual writer.

As we have seen, Ibn Ezra drew on Sa'adiah to disprove the secular nature of Esther, not the question of its authorship. Ibn Ezra might have mistakenly attributed Mordecai’s authorship to Sa'adiah, or may have known of a separate discussion that is no longer extant. In any event, when Ibn Ezra (A and B) on Est. 9:20 stresses that Mordecai wrote the original letters, this is not in Mordecai’s favor. Owing to poor observance of Purim, Mordecai needed Esther’s assistance (9:28-9). Ibn Ezra on 9:32 emphasizes that Mordecai needed Esther again, so that Purim would not be forgotten. This undermines Ibn Ezra’s own attribution of the book to him as a sole author.

A similar ambiguous sentiment is evident in Ibn Ezra B on Est. 6:6. He is concerned with Mordecai’s composition of Esther, which is questioned by the conundrum of how the author could have known what Haman was thinking. Ibn Ezra

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404 Marzolph, Focusees, 122-4. Marzolph also notes that Al-Jahiz was cognizant of the machinations of this attribution, and lamented that the preconception of associated characters could needlessly change the reception of materials for better or for worse.

405 See Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 111-2; Sasson, Gender Equality, note 23.

406 Ibn Ezra only mentions one of Sa'adiah’s three proofs for the divinity of the Esther text; see Wechsler, Book of Conviviality, 108-10. Thus, it is unclear whether he correctly cites Sa'adiah’s argument regarding the absence of the names of God with regards to Mordecai’s alleged authorship.
considers the midrashic view that this is a sign of Mordecai’s divine inspiration (b. Megilla 7a) and an anonymous opposing view that Haman later spoke out loud his inner musings to his entourage. Ibn Ezra comments that: *in my view, this is a conjecture*. He could be referring to the latter opinion or he could be noting that the verse itself is a conjecture by the author-Mordecai?, as to what Haman was thinking and hence not a sign of divine inspiration. Thus, the authorship of the book of Esther is not necessarily a one-sided proof of Mordecai’s status as the protagonist, in Ibn Ezra’s eyes.

### 3.8.3.3 Summary and Conclusions: An Imperfect Esther

Ibn Ezra’s commentaries on Esther capture the dichotomy between erotic Andalusian physicality and Neoplatonic spiritual perfection. This dichotomy is partially realized in how Esther transitions from beauty to faith, as well as by the duality of Mordecai and Esther, who are, respectively, portrayed as a static character and a dynamic character. This, coupled with the ambiguous nature of Mordecai as author, makes it seem that Ibn Ezra viewed Mordecai as the protagonist as he was in ER. However, Ibn Ezra introduces a philosophical dimension to Esther’s character development. I will now discuss how his stylistic choice, actually strengthens the identification between Esther and Ibn Ezra himself and so suggests her greater importance.

### 3.9 Beauty as an Expression of Spiritual Growth

Ibn Ezra’s view of character development is nuanced and equates Esther with the philosophical journey of all philosophical subjects including himself, precisely...
because of her shortcomings and beauty. This argument is supported by considering beauty in Ibn Ezra’s “Hayy ben Mekitz” together with his Bible commentaries.

3.9.1 Esther’s Beauty and Hayy ben Mekitz’s Beauty

Ibn Ezra’s commentaries emphasize beauty and add it to other characters aside from Esther, specifically females. Goldman found that this emphasis is also one of the after-effects of the reception of biblical characters in medieval Muslim literature.

One example akin to Esther, where Ibn Ezra’s rejects adding piety to characters in favor of beauty, is his certainty that Boaz was interested in Ruth because of her exotic appearance (Ruth 2:5-7) and not because of some spiritual quality. Ibn Ezra emphasizes Ruth’s beauty, an emphasis of his own making:

...(2:5) he thought that she was a married woman. Maybe he asked the young man, for he saw her dressed in her country’s garb; the shapes also change due to the (different) air (see his ‘other method’ on Gen. 12:11) and the way of drash is known (for instance b. Shabbat 113b). (2:7) So she came, and she has been on her feet—that she always busied herself with what was necessary for her and nothing else, so that he would not suspect her (of unbecoming conduct) for her beauty.

408 For instance, Ibn Ezra (short commentary) on Gen. 29:17 is detailed with regards to Rachel’s beauty. Like Esther, she is beautiful in all her limbs and organs. Ibn Ezra also adds beauty to certain verses. For example, his comment (short commentary) on Gen. 39:6 notes that Joseph was as handsome as his mother an implication not stated directly in the Bible. Ibn Ezra on Num. 12:1 claims that Moses was suspected of not sleeping with his wife “only since she was not beautiful”. Version A of Ibn Ezra’s commentary on the SoS. (literary interpretation. 1:5) rephrases the verse in a way that emphasizes the speaker’s beauty twice, as opposed to the verse’s one time. (Ibid) 3:7-4:1 connects these verse by noting SoS 3:11 details the extravagant ways in which Solomon tried to guard and please his beloved, though the wife of 4:1 was prettier than she was. Ibn Ezra (literal sense of SoS. 7:7, version B) notes that “there is no (greater) pleasure for the spirit in the world, nor a thing as beautiful and pleasant as desire”. His comment on Hosea 2:15 (A) argues that the whore implied to be Israel in the prophet’s parable, beautifies herself by wearing the jewelry described. This emphasis on beauty is absent in the Bible and is in line with high medieval misogynic approaches (3.5.3.1.2-2).

409 For example, Rachel is repeatedly praised for her beauty in Muslim tradition. The added crowd of women in the Joseph story in Muslim and late Midrash sources emphasizes Joseph’s beauty. In Tha’labi’s version of the tale of Serah bat Asher she is transformed from an old crone into a beauty. In the Midrashim she was already beautiful. See, Goldman, Joseph story, 111, 120, 131.

410 Opposing Rashi and his sources.

411 See HaKeter: Five Scrolls, 75.
Ibn Ezra’s interest in beauty can also denote the attainment of spiritual perfection. Levin notes that Ibn Ezra rejected the philosophical reading the Song of Songs as the pining of the intellect for God. Nevertheless, this idea seems to have inspired his metaphorical framework in “Hayy ben Mekitz”, Ibn Ezra’s literal homage to Avicenna’s “Hayy ibn Yaqdhan”. The desire for God is reframed as the female desire of the Song of Songs. Huss remarks that Ibn Ezra did not view allegorical characters as limited to their allegorical connotations. Hence, Ibn Ezra could very well have viewed Esther as endowed with additional meaning without feeling the need to reduce to book to actual allegory.

If such a philosophical reading of Esther persisted in Ibn Ezra’s mind, one would assume that elderly eternal Hayy corresponds to the elderly Mordecai. However, Avicenna places direct stress on the beauty of Hayy and God. God’s beauty is not described in physical terms, but he rewards those who can reach him with viewing his beauty. Esther’s beauty coupled with her conversion could then have been introduced by Ibn Ezra, to mark her as a new form of philosophical protagonist.

In fact, Ibn Ezra describes his Hayy as beautiful with allusions taken from the Song of Songs that also mix the descriptions of the male and female speakers of Song. This suggests not only the gender neutrality of Hayy, but also the gender neutrality of the spiritual voyage described. Such a mindset may have influenced Ibn

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412 See Levin, Hayy ben Mekitz, Pa. 4, 57. Huss argues that ibn Ezra’s Hayy is unlike Ibn Sinha’s version, but is actually the Shekinah or the universal soul. He also argues that the use of both gendered allusions from the SoS supports this as a unique adoption of the Neoplatonist motif of the desire for the world soul. See Haas, Ibn Ezra and the World Soul, 138-9, 152.

413 Huss, Allegory, 108-12. Also Ibn Ezra on SoS 8:7 (allegorical sense version B) identifies the ridiculed money wasting man of the verse with Haman. He cannot convert Israel because of God’s safekeeping. This suggests an untapped symbolic dimension for Esther as well.


Ezra’s emphasis on the beauty of biblical heroines such as Esther and Ruth. Mordecai though positive, is not ever handsome.

Avicenna’s Hayy moreover praises the “wisdom of the face” (physiognomy), as one of the first steps toward enlightenment. This medieval discipline directly translated physical appearance into innate quality. Ibn Ezra’s fascination with beauty could be an expression of this mindset and thus another sign of spirituality, since physiognomy was significant to Ibn Ezra’s Andalusia and Medieval Muslim medicine in general.

An example of this union of a morality and beauty is found in Ibn Ezra on Exod. 2:2 (short commentary). He views the verse that describes the newborn Moses as good as “that he was beautiful in appearance”. This explains how “good” can be seen, but hints at a value judgment oriented towards the perception of beauty.

