

Current Trends in the Study of Midrash

CHAPTER THREE

REWRITTEN BIBLE AND RABBINIC
MIDRASH AS COMMENTARY¹

STEVEN D. FRADE

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Carol Bakhos

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As the *volume* of ancient texts that stand in an interpretive relation to what was to become canonical scriptures has greatly increased over the past several decades, largely thanks to the publication of the Dead Sea Scrolls, so too has our appreciation of the great *variety* of the forms and methods of scriptural interpretation displayed within those texts. On the one hand, this has led to a greater appreciation of the centrality of the ongoing processes of scriptural interpretation to the very formation of the Hebrew Bible itself. On the other, it has sensitized us to the ways in which the processes of scriptural canonization shaped attitudes toward the authority of the scriptural text, which in turn affected the ways by which individuals and communities claimed or assumed for themselves the authority to interpret that text. As a result, scholars have had to move beyond the comparison of rarefied interpretive traditions to considerations of the varied strategies by which such traditions were formed and transmitted within specific socio-religious and literary settings.²

¹ This essay originated as a paper at the XVIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, as part of a panel on 'Rewritten Torah,' Leiden, August 2, 2004. Discussion among the panelists greatly contributed to its published form, as did subsequent comments by Moshe Bernstein, Joshua Levinson, Tzvi Novick, and Ishai Rosen-Zvi.

² For an excellent exploration of the methodological issues of comparing rabbinic literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls, see against the broader scholarship on comparison, see Lutz Doering, 'Parallels without 'Parallelomania': Methodological Reflections on Comparative Analysis of Halakhah in the Dead Sea Scrolls,' in Steven D. Fraade and Aharon Shemesh, eds., *Rabbinical Perspectives: Rabbinic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature*, 7-9 January, 2003 (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). For other studies of mine that address these issues, see: 'Interpretive Authority in the Studying Community' at Qumran, *JJS* 44 (1998) 46-69; 'Looking for Legal Midrash at Qumran,' in Michael E. Stone and Esther G. Chazon, eds., *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use and Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 59-79;

In the course of comparing and contrasting the varied forms of early scriptural interpretation, one distinction has become increasingly important: between those writings which blur, if not efface, the boundary line between received scripture and its interpretive retelling, and those which maintain, even highlight, that line, so that the interpretive relation of the one to the other can be displayed, and even contested.³ The latter approach characterizes scriptural commentary (whether in Philo, the Dead Sea Scrolls, or rabbinic midrash), which structures a dialogical shuttle between scriptural words and their accompanying explanation(s) through the use of formal, terminological markers to differentiate the two from one another. By contrast, a great variety of interpretive writings from second temple times which lack these formal traits of commentary have been lumped together under the rubric, first coined by Geza Vermes, 'rewritten Bible.'⁴ While this term has been applied more commonly to narrative texts, it has also been applied to legal ones, such as the Temple Scroll. While problems with the designation 'rewritten Bible' have been rightly noted, no commonly-accepted alternative has so far arisen to take its place.⁵ In brief, it is not

³ Shifting from Priestly to Non-Priestly Legal Authority: A Comparison of the Damascus Document and the Mishnah Sifra, *DSD* 6 (1999) 109–125; 'To Whom It May Concern: 4QMMT and Its Addressee(s)', *RevQ* 19 (2000) 507–526; "'The Torah of R. Davila, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Rabbinical Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2009) 25–60; 'Rhetoric and Hermeneutics in Midgats Mase Ha-Torah aive Midrash' Revisited: The Case of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Rabbinic Midrash' (Hebrew), in Yaakov Elbaum, Galit Hasan-Roken, and Joshua Levinson, eds., *Minhal Torah: Festschrift for Prof. Yaakov Frankel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, forthcoming); 'Looking for binah! Perspectives: Rabbinic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls' (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

⁴ For a fuller form of my argument here, with textual examples, see my *From Tradition to Commentary: Torah and its Interpretation in the Mishnah Sifra to Deuteronomy* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991) 1–23; reworked in 'The Turn To Commentary in Classical Judaism: The Case of Sifra Deuteronomy', in Peter Ochs, ed., *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Post-Critical Scriptural Interpretation* (New York: Paulist Press, 1993) 142–171.

⁵ See Geza Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition: Haggadic Studies* (2d rev. ed.; Leiden: Brill, 1973) 228–229.

⁶ See, in particular, Hindy Najman, *Seconding Sinai: The Development of Mosiac Discourse in Second Temple Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003) 7–8, with further bibliography in notes. An alternative designation, 'parabiblical literature', was suggested by H.L. Ginzberg (review of Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1: A Commentary*, *JS* 28 [1967] 574–577), but has only recently caught on, especially where the line between scriptural text and its reworking is less clear. See, for example, Devorah

self-evident how such 'rewritten' scriptures were understood by their 'authors' or 'audiences' to relate to what came to be the Hebrew Bible; for example, whether as interpretive complement or supplement, or as revelatory replacement or successor. Stated differently, did such 'rewritten' texts share in or borrow from the authority of their antecedent scriptures, or did they seek to supplant or upstage them? Such works display a variety of strategies whereby their authors claim authority for their parabiblical creations; with pseudonymy being only one.

