YAKIR PAZ

From Scribes to Scholars

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Rabbinic Biblical Exegesis in Light of the Homeric Commentaries

Mohr Siebeck

Yakir Paz, born 1978; currently lecturer in the departments of Talmud and Classical Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
orcid.org/0000-0001-8641-2839

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To my parents

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Note on Editions, Translations, and Abbreviations

The translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* follow Lattimore 1951 and 1967, but I have occasionally modified them to render the text more literal (and at times more awkward) in order to facilitate the understanding of the commentaries. Translations of the Hebrew Bible follow JPS, at times modified. Translations of Philo are based on Colson and Whitaker 1929–1968, unless noted otherwise.

All translations of the scholia are mine, unless stated elsewise.

Citations from rabbinic literature follow *Ma'agarim: The Historical Dictionary Project* (http://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx), unless stated otherwise. The references are based on the editions cited in the bibliography. I have noted textual variants only when necessary; in order to facilitate the reading, I have occasionally added punctuation and completed abbreviations.

Abbreviation of biblical books, Philo's treatises and mishnaic tractates follow the SBL guidelines.

In the citations of the scholia the following abbreviations are used: Ariston. = Aristonicus; Did. = Didymus; ex.= exegetical; Herod. = Herodianus; Nic.= Nicanor; pap. = papyrus; sch. = scholia.

Abbreviations

AFO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
AJPh	*American Journal of Philology*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*
BNJ	*Brill's New Jacoby online*: https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby
BNP	*Brill's New Pauly online*: http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-pauly
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
CPh	*Classical Philology*
DSD	*Dead Sea Dicoveries*
RivFil	*Rivista di Filologia e di Istruzione Classica*
GRBS	*Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies*
HSCPh	*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
JAJ	*Journal of Ancient Judaism*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JR	*The Journal of Religion*
JSIS	*Jewish Studies, an Internet Journal*: http://www.biu.ac.il/JS/JSIJ
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
JSQ	*Jewish Studies Quarterly*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LGGA	*Lexicon of Greek Grammarians of Antiquity*: https://referenceworks.brill-lonline.com/browse/lexicon-of-greek-grammarians-of-antiquity
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, Stuttgart, 1941–
RB	*Revue Biblique*
RE	A. Pauly et al. (eds.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft: neue Bearbeitung,* Stuttgart 1894–1980
RechSR	*Recherches de science religieuse*
RQ	*Revue de Qumran*
RRS	*Review of Rabbinic Judaism*
SPhA	*Studia Philonica Annual*
TAPhA	*Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*
WCJS	*Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

Introduction

Ὅμηρος δὲ καὶ πρῶτος καὶ μέσος καὶ ὕστατος, παντὶ παιδὶ καὶ ἀνδρὶ καὶ γέροντι τοσοῦτον ἀφ᾽ αὑτοῦ διδοὺς ὅσον ἕκαστος δύναται λαβεῖν.

But Homer comes first and in the middle and last, in that he gives of himself to every boy and adult and old man just as much as each of them can take.
(Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse* 18)[1]

In late antiquity, the Homeric poems and the Torah were identity-forming canonical texts in Hellenistic and Jewish cultures, respectively. Their immense impact manifested itself mainly in the pivotal and almost exclusive role they played in the *paideia*, in the wide sense of the term as it was translated by Roman scholars: *humanitas* – that is, the molding and perfecting of the human being.[2] These texts were at the center of the curriculum of both the novice student and the scholar, and were an important factor in forming social norms.[3]

In the opening of his treatise *Homeric Problems*, Heraclitus (ca. 100 CE) writes the following:[4]

Εὐθὺς γὰρ ἐκ πρώτης ἡλικίας τὰ νήπια τῶν ἀρτιμαθῶν παίδων διδασκαλίᾳ παρ᾽ ἐκείνῳ τιτθεύεται, καὶ μονονοὺκ ἐνεσπαργανωμένοι τοῖς ἔπεσιν αὐτοῦ καθαπερεὶ ποτίμῳ γάλακτι τὰς ψυχὰς ἐπάρδομεν· ἀρχομένῳ δ᾽ ἑκάστῳ συμπαρέστηκε καὶ κατ᾽ ὀλίγον ἀπανδρουμένῳ, τελείοις δ᾽ ἐνακμάζει, καὶ κόρος οὐδὲ εἷς ἄχρι γήρως, ἀλλὰ παυσάμενοι διψῶμεν αὐτοῦ πάλιν· καὶ σχεδὸν ἓν πέρας Ὁμήρῳ παρ᾽ ἀνθρώποις, ὃ καὶ τοῦ βίου.

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[1] Dio Chrys. 18.8; tr. Cohoon 1939, p. 219.

[2] See Marrou 1956, pp. 98–99 who discusses the widening of the meaning of the term παιδεία in the Hellenistic period.

[3] On the centrality of Homer in Greek education see Jaeger 1945, pp. 35–56; Marrou 1956, pp. 162–170; Verdenius 1970; Morgan 1998; Hock 2001; Cribiore 2001, pp. 194–197; Lamberton 2002 (on the role of Homeric allegory and rhetoric in education); Sluiter 1997; Sandnes 2009; Niehoff 2012b; Pontani 2011; 2012 (on the use of Homer by the grammarians). On the canonic status of Homer see Finkelberg 2003. On Jewish education in Late Antiquity and the centrality of the Torah see Hirshman 2009 (and detailed bibliography pp. 121–126); Safrai 1976; Aberbach 1982; Hezser 2000b, pp. 39–109; 2010; 2016; Schwabe 1950. On the role of canonical texts in the *paideia* of Late Antiquity see Stroumsa 2012. For a comparative study of the role of the text in education of Pagan, Christians, and Jews in antiquity see Snyder 2000. For a comparison of the status of Moses and Homer in antiquity see Alexander 1998; Hezser 2016.

[4] Heracl. *Quaest. Hom.*, 1.5–7, pp. 2–3 (tr. Russell and Konstan).

From the very first age of life, the foolishness of infants just beginning to learn is nurtured on the teaching given in his school. One might almost say that his poems are our baby clothes, and we nourish our minds by draughts of his milk. He stands at our side as we each grow up and shares our youth as we gradually come to manhood; when we are mature, his presence within us is at its prime; and even in old age, we never weary of him. When we stop, we thirst to begin him again. In a word, the only end of Homer for human beings is the end of life.

A similar concept can be found in rabbinic literature. So, for example, in a *baraita* adduced to the end of the mishnaic tractate Qiddushin (4:14), R. Nehorai (second half of the second century CE) states:

רבי נהוראי אומר: מניח אני כל אומנות שבעולם ואיני מלמד את בני אלא תורה,
שאדם אוכל משכרה בעולם הזה וקרן קיימת לעולם הבא.
ושאר כל אומנות אינן כן כשאדם בא לידי חולי או לידי זקנה או לידי יסורין ואינו יכול לעסוק במלאכתו הרי הוא מת ברעב.
אבל התורה אינה כן אלא משמרתו מכל רע בנערותו ונותנת לו אחרית ותקוה בזקנותו.
בנערותו מה הוא אומר? "וקוי ה' יחליפו כח" (יש' מ 31).
בזקנותו מהו אומר? "עוד ינובון בשיבה" (תה' צב 15).

R. Nehorai says: I would set aside all the crafts in the world and teach my son naught save the Torah, for a man enjoys the reward thereof in this world and its whole worth remains for the world to come. But with all other crafts it is not so; for when a man falls into sickness or old age or inflictions and cannot engage in his work, lo, he dies of hunger. But with the Torah it is not so; for it guards him from all evil while he is young, and in old age it grants him a future and a hope. Of his youth, what does it say? "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Is. 40:31). Of his old age what does it say? "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age" (Ps. 92:15).[5]

The difference between R. Nehorai's statement and that of Heraclitus reflects the essential gap between the attitude of Greek culture toward Homer and of Jewish culture toward the Torah: for Heraclitus the role of Homer ends when one dies, whereas for R. Nehorai the Torah leads man to the World to Come. Yet the similarity between the texts is no less important. R. Nehorai and Heraclitus agree about the centrality of the Torah and Homer in man's life and believe that their respective texts accompany man from youth through old age, adjusting themselves to the different periods of life.

The centrality of these texts and their undisputed canonical status led to the development of exegetical communities in which these texts were interpreted in a collective effort by dozens of scholars over hundreds of years. In the Alexandrian library from the third century BCE onwards, numerous scholars labored at editing the Homeric poems and interpreting them according to philological, rhetorical, grammatical, and literary criteria, especially from the school of Aristotle, while developing sophisticated hermeneutical tools and technical terms. This exegetical tradition continued to evolve during the first centuries of the Common Era throughout the Roman Empire and was later redacted over

[5] Tr. Danby 1933, p. 329.

hundreds of years into a voluminous exegetical collection, following verse order, which has come down to us mainly through the scholia on the margins of Byzantine manuscripts.

Parallel to the exegetical efforts on the Greek side, dozens of rabbis dedicated themselves during the first centuries CE to interpreting the Torah, using a wide array of exegetical methods. These rabbis were divided into distinct exegetical schools, and their commentaries were collected and redacted during the third century CE into Midrashic compilations, known as the Halakhic Midrashim, which were organized as a line-by-line commentary displaying a rich terminological system. These Midrashim have exerted a crucial impact on the formation of the role of the exegete vis-à-vis the holy text and on exegetical methods in the Jewish culture down to present times.

The non-allegorical Homeric commentaries and the Halakhic Midrashim which have come down to us are vast and significant corpora. Yet to date they have barely been compared by scholars, despite the fact that the rabbis were active within a distinct Greco-Roman context, and that Saul Lieberman and David Daube have already noted similarities between a small number of methods used by the Homeric scholars and the rabbis.[6] In light of this, the goal of this work is to systematically compare the two corpora for the first time. My argument is that it is possible to point to various ways in which the Greek commentaries deeply impacted the rabbis' exegetical approach. Moreover, I will argue that we cannot understand the very appearance of the edited Midrashic compilations and some of their core hermeneutical assumptions without a familiarity with the contemporaneous Homeric commentaries.

In addition to its influence on rabbinic terminology and exegetical techniques, I will demonstrate how Homeric scholarship – as a representative of the literary, rhetorical, linguistic, and didactic discourse of the time – impacted the rabbis' methods of organizing knowledge and their learning practices, as well as their very understanding of the concept of the canonical text and the role of the commentator. The rabbis, I will argue, were in many ways part of the exegetical world of their time. Furthermore, the comparison with the Homeric scholarship may also advance our understanding of the background to the development of the distinct approaches of the schools of R. Akiva and R. Yishmael.

The comparison between the two corpora, however, will not only reveal similarities, but will also enhance our understanding of the unique features in the rabbinic exegesis. Indeed, only by understanding how the rabbis adopted and adapted the hermeneutical principles and methods of Greek scholarship while incorporating them into a different exegetical system can we appreciate the novelty and uniqueness of the rabbinic project.

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[6] On Lieberman's and Daube's research, as well as later scholarship, see below.

1. Midrash, Scrolls, and Homeric Scholarship

One of the greatest enigmas in the study of rabbinic literature is the seemingly sudden appearance of a rich, fully-crystallized scholastic exegetical corpus, divided into different schools, comprised of the sayings of dozens of sages, and applying well-developed sophisticated hermeneutical techniques and a wide array of technical terms. Is this a product of a continuous evolutionary process; did it result from a "Big Bang" – a dramatic and sudden change during the relevant period; or was there perhaps some kind of combination of the two? In other words: what is the relation between the rabbinic Midrash and the Jewish biblical commentaries that preceded it?

The fact that almost nothing has survived from the literature of the Pharisees or from the non-allegorical Jewish-Hellenistic commentaries poses great difficulties in reconstructing the development of the Midrash. Various scholars have tried to locate the buds of the Midrash in inner-biblical commentary and in the Second Temple literature.[7] Some of these studies have emphasized the similarities in common narrative expansions and legal traditions, and thus outlined an exegetical continuum.[8] Others, as I shall discuss below, looked to Hellenistic culture for the Midrashic roots.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls significantly advanced the study of the ancient Jewish commentaries. Alongside the genre of rewritings of the Bible that does not explicitly disclose its exegetical thrust,[9] the scrolls also include commentaries such as the *pesharim*,[10] which follow the order of the verse, differentiate between verse and commentary, and contain the beginnings of technical terminology, at times even employing the term "Midrash."[11] Many

[7] See, e.g., Zeligman 1980; Vermes 1975a; Fishbane 1985; Shinan and Zakovitch 1986. For attempts to reconstruct early Jewish commentary see Goldberg 1981; Albeck 1969, pp. 84–93; Lieberman 1963, pp. 186–189; Urbach 1958; Brewer 1992 (who anachronistically projects later sources onto the Second Temple period).

[8] See, e.g., Kugel 1998, who is one of the dominant scholars of the school which focuses mainly on shared traditions, which began with Ginsburg's monumental project *The Legends of the Jews* (1913–1928).

[9] See, e.g., Kugel 2009.

[10] Most of the *pesharim* are dated to the end of the second-first centuries BCE. Some consist of a running commentary to the verse, where a citation of a verse is followed by such formulae as פשרו על or פשר הדבר. Most of the *pesharim* address prophetic texts giving them an actual or eschatological interpretation. The commentator is anonymous and authoritative. On the *pesharim* see Nizan 2009, Berrin 2005; Jassen 2012; Machila 2012; Goldman 2019, pp. 30–42.

[11] There is extensive scholarship on the hermeneutics and exegetical terminology in the scrolls. See, e.g., Fishbane 1973; Maier 1996 (general overview); Nizan 2009; Shemesh 2004; Elledge 2003; Bernstein 1994a; 1996; 1998; 2013 (collection of essays); Berrin 2005 (with bibliography), as well as references in the following note. Special scholarly attention has been given to the commentary known as *Pesher Genesis* A (4Q252), see Bernstein 1979; 1994b; Brock 1996; 2005; Werman and Shemesh 2011, pp. 54–55; Machila 2012.

scholars have sought to identify in this literature the "missing link" between the Bible and rabbinic Midrash.[12] Some have compared the terms used in the scrolls to those found in rabbinic literature,[13] at times even trying to reconstruct the hermeneutical methods that supposedly lie at the basis of the commentaries of the scrolls and comparing them to the rabbinic *middot* (measures of interpretations).[14] So, for example, Aaron Shemesh writes:

> I do not claim that there is an actual literary connection between the formulae in the scrolls and rabbinic midrash, but the comparison is important in order to show that already in the scrolls there are beginnings of fixed exegetical formulae also regarding Halakha, and these represent the first stages of the *middot* for commenting on the Torah.[15]

There can be no doubt that there are important common features between the exegetical methods of the authors of the scrolls and the rabbis. However, there are also crucial differences. First, unlike the scrolls, the Halakhic Midrashim do not present their commentary as the sole and unequivocal interpretation of a divinely-inspired authority, but rather as a commentary based on human efforts to resolve various difficulties in the biblical text.[16] In addition, Steven Fraade has highlighted several central characteristics of the rabbinic Midrash that seem almost self-evident, but are almost never documented in the scrolls:[17]

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[12] For a comparison between rabbinic and scroll commentaries see, e.g., Goldberg 1981; Werman and Shemesh 2011, pp. 51–71 (see p. 53 for a discussion of the term "Midrash" as representing a written treatise); Kugel 2009; Fraade 1991, pp. 1–23; 1998; 2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2007b; 2007c; Shemesh 2000; 2004; 2009; Kister 1998; 1999 (esp. pp. 332–335); Bernstein 1996; Bernstein and Koyfman 2005; Mandel 2001; 2006; 2017; Milgrom 1989; Brock 1985; 2000; 2009; Heger 2005; 2011; Shiffman 2005; Schremer 2001; Milikowsky 2013, vol. 1, pp. 61–62 and notes on pp. 99–101.

[13] For example, some have pointed out the similarity between the exegetical formula כי א הוא ב ("for A is B") found in the scrolls and the rabbinic formula אין א אלא ב ("A is nothing other than B"). See Werman and Shemesh 2011, p. 57. It is worth noting that Lieberman (1962, p. 49 n. 19) suggested that the rabbinic formula is equivalent to the Greek formula οὐδὲν ἄλλο A ἤ B. I have not, however, found use of the formula in the Homeric scholia.

[14] Bernstein and Koyfman 2005, for example, sought to identify in the scroll the use of such *middot* as *qal va-homer* (*argumentum a fortiori*) and *biyan av* (prototype) alongside more general techniques such as harmonization and combining of verse. Cf. Milgrom 1989.

[15] Werman and Shemesh 2011, p. 57 (my translation).

[16] See, e.g., Fraade 1998 (and in many more articles; see note below); