

Community and Culture

Essays in Jewish Studies

*In honor of the Ninetieth Anniversary
of the Founding of Gratz College*

1895-1985

NAHUM M. WALDMAN
Editor



Philadelphia
GRATZ COLLEGE
SETH PRESS

5747-1987

Literary Development and Historicity in the Aggadic Narrative of the Babylonian Talmud: A Study based upon *B.M.* 83b - 86a*

SHAMMA FRIEDMAN

Jewish Theological Seminary of America

Talmudic scholarship has often sought to determine the literary sources of the rich aggadic material included in the Babylonian Talmud (*BT*), or at least, to identify self-contained literary units, whose structure or subject matter set them apart. The existence of such units suggests that some of them were composed independently of the *BT* and incorporated there *en bloc*, especially when they are not an integral part of the local discussion.

S. J. Rapoport, pioneer of Talmudic scholarship, touches briefly upon the question of the literary units, in the article 'Aggadah' in his *Erekh Millin*:¹ "We have already noticed collections of aggadic statements in the *BT* concerning a single subject, even though there are internal contradictions, such as on *Aliah* to the Land of Israel (*Ketubbot*, end) . . . similarly collections of homilies by various sages, arranged in the order of the biblical text, e.g. on the first chapters of Exodus in *Sotah* 11 - 12. In *Megillah* 15 - 16 there is a long account . . . in which homilies on the entire book of Esther are assembled in order, with each *braitā* attached to its corresponding verse . . ." ² W. Bacher also mentioned the Esther collection, headed by its own proems, and bearing the characteristics of a unit in itself. He similarly pointed out a collection on Lamentations beginning at *Sanhedrin* 104a.³ A. Weiss independently mentions these collections and other blocks of independent aggadic material, which appear to have been brought to Babylonia as literary units.⁴

However, as to the question of the literary sources of the *BT*, no specific relationship has been found between these collections, and *existing* older Palestinian works. Were such a relationship established, much could be learned concerning the way the *BT* used and reworked its aggadic sources. Furthermore, this could be of special interest for aggadic narratives containing material of historical relevance.⁵ Although probably no one would claim that the existing Palestinian works under discussion were known in their present form to the redactors of the *BT*, the correlation of a complex sequence of Babylonian aggadic material with an existing Palestinian sequence argues for its derivation from a Palestinian source significantly similar in structure and content.⁶

Parallels to Babylonian aggadic material in the Palestinian Talmud and Midrashic works have often been noted by scholars⁷ and listed in the encyclopedic *Yefeh 'Enayim*.⁸ However, these are usually small units of single pericopae. They rarely indicate Babylonian dependence upon an entire Palestinian collection, composed of a series of pericopae, such as the above-mentioned aggadic collections recognized by scholars as independent, but lacking Palestinian parallels.

I wish to suggest that two such collections of narratives are to be found within the long aggadic passage at *BT Baba Metsia VII*.⁹ The second of these illustrates the phenomenon especially well, in that it is composed of pericopae of seemingly non-related subject-matter whose inclusion and sequence seem unexplained in the *BT*. The identification of a more original Palestinian form of this collection enables a simple explanation of the juxtaposition of the material in the *BT*. Furthermore, establishing the over-all parallelism of the collections allows one to determine the parallelism of specific details, which otherwise might be considered separate accounts. This latter point, when applied to historical material, often indicates, as we shall try to demonstrate, that the Babylonian account is a literary recasting, and its unsubstantiated details must be used critically in a reconstruction of factual events. Accordingly, it will be necessary for us to suggest alternates to the accepted historical accounts of certain sages, and the events in their lives.

The narrative *aggadah* at *BM* 83b - 86a appears to be composed of about 30 separate items linked together linearly through associative juxtaposition, one by one. It opens with a long account of R. Elazar, son of R. Simeon bar Yoḥai, including his well-known appointment as a [Roman] official, and a similar affair regarding R. Ishmael b. R. Yose. At the death of the former, R. Judah the Prince [Rabbi] wished to marry his widow, who refused, claiming that her husband had been greater in piety, and superior in Torah-learning, which Rabbi admitted. These two qualities are each elaborated upon. A rivalry of scholarship existed when the two sages were youths. Rabbi was consoled by his father for R. Elazar's superiority, saying, "He is a lion, son of a lion; you are a lion, son of a fox." Rabbi's father, we are told, was accounted among the most humble of men, a group which included the sons of B'tera. As to R. Elazar's acts of piety, which consisted in accepting bodily suffering voluntarily, Rabbi tried to imitate this virtue and "accepted" afflictions for thirteen years, among them toothache (84b - 85a). The account continues with, at this point, apparently perfect juxtaposition and development from theme to theme, enlarging upon Rabbi's illnesses, its genesis in an episode concerning a calf led to slaughter; his sufferings protected the generation from

untimely death, and eventually (and here the thread is lost completely) R. Hiyya's greatness in piety and teaching, accounts of his status in the world-to-come, and many other matters, related only by the loosest association, or not at all.