With the discovery and publication of the *peshtarim* among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and intensified interest in the exegetical writings of Philo of Alexandria, the formal contrast between 'rewritten Bible' and scriptural commentary, notwithstanding the many commonalities of their contents, became all the more striking and possibly telling. Did these formal differences, between 'rewritten Bible' and explicit scriptural commentary, reflect chronological development, as some have suggested, or possibly different social contexts, pedagogical functions, and ideologies of revelation? If scriptural interpretation, even at the same time within the same community, could be shaped into such very different forms of presentation, what were the rhetorical advantages (and disadvantages) of one over the other?

As is often the case, the pluses of such broad classifications are also their minuses, that is, that even as they assist us in sorting the many writings before us, they can easily blur the great degree of variety and the significance of differences within each class. For example, to group the *Book of Jubilees*, the *Temple Scroll*, the *Genesis Apocryphon*, Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities* 1–11, and Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* under the single rubric of 'rewritten Bible' does not do justice to the significant differences in form, function, language, and ideology between them. Similarly, although the earliest collections of rabbinic midrash assume the form of explicit scriptural commentary, to lump them with Philo's allegorical commentaries and the Qumran *peshtarim* reveals as much as it conceals. As I have argued at greater length else-

Dinman, 'Enoch 6–11: A Fragment of a Parabiblical Work', *JJS* 53 (2002) 223–237; George J. Brooke, 'Parabiblical Prophetic Narratives,' in Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 271–301. For further discussion of 'rewritten Bible,' with additional bibliography, see George J. Brooke, 'Rewritten Bible,' in James C. VanderKam and Lawrence H. Schiffman, eds., *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 2:777–781; Moshe J. Bernstein, "'Rewritten Bible': A Generic Category Which Has Outlived its Usefulness?" *Text* 22 (2005) 169–196.

where, not only are there significant differences between and within early rabbinic midrashic collections, but while sharing some important traits with Philo's commentaries and some with the *peshtarim*, they share many with neither. For example, whereas scholars have sought in the Qumran *peshtarim* the origins of rabbinic midrash, certain traits of rabbinic midrash are in closer alignment with Philo's commentaries, e.g. multiple interpretations and dialogical (question and answer) rhetoric. However, even in terms of these shared traits, other aspects of rabbinic hermeneutics and interpretive language align more closely with the *peshtarim*, e.g. the rabbinic *peṭraḥ*, even as in each case of similarity, important qualifications are necessary.⁶

I would like here to swing the pendulum back a bit, deconstructing somewhat the division between the classes of 'rewritten Bible' and 'scriptural commentary' without, however, dismantling it. I wish to argue that in many ways rabbinic midrash, both legal and narrative, may itself be viewed as containing aspects of 'rewritten Bible' beneath its formal structure of scriptural commentary. For example, even as rabbinic midrash formally presents itself as simply disclosing the meaning(s) of particular scriptural words, following the scriptural sequence, it more subtly often speaks itself in the voice of Scripture, addressing its midrashic audience in the second person much as God and Moses do in the Torah, often assuming (pseudepigraphically) the voice of either or both. Likewise, through its very methods of localized commentary, it commonly displaces scriptural words from their sequential order so as to reread (or retell) them intertextually in other, often surprising, scriptural contexts, much as do works commonly included under the rubric of 'rewritten Bible.'

Other common features of 'rewritten Bible' may also be discerned in rabbinic midrash, even as their formal traits differ: expansive paraphrase, filling in scriptural gaps; contractive paraphrase, removing discomforting sections or details; relocating laws or narratives to more congenial settings; harmonizing seemingly discordant verses; narrativizing laws and legalizing narratives; calendricizing biblical laws and narratives; identifying anonymous with named persons and places; eticologizing later practices or beliefs; and the list could go on. These are

⁶ See above, nn. 2, 3, as well as Steven D. Fraade, 'Midrashim,' *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1:549-552. On the Qumran *peshtar* in relation to the rabbinic *peṭraḥ*, see most recently Shani Berrin, 'Qumran Peshtarim,' in Matthias Henze, ed., *Biblical Interpretation at Qumran* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 114-115, 131-132.

all, you might correctly say, common traits of scriptural (if not literary) interpretation more generally. My point is that the formal traits of explicit commentary often disguise them, allowing the commentary to create or absorb a reworked scriptural text under the guise of a succession of discrete units of scriptural lemmata and accompanying explanations. While we should not dismiss the differences between what formally presents itself, at least to our eyes, as scriptural commentary and as 'rewritten Bible,' we should not become so imprisoned by such categories (of our own making) as to be blinded to the ways their less formal features have penetrated one another. But neither should we slip back to discounting the formal traits of each writing as mere literary detritus that stands in the way of our constructing a disembodied meta-tradition of scriptural interpretation or of our uncovering a subterranean font of shared laws and legends.⁷

In light of these general comments, I would like to examine one passage from the earliest rabbinic midrash to the Book of Deuteronomy, the *Sifre*, in its initial comments on Deut. 6:4, which from late second temple times to the present has had a central role in Jewish liturgy and belief as the *Shema*' declaration.⁸ Within its scriptural context, this verse and what follows are part of Moses' covenantal admonition to the people of Israel in the land of Moab, prior to Moses' death and the people's entrance into the promised land. Like so much of the Book of Deuteronomy, Deut. 6:4ff may be understood as a reworking of an earlier part of the Torah, in this case as an elaborated restatement of the first commandment of the Decalogue.