The centrality of beauty to Ibn Ezra is also apparent in another “fictional narrative”, apart from Hayy. Davidovitz found that Ibn Ezra’s long commentary on

416 See Ibid, Pa. 5-6, 91-2.
417 Ibn Ezra was one of the first known Jewish scholars influenced by actual translations of Aristotle, see Gómez-Aranda, Aristotelian Theories, 48-54. Perhaps he was also acquainted with the Physiognomy of Ps. Aristotle, though alternatives exist including Ibn Sina. See Gheretti, Semiotic Paradigm, 285-90. “The wisdom of the face” is greatly celebrated a generation later in the opening chapter and in the various tales of the Judge in Ibn Zabara’s Sefer HaShashuim. Levin, Ibid, 57-9. Ibn Ezra does not directly mention physiognomy, but does echo such views in a few of his comments, like Gen. 12:11 (short commentary). He argues that Sarah was distinctly beautiful only in Egypt and the Negev, since “the shapes change according to the air”. The Egyptians coveted her exotic beauty.
418 Another example uniting the physical and moral sphere is Ibn Ezra (short commentary) on Gen. 29:17. Ibn Ezra argues (probably against Gen. R. 70:16 or Sa’adiah), that some believe that “all created beings, their shapes should be equal”. Ergo, the defect in Leah’s eyes described there, should not be a defect at all. Note that R. Johanan in Gen. R. tries to correlate between the softening of Leah’s eyes, caused by having wept as she was to be married to the wicked Esau, and moral superiority. Ibn Ezra rejects such views and emphasizes the arbitrariness of physical appearance as endowed by God. He is not rejecting the possible significance of beauty, but considers the need to explain physical defect as pretentious. God decides one’s appearance.
Exodus provides the reader with an original parable of his own devising\(^{419}\), as was his custom when using parables as illustrations (20:14)\(^{420}\):

**You shall not covet** - many a man would wonder, “what is this commandment? How can a man not covet something beautiful in his heart, everything that is pleasant to sight (based on Gen. 2:9)?” And now I shall answer you with a parable: Know that a country fellow (peasant) who is of right mind, and sees a beautiful princess will not covet in his heart to sleep with her, for he knows that it cannot be. And do not think (suggest) that this country fellow is like one of those lunatics, who wishes that he had wings to fly in the sky! For that cannot be, as a man does not covet in his heart to sleep with his mother even though she is beautiful, for they have habituated him from his youth by telling him that she is forbidden. Thus, let every man of learning know that a beautiful woman or riches cannot be acquired by wisdom or knowledge, but only as God allots. And in Ecclesiastics it is said: “must leave all (his lot shall be given)” (Eccles. 2:21); and the sages said (b. Mo’ed Katan 28a): “a long life, sons and sustenance are not things that are tied to one’s virtue”. And for this the learned man shall not envy or covet. After he knows his neighbor’s wife is forbidden to him by God, she is more exalted (in his eyes) than the princess in the eyes of the country fellow. Therefore, he is happy with his lot and would take care not to covet or lust for that which is not his. For he knows that things that God does not wish to give him, he cannot take by force, intellect or trickery. Therefore, he trusts in his maker to provide for him and do as he decides\(^{421}\).

Ibn Ezra emphasizes how the great beauty of a princess or one’s mother does not lead to lust even in peasants, seemingly against natural inclination. This is the result of education. One needs to fortify oneself against coveting one’s neighbor’s wife. The distinct need to overcome the temptation of beauty reflects the theme of

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\(^{419}\) Another original parable is found in Ibn Ezra’s long commentary of Exodus 33:21:

\(^{420}\) ibid., Two Commentaries, 153.


Both parables stress decision making and the importance of one’s inner world to that process. This suggests the same emphasis on one’s state of mind I identified in Sa’adiah and Yefet’s works.
Esther’s spiritual growth in Ibn Ezra’s commentaries. Esther turned to God despite her beauty (Ibn Ezra A Est. 4:16). Tova Rosen notes that Andalusian poetry, including poetry by Abraham Ibn Ezra, tended to associate women with the intermediate Neoplatonist soul, which needs to be purged of its lower bodily imperfections and made subservient to the male-associated intellect to become closer to God. Associated imagery include the captive princess and the renunciation of female beauty by the soul.

It is hard to claim that Ibn Ezra’s Esther is not inspired by these notions to some extent. His poetry as described by Levin, also routinely chooses biblical female voices. The choice extends the similar biblical stylistics that attribute laments to a symbolic Zion-congregation. Ibn Ezra uses similar devices to convey the female speakers’ longing for God. This is the desire central to “Hayy ben Mekitz”.

Rosen notes a similar Platonic linkage, especially to “Phaedrus”, between beauty and intellect expressed in “Maskil and Peninah”. This narrative by Jacob Ben Elazar, the Hebrew translator of “Kalīlah wa Dimnah” is known from his “Sefer HaMeshalim”. The king of beauty chooses Maskil (literally, “the enlightened one,” “the philosopher”) the male “gazelle” to be king. Maskil is united with Peninah

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422 Ibn Ezra on Exod. 20:14 insisted that the acquisition of beauty is dependent on God’s intentions. Thus, beauty and spirituality are at odds but jointly linked to God.  
423 Rosen, Hunting Gazelles, 116-26. This overall depiction is also found in ascetic Islam. For a lengthy example of a woman as the soul, see Huss, Allegory, 100-7.  
424 Levin, Poetry of Ibn Ezra, 184-7, 127, 163. Ibn Ezra routinely identifies with the suffering of these female characters, going so far as to even identify with Hagar’s suffering in the service of Sarah. Ibid, Ibn Ezra’s “You Are my Splendor” (אשת תפרתי...I shall flee from Sarah my mistress (אשת / וּפָנֵי שָרַי גְבִרְתִי.))...Sarah cannot symbolize Judaism in his poem.  
425 A double emphasis on beauty and piety is not un-rabbinic. B. Shabbat 25b notes that a man’s merit must also be expressed by the beauty of his wife, who must possess beautiful (=good) deeds. Ethical and aesthetic dimensions are combined in the beautiful woman, similarly to the ways in which they are combined in the image of the rabbinic God, as noted by Maoz, Beauty of God, 345-6.  
426 Rosen, Maksil and Peninah, 159, 162. She argues that the narrative is closer to romance literature and chivalric novels than to Arabic literature in spite of some shared motifs. Ibid, 168-9.
(literally, a gem signifying beauty and wisdom). *Maskil* must defeat Cushan the Cushite king to protect his beloved.

Rosen views this victory as symbolic of the triumph of reason, beauty, and love over folly, ugliness, and violence\(^\text{427}\). Ibn Ezra’s Esther easily conforms to *Maskil* as signifying the union of the gazelle (3.8.1.2), enlightenment and eloquence. Hence, Esther’s change is like the change the narrator undergoes in *Hayy* or *Maskil*’s change. It is not negative per se. Huss mentioned developing characters in Ibn Zabara’s *“Book of Delight”*, a close contemporary to Ibn Ezra’s *Hayy*\(^\text{428}\).

Levin argues that *“Hayy ben Mekitz”* was influenced by such Maqama literature and was later perceived as part of it\(^\text{429}\). Dishon remarks that the authors of the first Sephardic Maqamas, who are all later than Ibn Ezra, were actually dependent and indirectly active in systematic biblical exegesis\(^\text{430}\). Ibn Zabara is a good example of this phenomenon, since he is quoted on a few occasions by Joseph Kimḥi on Proverbs, with whom he met and potentially studied\(^\text{431}\). Ibn Ezra in his commentaries on Esther as in his *“Hayy ben Mekitz”* is a precursor to these Spanish authors.

The emerging view of character development is contextually Andalusian. Avidov Lipsker compared the reception of two medieval Jewish narratives that arose from a Muslim context, *“Nathan of Zuzita”* and *“the Shining Robe”*. His analysis points to fundamental differences between Jewish authors from Muslim and Andalusian zones and Jewish writers from Christian spheres. Authors like Maimonides or even Ibn Ezra focus on an individual’s search for spiritual perfection

\[^{427}\text{See in Rosen, Maskil and Peninah, 167.}\]
\[^{428}\text{Huss, Minhat Yehuda, I, 31-3.}\]
\[^{429}\text{Levin, Hayy ben Mekitz, 17.}\]
\[^{430}\text{Dishon, Exegesis, 174-6. This was accomplished by biblical allusions in the novels that hint at known biblical interpretations or use original *ad hoc* interpretations.}\]
\[^{431}\text{Ibid. See the Spanish chivalric treatment of beauty in the French Song of Songs commentary, Japhet and Walfish, Way of Lovers, 81ff.}\]
and emphasize introspective character development, in contrast to the pietistic Ashkenazi stress on adherence to the Law\textsuperscript{432}. This search is the same as in Ibn Ezra’s depiction of Esther\textsuperscript{433} and by extension, himself\textsuperscript{434}.

\textbf{3.9.2 Conclusions: Protagonists Change According to the Times}

There is no abstract description of Esther’s role in the Book in any of my sources. However, the different ways in which she is characterized by different readings, all suggest that their authors had their own concepts of the protagonist and characterized Esther accordingly. The Babylonian Esther Midrash typified Esther as the heroine of a hinted at Greek novel, and thus associated her with a certain type of protagonist, but then subverted that type in favor of God’s intervention.

Sa’adiah Gaon constitutes a uniquely Jewish implementation of an Aristotelian static tragic character exemplar as mediated by Muslim medieval thought. Sa’adiah viewed exemplary nature as the core concept of protagonists and biblical narratives in general and thus endowed Esther with a paradigmatic nature. She is a figurehead for diaspora Judaism’s success, albeit coupled with a traditional rabbinic discourse and consciousness.

Both Ibn Ezra and ER’s later parts, reflect an Andalusian or Spanish milieu of misogyny, yet both also hint at a clearer concept of a protagonist than the BT, by their differing treatments of Esther. ER’s silence and careful stitching and sifting of accounts to favor Mordecai, shows that its redaction knew that the most important

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{432} Lipsker, How does One, 207-11. The Ashkenazi pietistic conception has epic undertones.
\item \textsuperscript{433} Ibn Ezra’s attempt to associate change, appearance and centrality is not unlike Muslim compilers of akhbar historiography. Judd found that such authors would subtly insert their conception of a character by manipulating character development. Ṭabarî, for instance, portrayed the decline of the Umayyad caliphate by enhancing character development, primarily of moral decline. However, like Ibn Ezra, he aimed to arouse sympathy by connecting these devices to enhanced complexity and mental portrayals. See Judd, Narrative and Character Development, 210-11, 216, 220, 222, 225.
\item \textsuperscript{434} Ibn Ezra’s comments on the righteous of the Bible identify him with a dynamic character seeking the divine and by extension with his Esther no less than Mordecai. See Wagner, Example, 382-6.
\end{itemize}
positive character saving a community should be the protagonist. This suggests the folkloric background of independent medieval Hebrew narrative more than the late Midrash rhetoric described in the previous sections\textsuperscript{435}.