It is our suggestion that behind this multiplicity of accounts and themes—there are many more in the text than we have summarized—lie two large collections, which have been juxtaposed and fused.¹⁰

The long story of R. Elazar b. R. Simeon occurs in a simpler form largely composed of unintegrated paragraphs, but containing a large number of the same basic themes and details, in *Pesikta de Rav Kahana XI*.¹¹ This passage ends with the account of "lion son of fox", Rabbi invited ailments to come upon him in emulation of R. Elazar, and he suffered toothaches for 13 years, but was still rejected. At this point the passage comes to an end.

The second collection is in the Palestinian Talmud (*PT*) *Kil'aim* ix, 3; 32b = *Ketubbot* xii, 3; 35a, and is also paralleled elsewhere in various forms.¹² This Palestinian sequence centers around Rabbi and does not mention R. Elazar b. R. Simeon at all. The opening pericope mentions Rabbi's thirteen years of toothache, the identical theme and wording of the closing line in the *Pesikta* collection! Because of this similarity, the Babylonian editor saw fit to incorporate this Rabbi collection immediately after the R. Elazar collection. Joining and fusing the themes from the end of the first with the beginning of the second, with a slight overlap, he created the appearance of the continuous account or a series of associated incidents, and thus eradicated the seam. The subsequent sequence is now understood. In it we see an expanded form of the *PT* Rabbi collection, the latter's basic material determining the contents.

It is possible to indicate the actual word marking the transition, *v'hainu d-* (84b end), introducing the passage where the humility of Rabbi's father is discussed. The humility theme, mentioning the elders of B'tera, who ceded their position to Hillel and appointed him Nasi, is part of the *PT* collection, not at its beginning, but at the midpoint, where it belongs to an episode explaining how Rabbi was cured.¹³ In the *BT* it was moved forward, so that it follows the "lion, son of fox" statement by the father of Rabbi, thus continuing the idea of his humility. It is the first theme from the Rabbi collection, overlapping the end of the Rabbi Elazar sequence.

In juxtaposing the two collections because of the similarity of subject-matter at their extremities, the editor causes an internal contradiction. According to the *Pesikta*, Rabbi voluntarily accepted afflictions in order to emulate R. Elazar. The same idea appears in *BT* (85a) in the above-mentioned final theme of the R. Elazar collection and joining the begin-

ning of the Rabbi collection.¹⁴ The two sages, then, encountered their afflictions in an identical manner. But according to *PT*, Rabbi's ailments were not voluntarily accepted but were a punishment for not having shown mercy to a calf led to slaughter.

The *BT* itself, in introducing the incident (several lines after the above, but beyond the seam between the collections), points out the contrast between the way the two sages met their sufferings: "The sufferings of R. Elazar b. R. Simeon were superior to those of Rabbi in that those of R. Elazar came through love and went through love, *but those of Rabbi came as a result of an incident . . .*" [concerning the calf] (85a). The contradiction troubled the commentators,¹⁵ but the *BT* offers no further reconciliation, and proceeds with the details of the Rabbi collection.

The text before us thus represents an artful jointure of two Palestinian aggadic collections, quite similar, but not identical to those in our *Pesikta* and *PT*, including creative additions and embellishments through the hands of the Babylonian editor. We shall therefore consider details of content and structure in these narratives against the backdrop of their Palestinian counterparts.

In the *Pesikta*, R. Elazar undertakes afflictions as a pious act, in no way connected or related to his activity as a Roman official. He expresses no regrets over this activity. Indeed he anticipates that after death the worms will have no power over him, except for one worm behind his ear, due to the fact that he once overheard a man blaspheme, and did *not* use the opportunity to punish him!¹⁶ He has no other regrets. But in the *BT*, he regrets having handed his critic over to the authorities, and receives a measure of assurance that he acted correctly, but had difficulty consoling himself,¹⁷ and seeks more assurances (83b). The continuation of this narrative, after a long interpolated digression¹⁸ relates the account of accepting afflictions, in great detail. This is introduced by repeating the above point that he was still not consoled, using an almost identical formula¹⁹ as a means of linking and integrating the parts of the story. Thus the upshot, in *BT*, is that the afflictions were invited to expiate the sin and assuage the guilt associated with Roman officialship.

Two pictures emerge. The *Pesikta* portrays no personal regrets on R. Elazar's part. The *BT* does, and with great emphasis. Due to the parallelism of the two collections, clearly these points belong to the *BT*'s embellishments of the original Palestinian collection, both in the blasphemer account, and from there called forth as a linkage-phrase integrating the chapters of the story.²⁰ Thus they cannot be used as historical evidence, as J. Guttman would have it, in his claims that "there is undoubtedly an historical kernel to the account that R. Elazar himself was unsure, at the

end of his days, as to whether he acted correctly in fulfilling the position ordered by the authorities . . . and therefore prayed that afflictions come upon him so that he could purge his sins."²¹