In the excerpt that we shall consider, *Sifre Deut.* 31,⁹ three formal characteristics of rabbinic midrash stand out: 1. Interpreting verses from different parts of Scripture in light of one another (even such

⁷ See David Stern, 'Introduction to the 2003 Edition,' in Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003) XV-XXIV, esp. XIX, XXII.

⁸ The origins of its liturgical recitation are unclear. See Josephus, *Ant.* 4:212-213; *Lit. Ant.* 160, although these are not as explicit as one would want. For Qumran see Moshe Weinfield, 'Traces of "Qeḏuṣhat Yozer,"' [Hebrew] *Tarbiz* 45 (1975-1976) 15-26; Shemaryahu Talmon, *The World of Qumran: from Within* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986) 226, 229. The Mishnah (*Tamid* 5:1) certainly assumes it was recited in the Temple. For the liturgical place of the *Shema*' in Judaism, see Jeffrey Tigay, *The JPS Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996) 440-441.

⁹ This text and others to be considered below are appended, with English translations, at the end. Cf. *Midrash Tammin* Deut. 6:4 (ed. Hoffmann, 24). Note that I have omitted a major section of text (between sections [A] and [B]), which, as Louis Finkelstein and others have noted, is a digression from the flow of the commentary, if not a scribal or editorial gloss, as is apparent from the resumptive repetition with which sec-

citations). 2. A dialogic rhetoric of questions and answers (seven such rhetorical questions). 3. Alternative interpretations (two). In common midrashic fashion, Deut. 6:4 is not 'read' in terms of its immediate scriptural context, but its meaning is determined in juxtaposition with Exod. 25:2, from which an implicit interpretive question is generated, to which Deut. 6:4, once midrashically interpreted, will eventually provide an answer: Why are the Israelites in Exod. 25:2 addressed as the 'children of Israel' (that is, Jacob) and not of their earlier progenitors, Abraham or Isaac? (A1)

Although the answer may be said to be simply genealogical—in that the descendants of Abraham and Isaac were not all included among the subsequent nation of Israel—the exegetical narrative has Jacob express a life-long anxiety, whether some of his offspring too would prove unworthy of inclusion in the covenantal chain. Jacob frets that he might produce *כְּלוּלָה* (waste, refuse) as did Abraham (Ishmael) and Isaac (Esau). Thus, the midrash has transported us from the broad scriptural context of Moses' end of life and his admonitions to the Israelites as he confronts his anxieties about their future, to the much earlier scriptural scene, here exegetically imagined, of Jacob's end-of-life anxieties concerning his offspring and his admonitions to them. That is, Jacob, like Moses, realizes that the fulfillment of God's covenantal promises to him now hangs in the balance of his progeny.¹⁰ The midrashic commentary next ([B]) creatively interprets Gen. 28:21 ('the Lord shall be my God') as an expression of Jacob's unconditional faith, *be'ora* he begets children, that God's name will fully rest on him, as signified by all of his children, without exception, being worthy progeny.

After producing twelve sons, the one son who appears possibly to have compromised this expectation and most aroused Jacob's anxiety is Reuben, his first-born no less, for having 'lain' with Jacob's concubine, Bilhah, of which deed Jacob somehow hears ([C]). Our midrash must next prove, again by interpreting several verses (Gen. 35:22; 37:25; Deut. 33:6), not only that Reuben repented his sin but that he was forgiven by God, as confirmed by Moses, thereby allowing the inclusion of

tion [B] begins. Although I have reproduced the text from Finkelstein's edition, I have checked the manuscript variants, none of which affect my interpretation of the text. For parallels to the components of this text in later rabbinic collections, see Finkelstein's notes ad loc.

¹⁰ For a similar anxiety attributed to Moses, see *Sifre Deut.* 335 (ed. Finkelstein, 385). For a similar midrashic linking of Moses' final admonitions to those of Jacob, see *Sifre Deut.* 2 (ed. Finkelstein, 10).

all twelve sons as Jacob's covenantal successors.¹¹ The possible redundancy within the concluding proof-text of this section ('Let Reuben live, and not die' [Deut. 33:6]) is midrashically understood to mean, 'live in this world, and not die in the world to come,' thereby signifying that Reuben's repentance had been accepted by God.¹² Although the base lemma of Deut. 6:4 (*יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד*) may by now have been forgotten on this detour of establishing Reuben's repentance, its words echo in Gen. 35:22, with the phrase *יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ* ('and Israel [Jacob] heard'), thereby anticipating, through this midrashic parataxis, that it might yet return.¹³

While it would appear that Jacob is now ready to meet his death, he still fears that his sons are not wholehearted and united (without *בְּחֵלְדָּתָא*) in their commitment to God ([D]). He gathers them together with words that once again proleptically prefigure Deut. 6:4: *וְיִשְׁמְעוּ אֶת אֲבוֹתָם יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְיָ אֶחָד* ('Hearken, O sons of Jacob, Hearken to Israel your father'; Gen. 49:2).¹⁴ Having admonished each son individ-

¹¹ Note CD III, 4–5, which speaks of 'the sons of Jacob' having 'strayed' and been punished, without specifying which sins by which sons are being referenced. However, given the general emphasis on sins of sexual lust, one might presume Reuben's sin to be included. On Reuben's sin elsewhere in the Dead Sea Scrolls, see below n. 24.