Conversely, Ibn Ezra’s Esther is indicative of a change in the conception of literary characters overall. He represents the shift from Aristotelian poetics such as in Sa’adiah, to more Neoplatonist conceptions inherent to later medieval romance. This transition also paved the way for the protagonist of the modern novel. Change becomes necessary and beneficial even if it is still negative in its onset. Nevertheless, Ibn Ezra highlights Esther’s appearance as a major theme, independently of its status in the Midrashim as an obstacle or as a sign of divine approval\textsuperscript{436}.

In short, the indirect concept of the protagonist in Midrashim and systematic medieval exegesis is more directly dependent on the exact theological message the authors wish to convey as the “true” sense of the Bible, than other aspects of characterization. The concept of the protagonist like literary style in general, is historically mutable and highly dependent on the literary and philosophical context of the individual composition.

\textsuperscript{435} On the parting of Midrash and narrative in the high Middle Ages, see the introduction in Dan, Hebrew Story. The restructuring of ER II along the lines of such a narrative, shows how this parting narrowed the freedom of composing late Midrash in the latter Middle Ages (3.4).

\textsuperscript{436} The Neoplatonist approach is unlike the Greek novel, which emphasizes beauty but usually not through specific descriptions, thereby suggesting only an ambiguous relationship between body and mind. De Temmerman, Crafting Characters, 39-40. Ibn Ezra’s view is thus distinctly medieval.
Conclusions: Characterization in Midrash and Medieval Bible Commentaries

The three different methods of characterization I examined in this study, reveal the growing emphasis on biblical characters as real individuals that divides some late Midrashim and medieval Bible commentaries from classical Midrash. Both late Midrashim and medieval Bible commentaries use characters as focal points and as organizing principles, when they paraphrase biblical narrative.

While the different approaches with regards to characterization suggest two differing conceptions of character that distinguish Midrash from medieval commentaries in general, some similarities between late Midrash and systemic Bible exegesis are also noticeable. These primarily include the tendency to harmonize disparate characterizations into consistent versions of biblical characters, a shared penchant for illustrating character consciousness using quoted monologues, as well as an emphasis on character development.

Classical and late Midrash focus on the indirect question of what preexisting literary type can be associated with a given character; in other words, what type or literary model can best explain the character’s traits. By contrast, medieval commentators ask who a character was as a historical “real” individual. Midrash works mostly by allusion, whereas medieval exegetes discover and expand on granular biblical characterizations, as a method of explaining the biblical text.

There is an important cultural distinction to be made here, however: medieval exegetes from Christian zones of influence adhered to a late-midrashic and novelistic view of biblical characters, whereas those from Muslim zones employed a more philosophical- legal and historical approach. Below I elaborate on all of these distinctions based on my findings, which have been guided by the three criteria for
characterization examined in this study: character analogy, the representation of consciousness and the concept of “protagonist”. The richness of these conclusions suggests a need to go beyond a purely developmental diachronic narrative to capture the medieval concept of character inherent to Midrashim and to systematic Bible commentaries.

4.1 Character Analogy: Mimesis and Typology

Analogical devices were integral to all my sources, though the extent of their abstraction and elaboration differed across different kinds of Midrash and systematic exegesis. Tannaitic literature uses analogical devices in its midrashic lists as a main mode of discourse about characters, but shows little independent interest in characters. It takes a rhetorical interest in character hierarchies and only indirectly alludes to the attributes and traditions that inform characterizations, brought about by calculated juxtaposition. These undisclosed attributes are often compatible with other midrashic lists and narratives about the same characters and therefore represent a performative variation. This alludes to a reality of underlying “traditions, which is shared with other forms of post biblical literature (1.2.1 and 1.2.2.3).

This concept of character emerging from Tannaitic discourse is orally inspired. Character narratives only occur when an exegetic need arises and presupposes audience familiarity with certain characterizations, whereas at other occasions the lists remain as a mnemonic representation of myriad narratives. This observation is true of all three case studies and thus might be true of biblical characters in Tannaitic literature in general, while also suggesting a stronger relationship between characters in Tannaitic literature and character lists in post biblical literatures. The list as a favored form of Tannaitic characterization
nevertheless has a hermeneutic aspect to it that makes it uniquely midrashic when compared to classical rhetoric. This difference calls for further explanation.

PRK 13 and b. Megilla use analogies in narratives and comments to present novel and often critical themes related to Jeremiah and Esther. This is accomplished mostly through indirect comparisons to other characters independent of the form of the midrashic list, which later readers tended to expand into actual narratives (1.4.2.1). PRK 13 in particular suggests a more elaborate association between character and the content of its associated biblical text (2.2 and 3.3.3). This overarching trend is an innovative Amoraic view of biblical characters as in light of the reception of their associated texts and traditions. Amoraim further used characters to organize and shape larger midrashic units and narratives as an expression of the growing codification of rabbinic literature itself1.

Leib Moscovitz’s account of the processes of “conceptualization” in rabbinic literature may account for this change. Tannaitic legal thought differs from Amoraic thought in terms of the greater conceptualization inherent to the Amoraim, which results in the association of specific biblical terms with myriad legal cases and with the character of a certain sage. This is more often than not a literary fiction2. Moulie Vidas noted a similar development in Amoraic “bookish culture”. This associates oral texts and by extension the whole concept of Torah to various physical locations and

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1 See for instance Y. Sanhedrin’s focus on creating a biography for Gehazi based on supplementing the examples of a midrashic index with a chain of narratives. See Vachman, He is Holy, 86-9, 102. See also Judah the Patriarch in Y. Kilayim. This process is in line with what I described for Tan. Balak (1.4.2.1). We have already encountered other units associated with Amoraim and built around a character no less than on an exegetic or homiletic structure, such as Balaam in BT Sanhedrin 105a-106b (1.1). On such considerations in the shaping of PRK, see Ben-Pazi, Compilation, 138-9. See also the lesser example of the inclusion of tales about Rashbi in PRK 11, as presented in Rubenstein, Hero, Saint and Sage, 513.
specific sages. This concept is often dramatized by accounts of a certain Rabbi
traveling and bringing back an innovative difficulty-solving tradition³.

Another idea furthered by the Amoraim according to Vidas is the rise of a
form of rabbinic authorship where the characterization of a certain sage might impact
his Torah⁴. I suggest applying these ideas to several other well-known lengthy
Amoraic discussions of biblical characters by concentrating on the accounts related to
them⁵. Amoraic renditions of characters are more abstract entities used to organize
myriad narratives and their associated texts in line with the concept of the teachings of
a certain sage. This textual association can also impact their literary reception as
characters, as the negativity to Jeremiah clearly shows (2.2.1.2)⁶.

The crystallization of accounts around a unified view inherent to a
composition might explain the lack of ambiguity in Amoraic accounts of Balaam and
Jeremiah compared to their Tannaitic counterparts (1.1 and 2.1). Future studies should
examine how these phenomena entail a novel way of relating the collection of
aggadah to the codification of halakhah in much the same way that Barry Scott
Wimpfheimer reads lengthy Talmudic legal narratives. These narratives are at once a
precedent for the legal unifying purposes of a sugya, as well as a breach in the
editorial framework, in favor of a “thick” anthropology of psychological
characterization⁷. Amoraic biblical characters seem to serve as such a “thick” unifying
fiction of their texts and traditions.

³ Vidas, A Place, 23, 26, 30-9.
⁴ Ibid, 45-6, 50.
⁵ A greater emphasis on consistency is extended by the blurring and unification of sages with their
associated tales, in the later redaction of ARN b. See Elbaum, Models, 73-7.
⁶ Moscovitz, Talmudic Reasoning, 84-90. The implicit characterization in Tannaitic midrashic lists
parallels Tannaitic legal induction. They both show a similar degree of analogical thought.
Late Midrash greatly enhances the tendency to unify and harmonize accounts about a character. Collectivism gives way to a more focused authorial vision that is organized around self-referentiality. I have shown this to be the case in PR 26 (2.3.2). Some compositions or chapters do not simply concentrate materials related to one figure as was done in earlier Midrash, but rather focus on expressing the image of this figure.

ER’s attempt to return to a more classical exegetic form avoids the elaborate disputations on characters that exist in some of its other late parallels (3.1). However, ER superimposes Esther and Mordecai sources or Mordecai and Haman accounts, to express a heightened awareness of their analogical functions. ER systemically arranges older sources to bolster its editorial views of the characters by manufacturing tensions between reordered accounts (3.4.2).

Character analogy thus becomes more pronounced in late Midrash in general. Tan. Balak and PR 26 focus on systematic comparisons with secondary characters in multiple narratives that extensively highlight the distinct peculiarities of their Balaam and Jeremiah (1.4.2ff and 2.3.1.3-2.3.2). This dramatic use of secondary characters is often introduced by the later readers for the explicit purpose of characterization and not for the organization or allusion of traditions, as it is often in opposition to the spirit of other midrashic parallels.

This late pattern of character contrast hints at the adoption of theatrical features and is also apparent in piyut (1.5.1. and 2.3.1.3). Hence, the theatrical aspect

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9 The few Amoraic story cycles centered on characters are less interested in the actual biographies of the characters than in the causality of the events. See in Rubenstein Hero, Saint and Sage, 509-10.
10 The subordination of the character of Haninah ben Dosa to the “hero pattern” in the BT also exemplifies a collector mentality centered on one character, combined with the midrashic affinity for types (4.3). This combination shapes the overall structure, in line with Christian miracles. See Hasan-Rokem, did Rabbinic Culture, 29, 52-53.
of homilies in general might account for the adoption of character analogy in narratives in all layers of Midrash. A future study of pairs of characters in the Midrashim and the very same pairs presented in *piyyutim* that include late medieval specimens, deserves attention.