In the *Pesikta*, R. Joshua b. Korḥa rebukes R. Elazar as being "vinegar son of wine", and speaks of his fleeing to Laodicea.²² The identical phrase, in the same context, is found in *PT Ma'asrot* iii, 8; 50d.²³ In a corresponding position in the *BT's* expanded version, namely, after the "vinegar son of wine" episode, we find this rebuke, in the form: "Your father fled to 'Asia', you flee to Laodicea", spoken by Elijah.²⁴ However, in the *BT's* account, this was said, not to R. Elazar b. R. Simeon, but to R. Ishmael b. R. Yose! This conversation, which otherwise could be taken as a continuation of the R. Elazar episode, is thusly introduced: "and also R. Ishmael b. R. Yose had the same experience".²⁵

Having determined a *Pesikta*-like collection as the *BT's* underpinning here, one must conclude that the earlier, Palestinian tradition ascribed this incident to R. Elazar alone as in both *Pesikta* and *PT*, and not at all to R. Ishmael b. R. Yose. In the expanded *BT* version, R. Ishmael was introduced. It is quite common for the *BT* to produce narratives on the sages in doublets, in which an original story has juxtaposed to it an almost identical retelling, involving a different sage.²⁶ This part of the episode was thusly recast around R. Ishmael,²⁷ or in this case, perhaps, the body of the episode remained even as it was,²⁸ with the above-mentioned introduction alone being added, as a redactor's linkage of passages²⁹ (resulting in the imprecision of meaning and detail as to how much of R. Elazar's story happened to R. Ishmael).³⁰

Thus viewed, this *BT* record of R. Ishmael is a secondary source, which developed from literary embellishment. The embellishment cannot be used as historical evidence. We must then question the commonly held opinion³¹ that R. Ishmael b. R. Yose was appointed to an office like that of R. Elazar,³² and indeed, this is taken to indicate that the phenomenon was common.

This consensus may be based on Graetz. In his *History* he records R. Ishmael's office as fact and as part of a general trend.³³ In a later study³⁴ he attempts to defend this. The historicity of the *BT* account is considered a matter of distinguishing between the legendary and the historic. When the former is removed, the latter remains as a plausible historic kernel.³⁵ Whenever possible, Graetz correctly adduced support from Palestinian sources, e.g., concerning R. Elazar. However concerning R. Ishmael, he accepted the basic assertion of the *BT* despite the conflicting evidence from the Palestinian sources. Thus, Graetz viewed the conversation about "fleeing" in the *Pesikta*, and *TP*, as being erroneously attributed to R.

Elazar instead of R. Ishmael.³⁶ However, the determination of primary and secondary literary usages is a more reliable criterion and takes precedence over the "historic kernel" principle. The primary forms of these accounts do not mention R. Yose, and associate the details of the episode to the R. Elazar story. *BT*'s recasting and embellishing are easily separated from the *literary* kernel.

We shall now turn to the continuation of our passage, which we have identified as an original Palestinian collection, similar to *PT Ki'aim* (= *Ketubbot*). In reading the *BT*, the surprising feature is the rapid progression from theme to theme. Does the *BT* really free-associate in such an undisciplined form? Rabbi suffered afflictions 13 years; they began through the calf incident; his afflictions protected the generation; Rabbi taught Torah. All of this surrounds one theme. Then come about 10 pericopae connected only by the general theme of Torah, among them: R. Joseph "sat" 40 fasts. . . . Then we arrive at: Resh Laqish marked the sages' graves, but could not find R. Ḥiyya's. There is no clear indication for the insertion of this account here. Continue: R. Ḥiyya would quarrel with R. Ḥanina as to which of them could protect the Torah best. Rabbi praised R. Ḥiyya, and R. Ishmael b. R. Yose protested; R. Ḥiyya's fiery place in the world to come is unapproachable by R. Yoḥanan; a sage who violated Elijah's warning and looked at R. Ḥiyya's chariot there appeared burned; other R. Ḥiyya accounts, and in closing, Rabbi's physician and the death of Rabbah bar Naḥmani.

This long section, which clearly centers around R. Ḥiyya, appears to have no direct connection with the account that began with R. Elazar b. R. Simeon, and his Roman office. However, all of these features appear, in simpler form, and, with logical continuity, in the *PT* passage. There, after the telling of Rabbi's ills, *his cure is achieved due to R. Ḥiyya* (actually Elijah in his guise), therefore followed by the praises of R. Ḥiyya. This is the missing link. The *BT* incorporates the entire structure, but without including the transitional theme. The *BT*'s sequence then, is not established by free association alone, but by the incorporation of an overall structural framework, upon which it enlarges, embellishes and augments locally with similar themes.