¹² See all of the *tanqumim* to Deut. 33:6; *Sifre Deut.* 347, 348, 355 (ed. Finkelstein, 404–405, 420); *bSan.* 92a; *Rashi* to Deut. 33:6; and others. Cf. *Sifre Deut.* 2 (ed. Finkelstein, 10), where Jacob's reproval of Reuben for his sin is also mentioned, but without mention of Reuben's having repented. For 'parabiblical' treatments of Reuben's sin, see *Jub.* 33:1–9, 15; *T. Ren.* 1:6–10; 3:11–15; 4:2–4; *T. Jud.* 13. Of these, only in *T. Ren.* 1:8–10 is Reuben said to have repented for his sin, although in *T. Ren.* 4:2–4 he expresses remorse. However, the dating and provenance of the *Tanqumim* is uncertain. For recent treatments of ancient interpretations of Reuben and Bilhah, see James Kugel, 'Reuben's Sin with Bilhah in the Testament of Reuben,' in David P. Wright et al., eds., *Pomegranates and Golden Bells: Studies in Biblical, Jewish, and Near Eastern Ritual, Law, and Literature in Honor of Jacob Milgrom* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1995) 525–554; idem, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible As It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998) 463–469; Michael Segal, 'The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology' [Hebrew] (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 2004) 67–78; idem, 'The Relationship Between the Legal and Narrative Passages in Jubilees (Reuben and Bilhah/Judah and Tamar),' in Devorah Dimant and Esther Chazon, eds., *Rewriting the Bible: Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'Bilhah the Inner Temptress: The Testament of Reuben and "The Birth of Sexuality,"' *JQR* 95 (2005, forthcoming).

¹³ Gen. 35:22 is the only verse, besides the *יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ* admonitions of the Book of Deuteronomy, in which Israel (singular) is the subject of the verb *שמעו* in a positive sense.

¹⁴ Although these words are not explicitly cited in the midrash, they can be easily supplied in the ellipsis of Gen. 49:1–8 as cited. However the connection is very much

ally, he now addresses them collectively, asking them to allay his anxiety through a declaration of their faith, which they do through a slightly glossed version of Deut. 6:4, thereby explicitly returning us to the base lemma, which so far has gone uninterpreted, but has been echoing through a tapestry of proof-texts (Gen. 28:21; 35:22; 49:2). But that base lemma is now radically reconfigured. While Deut. 6:4 in its own scriptural scene represents a communication from Moses to the people of Israel, in its reconfigured midrashic scene, it expresses the response of Jacob's sons to their father, here by his name Israel. Deuteronomy 6:4 now functions as the fulfillment of Jacob's expectation (or prediction) in Gen. 28:21, as previously interpreted: that God's name would rest on Jacob, that is on the sons of Jacob, as confirmed by their declaration of God's name, YHWH, as being 'our God' and unitary. Their words, beginning with יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ , are also the antidote to $\text{לֹא יֵשׁוּב עָלֵינוּ}$ (Gen. 35:22), the source of Jacob's anxiety.¹⁵

We are next ([E]) given three possible responses by Jacob to his sons' declaration. Gen. 47:31, Jacob's bowing at the head of his bed, just prior to his death, is first interpreted to indicate Jacob's expression of thanksgiving to God that all of his sons (conceived on his bed) have proved worthy transmitters of the covenant through their wholehearted affirmation of faith in God. Alternatively ($\text{בְּרִיתוֹתָם עָלָיו}$), it is understood as an expression of thankfulness that Reuben in particular, who defiled Jacob's bed (Gen. 49:4; 1 Chron. 5:1),¹⁶ had repented. Yet a third, altogether different understanding ($\text{וְיָקֹם יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה}$) is provided: that Jacob responded to his sons' acclamation with non-scriptural words of praise of God, 'Blessed be the name of His glorious majesty for ever and ever,' which we know as the liturgical response to the recitation of the *Shema*, originally a congregational response, but later uttered pri-

¹⁵ explicit in a liturgical poem (*piyyut*) by Yannai (ninth century CE) which midrashically "retells" Deut. 6:4: "He [Jacob] called to them [his sons] (with) יְהוָה and they answered him (with) יְהוָה ." See Zvi Meir Rabinovitz, ed., *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Yannai According to the Triennial Cycle of the Pentateuch and the Holidays* [Hebrew] (2 vols.; Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1985–1987) 2:142.

¹⁶ It is this verbal link that is at the heart of the thematic link between Reuben's sin and the deathbed dialogue between Jacob and his sons.

¹⁷ That Reuben committed his sin on Jacob's bed is stated twice for emphasis in Gen. 49:4, with which compare 4Q252 (*Commentary on Genesis*) IV, 3–7 and LXX Gen. 49:4. While less verbally explicit, as we shall see, the two scenes are also linked by the common bed of Reuben's sin and Jacob's death. The bed is also the site, at least figuratively, of reciting the *Shema* upon arising in the morning and reclining in the evening.

varely in a whisper, except during the liturgy of Yom Kippur, when it is communally recited aloud.¹⁷ Finally,¹⁸ God's own voice speaks directly (for the first time in this midrash), assuring Jacob that his sons will recite the *Shema* twice daily, as Jacob had always hoped they would, thereby suggesting that Jacob had already known of the *Shema* and its significance long before its utterance by his sons before his death (or its scriptural formulation by Moses). But the language here suggests that in this final scene of the midrash, God's words to Jacob point beyond both Jacob's final exchange with his sons and Moses' final admonition to the Israelites to the successive generations of the progeny of Jacob, who will continue unceasingly the practice of reciting the *Shema* twice daily.¹⁹