Medieval exegetes showed a greater degree of abstraction in their use of analogy compared to Midrash. Analogy is a means of clearly evaluating characters and their actions. This is true in particular of Yefet’s and Rashbam’s treatment of Balaam (1.6.3 and 1.8.1). These exegetes compared Balaam’s isolated state of mind to that of Nebuchadnezzar and Jonah respectively, which are associations entirely of their own making. Characters become a way to better understand other characters and their particular mindsets. Abraham Ibn Ezra similarly uses more traditional analogy to highlight Esther’s exceptional mental traits (3.8.3).

In contrast, Rashi and Radak rarely use analogy to characterize Jeremiah. This raises the question of whether Rashbam employed the device as a result of the growing impact of the Chivalric novel (1.9) or whether this was a development inherent to the late Northern French School. This issue could be addressed by examining the use of analogy in other late French commenters such as Joseph Bekhor Shor and Eliezer of Beaugency

Analogical characterization in medieval Jewish Bible commentaries is thus ever-present but eclectic, ultimately abandoning direct dialogue with Midrash. Exegetes instead used analogy as a way to think about and compare whole narratives, which suggests a view of biblical characters that went beyond the gradual tendency toward unification of traits and narratives in Midrash. Each Midrash and exegete

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11 For character ambiguity distinctly inspired by chivalric uses of analogy, see Dobyns, *Voices*, 23-6. This might suggest another tie between the exegetes and the authors of late Midrash.
demonstrated a conception of analogy influenced by specific literary contexts to a greater extent than the two other criteria considered. Hence, future studies on Jewish connections to Hellenistic, Christian and Muslim genres such as “tales of the prophets” might do well to focus on uses of character analogy as a starting point (1.5.1, 1.7, 1.9.2, 3.2.2, 3.9.1).

4.2 Character Consciousness: East and West

The reasons for expressing character consciousness generally separate Midrash from systematic medieval exegesis. Midrash is interested in illustrating characters as a literary innovation that furthers the message of the specific composition. Midrash expresses original renditions of characters (1.4.3, 2.3.1, 2.2.1.3, 3.3.1). Exegetes meanwhile, view biblical characters as persons with a certain psychological makeup, which is used to better elucidate their behavior in wider biblical narratives or parallel accounts (1.6.3, 1.7.3, 1.8.1, 2.4.3, 2.6.1, 3.6.2.2, 3.8.2).

An overall diachronic increase in the representation of consciousness is apparent in later medieval sources both in the Midrashim and in systematic exegesis. This tendency is often expressed by an increased preference for quoted inner monologues, specifically when treating older Midrash accounts. This was the conclusion of the comparison between Jeremiah’s consciousness in PR 26 and in PRK 13 (2.2.1.3 and 2.3.1). A similar conclusion is derived from comparing Jeremiah’s character in PR 26, Rashi and Radak (2.4.2 and 2.6.2.1). Jeremiah is increasingly characterized by monologues centered on his state of mind, at ever more refined levels of sophistication.

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12 Cohn argues that a greater interest in consciousness is typically part of a greater interest in the mimesis of literary texts in general. Cohn, Transparent Minds, 47-8.
Another difference in the representation of the mind that differentiates homilletic from late Midrash is the rhetoric employed, since one rhetorical model replaces the other. The emphasis on the emotions of a community in dialogue with God aghast at Jeremiah in PRK 13 and beyond is transformed by PR 26 into an authorial monologue in his favor (2.3.3.2).

Anisfeld posited that dialogues between characters and God were typically Amoraic. These may have been supplanted by inner monologues. Divine dialogues in compositions such as SoS. R. and PRK are related to the establishment of a sense of intimacy with the divine. This could be explained as a Jewish response to the Christian concept Peter Brown dubbed the “friends of God”. Christianity in Late Antiquity formulated a new hierarchy focused on direct contact with the divine through the holy man. Midrashic counterparts might have adapted this idea in dialogues between characters representing the Jewish collective and God. Dialogue was then replaced in later Midrashim by monologues that were more representative of the vision of one author. In essence, diatribe was supplanted by Éthopoeia (2.3.3.1).

I encountered numerous examples of this tendency throughout this study. This leads to a broader hypothesis. Late Midrashim might have been so interested in

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13 Anisfeld, Sustain Me, 52-65, 111-8; Brown, Making of Late Antiquity, 56, 60, 64. The causes that led to more personal spiritual hierarchies in Late Antiquity might have also effected the nature of characterization in the Greek novel, as they ultimately focus on an isolated individual’s place in an alien world. See Reardon, Greek Novel, 299-300, 306-7.

14 I found several examples of a seemingly original late Midrash homily or probable variant shaped as a character monologue over the course of this study. For instance, BR has a few places where misogynic views are introduced in the inner monologues of female figures that are absent in parallel accounts. BR Va’era 19:17, 26; Chayei Sarah 24:64-5, VaYetze 29:32-3 (3.5.3.1.2). PRE also employs monologues in its accounts of Jonah (PRE 10), God’s account of Eve (PRE 12), Eve (PRE 13), Adam’s founding of holy sites (PRE 20), the burial of Abel (PRE 21), kings of nations (PRE 38), Titus’ thoughts (PRE 49), Haman’s thoughts (PRE 50). See also the thoughts of the Israelites in the ending of PR 10, a possible late addition to that composition similar to PR 26.

The following examples are only a small sample of accounts that were not always mentioned in passim of monologues centered on my three case studies that show the phenomenon to be more prevalent than just PR 26. Balaam: Tan. Balak 15 compared to no Balaam in ARN b 23. See also Tan. Balak 17. PRE 29 contains the author’s historical allusion to his present as prophesied by Balaam. Eliyahu Rabbah 26 is constructed as a comparison of Balaam’s biblical quotes to what the anonymous homilist thinks Balaam should have said instead. This emphasis is perhaps one of the clearest examples.

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character monologues that instances of inner monologue in late compositions that are unprecedented in their classical parallels might be a reliable marker of late redaction. Future studies of revisions in the broader Tanḥuma-Yelammedenu literatures could further establish this claim. Accounts of monologue-like prayers by biblical characters that also lack a divine answer might be a good starting point.

This representation of consciousness in apologetic monologues connects late Midrash to Jewish systematic exegesis in Christian zones of influence. This shift in style might have been mediated through Byzantine exegesis and Midrash, and relates to changes in the study of rhetoric in the High Middle Ages (2.3.4 and 2.5). These developments link some late Midrashim and Jewish medieval Bible exegetes to the codependent resurgence of the novel in the Christian East and West.

The authors of late Midrashim, commentaries and novels all seem to express a greater emphasis upon their own personal insights, which allows them to assume the character’s voice in of a late-midrashic “Ethopoeia”. Jeremiah: Bereshit Rab (BR) VaYesalach has a lengthy Jeremiahian monologue. Esther: Midr. Ps. 22:2, 4 compared to 3, 6, 13, 16, 22, 23. Generally, the older part of Midr. Ps. contains many original examples of character monologue as exemplified by David, though not all of these are extensive and thus warrant a separate study.


15 ER and neo-classical Midrash might seem an exception to the use of monologues due to their more compulsory nature, but there is a case for the mere inclusion of the Josippon additions in ERII. These amount to prayers/monologues for Esther and Mordecai though unoriginal (3.4).

16 Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 15. Bakhtin argues that the novel, unlike the epic, depicts the experiences of the present. He notes that: “When the novel becomes the dominant genre, epistemology becomes the dominant discipline”. Hence, the depiction of the relations between consciousness and the world is central to the novel. We have seen that this is equally central to Jewish medieval Bible commentators, which then suggests a novelistic background. Vance argues similarly that scholastic trends endow an epistemological cast to chivalric romance, Topic to Tale, 27.
monologue with little compunction. Expressive biblical characters prefigure the authority of the “Author” over his work.

Rodrick Beaton noted several similarities between Chrétien’s French chivalric novels and the later Byzantine Greek novels. There are many common features to these novels, including an emphasis on character perception (also see in 1.9.2) and a timelessness divorced from historical circumstances. These features are equally characteristic of late Midrashim. A comparative study of late Midrash and these late novels therefore might be required. These wider literary trends could also be better represented by comparing the late rhetorical Byzantine developments to distinctly Jewish Byzantine texts such as Leqah Tov or the Scroll of Aḥimatz.

Radak’s greater psychological complexity in his characterization of Jeremiah is especially compatible with poetic trends in France at the time, even beyond the possible impact of Troubadour poetry (see also 2.6.3). Diana Stielstra examined the prolific inner monologues in chivalric romance. She argues for a transformation in 12th century novels from expository or rhetorical uses to more mimetic and psychological renderings which present conflicted characters. A similar increase in psychological complexity is apparent in later 13th century novels. Hence, a future study of inner monologues in later Jewish exegetes from France and Provence in particular is necessary in light of these refinements.