This framework as it appears, in *TP*, can be subsumed under nine rubrics: (1) 13 years of toothaches; (2) as a result, childbearing-related mishaps were averted; (3) the afflictions came through an incident over a calf, and left when Rabbi protected other creatures; (4) in a long episode about humility, the Resh Galuta, and Rabbi's rebuke of R. Ḥiyya, Rabbi's pains are lifted,³⁷ the two are reconciled, Rabbi extends special courtesies to R. Ḥiyya, which are challenged by R. Ishmael b. Rabbi Yose, and he is

placated; (5) Rabbi praises R. Ḥiyya; R. Ishmael b. R. Yose reacts; (6) R. Yose fasted 80 days to see R. Ḥiyya, and when he saw him and his entourage³⁸ his eyes were dimmed; (7) this R. Yose was a pupil of R. Yoḥanan; (8) R. Simeon b. Laqish fasted 300 fasts to see R. Ḥiyya but could not see him, and he received the explanation that R. Ḥiyya taught (*ribbeš*) more Torah; and (9) the burial of R. Huna Resh Galuta in R. Ḥiyya's burial cave.

Even some of the finer leitmotifs in the *PT* strike a familiar chord in the *BT*.³⁹ The parallelism established for the entire sequence of the collections suggest that the delicate points of similarity are also Babylonian reapplications of the material. In (9), an actual burial in R. Ḥiyya's cave, the deceased courteously refused (to take a place near R. Ḥiyya and) to displace his son. The *BT* tells us who is "placed" (Rashi: "seated in the academy on high") near R. Ḥiyya; R. Yoḥannan could not take a place near Rabbi Ḥiyya due to the fire. The fire may be inspired by the eye-dimming experience recorded at *PT* (6), indicating splendor. This becomes a separate account of blinding by fire in *BT* for R. Ḥaviva b. Surmaqi, who looked upon R. Ḥiyya's chariot in heaven (85b). He had been told not to look, a detail found in *PT*, not at (6) but at (9), where Rav Huna lifted his eyes to look, and was told to lower his glance. The Yose who fasted in *PT* (6, 7) was a pupil of R. Yoḥanan, but in *BT* the Babylonian Rav Joseph fasts in multiples of 40,⁴⁰ for other purposes.

The *BT* in our passage records that R. Simeon b. Laqish, who was of the practice of marking the burial caves of the sages, was disturbed when he couldn't find R. Ḥiyya's and heard a *bat kol*, which explained that he did not teach (*lo ribbašta*) as much Torah as R. Ḥiyya. Using the idea of the "historic kernel" alone, one would be tempted to adduce this as evidence concerning actual events, as indeed Jacob Mann has done: "In the third century, C.E., some scholars made it their practice to erect signs near the graves of the earlier Rabbis which were forgotten in course of time and could be identified only with difficulty. R. Lakish (died about 279 C.E.) is reported to have indicated in this manner the sepulchral caves of the scholars . . . and on one occasion he had great difficulty in finding the tomb of such a famous scholar as R. Ḥiyya (*BM* 85b). In *BB* 58a the same practice is related of R. Benaya. . . . In this connection we have a legendary story of R. Benaya . . .".⁴¹ However, the wording of the Resh Laqish account and its place in the collection introduces another possibility; namely, that this is a Babylonian reworking, by means of a theme known elsewhere, of a Palestinian original closer to (7). Any historic reconstruction, then, should be in this direction: Resh Laqish longed to see a vision of R. Ḥiyya, and would undergo fasts in order to achieve this.

The "legendary" account in *BB* 58a may indeed be the source for the grave-marking theme introduced here.⁴² It can be shown that themes used for embellishment in one *BT* passage are often found in close proximity in another, as if the redactor were making use of such a source.⁴³ *BB* 58a contains the comparison of the beauty of certain sages to Adam, quoted here at 84a; "they went and reported at the house of the king, there is one man among the Jews who . . .", used here in the Rabbah b. Naḥmani narrative at 86a.⁴⁴ Another theme from *BB* 58a appears in the R. Elazar narrative, suggesting that these embellishments were added after the two main collections were joined.⁴⁵

Following in the *BT* is a debate between R. Ḥiyya and R. Ḥanina. R. Ḥiyya claims that he could singlehandedly restore Torah-knowledge if it should be forgotten. He would sow flax, weave nets, trap deer, produce parchment from their skins, write the Torah, etc., and teach. Rabbi praises him: "How great are Ḥiyya's deeds!" R. Ishmael b. R. Yose says, "Even greater than my father?" and Rabbi assures him, "Heaven forbid."

The episode is composed of several separate elements. The *PT* (4) has Rabbi honoring R. Ḥiyya, with a reaction coming from R. Ishmael b. R. Yose; an answer by Rabbi similar to the one in the *BT*; and a pericope (5) of Rabbi praising R. Ḥiyya. The wording of the praise is not indicated. In some witnesses of the Genesis Rabbah parallel, a formulation of the praise is attempted: "He is a great man, a holy man."⁴⁶ The "deer-skin" story⁴⁷ is not in this *PT* collection, and was built upon a theme found elsewhere. At *PT Megillah* iv, 1; 74d, R. Ishmael says that he can recite all of scripture by heart. R. Ḥiyya says, "I could write all of scripture for two *manehs*—, I would buy flax-seed . . . trap deer and write all of scripture on their skins." Rabbi heard and said, "Happy is the generation in which you (i.e. both) live."