Through its intertextual 'reading' of a variety of scriptural verses, our midrashic commentary editorially combines several very different, and chronologically distinct, scenes.²⁰ Its renarrativizing of Deut. 6:4 does not only relocate its original recitation to the much earlier time of Jacob's death, but provides an exegetical anticipation for its subsequent recitation as part of the daily Jewish liturgy in the context of the midrashic audience's own present practice (and beyond).²¹ Whereas the liturgical practice of the *Shema* is elsewhere grounded in its Deuteronomistic setting, specifically in a concrete interpretation of Deut. 6:7

¹⁷ For an explanation of its being uttered in a whisper, as a compromise between Jacob's having recited it and Moses not, see bPesah. 56a. While in the Sifre this is given as an alternative interpretation, later versions of the narrative simply present this as Jacob's response, perhaps reflecting its role having become more set in the synagogue liturgy. See Tg. Ps.-J Deut. 6:4; Tg. Neof. Deut. 6:4; Tg. Neof. Gen. 49:2; bPesah. 56a; GenR. 98:3 (ed. Theodor-Rabin, 1952); 96 (*Shiḥah Hadashah*) (ed. Theodor-Rabin, 1902).

¹⁸ It is not clear if this is part of the third ($\text{וְיָקֹם יַעֲקֹב וְיִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה}$) alternative or a return to the body of the midrash.

¹⁹ This is made explicit in later midrashic formulations. See, for example, the *piyyut* of Yannai, referenced above, n. 14: "Therefore in their (subsequent) generations they uttered the *Shema*." Similarly, in DeutR. (ed. Lieberman, 67) to Deut. 6:4: "And until now they continue the practice of reciting daily the *Shema*." ... Thus, from our ancestor Jacob they merited the recitation of the *Shema*." See Lieberman's notes for parallels.

²⁰ See Joshua Lewinson, "Dialogical Reading in the Rabbinic Exegetical Narrative," *Poetics Today* 25 (2004) 497–528; idem, *The Tivnet Told Tale: A Poetics of the Exegetical Narrative in Rabbinic Midrash* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2005).

²¹ On the temporal workings of midrashic narrative reconfiguration, see Steven D. Fraade, *From Tradition to Commentary*, 123–162; Marc Bregman, "Past and Present in Midrashic Literature," *HAR* 2 (1978) 45–59; Jonah Fraenkel, "Time and its Shaping in Aggadic Narrative" (Hebrew), in *Studies in Aggadah, Targum and Jewish Liturgy in Memory of Joseph Heinemann* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1981) 133–162; idem, *Time and its Role in the Aggadic Story* (Jerusalem: International Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization, Everyman's University, 1987).

(when you lie down and when you get up),²² here it is traced back much further, pre-sinaitically, to Jacob's last dialogue with his sons, as midrashically imagined. Once this midrashic retelling of Deut. 6:4 has been internalized by its auditors, their *own* recitation of the *SHEMA* can never be quite the same. Rather than simply experiencing their recitation of Deut. 6:4 as the repetition of Moses' instructions to the Israelites at Moab, they now experience it as a performative reenactment and extension of the final dialogue between Jacob and his sons, fraught as it is first with suspended anxiety and then with thankful release. In proclaiming their faith in God, they now dialogically assume their own performative role as לַאֲרָמֵי/בְּרָכָה יְיָ, the sons/descendants of Jacob/Israel, thereby affirming not just theologically God's unity, but now reciprocally and socially their own as well (in exclusion of the הַרְבֵּב born of Abraham and Isaac).²³ The midrashic re-siting of the words of Deut. 6:4 to the narrative of Jacob's death thereby solves a liturgical difficulty: How can Israel recite the *SHEMA* if it is addressed to Israel?

What happens were we to strip this complex commentary of its formal and explicitly midrashic elements to produce a straight-forward retold biblical narrative, that is, transform it from scriptural commentary to 'rewritten Bible'? I have provided for comparison several such examples, from both ancient and modern sources. While there are no full parallels to our retold narrative from second temple sources, there is at least an analogue for the tradition of Reuben's repentance for his deed through long-term fasting in the Testament of Reuben 1:8–10.²⁴ Clearly much of the rhetorical force (and creativity) of the midrash is lost or flattened in these retold narratives. Without our present midrash, we would be left to guess at the interpretive strategies that might lie

behind them. But there is another problem: Stripped of its exegetical structure and details, the retold narrative of Jacob's dialogue with his sons would no longer fit within the context of a commentary to the Book of Deuteronomy, but would better fit as an insertion into the narrative of Genesis 49, which is where Louis Ginzberg places it in his modern 'retold Bible' (*Legends of the Jews*), even as he gives its source in his notes as the Sifre to Deuteronomy.²⁵ Similarly, the targumic expansions make no narrative sense within the context of Deut. 6 if we read them as part of a continuous 'Aramaic Bible,' independently of the Hebrew scriptural verses they translate, but fit better as renderings of Gen. 49:2, where they are likewise found.²⁶ Once the retold narrative is extracted from its midrashic language and commentary structure, the interplay between Moses' last words of anxious admonition and those of Jacob, or between Deut. 6:4 and Gen. 28:20, is lost, as is the temporal interplay between those scenes and between them and the performative present of the text's dialogically engaged auditors. Incorporated within a commentary to Deut. 6:4, as in the Sifre, the retold narrative of Jacob's last words with his sons *impresses* itself upon the very words, and liturgical recitation, of the *SHEMA* more forcefully and performatively than when the words of the *SHEMA* are simply imported into a retold narrative of Gen. 49.²⁷