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17 Beaton, Greek Romance, 30-1, 62-5. He sees Byzantine novels as focused on the experiences of a typical individual. This focus is the result of the weakening of Byzantium and the need to reassess itself and its citizens’ place in the world. The similar use of monologues in systematic exegesis might represent a Jewish response to the uncertainty of the crusades.
18 Ibid, 22-3, 67-9. The relative lack of inner monologues in Sa’adiah and Yefet, could show the Byzantine proliferation of inner monologue, which was alien to Muslim spheres.
19 For this type of monologue in a possibly Byzantine halakhic composition, see Philosophus’ thoughts in Minor Tractate Kallah Rabbati 7:4. See also Leqah Tov’s introduction to Lamentations.
20 Stielstra, Portrayal of Consciousness, 55-9. Many of the differences between novels are connected to the reception of Ovid. Chrétien seems less comfortable with inner monologue, and although he uses it often and for varied functions, he seems more comfortable with narration. Ibid, 73-5.
21 Ingram, Romancing the Psyche, 16-7. For parallel to troubadours and Radak connected to conflicted psychology as evident in 13th century novels, see Ibid 85-130.
Jewish Bible exegetes active in Muslim spheres showed a great interest in the mental traits of biblical characters as well. However Yefet, Sa‘adiah and even Ibn Ezra mostly prefer psycho-narration to quoted monologue. Cohn noted that this preference does not usually imply specific historical circumstances but rather an intellectual context. She associates psycho-narration with authorial judgement; thus Sa‘adiah and Yefet’s preference bolsters their legal or Aristotelian contexts (1.7 and 3.7.2.1). The same connection was voiced by Alan Palmer who argues that psycho-narration has been favored by literatures influenced by philosophy throughout history. The philosophical rational sphere led exegetes to be interested in character motivation as part of their realistic depiction of biblical characters. This tendency is also comparable to the predominantly medieval Muslim conception of historicity.

According to Stefan Leder, “fiction” in Muslim medieval texts, although undefined as a concept, is defined by certain stylings that hint that the texts should not be understood as factual. Daniel Beaumont noted that Muslim historiography is far less interested in a sense of verisimilitude than the “Arabian Nights.” Historiography’s “real” nature caused it to avoid description so as not to be mistaken for “fiction.” Preference for psycho-narration is one consequence of this view. The same distinction is evident in oral Muslim storytelling. Storytellers would intersperse...

22 Cohn, Transparent Minds, 9.
25 Leder, Conventions, 44-5, 49-50, 59. Two distancing devices are a frame story in which the text is told to an audience, as well as questioning the factuality of the narration by a character within the text. 26 “Fictional” texts such as the “Arabian Nights” might have served the function of a cultural sub-conscious for more formal genres, see Kaufman, Subjectivity, 126-7, 136, 140-4. The same conservatism holds true for the representation of consciousness in Khabar, even going to the length of changing narrative elements to be more report-like, such as replacing inner monologue with psycho-narration. See Beaumont, Hardboiled, 7-8, 12-14. For a similarly motivated tendency to limit characterization in “eastern” Jewish versions of the tale of “the mother of seven”, see Baumgarten, Mother of Seven, 311-3.
27 Beaumont, Inanimate in Fictional, 60-3.
28 Leder, Conventions, 37-9.
their performance with narration\textsuperscript{29}. It was frowned upon to place too much emphasis on character emotion\textsuperscript{30}.

Attacks against Moses Ibn Ezra’s treatment of biblical poetry equally show that highlighting the Bible’s poetics was understood by Jews as undermining the Bible’s truthfulness\textsuperscript{31}. Thus, Judeao-Arabic exegetes may have avoided using methods of characterization that could color the Bible as unfounded “fiction” for the very same reasons as in Muslim historiography. This results in a preference for psycho-narration, whereas Jewish exegetes from Christian zones use techniques that linked the Bible with fictional genres such as novels or Troubadour poetry. It would be important to reevaluate how this divided medieval exegetic embrace of character consciousness could have impacted the exegetes’ conceptions of biblical law, history and maybe even fiction\textsuperscript{32}.

4.3 The Concept of Protagonist: Types, Exemplars and Development

All the sources in this study demonstrate an intuitive concept of the protagonist though they express it differently. This hints at two underlying senses of character that separate Midrash, from all periods, from systematic Bible exegesis.

Midrash mostly allude to respective types of protagonists from other genres or texts, probably for the benefit of their intended audiences. For instance, Tannaitic

\textsuperscript{29} Faik, Storytellers, 26-7, 94, 137. Ibn al-Jawzi in his “Kitab Al Qussas” shows how the storytellers would distance themselves from their characters, even when speaking as these characters. Storytelling was at once imitation and commentary.

\textsuperscript{30} Faik, Storytellers, 98, 111. Faik mentions four performances by Ahmad Ghazâlî, the younger brother of the famous theologian and philosopher, as recorded by Al-Jawzi, relating to Moses on Mount Sinai, among others. I feel the poetics of these scenes have much in common with midrashic storytelling, specifically in dramatized \textit{piyyutim}. The scenes consist mostly of dialogue with little recorded action. Faik notes how these scenes challenge speakers to arrive at new facts or truths and thereby also comment on contemporary society. Ibid, 100-4.

\textsuperscript{31} See Cohen, Imagination and Logic, 438-44, 452-3. I thank Prof. Polliack for this comparison.

\textsuperscript{32} For this distinction as separating chivalric romances from their later forms in the 13-14\textsuperscript{th} centuries, see Ingram, Romancing the Psyche, 23-6.
Balaam is a lesser flawed rabbinic Moses (1.3.2), PRK 13’s Jeremiah is a hated stand-in for Christian polemicists (2.2.4), BT Esther is like a failed heroine of a Greek novel (3.3), Tanḥuma Balaam is a comic rendering of the Tannaitic themes (1.5.2) and PR 26’s Jeremiah is a paradigmatic Rewritten Bible hero like Ezra or Baruch (2.3.2). ER II veers towards a folkloristic conception of “hero” in its macro structure that depicts Mordecai as a savior who is also Haman’s foil, whereas Esther is demoted in favor of Mordecai in light of wider misogyny (3.4.2 and 3.5).

Midrash therefore broadly uses a conception of type matching befitting a more folkloristic approach. It places audience endearment above character illustration. This approach to characters was common in Late Antiquity and hence speaks volumes as to the compatibility of Midrash characters with other Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages genres.

Abraham Smith noted that in the Greco-Roman world, characterization adhered to theatrical and Aristotelian conventions and was typological rather than psychological. Josephus, he argues, used Sophocles’ and Herodotus’ typology. We have seen the Rabbis do the same. Hence, a study of how midrashic typology relates or even reuses second temple and post biblical typology is in order.

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33 Smith, Tyranny, 263-6, 276. Josephus’s use of biblical characters in analogies to other characters is another facet of the typological trend recognized by scholars, see Daube, Typology, 25-8. For this phenomenon connecting Apollonius’ Golden Ass and “saints’ lives” in light of classical literature, see Bakhtin, Dialogical Imagination, 115ff. Prescott made similar remarks on characterization in new Roman comedy, noting that the figures are all stereotyped representatives of various trades. Although they are slightly individualized and realistic, consistency is secondary to dramatic convenience. The parasite’s daughter in the “Persai” might be an exception. See Prescott, Interpretation, 132-3.

34 Ovid also employed analogy to theatrical types very much like Tan. Balak or the BT may do. See his ingenious uses in Ginsberg, Cast of Character, 42-5.

35 For an extensive description of how PRK 11 uses the classical hero athlete type merged with themes taken from Christian hagiography, which furthers my point regarding Midrash typology, see Rubenstein, Hero, Saint and Sage, 517-26.
The Patristic view of biblical characters might similarly have been typological\textsuperscript{36}. Hence, it would be crucial to study how Amoraic Midrashim used types compared to their chronologically parallel genre of “Apocryphal Acts”, which also needed to adapt pagan typology into a new theological framework. This type of study could be centered on types in late-midrashic parables, since I suspect that these were more fluid than classical rabbinic parables (1.5.2 and 2.3.4)\textsuperscript{37}.

Unlike Midrash, systematic Bible exegesis opts for more individualized characters marked by an increased emphasis on complexity and dynamism meant to elicit sympathy\textsuperscript{38}. These two mimetics take the place of midrashic allusion to character importance. Arthur Jerrold Tieje, who examined the development of the chivalric novel after the Middle Ages, mentions a similar gradual shift towards individuation. The didactic pious types of the 17\textsuperscript{th} and early 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries replaced the chivalric romance, but gave way to the modern novel’s emphasis on individuation\textsuperscript{39}.

The back and forth from typology to individuation might then be a natural process in the ebb and flow of literature. This could further explain the differences between Midrash and systematic Bible exegesis.

\textsuperscript{36} See for instance the following use of Jeremiah as a type (bold). NPNF2-07, 272. Gregory Nazianzen “Orations”, Oration XXI: XII:
\textit{In the palmy days of the Church, when all was well, the present elaborate, far-fetched and artificial treatment of Theology had not made its way into the schools of divinity, but playing with pebbles which deceive the eye by the quickness of their changes, or dancing before an audience with varied and effeminate contortions, were looked upon as all one with speaking or hearing of God in a way unusual or frivolous. But since the Sextuses and Pyrrhos, and the antithetic style, like a dire and malignant disease, have infected our churches, and babbling is reputed culture, and, as the book of the Acts (17:21) says of the Athenians, we spend our time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing. O what Jeremiah (Lam. 1:1) will bewail our confusion and blind madness; he alone could utter lamentations befitting our misfortunes.}

\textsuperscript{37} A study regarding characterization in post-Nicene passions suggests that a typological view of character slowly gave way in later compositions such as the “Passio Caeciliae” to more nuanced versions, specifically in the field of employed rhetoric. Bossu, De Temmerman and Praet, Saint, 437-9.

\textsuperscript{38} For these terms as a taxonomy of characters, see Ewen, Character, 34-44; Berlin, Poetics, 23-33; Rimmon-Kenan, Narrative Fiction, 36-42; Polak, Biblical Narrative, 255-6. For a narratology focused approach see briefly in Herman, Basic Elements, 134-6.