In our *BT* passage, the redactor cannot use the above praise formulation, since both of the sages were praised there by Rabbi. But the redactor wishes to link this with the *TP* theme at (4), where R. Ḥiyya alone merits Rabbi's favor, and R. Ishmael complains. He must therefore link these two with an expression of praise for R. Ḥiyya alone, which he newly formulates here: "How great are Ḥiyya's deeds."

In order to emphasize the reality and actuality of R. Ḥiyya's role as an educator, G. Alon writes, "Certainly these were actual deeds, and therefore Rabbi praised him, 'How great are the deeds of Ḥiyya.'"⁴⁸ Alon is definitely correct in portraying R. Ḥiyya as an active popular educator, as *TP* here (7) records—he would go into "exile" to *teach*. This categorization is also substantiated by other sources. But as to the phrase regarding "Ḥiyya's deeds" attributed to Rabbi here, we have seen that this is a

secondary formulation with clear literary reasons for its existence, and cannot serve as the historical substantiation of R. Hiyya's description of how he could prevent the Torah from being forgotten.

There are additional literary factors operating in our passage, some of them of an intricate nature. These include creative incorporation of material that may have existed in close proximity in the original collection,⁴⁹ the transfer of sub-themes between the collections in jointure,⁵⁰ and others. We hope to be able to deal with these at greater length.⁵¹

Summary and Conclusions

Much of the narrative Aggadah in the *BT* is of Palestinian origin. The literary sources used by the *BT* have generally not survived, but many parallels exist in the *PT* and Midrashim. In analyzing *BM* 83b - 86a, we consider two long sequences from existing Palestinian literature as parallels of the *BT* passage, and we study their relationship in its entirety, before focusing upon the individual episodes. The resemblance of these extended passages in content and structure—especially with regard to the second of them, in that it encompasses diverse issues—enables us to gain insight on the sources used by the *BT*. We can describe the jointure, due to similar themes at the close of the first and the head of the second of the two collections, the type of embellishments added, and the creative transfer of themes and phrases even after the collections have been joined.

From literary development to history: having established the status of some narrative details as primary and some as secondary, resulting from the above-mentioned processes, we must apply this to the clarification of historic descriptions of the events portrayed in those narratives.

NOTES

* A Hebrew version of this paper was presented at the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem, 1981, and appears, with expanded textual information, as the first part of a study on Aggadah in *Tarbiz IV*. I wish to thank Sara Friedman for her insightful suggestions regarding style in the current work.

1. Warsaw, 1914 (repr. Jerusalem, 1970).
2. P.24 (Hebrew) Prof. H.Z. Dimitrovsky pointed out to me the phrase, "end gmara" (*shiq g'mara*), marking the end of the regular Talmud, and the beginning of this collection, in MS Vat. 134 (Facsimile edition, Jerusalem, 1972, p. 200). On the Exodus passage, see A. Shinan, *Midrash Shemot Rabbah* (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 1984), p. 19.
3. *Die Agada der babylonischen Amoräer*, Frankfurt a.M. 1913 (repr. Hildesheim 1967), pp. 118-120.
4. *Studies in the Literature of the Amoraim* (Hebr.), New York, 1962, pp. 171-174; 251-263; 281-294. On the search for aggadic collections as sources of the *BT*,