It is reasonable to imagine that the discrete retold biblical narratives that we have encountered—Jacob's lifelong worrying about his offspring, Reuben's repentance for his sin with Bilhah, and Jacob's deathbed dialogue with his sons—pre-existed the Sifre's commentary to Deut. 6:4 as independent episodes of rewritten biblical narrative, whatever their origins (rabbinic or pre-rabbinic) or modes of transmission (written or oral). However, their dialogical combination would seem to be the creation of the editorial process that produced the Sifre's com-

²² See mBer. 1:3; Sifre Deut. 34 (ed. Finkelstein, 62–63).

²³ Cf. bHag. 3a–b for another dialogical interpretation of Deut. 6:4, this time in conjunction with Deut. 26:17–18. One might compare, in this regard, the performative drama of synagogue recitation of the *SHEMA* with that of the *Qedahshah*, which similarly employs scriptural verses to dialogically reenact an angelic declaration of God's holiness. Although probably later than our midrash, the dialogical recitation of the *SHEMA* is inserted into Qedahshah of the Musaph service. See Ezra Fleischer, "The Diffusion of the Qedahshah of the Amidah and the Yozer in the Palestinian Jewish Ritual" [Hebrew] *Tzofar* 38 (1969) 255–284.

²⁴ For other texts of this genre, dealing with Reuben's sin, see above, n. 12. Note as well 4Q522 (*Commentary on Genesis*) IV, 3–7, which provides a *pesher* to Gen. 49:3–4, explaining that Jacob reproved Reuben for having slept with his concubine Bilhah, but nothing about Reuben's having repented for his deed.

²⁵ Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1948) 130–131, 140–141; *ibid.*, vol. 5 (1953), 364 (nn. 354–356), 366–367 (nn. 382–383). For Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews* as a form of 'retold Bible,' see above, n. 7.

²⁶ I have argued elsewhere ('Rabbinic Views on the Practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third-Sixth Centuries,' in Lee I. Levine, ed., *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* [New York: Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992] 253–286) that the extant targumic texts were employed, whether in worship or in study, in 'interlinear' *accompaniment* to the Hebrew text of Scripture, rather than as a continuous Aramaic replacement text.

²⁷ Compare GenR. 98:3 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1252) and 96 (*Sittah Hadashah*) (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 1201–1202). See also Deut. Rab. 2:35; bPesah. 52a.

Sifse Deuteronomy 31 (trans. R. Hammer, 55–58):

[A] 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one' (Deut. 6:4): Why was this said? Because Scripture says elsewhere, 'Speak unto the children of Israel' (Exod. 25:2). It does not say, 'Speak unto the children of Abraham,' or 'Speak unto the children of Isaac,' but rather 'Speak unto the children of Israel.' Our father Jacob merited such a declaration to be directed to his children, because all his days he was troubled by fear, (for he said,) 'Woe is me, perchance such unworthy ones will issue from me as they did issue from my forefathers.'

...

[B] Ishmael issued from Abraham, and Esau from Isaac, but as for me, such unworthy ones shall not issue from me as they did from my forefathers, as it is said, 'And Jacob vowed a vow, saying' (Gen. 28:20). Can one ever imagine that Jacob would have said 'If God ... will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on ... then shall the Lord be my God?' (Gen. 28:20) (Could he have meant) that otherwise He shall not be my God? Hence Scripture goes on to say, 'So that I come back to my father's house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God' (Gen. 28:21), implying (that He will be Jacob's God) in any case. What, then, does 'then shall the Lord be my God' mean? (Jacob said:) 'Let Him rest His name upon me, so that at no time whatever shall such unworthy ones issue from me.'

[C] Similarly, Scripture says, 'And it came to pass, while Israel stayed in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah, his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it' (Gen. 35:22). When Jacob heard about it, he was shaken and said, 'Woe is me! Perchance an unworthy one has appeared among my children.' Forthwith, however, the Holy One informed him that Reuben had repented, as it is said, 'Now the sons of Jacob were twelve' (Gen. 35:22). Did we not know that they were twelve? Rather, this indicates that Jacob was told by the Holy One that Reuben had repented. Hence we learn that Reuben fasted all his days, as it is said, 'And they sat down to eat bread' (Gen. 37:25). Could one ever imagine that the brothers would sit down to eat bread without their eldest brother? (Yet he was in fact not with them on that occasion), hence we learn that he fasted all his days, until Moses came along and accepted his repentance, as it is said, 'Let Reuben live, and not die' (Deut. 33:6).

