

**THE ATTEMPTED MURDER BY LABAN
THE ARAMEAN:
An Example of Intertextual Reading in Midrash¹**

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ABSTRACT This article deals with the question of why Laban the Aramean, a rather harmless character as presented in the biblical text, is generally portrayed in rabbinic literature as a major enemy of Israel. It is argued that the view of Laban as a villain developed as a result of rabbinic hermeneutics, and that the characteristics attributed to him in rabbinic literature were not arbitrarily chosen due to some extra-textual issue or an ideologically motivated wish to provide him with a set of negative characteristics. Rather, they are an outcome of a reading of the biblical text, albeit a reading that is naturally biased and conditioned by a certain set of assumptions. The rabbis were grappling with the biblical text in a process where they filled in gaps that they perceived in the text and explained repetitions and inconsistencies having certain assumptions of how these features were to be understood. It is suggested that a factor which most probably played a significant role in developing a negative view of Laban was an intertextual reading of Deut 26:5 and Gen 31:23–25 that seems to have given rise to the idea that Laban attempted to kill Jacob when the latter fled from Haran.

Laban the Aramean is perhaps not a very well known biblical figure. He is the father-in-law of Jacob and the father of Leah and Rachel and appears in a few chapters in Genesis where he is a

minor character with no great significance. Yet, he is known in Jewish tradition as a major enemy of Jacob and thereby of all of Israel, and his main characteristics are deceit and wickedness. He is even repeatedly said to have attempted to kill Jacob. The question accordingly arises: how and why did this portrait of a villain develop? Most likely several factors contributed. We will begin by examining the origin of the idea that Laban attempted to kill Jacob and the influence that this most probably had on forming the image of him as wicked and then go on to explore other contributing factors.

The Attempted Murder by Laban the Aramean

The idea that Laban attempted to destroy Jacob is repeated in every observant Jewish household every Pesah, since it appears in the Passover *Haggadah* where Laban is said to be even worse than Pharaoh:

Go and learn what Laban the Aramean attempted to do to our father Jacob! Pharaoh decreed only against the males but Laban attempted to uproot everything, as it is said: *An Aramean destroyed my father* [Deut 26:5]. Then he went down to Egypt...

It is nowhere stated in Genesis that Laban attempted to kill Jacob or his family, so the question of how this idea originated arises.

The key appears to be the traditional Jewish rendering of the phrase *hct sct hrnt* (*arami oved avi*) in Deut 26:5, which in modern Bible translations is translated as, »My father was a fugitive Aramean» (New Jewish Publication Society Translation), »A wandering Aramean was my ancestor» (New Revised Standard Version), »My father was a wandering Aramean» (New International Version), »An Arammian nomad was my father» (Jerusalem Bible) or something very similar. The wandering Aramean is by modern biblical commentators as well as by Jewish medieval ones usually understood to refer to Jacob, or possibly to all the patriarchs. Israel's ancestors came from a region known as Aram Naharaim which could explain the designation »Aramean.»

Jewish tradition as expressed in the midrashim and targumim, however, have a completely different rendering of the phrase, usually understanding it to mean »An Aramean destroyed my father» and identifying the »Aramean» with Laban. The earliest evidence of this understanding is found in tannaitic literature and since it also appears

in a large number of later rabbinic texts² it was apparently widely accepted. I list a few of the earliest references in rough chronological order:

Targum Onqelos

... ohrmnk ,jbu tct ,h tscutk tgc vtrrt ick

Laban the Aramean sought to destroy my father, and he went down to Egypt...

Sifre Devarim

vkgnu sctk ,bn kg tkt ortk cegh ubhct srh tka snkn
uscht ukhtf hrntv ick kg

This teaches that our father Jacob went down to Aram only in order to perish, and Laban the Aramean is considered as if he destroyed him.

Targum Neofiti

vhsh in vh,h ,czhau vhurha in cegh ibuctk vscunk rcx vhhrt ick
ohrmnk ,jbu

Laban the Aramean sought to destroy our father Jacob from the beginning, but you saved him from his hand, and he went down to Egypt...

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

in hhhs trnhn hczhau vh,uscutk tgcu thurha in cegh ibuct³ ,jb thrvb ortk
...ohrmnk ,jb ihsf r,cnu hush

Our father Jacob went down to Aram Naharaim from the beginning and he [Laban] sought to destroy him, but the Memra of the Lord saved him from his hands. Afterwards, he went down to Egypt...

Midrash Tannaim and the comments in the margins of *Targum Neofiti* have the same interpretation. The rendering of the phrase depends on the understanding of the Hebrew root *sct* (*abd*), in modern Bible translations rendered »fugitive» or »wandering» but here understood to mean »destroy.» This has to do with the vocalization of the word, and since the biblical text was not yet vocalized at the time the early midrashim and targumim came into being there were at least two ways of interpreting it. *sct* (*abd*) can be perceived as *sTMcÄt* ((*oved*) *qal* participle) in which case the phrase is intransitive and *hct* (*avi*) most likely the subject: »My father was a wandering Aramean,» but it could

also be $s@çit$ (*ibbed*) *piel* perfect) in which case the phrase becomes transitive and *hnr̄t* (*arami*) the subject and *hct* (*avi*) the object: »An Aramean destroyed my father.«

The root *sct* (*abd*) in *qal* has the meaning of »perish, die, be destroyed, be lost, stray, wander, disappear,« and it is the understanding of *sct* (*abd*) as a *qal* participle which is the basis for the translation »my father was a wandering Aramean.« The *piel* form of the root means »cause to perish, destroy, kill,« and interpreting *sct* (*abd*) as a *piel* perfect thus gives the meaning »an Aramean destroyed my father.« This is essentially how the phrase was understood in Jewish tradition, the intransitive understanding making its first unambiguous appearance in the 12th century in the commentaries of Ibn Ezra and Rashbam. It is possible that *Sifre* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* contain a combination of both the intransitive and the transitive interpretation, but the transitive is undoubtedly the predominant one.⁴

Thus, both the understanding »My father was a wandering Aramean« and »An Aramean destroyed my father« are grammatically possible. However, there is an almost complete scholarly consensus that the phrase originally meant »My father was a wandering Aramean« and that it was at some point reinterpreted to mean »An Aramean destroyed my father« and the »Aramean« identified with Laban. Among the attempts to explain this reinterpretation the most common ones have been to attribute it to historical factors outside of the text, assuming that the rabbis identified Laban with historical enemies of Israel, such as the Seleucid rulers of Syria,⁵ Antiochus Epiphanes,⁶ Rome (noting the similarity between *hnr̄t* (*arami*) and *hnr̄* (*ramai*),⁷ or Herod.⁸

The problem with identifying Laban with a historical enemy of Israel, however, is that such identifications are not stated or even hinted at in rabbinic literature, as opposed to Esau, who is clearly identified first with Edom and later with Rome. The identification, then, becomes wholly dependent on the date assigned to the midrash, a situation that easily leads to circular reasoning. The fact that an identification with a historical enemy is not made in rabbinic literature naturally does not definitely rule out the possibility that such an identification was the reason for the reinterpretation, but in my opinion there is another possible way of explaining why the rabbis chose the transitive interpretation.

The fact that Jacob is called »Aramean« in Deut 26:5 probably seemed peculiar to the rabbis who regarded the Bible as a unified whole containing no inconsistencies, since he is nowhere else in the Bible referred to as such. On the contrary, Genesis seems to go out of its way to emphasize that Jacob, in contrast to Laban was *not* an »Aramean« (25:20, 28:5, 31:20, 31:24). Given this sensibility to inconsistencies in the Bible, they would naturally be disturbed by the designation of Jacob as an Aramean in Deuteronomy, a fact that has been pointed out by several scholars.⁹ Accordingly, it seems likely that the word »Aramean« would rather evoke associations to Laban, who is commonly referred to as »Laban the Aramean« (hnrvt ick (*Lavan ha-arami*) Gen 25:20, 31:20, 31:24). Laban is the best-known Aramean in the Bible, and it would be natural for the rabbis to understand the word »Aramean« to refer to him. If the »Aramean« is identified with Laban, the root sct (*abd*) must be understood as a *piel* form meaning »destroy,« but since that is grammatically possible it probably did not cause great difficulties. This is not to say that the rabbis interpreted hct sct hnr (arami oved avi) to mean »my father was a wandering Aramean« and then consciously distorted it to mean something else because the original sense seemed strange to them. Rather, I propose that the transitive reading was the way they understood the verse, given their assumptions and presuppositions.

A Case of Intertextuality

Once hct sct hnr (arami oved avi) was understood to mean »an Aramean sought to destroy my father« and the Aramean identified with Laban, the question of when Laban attempted to destroy Jacob immediately presents itself. *Aggadat Bereshit*, a tenth century midrash, supplies an answer by reading Deut 26:5 and Gen 31:23-25 in conjunction with each other:¹⁰

cauhuuklkvuwickinceghjrcaavgacâohrvvktâhbhgtat,ukgnkrhat's
 rvcukvt,tge,ceghucegh,tickdahunrtbawudhavuickgnaurwvc
 scthnrt nrutvan ifawceghkdurvku lkhkaecnickvhvu (vftk,hatrc)
 khj,vwubhctceghscthnrtvickintktwiftuvvnu (vufohrcs)'udu hct
 wujukaunmgvagugarkvkdbukufhcklvv"cevu'uduhbhgtatnrtucegh
 (sftk,hatrc)'uduickktohvkttchunrtbawceghkaufm,uagkkhac

Another interpretation: *A song for ascents. I turn my eyes to the mountains*; [Ps. 121:1] When Jacob fled from Laban he went and encamped on a mountain. Laban heard [that Jacob had fled and he pursued after him] and he overtook him, as it is said: *Laban overtook Jacob. Jacob had pitched his tent on the Height* (Gen. 31:25). And Laban attempted to go and kill Jacob, as Moses said: *An Aramean destroyed my father* (Deut. 26:5) What does this mean? [It means that] through Laban the Aramean our father Jacob was destroyed. And Jacob said: *»I turn my eyes.»* The Holy One blessed be He went, as if it were possible [to speak in this manner], and revealed himself to the wicked one and made himself his [Jacob's] messenger in order to carry out the needs of Jacob, as it is said, *but God appeared to Laban* etc. (31:24).¹¹

The phrases, »when Jacob fled from Laban he went and encamped on a mountain. Laban heard and he overtook him» summarize Gen 31:21-23, and it is concluded by the quotation from v. 25. Accordingly, *Aggadot Bereshit* interprets the story in Genesis as follows: Jacob escapes to the hill country of Gilead (v. 21), Laban hears about his flight and pursues him with the intention of killing him (vv. 22-23, 25 and Deut 26:5), God intervenes and as a result Jacob is saved (v. 24).

There are hints of Laban's hostile intentions in Gen 31:23-25, and an intertextual reading of Deut 26:5 and Gen 31:23-25 may well have produced the idea that Laban wished to kill Jacob when the latter fled from Haran.

Gen 31:23-25 reads:

ohvktchu:sgkdv rvc u,tecshuohnh ,gca lrsuhrjt;srhuung uhjt,t jehu
:gr-sg cuyncegh-ogrcs,-iplknavukrnthuvkhkvokjchnrvtick-kt
...cegh ,t ick dahu

So he took his kinsmen with him and pursued him a distance of seven days, catching up with him in the hill country of Gilead. But God appeared to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night and said to him, »Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad.» Laban overtook Jacob...

The root *ecs* (*dabak* – »catching up») in *hiphil* often has a connotation of hostility in Biblical Hebrew and is frequently used in the context of war (Judg 20:42, 2 Sam 1:6, Judg 20:45, 1 Sam 14:22, 1 Sam 31:2).¹² Read in the light of Deut 26:5 which reinforces the notion of hostility, these verses would give good reason to state that Laban pursued Jacob with the intention of killing him.

Such an intertextual reading, where one verse evokes associations to another verse and where these verses read together generate a new meaning that each one of them could not have on their own is a common feature of midrash, as has been demonstrated in recent research on midrash.¹³ Thus, confronted with a biblical phrase that seemed to be saying that Laban destroyed Jacob, the rabbis came to think of Gen 31:23-25, which read together with Deut 26:5 could be understood to mean that Laban intended to kill Jacob when the latter fled from Haran. This is not to say that the rabbis interpreted *hct sct hrnt* (*arami oved avi*) to mean that Laban sought to destroy Jacob and then went looking for a verse to prove this idea, but rather that an unintentional association to Gen 31:23-25 made this interpretation of Deut 26:5 possible.

These texts which attest to an understanding of Gen 31:22-25 and Deut 26:5 in light of each other are admittedly late (the tenth and thirteenth century respectively), but there are earlier indications of such an understanding even though the verses from Genesis are not explicitly quoted. *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber edition) *Ekev* 5 describes Jacob's hardships in chronological order from his birth: already in the womb Esau tried to kill him, when he had received the blessings Esau planned to kill him again, he escaped to Laban where he suffered because of the latter's daughter, and after that Laban attempted to kill him. Due to the chronological account and the words »after that,« it seems reasonable to conclude that »after that« refers to Jacob's escape and Laban's pursuit of him even if the verses from Genesis are not quoted.

wudrvk ick aehc lf rjtu wu,cc rgymbu ickk jrcu
(v uf ohrcs) hct scut hrnt rntba

And he escaped to Laban and suffered because of his daughter¹⁴
and after that Laban attempted to kill him, as it is said: *An Aramean destroyed my father* (Deut 26:5).

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan as well as the marginal glosses of *Targum Neofiti* understand Deut 26:5 in the context of Jacob's stay with Laban. The addition »but the Memra¹⁵ of the Lord saved him from his hands,« present also in *Targum Neofiti* to Deut 26:5, is most likely a reference to Gen 31:24 where God intervenes and warns Laban not to hurt Jacob. Even though there is admittedly no text from tannaitic times that explicitly quotes Deut 26:5 together with Gen 31:23-25, it nevertheless

seems reasonable that an understanding of these verses in light of each other gave rise to the idea that Laban attempted to destroy Jacob. These later texts, then, reflect an understanding that originated in earlier times. It also seems reasonable to assume that the idea that Laban attempted to kill Jacob, which is widely spread in rabbinic literature, played a significant role in forming a negative view of Laban.

Laban the Deceiver

Apart from being presented as attempting to destroy Jacob, Laban is generally considered to be a wicked person whose most outstanding characteristic is deceit according to the midrashim and targumim.¹⁶ The epithet »deceiver« can easily be derived from Laban's behavior in the biblical story but most midrashim and targumim emphasize this characteristic out of proportion. One reason for this is probably the similarity between the Hebrew words *hnrt* (*arami* »Aramean«) and *htnr* (*ramai* »deceiver«), permitting a double reading of *hnrt* (*arami*) as meaning both »Aramean« and »deceiver.« The rabbis comment on the repetition of the word »Aramean« in Gen 25:20 which seemed peculiar to them, since in their view repetition in the biblical text only *appears* to be a repetition but is actually a hint to another meaning.¹⁷ Due to the similarity of *hnrt* (*arami*) and *htnr* (*ramai*), they most likely understood the repetition as a hint that Laban was a deceiver. In this way the verse is understood to be saying that Laban was an Aramean *and a deceiver*. Thus, the characteristic »deceiver« attributed to Laban in rabbinic literature was not arbitrarily chosen out of a specific interest in his person or a wish to provide him with a certain set of negative characteristics, but is rather the outcome of a reading of the biblical text although this reading is naturally conditioned by a certain set of assumptions.