- see Rapoport, *Kerem Hemed VI* (1841), p. 250; N. Krochmal, *Nachman Krochmals Werke*, ed. S. Rawidowicz, Berlin, 1924, pp. 250–256; M. Gaster, *The Exempla of the Rabbis*, repr. New York, 1968, p. 2, citing Rapoport (above, note 2); I. Ben Gurion, *Sh'vile ha-Aggadah*, Jerusalem, 1949, pp. 169–170; and see below, note 6. Some wished to hypothesize aggadic collections anterior to the Palestinian literature. Cf. Ph. Bloch, “Spuren alter Volksbücher in der Aggadah”, *Judaica, Festschrift zu Hermann Cohens Siebzigstem Geburtstag*, Berlin, 1912, pp. 703–721 (of course, the variations in orthography of names adduced here [p. 719] cannot be taken as an indication of a composite source). B. Heller, “Quelques problèmes relatifs aux légendes juives”, *REJ LXXXI* (1925), pp. 1–26 and the citations there.
5. See S. Lieberman, “The Martyrs of Caesarea,” *Annuaire de l'institute de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves*, VII (1939–1944), p. 395; *idem*, “On Persecution of the Jewish Religion,” in *Salo Whittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume*, Jerusalem, 1974 (corrected: 1975) III, Hebrew section, pp. 213–221; L. I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class in Palestine during the Talmudic Period* (Hebrew), Jerusalem, 1985, p. 6, n. 18 (with reference to the present study).
 6. As, indeed, aggadic parallels of single episodes often appear more original as to the details of historic information in their Palestinian form, cf. S. Safrai, “Tales of the Sages in the Palestinian Tradition and the Babylonian Talmud”, *Scripta Hierosolymitana XXII* (1971), pp. 209–232. The Babylonian tradents felt free to recast the style of Palestinian narratives, cf. Z. Frankel, *Introduction in Talmud Hierosolymitanum* (Hebr.), Breslau, 1870 (repr. Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 49a–51b; Y. Karlin, *Divre Sefer*, Tel Aviv, 1952, pp. 5–42 (see D. Goodblatt, “The Babylonian Talmud” in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, Vol. 19, 2, Berlin and New York, 1979, p. 302); A. Aderet, “Tahalikhe Illui v'Dildul b'Sippure ha-Aggadah,” *Alé Siah* 6 (1979), pp. 156–177.
 7. Z. Frankel, *op. cit.*
 8. For an appreciation of some aspects of this work, see Rivka Ziskind, *Rabbi Aryeh Loeb Yellin, Author of “Yefeh 'Einayim”* (Hebr.), Jerusalem, 1973.
 9. We shall deal with the long midrashic section elsewhere.
 10. For this phenomenon on a smaller scale, but of great frequency, in the *sugyot*, see my study in *Proceedings of the Seventh World Congress of Jewish Studies III* (1981), pp. 251–255.
 11. Ed. B. Mandelbaum, New York, 1962, pp. 190–200, and specifically 195–200.
 12. *Genesis Rabba* par. 33, ed. Theodor-Albeck, pp. 305–307; also par. 96 in regular editions, Wilna, 178c, and in later works. The second part is in *Ecclesiastes Rabba*, IX.
 13. Theodor brings a version or expansion in a MS commentary: “How was Rabbi cured? Rabbi was humble . . .” (p. 305).
 14. *Pesikta*: “Q'rā l'hōn We'atōn”; *BT*: “qabbal 'aleh”.
 15. “Accepted afflictions upon himself—it would appear best to explain, that his prayer that they should come was not accepted” (S. Edels = *Maharsha*); “this means that when he saw the praiseworthiness of afflictions, Rabbi demanded afflictions, but that is difficult, in that below it is said that they came through an incident, and if so, they came upon him against his will”! (R.I. Pinto = *Rif* to *'Ein Yaaqov*). *Yalqut Shimoni* attempts a reconciliation: “Rabbi accepted afflictions, and they came through an incident and left through an incident” (to

- Psalms 145, repr. New York, 1944, p. 968b; cf. S. Luria [= Maharshah] in *Hokhmat Shelomo*, ad. loc.). But as we have seen, the Talmud contrasts these two avenues. "‘And Rabbi’s came through an incident’, but the commentators raise the difficulty, that Rabbi also accepted them voluntarily," (A. Wolkin, *Bet Aaron*, Wilna, 1923, p. 210).
16. *Pesikta*, pp. 198–199.
 17. *v’afilu hakhi la miyyatva da’ateh*.
 18. The many interesting literary and structural issues here will be discussed elsewhere. For now, see Rapoport, *Kerem Hemed* VI (1841), p. 249, and below, note 50.
 19. *v’afilu hakhi la s’makh . . . adda’ateh*. The ellipsis is the sage’s name.
 20. In this passage, the Babylonian rewording of existing themes, and addition of further embellishments, contain Iranian words: *parhagvana*, *parvanqa* (the latter in a proverb). In connection with Y. Soreq’s suggested derivation of *harmana* from the Latin (JQRLXVII, [1977], p. 236), the Iranian derivation in S. Telegdi, "Essai sur la phonétique des emprunts iraniens en araméen talmudique", *Journal Asiatique* 226 (1935), p. 241; and *Additamenta ad Librum Aruch Completum*, Vienna, 1926, p. 163, should be noted. For *hwrmn*’ in MS Vat. 117 noted by R. Rabinovicz as a unique spelling for the Talmud MSS in this passage (*Variae Lectiones*, BM, Munich, 1883, p. 238, note *aleph*), the MS itself reads *hrmn*’.
 21. *Zion* XVIII (1953), p.1 (Hebrew); cf. H. Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden* IV, Leipzig, 1908, p. 207. The same applies to Guttman’s claim for further support from the *BT*’s account of R. Elazar’s concern that the sages would not bury him properly. Aware of the absence of this in the Palestinian sources, Guttman still argues, "it is inconceivable that the Babylonian tradition would thusly describe the relationships between R. Elazar and the sages, unless it relied in this detail upon authentic information to some extent" (p.1, and see p.4). The category of literary embellishment, established through many examples in the *BT*’s handling of the Palestinian collection serving its source here, removes any cogency from this argument.
 22. "*d’arqt w’azalt lakh l’lodiqia*", p. 195, and cf. Prof. S. Lieberman’s note there on the structure of the whole sentence.
 23. That being, however, a truncated account, omitting the beginning (cf. S. Buber, *Pesikta*, Lyck, 1868, 91b, note 196), perhaps out of respect for R. Elazar, or other concern.
 24. "*Avukh ‘arāq l’asya, at ‘arōq l’lodiqia.*"
 25. ". . . *m’ta ki hai ma’ase l’yadeh*" (83b - 84a).
 26. Cf. Rapoport, *Erekh Millin* (*op. cit.*, note 1), pp. 22–24. On narrative doublets, juxtaposed or otherwise, see A. Weiss, *The Talmud in its Development* (Hebr.), New York, 1954, pp. 273–274 and note 304, mentioning our instance; Ch. Albeck, *Introduction to the Talmud* (Hebr.), Tel Aviv, 1969, pp. 477–480. The same exchange of names occurs in the account of R. Elazar’s visit to R. Simeon b. Yose b. Laconia, his father-in-law (*Pesikta*, pp. 195–196 = *PT Ma’asrot*, *ibid.*), which is presented in *BT Pesachim* 86b regarding R. Ishmael in place of R. Elazar (cf. Weiss’s note, *ibid.*). Buber wished to emend *Pesachim* in accordance with the Palestinian tradition (*op. cit.*, 91b, note 203). Graetz (below, note 35), prefers *BT Pesachim* to the *Pesikta* and *PT* account. A. Hyman considers