[D] Thus also you find that when our father Jacob was about to depart from this world, he called his sons and reproved each one of them individually, as it is said, 'And Jacob called unto his sons ... Reuben, thou art my first-born ... Simeon and Levi are brethren ... Judah, thee shall thy brethren praise' (Gen. 49:1–8). Having reproved each one individually, he again called them all together and said to them, 'Do you have any doubts concerning Him who spoke, and the world came into being?' They replied, 'Hear, O Israel, our father! Just as you have no doubts about Him who spoke, and the world came into being, so do we have no doubts. Rather, "The Lord, our God, the Lord is one"' (Deut. 6:4).'

[E] Hence it is said, 'And Israel bowed down upon the bed's head' (Gen. 47:31). Did he actually bow upon the bed's head? Rather, he gave thanks and praise to God that unworthy ones had not issued from him. Some say that 'And Israel bowed down upon the bed's head' (means that he gave thanks) for Reuben's repentance. Another interpretation: He said, 'Blessed be the name of His glorious majesty for ever and ever.' The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, 'Jacob, surely this is what you desired all your days, that your children should recite the *Shema* 'morning and evening.'

Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan Deut. 6:4:

והיה כיוון דמשה ויעקב אבות לומר כנשוא מיני עלמא הוה משה דילמא אית
בבני פטרלא קרא יתוח ושיילינן דילמא אית בלבוהו עקומתא אריכו כוליהו
כחדא דאמרו ליה שפע ישראל אבות יי אלקא יי חז עוי יעקב דאמר כריך שום
יקריה לעלמי עלמי.

And it was, when the time was reached for our father Jacob to be gathered from the midst of the world, he was afraid lest there be a defect among his sons. He called them and asked them: Is there any guile in your hearts? All of them replied as one and said to him: 'Hear, Israel, our father, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.' Jacob answered and said: 'Blessed be his glorious Name for ever and ever.' (trans. E. Clarke).

Tg Neofiti Deut. 6:4:

כִּיךָ וְסוּחַ קִצָּה דְאֲבוּתָא יַעֲקֹב לְמַחְבֹּט בְּשֵׁלֵם מִן גּוּ עַלְמָא כְּרִישׁ תְּרִין עֶשְׂרִית
 שְׁבַעֲיָהּ וְאַקִּים יְהוָה חוּר חוּר לְדִרְוּשָׁה דְדִהֲבָה עֵינֵי אֲבוּתָא יַעֲקֹב וְאֲמַר לְרוּחַ
 אֲבוּרָהּ אֲבוּי דְאֲבָה קָם מִיַּיְנָה פְּסִירָה יִשְׁמַעְיָאֵל וְכָל בְּרִי (ה) דְקִטְרוּרָה וְיִצְחָק אֲבָה קָם
 מִיַּיְנָה פְּסִירָה עֵשׂוּ אֲחִי דְלִמָּה לְשִׁעוּתָא דְדִהֲבָה אֲבוּי דְאֲבוּרָהּ פְּלַח אֲתוּן פְּלִחוּן אִו
 דְלִמָּה לְשִׁעוּתָא לְבָן אֲחוּתָא דְאֲמַר פְּלַח אֲתוּן פְּלִחוּן אִו לְאֵלֹהִיהָ דְיַעֲקֹב אֲבוּרָהּ אֲתוּן
 פְּלִחוּן עֵינֵי תְרִין עֶשְׂרִית שְׁבַעֲיָהּ דְיַעֲקֹב כְּחוּדָה כְּלָבָה שְׁלֵמָה וְאֲמַרְרִין שְׁמַע מִן יִשְׂרָאֵל
 אֲבוּתָא יִי אֵלֹהֵי יִי חַד הוּא יְהֵא שְׁמִירָה מְבֹרַךְ לְעַלְמֵי עַלְמֵיךָ.

When the appointed time of our father Jacob arrived to be gathered in peace from the midst of the world, he gathered the twelve tribes and made them stand round about his bed of gold. Our father Jacob answered and said to them: From Abraham, my father's father, arose the blemished Ishmael and all the sons of Keturah, and from Isaac my father arose the blemished Esau, by brother: Perchance you worship the idols which Abraham's father worshipped, or perchance you worship the idols (which) Laban, my mother's brother, worshipped? Or do you worship the God of Jacob your father? The twelve tribes of Jacob answered together with a perfect heart and said: Listen to us, Israel, our father: The Lord our God is one Lord; may his name be blessed for ever and ever. (trans. M. McNamara)

Fragment Tg. Deut. 6:4 (MSS V,N):

כִּיךָ דְמַטָּא קִרְיָא דְאֲבוּתָא יַעֲקֹב לְמַסְתַּלְתָּא מִן גּוּ עַלְמָא קְרִיא לְתַרְרִין עֶשְׂרִית בְּרִי
 וְאַקִּים יְהוָה חוּר חוּר לְדִרְוּשָׁה עֵינֵי אֲבוּתָא יַעֲקֹב וְאֲמַר לְרוּחַ דְקִטְרוּרָה דְדִהֲבָה
 תְּרִין אֲבוּי דְאֲבָה פְּלַח אֲתוּן פְּלִחוּן אִו דְלִמָּה לְשִׁעוּתָא דְדִהֲבָה לְבָן (אֲחוּתָא) דְאֲבִי
 פְּלַח אֲתוּן פְּלִחוּן (אִו) לְאֵלֹהֵי דְיַעֲקֹב אֲתוּן פְּלִחוּן (עֵינֵי תְרִין עֶשְׂרִית שְׁבַעֲיָהּ שְׁמִירָה כְּחוּדָה
 כְּלָבָה שְׁלֵמָה) וְאֲמַרְרִין שְׁמַע כְּפִי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲבוּתָא יִי אֵלֹהֵי יִי חַד הוּא יְהֵא שְׁמִירָה מְבֹרַךְ
 וְעוֹד לְעַלְמֵיךָ.

When the fixed time arrived for our father Jacob to be taken up from within the world, he called to his twelve sons and had them stand all around his couch. Jacob, our father, began and said to them: Perhaps you worship the idols that Terah my father's father used to worship; or perhaps you worship the idols that Laban, my mother's (brother's), worshipped; (or do you worship the God of Jacob?) The twelve tribes answered in unison, wholeheartedly, and they said: 'Hear, now, Israel,

our father, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one, may His name be blessed forever.' (trans. M. Klein)

See also Fragment Tg. (P,V,N) and Tg. Neofiti Gen. 49:2, as well as marginal and interlinear glosses to Tg. Neofiti.

Testament of Reuben 1:8–10 (ed. M. De Jonge, 2–3):

8. הָיִיתִי יָגֵב עִטְוֵן רְעוּלָאוֹנְרָא וְדֵה עִטְוֵדָא רֹב סוֹרְהוֹגֹן עֲוֹנוֹנוֹן כְּטוֹנוֹן
 כַּל עִטְוֵא מִיְהוּבָא עִמְבִּלְאִיֹּסְתְּהוֹן עֹשֵׁי תְּבַחְדָּרוֹן. 9. כַּל עֵן רְעוּלָאוֹנְרָא עֲשׂוּרָה
 מוֹט עִטְוֵא עִתְּהוֹן מֵרֵעֵנוֹסְתָא עֲוֹנוֹנוֹן כְּטוֹנוֹן. 10. אִיִּוֹן כַּל אִמְעָבָא עֲוֵא עִתְּוֹן
 כַּל רֵעֵבָא עֲוֵא עִתְּוֵן אֵיִן מֵרֵעֵנוֹסְתָא עֲוֹנוֹנוֹן כְּטוֹנוֹן. 11. אִיִּוֹן כַּל אִמְעָבָא עֲוֵא
 עִתְּוֵן מִן יְעִוְרָא עֲוֹנוֹנוֹן כְּטוֹנוֹן. 12. אִיִּוֹן כַּל אִמְעָבָא עֲוֵא עִתְּוֵן מִן יְעִוְרָא עֲוֹנוֹנוֹן
 כְּטוֹנוֹן. 13. אִיִּוֹן כַּל אִמְעָבָא עֲוֵא עִתְּוֵן מִן יְעִוְרָא עֲוֹנוֹנוֹן כְּטוֹנוֹן.

For I was thirty years old when I committed this evil deed in the sight of the Lord, and for seven months I was an invalid on the brink of death. And after this, with determination of soul, for seven years I repented before the Lord: I did not drink wine or liquor, meat did not enter my mouth, and I did not eat any pleasurable food. Rather, I was mourning over my sin, since it was so great. Never had anything like it been done in Israel. (trans. H. Kee)

Yannai, *Qerovah* 140 (ה) to Deut. 6:4 (ed. Rabinovitz, 2:142):

אִישׁ מִם בְּהַאֲסִיפֵי בְּרִי אִיִּסָּה וְשִׁמְעֵי // וְקִרְיא לְרוּחַ שְׁמַעֵי רִעוּי לֵאמֹר
 כִּכְן לְדִרְוּרָתָם נוֹהֵה קְרִיָּה שְׁמַע // וְלִכְן כִּסְיֵי וְקִרְיֵי מַעֲשֵׂה לְמַשְׁמַעֵי

When the blameless man (Jacob) was being gathered (to die) he gathered his sons so they might hear // And he called to them (with) 'Hear!' (pl.) (Gen. 49:2) and they answered him (with) 'Hear!' (sing.) (Deut. 6:4).

Therefore for their (subsequent) generations they uttered the recitation of the *Shema* // And therefore at Sinai they preceded performance to hearing (Exod. 24:7). (trans. S. Fraade)

Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Jews* (2:130–131, 140–141):

Jacob, noticing the Shekinah over the bed's head, where she always rests in a sick room, bowed himself upon the bed's head, saying, 'I

thank thee, O Lord my God, that none who is unfit came forth from my bed, but my bed was perfect.' He was particularly grateful for the revelation God had vouchsafed him concerning his first-born son Reuben, that he had repented of his trespass against his father, and atoned for it by penance. He was thus assured that all his sons were men worthy of being the progenitors of the twelve tribes, and he was blessed with happiness such as neither Abraham nor Isaac had known, for both of them had had unworthy as well as worthy sons ...

When his sons were brought into his presence by the angels, Jacob ... said to them, 'Ismael and the sons of Keturah were the blemished among the issue of my grandfather Abraham; my father Isaac begot a blemished issue in Esau, and I fear now that among you, too, there is one that harbors the intention to serve idols.' The twelve men spoke, and said: 'Hear, O Israel, our father, the Eternal our God is the One Only God. As thy heart is one and united in avouching the Holy One, blessed be He, to be thy God, so also are our hearts one and united in avouching Him.' Wherefore Jacob responded, 'Praised be the Name of the glory of His majesty forever and ever!'

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