\textsuperscript{39} Tieje, Characterization, 7-11, 74-7, 84-6, 91.
Yefet and Rashbam’s versions of Balaam are nuanced and their downfall is based on a misguided change of heart (1.6.3 and 1.8). Radak and Rashi paint a more flawed and thereby complex Jeremiah. Rashi uses an apologetic tone, but slightly undermines it by highlighting Jeremiah’s penchant for needless complaints (2.4). Radak focuses on Jeremiah’s anguish as a central motivator underlying some of his more disagreeable behavioral traits (2.6.2.2).

Sa’adiah and Ibn Ezra employ different approaches signaled by their opposite uses of character development. Sa’adiah idealizes Esther’s thoughts, actions and discourse and hence sketches a static character compatible with Muslim receptions of Aristotle (3.6.1). Ibn Ezra opts for a Neoplatonic vision of a flawed Esther that gains spiritual insight and therefore prefigures Medieval Hebrew Spanish romances, if not novels in general (3.9.1)\(^40\).

The differences between Sa’adiah and the other accounts suggests another a possible gulf between exegetes who operated in a Muslim context, such as Sa’adiah and to some extent Yefet, and those writing in Christian contexts. Those informed by a Muslim context, view character development as negative (3.6.2.1)\(^41\). Ayaz Afsar

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\(^40\) Vance suggests an intellectual reason for the increased dynamism of Chivalric protagonists. He recognizes in Chrétien, Marie de France and in later “chanson de gestes”, a new 12th century Aristotelian distinction between essence and accident that allowed for character growth. Chivalric romance discriminates between substance and accidents. The soul as a primary substance can have accidents within it and thus change without losing its positive nature. This same distinction also gave rise to questions of authorship in the Christian Bible exegesis of the era. In this way, Ibn Ezra shows how comparable Muslim philosophical developments can lead to character development. See Vance, Topic to Tale, 28-9; Minnis, Theory of Authorship, 28-9. “Percival” embodies another possible connection to the Bible and its exegesis. The novel contains the theme of different layers of clothing and armor. A change of clothing denotes character growth. Percival changes when he dons the armor of the Red Knight, but maintains his coarse Welsh undergarments, which are only later replaced. See in Weinraub, Jewish Rite, 122-5. The dichotomy between content and form as expressed by Abraham Ibn Ezra in his introduction to Lamentations, uses very similar terms of coarse and fine dress, as metaphors for biblical interpretation. This all too generic similarity might hint at a similar insight when interpreting the Bible and its characters, born of distant philosophical developments.

\(^41\) Sa’adiah repeats his views regarding the main function of characters as exemplars in his introduction to the Psalms as translated by Sokolow, Prolegomenon, 139-43: “…The third category is the Narrative... [Divine speech] further subdivides after [the creation of man into two: One part is the narrative of commendable folk such as the Torah details the narrative of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, thereby intending to require us to emulate them. In this book, too, there are numerous examples such as Phineas, of whom it was written: ‘Phineas stepped forth and intervened ... It was reckoned to his
accordingly describes a comparable aversion to character ambiguity as emblematic of Qur’anic characters\(^{42}\).

Annette Yoshiko Reed pointed to this approach in older material. Characters as an exemplary source of ethical guidance were one of the major ideas that shaped classical history and biography. These genres shared an emphasis on example, imitation and avoidance\(^{43}\). In this light, Sa’adiah, Yefet and possibly all Judaeo-Arabic Bible exegesis have something in common with Philo and Josephus’ renditions of biblical characters. Sa’adiah’s explanation of the presence of narrative in the Bible even echoes some of Philo’s and Livy’s justifications of narrative\(^{44}\). This similar viewpoint does not necessarily suggest a direct influence, but rather the mediation of classical knowledge in Muslim literature. This tie needs to be further developed in the future along with the possible exemplary nature of key biblical figures, such as David and Abraham, in the Muslim “tales of the prophets”.

Rashbam, Radak and Ibn Ezra may exemplify the emergence of the developing flawed protagonist common to the medieval novel and potentially to exegetes from Northern France, Provence and Spain (3.9). Character development is associated with centrality in their renditions of Balaam, Jeremiah and Esther. This feature enabled Bakhtin to separate epic from novel based on the ambiguity of the novelistic hero\(^{45}\). Liss likewise found that Rashbam repeatedly portrays a traditional, i.e., midrashic, negative character as sympathetic and vice versa thereby embracing

\(^{42}\) Afsar, Comparative Study, 133-5, 188-91, 208, 229-32.
\(^{43}\) Reed, Exempla, 190-1.
\(^{44}\) Ibid, 193-4, 198-9.
\(^{45}\) Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 10.
ambiguity. This is true of his treatment of Rebekah, Jacob, Esau, Joseph and his brothers, as well as the Israelites in the desert and hence argues that Rashbam’s emphasis on Balaam’s ambiguity is not unique.

Lacey’s description of Chrétien’s protagonists as dynamic is in line with characters in these Jewish medieval Bible commentaries. Chrétien’s heroes undergo psychological change, whereas secondary characters mostly serve to contrast and forefront these mental developments. Bakhtin emphasized change as the divide between the Greek novel “Chronotope” and its chivalric applications. Positive character development is at the core of the high medieval novel.

Warren Ginsberg condensed the changes that characterization underwent in medieval Christian literature into a passage from an Aristotelian adherence to types, to greater uses of monologue and “Ethopeia” brought about by later receptions of Ovid and Virgil. This process culminated in the ascension of more conflicted characters through the literary expression of a new dominant form of rhetoric focused on disputation. Boccaccio and Chaucer created more ambiguous characters who were meant to dramatize multiple viewpoints.

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46 Liss, Fictional Worlds, 251-2. See also Rashbam on Eccl. 7:15. He notes the ambiguous nature of the wicked and righteous. Rashbam is more ambiguous than possible Midrash sources.
48 Liss, Fictional Worlds, 147-8.
50 The characters of the chivalric romance like those of the Bible were stock characters. Each author demonstrated his skills by fleshing them out differently. See Ingram, Romancing the Psyche, 21. Rashbam, Radak and to a lesser extent Rashi approached biblical characters similarly.
51 Lacy, Craft of Chrétien, 28-33. Character development is central to all of Chretien’s novels. Lacy shows that all five novels are roughly divided into before and after a character realizes his flaws and sets out to repair them. This is a scheme where a crisis leads a hero to aspire to become something or someone else. Ibid, 1, 42-5. See also Ingram, Romancing the Psyche, 19, 27-8.
52 Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 105-9, 116-7, 150-5.
53 Ginsberg, Cast of Character, 14-7, 69-72, 94-5, 106-7. For the permutations of narrative as a testing ground for ideas in Chrétien’s novels, see Lacey, Craft of Chrétien, 4-8, 68-70, 115-6. For this aspect as central to later novels, see Bakhtin, Dialogic Imagination, 39.
The biblical characters described by Jewish exegetes and documented in this study adhere to some of these developments closely, but are also the result of the impact of the uniquely Jewish late Midrash. Some late Midrashim do establish a continuity with the dynamic characterization of figures in Bible commentaries. PR 26’s Jeremiah change of role is the climax of that composition (2.3.1.3)\textsuperscript{54}. Likewise, Levinson found R. Eliezer’s biography in PRE to be interested in his change of identity more than in material transformations\textsuperscript{55}. Dov Weiss similarly traces an affinity for positive character development in the Tanḥuma and related literature. These supply unparalleled narratives where God is confronted with numerous characters and changes his mind\textsuperscript{56}. These insights suggest the overall positivity of character development inherent to some late Midrashim\textsuperscript{57}.

In summary, some medieval exegetes, as did some Christian medieval authors may have refined an expressive rhetoric typical of late Midrash characters into a more conflicted characterization. Hence, a future comparison of Jewish medieval exegesis to characterizations in Dante, Boccaccio or Chaucer might be warranted. Specifically, a future comparison of female and male characters might ascertain what Esther and Jeremiah in this study only suggest; namely, that the flawed nature of medieval protagonists might not be solely an issue of gender but a universal development.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{54} Rubenstein notes that the PRK 11 story cycle depicts one character changing types, but this message of change is still not the main message of the cycle. See Rubenstein, Hero, Saint and Sage, 527-8. Compare this to PR 26’s conclusion.
\item \textsuperscript{55} Levinson, Post Classical Narratology, 104.
\item \textsuperscript{56} Weiss, Confrontations with God, 231-42, 252-263, 268, 274. Tanḥuma narratives tend to come up with new protesting characters or show two instead of the one character in parallels. This phenomenon is reminiscent of the Balaam and Balak duality I described extensively.
\item \textsuperscript{57} See in Meir, Changing Character, 61-8. My case studies suggest that Talmudic sages are closer to the epic’s adherence to a-priori identity, whereas later authors infringe upon the novel. Perhaps a future comparison to epic literature from Sassanian Babylonia or later is in order.
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4.4 Summary: Midrashic Types and Novelistic Exegetes

In summary, the representation of biblical characters in classical and late Midrashim, as well as in systematic Bible exegesis, seems to take the form of a transition from the allusion of late antiquity to the mimesis of the novelistic protagonists of the High Middle Ages. What differentiates the sources discussed here is their growing sense of ambiguity and a preference for the representation of consciousness.

However, the classical exemplary approach to characters inherent to some Midrashim and mediated by Muslim conceptions of historicity distinguishes the narration of Judaeo-Arabic exegesis from its counterpart in Christian spheres of influence. Characters from Christian spheres have much in common with the greater emphasis on the psychological mimetic dimension found in late Byzantine rhetoric, chivalric romance, *piyut* and late Midrashim.

These multiple conclusions underscore the need to go beyond the general developmental framework of a “concept of character” so that each change be approached separately in light of its own period and intrinsic processes. The distinctions between late Midrashim and systematic exegesis show that “characterization” is not a purely diachronic process, but also results from internal developments in broader genres and conventions. This is doubly true, since late Midrashim and many systematic commentaries vary considerably, in spite of being contemporaries and sharing stylistic preferences.

In fact, three simultaneous parameters emerged that account for the characterization of biblical figures in medieval Jewish exegetic sources: internal chronological developments, the literary qualities inherent to each genre individually, and the impact of concurrent Muslim and Christian literary developments. Future

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58 Compare to the similar scheme found in Cohn, Transparent Minds, 139-40.
discussions of “Characterization” in these exegetic sources must be broached foremost with this refinement in mind.

The major difference between characterization in Midrash and in systematic exegesis can be best summed up by the following late-midrashic account. Tan. Buber Jethro 16 quotes a divine monologue that directly addresses character appearance (in bold)⁵⁹. God argues that his many appearances (Heb. demuyot)⁶⁰ that are detailed in a midrashic index, only prove that he is one entity regardless of how he appears:

...Another interpretation: Since the Holy One had appeared to them in the sea as a warrior making war (Exod. 15:3), appeared to them on Sinai as a scribe teaching Torah, appeared to them in the days of Solomon as a youth (SoS. 5:15), and appeared to them in the days of Daniel as an elder (Dan. 7:9, 13, 22); the Holy One said to them: Even though they saw me in many forms, I am the one who was in the sea; I am the one who was on Sinai; I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. R. Hiyya bar Abba said: He appeared to them (in a form that was) appropriate for each and every concern, and so in each and every matter. In the sea (it was) as a warrior (that) he waged the wars of Israel. On Sinai he taught Torah to Israel and served as a scribe. In the days of Daniel he taught Torah as an elder, for so it is fitting for Torah to be coming from the mouths of the elders. He appeared to them as a youth in the days of Solomon as was fitting for their deeds, as stated (SoS. 5:15): HIS VISAGE IS LIKE LEBANON, YOUNG AS THE CEDARS⁶¹.

Kister emphasizes that this source and its parallels assume that God’s appearance is dependent on human observation and circumstance. The shapes God takes on are dependent upon the onlooker (underlined above)⁶². This account is as

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⁵⁹ Rashi’s use of demut “דמית” seems in line with the Tanḥuma. Rashi reads Mica’s idol as demut and also see his unique parable in Gen. 37:1. The moral dimension of the parable with regards to storytelling, is reminiscent of the message of the above Tan. (Buber) Jethro. Alternatively, medieval Bible commentaries on SoS. seem to recognize characters as part of the artifice of fictional compositions. See the literary layer in Rashbam, Kara and both of Ibn Ezra’s SoS. commentaries. A study of their possible terminology for “fiction” and characters in these commentaries is worthwhile.

⁶⁰ Sifrei Num. 22= Num. R. 10:7 has an indirect comparison of God to the beauty of a youth reminiscent of Narcissus. Both versions however, do not use demut for his reflection in the water. Thus, God’s appearance in Tan. Jethro above might not only be a physical reflection.

⁶¹ […דניא את נראתה לה ימת החור, חרב עיו מנו ותת עם, תורה להדה סני ת必要 פלגי, וראה בים ימי שלמה, מנהל, 오튰 להדה בי מתי צאן כוק, מנהל הצים הרץ, הכים משנל שידות רוזיא עומד פתיות, אנא נ אירוע, אנא נא המן, למעלה כⵓ," פאך את כים Fucked, לבר סבר את מתי צאן כוק, וראה להדה ימי שלמה. הזכירה, לסניא את מתי צאן כוק, וראה להדה ימי שלמה, ישון את מתי צאן כוק, וראה להדה ימי שלמה, ישון את מתי צאן כוק, וראה להדה ימי שלמה, ישון את מתי צאן כוק, וראה להדה ימי שלמה, ישון את מתי צאן כוק.]

⁶² Kister, Divine Manifestations, 115. See also PR 33.
methodical a discussion of literary characterization in Midrash as one can hope for. God declares in a distinct monologue that his appearance as a multitude of characters does not touch upon the true nature of the divine. Characterizations simply needs to be palatable to the audience\textsuperscript{63}. Hence, the “true” nature of God and all literary characters is not discussed in Midrash directly. It instead tries to describe characters solely by approximation as a type that corresponds to a specific audience or hermeneutical need. Midrash illustrates rather than expresses or represents.

The central differences in characterization differentiating Midrash and Bible commentaries ultimately lie in their starting points. Midrash uses a top-down typological model\textsuperscript{64}. It explains one figure by alluding to a known type or character. Medieval exegesis, through its more systematic nature, employs a more bottom-up approach that mimics a consecutive reading process. The exegetes collect, comment and even enhance characterizations inherent to the biblical text. This results in greater individuation of biblical characters, since it naturally leads to divergence from types where possible\textsuperscript{65}.

Some late Midrashim or chapters thereof straddle the line between these extremes. They focus on illustrating character more than on interpreting verses. However, late Midrash only has some poetic devices in common with Bible exegetes, because it is more detached from the biblical text than its classical predecessors. These similarities still suggest that systematic Bible exegesis and not just independent

\textsuperscript{63} This account in its many forms might have served as an anti-Christian polemic aimed at divine incarnation. Kister, Divine Manifestations, 113-4. Kister also notes that earlier versions of this homily, MekhY. Shira 4 and Bahodesh 5, contain no mention of “demuyot harbe”. Late parallels other than Tan. Jethro by contrast, contain no quoted divine monologue. It is then not impossible that Tan. Jethro’s “demuyot” denotes characters in a more modern literary sense. The term only appears in a late source in a way corresponding to a late source (1.4.1 and 2.3.3.2), according to my findings concerning characters in late Midrash.

\textsuperscript{64} For these terms, see Herman, Storytelling and the Sciences of the Mind, 200-1; Cohn, Transparent Minds, 205-13.

\textsuperscript{65} Herman, Ibid.
medieval Hebrew prose narratives continue literary trends inherent to late Midrash. Eric Lawee posited that certain medieval Jewish exegetes were forced into a historical conception of scripture that separated them from Christian views.

Medieval exegetes’ renditions of biblical characters could then be understood as another form of this historicity. They might have increased the mimetic qualities of their biblical characters on the basis of a realistic perception of the Bible. They updated enhanced the characters’ realism in line with changing medieval conceptions of realism in literature. This possibility warrants future comparison to Renaissance exegetes but also highlights a paradox. Bible exegetes viewed biblical characters as “real” and as a result made them and the Bible seem more mimetic and thus fictional.

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66 Lawee, On the Threshold, 288-90. Historicity was fueled by the disharmony between Judaism’s past and present. This historicity was brought to the fore in Renaissance Bible exegesis. See in particular his discussion of Abarbanel’s treatment of historical Jeremiah’s biography as informing his style and retroactive treatment of the past, ibid, 296-9.
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הrtc<ת ח"ש חיים רוזנברג

החלה ב развитה הספרותית Stefania - לח"ש ימי הביניים
נשימתו של הפרט

%=15:00 / 15:30
2019

母校: אוניברסיטת תל אביב
הפקולטה להודווך והודיה ח"ש, הפקולטה להודווך והודיה ח"ש
6997801, תל אביב
TATE OF TEL-AVIV, P.O. BOX 39040, TEL-AVIV 6997801, ISRAEL
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תקציר

ימי הביניים (לערך, המאות השביעית עד השתיים עשרה לסה"נ) היו עדות להופעת פרשנות המקרא כסוגה נפרדת לגמרי מן המדרש, כמו גם לשינויים מרחביים קי猴 לכת בתודעה הספרותית המשתקפתBah conservatism inshader of the same. עדיף זה מניח לקוור בך חקר המדרש שב פני מתקורמים

המשולבים עם הפרשנות של פרשני ימי הביניים למקרא כספרות, באמצעות תובנות מרכזיות מתורת הספרות, ובפרט, בדמות

ה🌎 ובספרות, ובפרט, בדמות עזוב הדומם, ובאמעתעה השואווה לולגון מדרשיות המבילדות. אני מתמקה באור מושב

הדרומת מדרשיהขาว וחוזיות המקראים מימי הביניים כספרות, באמצעות ביכריניות בוחרת של להלמָר שмедицин בברך: בלעם, רמייה ואוסטר, הפר

שנה מגוונים בנתיכו מדרשיות ופרושיות מחקריות שמקורות ועל שעון

פרק המבוא (0.1-0.5) עד במחקרים הקומימיים על אופי דמותו וממדשה ובמדרשים ימי הביניים

ומפר את השיקולים השמרות את בכתובות הדוממות, המדרשים והמדרסיות המדרשים הדלשות

ובפריק העובדות הושнее. סקירה בברחת של האנת שלידים המקראיםypass סקירה פרשורת ומדרסית פאתות.

במבילית, שב כל אדם ימוקן העריך.

החלק.Result של עבורה המדרשים (1.1-1.9.3) במקרא והארכיונים והאנולוגים המודרנים על

בלעまと. הסדרות התנאיות שמתנאות בארכיון, באורך שרнстים מדרשים התמָר של פעולת療ורית ותומך בו

בדקתו מדרשים. שרнстים של הב cdr גאָריות מדרשים דליים וברכיבים ארוכים יותר. והו גוני.

ושıyorה, בכל העניין, המ וד徭ות של הסדרות בולעaticon, בפי שפגועות את הפרקים והמודדות והחדותאהמנסים. שרнстים מדרשים של פעולות אופי אנלוגיות השונותlette המודרים פיתוחון. פון פרשטי זה בדשל

ממשיכות ברטוארית הקומפורטית.

נתונה בלועי המסיע את המרוכבים והזוהו במדורות של בלוע, פון בחרו שרнстים מדרשים

לעטיפת של בחרו רטריבים, שרפרט שלראות ציצת בלועות נחתה מעשה. או עליון מופרור של בלוע בועת

ובעונות היוד. ההבדלים ברטריבים בראירי בינונייםekte יעניי הערזים, אשר במעטה זה פונה

לאalore לאור החמות בקומדיו והד_Detailות במדורית ומדירוסים בולע. הבחרות מהולך את בלוע אךנהנת

שנה.
 theano בבלב לב עתיר פירוי בן על יונה דאבעון לשורי ואחרת ה។

יפתמשת באנוואל גי דריוור יפעבש פפיריס, על חנת ה(random בברית יאכון בבלב. זא

פונגו באנקענות לבן לבבלע עטמיה כמطبيع חקל משני לברקנאות. עונרים הער שיפבח בצעב הנפש

של בללע והשאואות להבנעם, מזרטמו זייפ ית יושב באור והשטרי בה枷תי הנחה צוד

אלסאאובי (מולטיוולו) מעטירות פילוסופיות. הצבוע על הדשנת וגו האמצעותAMAGE סדר האנגלית

בוכ פڇיווח בפריוו יחככל.

בללע בהאי פירווי, שטוחל בנס יואר זג דריומ מירב, די אטרפתי מבחרים האב

אלאוניגו לייזה. המברחת השוואה או ליאור שימיש רחב באנק вокруг ברכן האנימרין ויאור להגמה

ה możבייה של הער שבר המים האובי. פירוניו המקרה הגרגרי והנורית העולה על רס"ב מפור使って את

המצב הממילייף של המקרה עם בלפל קיננה גיב ויכולו פפירויות ושרוטונות דמיון. התשנותיו הנברותගה יסוד

הحضور ביאוני האברידר.

החלק ענשי של השד החורש (2.1-2.6.4) על יונה בתינוח של ירמי ומגר עציו

הללכה וגררה שלידים במנונואות פותעה. פסיקתא דרב בהא ביאריי אתי ירמי אוון באת פשעת שטוח

והופך לחוון נבוארות. פסיקתא אלה אפיינה את תודעה ירמי גנרטור וד שית אנסימה שיקבול בבריבור.

אמרה באנכדעת השוואה או ליאורTREEも多い פסיינה ושקופיות. התשנותיו עליון האות הגרגרי מציב כגד

הكلف הנצאוריות של שפר ירמי מתחארא בפריוווי של הורימונים, דכבר על המקנה הלקות של הראריה

הנוצרות את המפר.

פסיקתאระบוי, כלת גאתי, מגרוורו פסיקתא "לידריה", אמתאנו ציטוט ההשה הפמינית של

הпущен גאתי הפסעג הוכל הוללה. הצבעו והתנעלב בלבל קרואות מדרישות לא מתוצאות דונご紹介

הרב כהנא. מהביר פסיקתא ראתי כמעדדי תג קלול של ירמי, על מתת להקך האפסרות ואופיו

הממנשהחשא את המבלי עם ירמיות ודריהוים על ביני ירמי, כמור ביאפרים אתי בויתו

בנורית השיך של ירמיות המשנה. השימש במנונואות הצבוע על הת móg יעדנו ריעוריים ברגינית

מאותה, בישה ביסיר פגנוגนโย בן פסיקתא ראתי יבכי מדריש וספיסיאו המקרה ביבנונין.

ירמי הפריוווי ל"שלמה יציק מעשיה אתי הנצאותו המגנונית בפסיקתא ראתי. רוא"י מנס מדומע

תחכות דворот קואנונואות אופונואות המוחבישה את אשﾞירי ילב. "רוא"י, מגסאיי אתי יכים.
כמתלונן סדרתי בכמה מונולוגים מקוריים וחסרי רקע מקראי. כך,úa, w ז告诉他 של ה더יה, הוא מארח פעמיים יבשון
עב הלוחות שברמיה רדפק את זפי מצ helf בnings בambique. רדפק, על מנת להחרחחל חוכל מבורי הקשישה. הסברה, את הדגה הפסיקולוגית בידינו, והאוקיפה לדגימה את הקשישה
וידוגים ביוור העורובוזים הסמוכים בעונת וגוואנגיית ורגיאנטית לרדפק כון בברשטיית מוניקה למלומוד הפימה.

רדרי ביבי, ב_uniform פותח את שב אביר יף קשישה

ה探し בשתייה של מוניקות הדוקטרינה (3.1-3.9.2) בותח את האסטר מגנט את מוניקה הרחבית
במסורה, זכר, עקוף הלוחות של חכת וגם את המוניקות העורובוזים (קדר, המוניקות משנרטון יינה"ב) רוחא
benhavn תלהחג קיוור. "זאת מסדרים את מגילת הב fullfileים המא🏹ים בשתי תימות בחורה, ואתה,
པושרל אברך, והודשות, מתריסת חורה לחיבות קטפה. זמנה מוייסוס זמר מגילר אינו הרון
ירונף, זא התלמוד בו וחי מפר את הדרח ודיית המוניקה בכנות הרומנים, לgetConfig בחרבח
אלוהית. כמי, זוכי ללכס מודע יקושר בך הרונים חיובה לפני התלמוד הבבלי, איון מפורך.

かない קולות של מוניקה אס터 בחכת מיתולייה ואשתה של אסטרה לובשת מדורק, בינוניה לגנאותו
מקבולות במדרשפו מקורות אסטרה. התלמוד אסטרה מתבצרת, עד הידכתי ממדיך ליפורד הכותז, או
לא היה מזדו זכרו באמעטראק איסוך כמעשל בעניי, על תיאורית פחה להביריאית על אסטרה. לע כ, מסehr

שמדרו "גיא-קלייאן" הז מפואר ידיעה באמעטרקא איסוך והשמחת מפורך, או באמעטרקא חזר
גר朋友们对 נייחות. אחדוב ובר אסטרה רהב מכיג את מרדכי ובמק槿 על פיתויו דמות פילוקליורה. הקשיה
ואת חזר הפוסיל לאסטרה למקנה הספרות הפוגיסית. את ניגרה בחרך והרב מפורך ימיה-קלארי.
עדות מוניות لكل תנים בטישה הנאוונגיית ממומיס לרגלהו המפורה לק-קלארי.
אסטרה ביוור להפרחת דגון או אומל ז pracyי כלל אפרודיט השתייה הפוסילית. הקשיה ממקך,
אסטרה כמות חסרה יהן בפורית, ומונע "פילוקליורית" הזגה ורא ממר, נוברת והשפעת התמקדה
המונולית של השמאית, של אריסיא על פיתויו הגדתי לא רבד". ופגישה זה ממדיך את חפס הדריך. 
The transformation of the historical and fictional characters, and their role in the development of new character types. Abraham ibn Ezra emphasizes Esther in view of philosophical developments that changed the meaning of the concept of a character. Meanwhile, the emphasis in the first half of both of his interpretations is on the physical and sexual beauty of the Moors, while in the second half he neglects this perspective for the spiritual growth of Esther. It is proposed that Raba saw Esther rather than Mordecai as the first character, due to the integration that led, between physical beauty and development, to the support of the Esther figure. The chapters that support this are from his other interpretations, character traits in 'Hay ben Makitz' and similar works in oriental and Hebrew literature.

Finally, the conclusions (4.1-4.4) re-examine the idea that I am using to design characters, especially in light of the three cases in terms of characters in Beulah, Jeremiah, and Esther together. Two main centers of tension: it is proposed that there is a "topographical" perspective of the characters. He hints to other types of characters in order to free the behavior of the characters for the audience, for educational or historical reasons. This perspective is necessary for the relationship between characters in late biblical and early medieval times. Later interpreters have developed this perspective in different ways. The Talmudic literature tends to equate hidden hints, while, for example, the substantive characters are used as a principle to establish chapters and complete sections, according to the acceptance of the stories that are related to the characters. This is a symbol of the increasing simplification in thinking, the Amorite. The later interpretation develops the dramatic methods of the book and the outer dialect, and, as a result, the emphasis on the characters.

In contrast, medieval interpretation has turned into a specialized field of study, apparently due to increased attention to accuracy and the historical dimension of the book. The interpreters strengthen the internal traits of biblical characters, as a means to support their non-fictional nature of the text. The result is more "realistic", rather than character heroes. Therefore, it is necessary to consider this development together with the revival of this genre in late medieval times.

A difference is noticeable between the areas of influence of Muslim and Christian: the active interpreters in the Islamic areas prefer less dramatic forms such as "incidental conclusion", and did not delve into the development of characters, perhaps because of the Islamic literature, which avoids allegorical means and emphasizes the aesthetic.
הפרדיגמט緩יש צート של דמיון כדי. פרשנים הפיעולים בארץ אך recur потому "מיטול נראית".

השאיבים והשאיבים הקואופטרים מיתר של אופי הדמות בצורת המיתר. הפרשנים הכלל משקפים את הת настоя גביזי של מתמיד "המחבר"牙齿 שגרות מצורת של מתמיד תמרור והפרשנות הכולית.

לבסוף, התהות הנולים ממסכת הפ˖לויות בזו למד יאפרוניו התהחותי או מוסבר בין הממדים. התו יזמר כי אפני דמיון משותף.

הפרשנים הביניאים חזות חלדה של שגויים פורמיס או הצרכים באופי של התהחות המשותף.

המדרש והפרשנות המוקד הביניאים, לעד התהחותי אופטיקו-איצטליות והפרשנות יזמיות. פרק המסקנות וצמצום מגוון ד DisplayName עם המ المواطنين ינולות לתרומת התהחותי המיתרית.

פרשנות יזם הביניאים וספורת מול המיתר באל.

ה