The Significance of Jacob for the Image of Laban

Another reason for the emphasis on Laban's deceit is most probably the wish on the part of the rabbis to excuse Jacob's behavior and make him appear in a more favorable light. The rabbis saw Jacob as the

representative and the embodiment of the people of Israel, and given this identification it is scarcely surprising that part of his behavior as described in the biblical story, such as making his brother sell him his birthright in return for a bowl of stew, and tricking his father into giving him the blessing seemed disturbing to them and in need of reinterpretation.¹⁸ If Laban was the first one to introduce deceit into their relationship, Jacob's manipulation of the mating of the sheep and his secret departure from Paddan-aram will be understood as necessary measures to survive when dealing with such a deceitful and unreliable person as Laban. All the midrashim and targumim are very careful either to reinterpret Jacob's deception of his father and brother when he took the blessing intended for the first-born by calling it an act of wisdom, or to simply pass over it in silence. By reinterpreting or ignoring Jacob's deception and emphasizing Laban's deceitful behavior toward Jacob, an impression is created of an innocent Jacob who is unjustly ill-treated by a deceitful Laban.

Although the expansions on Laban in the targumim do not differ much from the expansions in the midrashim, an analysis of a coherent narrative reveals more clearly than that of a midrash the significance that the improvement of Jacob's image has for the structure of the whole narrative and the effect that this new structure, or lack of structure, has for the impression the reader gets of Laban. Deceit is Laban's most outstanding characteristic according to *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* and even though this is repeated a number of times (Gen 29:12, 19, 22) it is not only these additions which create the image of Laban as extraordinarily deceitful. Redefining Jacob's taking of the blessing by means of deceit as an act of wisdom and by adding that Isaac knew that he was blessing Jacob, results not only in making Jacob appear in a more favorable light, but also in a different evaluation of the subsequent events.¹⁹ Since Jacob's taking of the blessing is not defined as a deception, Laban's deception of Jacob is no longer understood to be an expression of measure for measure, and the basis for understanding Laban's deception as a rebuke of Jacob is eliminated. Thus, the structure of the narrative is altered, making Laban automatically look bad, without necessarily attributing any additional negative traits to him (as is the case with Esau). While the structure of the narrative in the biblical text implies that Laban has the role of an instrument

with which justice is meted out to Jacob, he fulfills no such function in *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, where his deceit accordingly appears unwarranted and therefore more serious as well as more emphasized. Accordingly, the wish to make Jacob appear in a more favorable light has consequences also for the understanding of passages which are not actively reinterpreted, and brings with it an image of Laban that was perhaps at first unintended. It seems likely that the automatic negative portrait of Laban that emerges as a result of the rabbinic reinterpretation of certain elements in the story contributed to the further vilification that the rabbis made him undergo.

In addition to the automatic and sometimes unintentional negative portrait of Laban resulting from the reinterpretation of Jacob's dubious actions, the rabbis also actively and deliberately portray him negatively for the purpose of improving Jacob's image. It becomes a circle where everything works to Laban's disadvantage. He automatically looks more negative as a result of the improvement of Jacob's image, and in addition he is deliberately attributed with negative characteristics (although they are not preconceived but derive from the rabbis' understanding of the text) in order to further improve Jacob's image. Again, we are faced with evidence of interaction between reader and text. The presentation of Jacob in a more favorable light is ideologically motivated, but the outcome of such a reinterpretation of the biblical story, namely a more negative impression of Laban then automatically appears to be really inherent in the text. Exegesis of this new reinterpreted text then results in an even more negative portrait of Laban. To this is added the deliberate vilification of Laban, inspired both by the reinterpreted text and the wish to improve Jacob's image.

Interaction Between the Rabbis and the Biblical Text

The rabbis explained the inconsistencies and filled in the gaps which they perceived in the biblical text with information provided by other biblical verses and with material from their cultural and ideological background. It is this interaction that explains the characteristics they attributed to Laban, rather than preconceived ideas which they read into the text. As D. Boyarin has pointed out, rabbinic biblical interpretation is not a reflection of an already existing ideology but rather

a dialogue with the text where the reader's experiences and his/her ideological/theological/political concerns naturally affect his/her understanding of the text but where the text is also assumed to affect the reader and the formation of his/her ideology or theology.²⁰ This is a clear shift of emphasis from the earlier approach to the study of midrash that tended to focus only on the ideological side of the interpretations, assuming that when an ancient interpreter deviated from the biblical narrative in his retelling of it, the reason for that deviation must be sought in some extratextual issue such as his political allegiance or religious agenda. As to confirm this new approach to midrash, this study on Laban strongly indicates that the negative image of him may have emerged simply as a result of rabbinic hermeneutics and the identification of Jacob with the people of Israel, without any identification between him and a historical enemy necessarily being made.

This interaction between the rabbis and the biblical text is also evident in the idea that Laban attempted to destroy Jacob, which I have suggested came into being by reading Deut 26:5 in conjunction with Gen 31:23-25. This understanding appears to be the result of an exegetical effort to make sense of a problematic phrase in Deut 26:5, but once the idea became established, it seems to have become part of the ideology of the rabbis and then negatively affected their understanding of other biblical sayings about Laban. Accordingly, an ideology is formed through the reader's struggle with the text, and the ideology in turn affects the understanding of the text in a constant interaction.

Thus, this study suggests that a portrait of a villain can develop simply as a result of hermeneutics without identification with a historical enemy. It also indicates that an image of an enemy can develop primarily as a side-effect of concerns other than interest in the villain himself, observations which draw attention to the role that exegesis played in the formation of the opinions and world view of the rabbis as well as the inseparability of exegesis and ideology.

Notes

1. For a more detailed presentation of the issue of this article, see Hedner-Zetterholm 2002.
2. See, *Midrash Tanhuma* (Buber edition) *Ekev* 5; *Aggadot Bereshit* ch. 53

[54] p. 108; *Midrash Psalms* 30.4; *Midrash ha-Gadol* on Gen 31:22-23 p. 549; *Yalqut Shimoni* vol. 1 *remez* 938 p. 659; *Leqah Tov* on Deut 26:5 p. 90.

3. = =jb
4. There is a third possibility of understanding sct (*abd*), which has been used to explain the Masoretic text where sct (*abd*) is vocalized 5^mcÄ (*oved*) although the cantillation marks suggest the intransitive reading. According to this hypothesis the Masoretes understood 5^mcÄ (*oved*) not as *qal* participle but as the more rare conjugation *poel* perfect. According to Kautzsch and Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar*, § 55, *poel* is the equivalent of *piel* in a limited number of verbs in the Bible.
 5. Finkelstein 1938, 299-300.
 6. Seeligmann 1948, 85-86.
 7. Aberbach 1978, 1197 and personal communication Nov. 8, 1999.
 8. Yuval 1996, 22.
 9. See e.g., Dreyfus 1981, 152-153; Steiner 1997, 129.
 10. *Midrash ha-Gadol* to Gen 31:22-23 likewise juxtaposes Deut 26:5 and Gen 31:22-23 (p. 549).
 11. Ch. (53) [54] p. 108.
 12. In poetic texts the *hiphil* form of the root ecs (*dabak*) has the meaning of »cleave to, cling to,« (e.g. Jer 13:11, Ezek 29:4, 3:26, Deut 28:21, Ps 22:16) but in all the historical books, with the exception of Judg 18:22, it has a clear connotation of hostility and war. The word *dahu* (»overtook«) in v. 25 also has a hostile connotation (Exod 14:9, 1 Sam 30:8, 2 Sam 15:14, Lam 1:3, 1 Chr 21:12) although it has a wider range of meanings and nuances than *ecshu* »catching up«.
 13. See Boyarin 1990, 22-32.
 14. *u,cc* could perhaps also be interpreted to mean »in his house,« but the parallel version in *Tan Ekev* 3 has *ick ka uh,ubcc* (»because of Laban's daughters«), which indicates that it is probably »his daughter« that is meant here also.
 15. Literally: »the word« of the Lord. *Memra* is a paraphrase used by the targums when referring to God.
 16. See e.g., *GenR* 63.4, 70.19, 75.5; *Tan Vayishlah* 1; *Gen Rabbati* on Gen 31:23-24, 30:35, 31:8; *Midrash Aggadah* on Gen 29:24, 31:33; *PsJ* Gen 29:12, 29:19.
 17. For a summary of the most important assumptions underlying rabbinic biblical interpretation, see Kugel 1997, 17-23.
 18. Kugel 1997, 199-200. Kugel points out that the rabbinic assumption that the Bible is perfect, containing no inconsistencies or contradictions to some extent also included biblical heroes. Thus, Jacob and other meritorious figures ought not to behave improperly, and if at times they appear to do so, the rabbis conclude that something else *must* have been meant. The Bible's perfection ultimately meant that it was in accordance with the interpreters' ideas and standards of conduct (p. 21).
 19. Bar-Efrat 1989, 93 has pointed out that events in a plot receive their meaning from their position and role in the system as a whole. The events are like building blocks, each one contributing to the entire structure, and the removal of one building block may cause the entire structure to collapse, or at least cause severe damage to it. The main relations between the different building blocks are those of cause and effect, parallelism and contrast. Redefining Jacob's taking of the blessing as an act of wisdom must be regarded as the removal of such a building block, resulting in the elimination of the connection between cause and effect, thereby causing severe damage to the whole structure.
 20. See Boyarin 1997, 11-19.

Sources

Aggadat Bereshit ed. Buber 1903

d"xr, tetre wruc 'a 'svn w,hatrc ,sdt

The date of the final redaction of *Aggadat Bereshit* is considered to be the tenth century.

Midrash ha-Gadol (Genesis) ed. Margaliot 1947

Z"a, ohkaurh w<UhkDrN 'N <hÑtrCk kusdv arsn

Midrash ha-Gadol (Deuteronomy) ed. Fisch 1972

d"ka, ohkaurh wahp 'a 'svn wsnhrscs kusdv arsn

Midrash ha-Gadol is a compilation of interpretations mainly from the midrashic tradition, the talmudim and Geonic writings and is usually dated to the thirteenth century.

Midrash Tanhuma ed. Buber 1884

ws"or, cuck wruc 'a 'svn wiahvu ousev tnujb, arsn

The date of *Midrash Tanhuma* is very uncertain but it is commonly believed to have undergone a final redaction sometime between 600-800 C.E.

Midrash Tannaim ed. Hoffmann 1908

j"xr, ihkrc wibtnpptv ' . 's 'svn wohrcs rpx kg ohtb, arsn

Midrash Tannaim is the designation given by Hoffmann to a halakhic midrash which he has reconstructed from the late *Midrash ha-Gadol* and geniza fragments published by Solomon Schechter. Due to the uncertainties around the text one cannot be specific about its origins and date but it is by and large considered to be a tannaitic midrash.

Passover Haggadah ed. Safrai 1998

whrpx ctzu ktuna urthcu tucn unhsev jxp ka vsdv wk"zj ,sdv
j"ba, wtyrf ohkaurh

The dating of the Passover Haggadah is very uncertain but the midrash on *arami oved avi* is generally believed to be from tannaitic times.

Sifre Devarim ed. Finkelstein 1939

a", ohkaurh wihyakebhp 't 't 'svn wohrcs rpx kg hrpx

Sifre Devarim is believed to have undergone a final redaction in the late third century.

Targum Neofiti

Neophyti I: Targum Palestinense MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana. Edited by A. D. Macho. Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1968-1978.

The opinions on the dating of *Targum Neofiti* have varied considerably, but the greater part of the targum is nowadays commonly believed to be from the period between the fourth and the seventh century.

Targum Onqelos to Deuteronomy

Targum Onkelos to Deuteronomy: An English Translation of the Text with Analysis and Commentary (Based on Sperber's Edition) by I. Drazin. Hoboken: Ktav, 1982.

Most scholars date the final redaction of *Targum Onqelos* to the third century.

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch: Text and Concordance, E. C. Clarke with Collaboration by W. E. Aufrecht, J. C. Hurd, and F. Spitzer. Hoboken: Ktav, 1984.

The dating of *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* has been much debated but most scholars nowadays believe that the text in its present form cannot be dated before the seventh or eighth century, although it contains material that is much older.

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