the possibility that the two versions refer to two separate events (*Toldot Tanaim V'Amoraim*, London, 1910/11, p. 211). None of these three explanations is methodologically sound, but Buber's is in the proper direction. The *BT*, in retelling a Palestinian narrative, assigns it, even at an early stage of the Babylonian text, to a different personage.

27. In which case "your father fled to 'Asia'" would refer to R. Yose. L. Blau strangely seems to read our text as indicating that R. Yose, father of R. Ishmael, was also a Roman official! "Aus Baba Mezia 84a geht hervor, dass Jose ein Art Geheimpolizist bei den Römern war" (*MGWJ* XLI, [1896], p. 106). Perhaps he felt that if R. Yose also fled, it was for the same reason. Furthermore, even though Brill quotes out text properly (*avukh 'araq l'asya at 'araq l'lodiya*), he appears to read it as saying that R. Yose fled to Laodicea! Perhaps the interplay of 19th century historical writing has some bearing on this. The fourth volume of Graetz's *Geschichte* (on the Talmudic period), the first to be published, in 1853, was certainly an influence upon historians (see I. Schorsch, introduction to *H. Graetz, The Structure of Jewish History*, New York, 1975, pp. 46–62). Here Graetz accepted the emendation of Y. Heilperin (*Seder Ha-Dorot* II, repr. Jerusalem, 1964, p. 146) for *Shabbat* 33b, "Yose will be exiled from Sephoris". He emended accordingly (*demgemäss*) in *BM*: "your father (R. Yose) fled to Laodicae" (p. 190, note 2). However, the Hebrew translation of *Geschichte* (*Divrē Ymē Yisrael* II, Warsaw, 1893), which may have, at some stage, been used by Blau, mistakenly presents this as the text of *BM* and not an emendation (p. 286, note 2; correct there also Heilperin's *Shabbat* emendation, and the source of the *TP* quote as *Avodah Zara*). Rapoport, identifying 'Asia' with Sardis, concludes that R. Yose fled to Sardis, or, since it is reported that R. Yose died in Laodicea, also suggests (*yesh s'vara*, "there is reason" or "there is an opinion", see above) reversing the place-names: "your father fled to Laodicea, you flee to 'Asia'" (*Erekh Millin* I, p. 308, s.v. 'Asia'). Of course, it is not necessary to force absolute agreement upon these texts and, in any case, we must remember that the *BM* passage cannot serve as primary historical evidence.
28. The language would then have been originally referring to R. Simeon as the one who fled, more in accordance with *TB Shabbat* 33b.
29. The style of this introduction (note 25) does not occur in other *BT* narratives, but is similar to redactional usage. We have seen (note 26) that R. Ishmael is often associated with R. Elazar, as he also is in the following pericope (84a). There is even some evidence that a gloss of this style was being circulated in the margins of the MSS of our text, for a very similar one was incorrectly inserted in some MSS (including Hamburg, 165), at 84b top; cf. Rabbinovicz, *op. cit.*, p. 241, note *tav* (only the second part of the gloss being consistent in the MSS), and see note 19 above.
30. As a result, the commentators felt that this refers to the entire event, in all its details, including the exact details of the fabulous surgical investigation at 83b, cf. J. Rischer in *Iyyun Yaakov* on *'En Yaakov*, and others.
31. "All scholars agree that he was appointed to this type of office," Soreq, *op. cit.*
32. G. Alon, *Toldot ha-Y'hudim b'Eretz Yisrael b'T'kufat ha-Mishnah v'ha-Talmud* II, Tel Aviv, 1955, p. 65–66.
33. *Geschichte* IV, pp. 207–208.

34. "Die kriegerische Bewegung in Palästina am Ausgange des zweiten Jahrhunderts", *MGWJ* XXXIII (1884), pp. 481-496.
35. "Der Kern . . . Die Tradition dieses Kernes im hebräischen Style klingt durchaus glaubwürdig" (p. 490).
36. In a rather circular argument, including an emendation of the *BM* passage. As I understand it, he determines that R. Ishmael and not R. Elazar must have been the son-in-law of R. Simeon b. Yose b. Lakonia (see above, note 26), in that Laodicea is a word-play on that name, and *BM* must be emended (see above, note 27), to read that "your father fled to Laodicea," not "Asia," etc. (p. 492, note 1). As to *Seder ha-Dorot* quoted by Graetz, the entry on R. Simeon b. Yose b. Lakonia (p. 248-249) does not entertain the possibility that R. Ishmael was his son-in-law.
37. Note that this collection itself has two accounts of his cure, probably indicating its own development, where the R. Hiyya segment was attached, due to this common theme. A reconciliation is attempted in the phrase "after *thirteen years and thirty days*, Elijah entered". The italicized is clearly introduced here from the first account, and is not found in the *Genesis Rabba* parallel (p. 306). Allusion is made to the double explanation for Rabbi's cure in *Yihuse Tanna'im V'Amora'im*, Jerusalem, 1963, p. 136.
38. See J. N. Epstein, *Prolegomena ad Litteras Amoraïtica*, Tel Aviv, 1962, p. 420, note 19.
39. *Yefeh 'Enayim* began to point out (for "eye-dimming" and Resh Laqish's search) that the idea appears "in a different manner," in the *PT*, or in *Ecclesiastes Rabbah*.
40. According to MSS.
41. *HUCA* I (1924), p. 354.
42. Cf. *Shabbat* 34a, regarding R. Simeon b. Yoḥai, and note 50.
43. See my parenthetical remark in ed. H. Z. Dimitrovsky, *Texts and Studies* I, New York, 1977, p. 328. I hope to adduce more examples from this chapter elsewhere.
44. That passage is replete with transferred themes.
45. In the *Makhepela*, Sara was observing (*m'ayna*) Abraham's head (*BB*), as the wife of R. Elazar would observe (*m'aynana*) her deceased husband's hair; reference to the *BB* passage in this connection was made by H. Z. Dimitrovsky in *Bava Metzia*, Hebrew translation and notes, Jerusalem, 1960, p. 157, line 128.
46. P. 307. Another laudatory expression by Rabbi for R. Hiyya is found in *TB Menahot* 88b.
47. Also at *Ketubbot* 103b.
48. *Toldot* (*op. cit.*), p. 140.
49. The idea that much study of Torah saps the strength is expressed in *Pesikta* in connection with R. Elazar. When he first began to study—some say he toiled at it for 13 years—and learned the entire *Sifra*, he lost his original brute strength and *could no longer raise his garment (gulta)*, p. 198 (as to the falling of the garment from much study, see *PT Berakhot* V, 1; 9a, mentioned, after a somewhat similarly worded account of Resh Laqish, as happening to R. Elazar, according to some sources, cf. Epstein, *op. cit.*, p. 609). This theme, transformed to an immediate and miraculous reaction, is applied to Resh

Laqish at 84a, the section interrupting the R. Elazar account. It would appear that the R. Yohanan—R. Simeon b. Laqish tales existed in symbiosis with the R. Simeon b. Yohai—R. Elazar b. R. Simeon narratives, in pre-redactional aggadic collections, or at least shared themes. Carrying a man on the back and then being questioned about learning (*Pesikta*, p. 197) resembles an account where R. Laqish is carried (*Megillah* 28b). On 24 questions and answers in debates of R. Yohanan and R. Simeon b. Laqish, see *Shabbat* 33b, involving R. Simeon b. Yohai. On the snakes and the burial cave of R. Simeon b. Yohai, *Pesikta* p. 199, *BM* 84b, 85a, and the lion-fox theme, see *BK* 119a-b (pointed out by Dimitrovsky, *op. cit.*, p. 157, line 142; p. 158, line 162) in a narrative including R. Yohanan and Resh Laqish. In *Pesikta* R. Elazar b. R. Simeon was weakened, *his arm was revealed*, his wife wept, woe for this body going to the worm—in *Berakhot* 5b R. Elazar (b. P'dat) was ill (weak), R. Yohanan *revealed his arm*, R. Elazar wept, for this beauty that will wear away in dust . . . etc.

50. "They call me rabbi" (84a), "they call you rabbi" (85a); "if you repent I shall give you my sister" (84a), "if you repent I shall give you my daughter" (85a); "he said to him, it is taught in a way that supports your opinion" (84a), "whenever Rabbi said something, R. Elazar would support his opinion" (84b). R. Simeon b. Yohai says, "I have one pigeon among you," etc. (84b), Rabban Simeon b. Gamliel says, "I have one pigeon among you" (84b). "Theirs is greater than ours" (84a); "ours is greater than theirs" (84b). These are not common phrases, and some of them hardly occur elsewhere. Also, compare: "All those 13 years no child-bearing woman died (*lo meta haya*) in the Land of Israel, and no pregnant woman miscarried . . .," regarding Rabbi's afflictions (*PT Kilaim*); "all the years of R. Elazar's afflictions no man died before his time, all the years of Rabbi's afflictions the world was not in need of rain" (85a); "all the years . . . no harmful animal (*haya*) entered their town (*l'matayho*)," regarding the period after R. Elazar's death, before his burial (84b).
51. In a study of *BT*, *BM* VI—VII, where further technical information will be presented for phenomena discussed here.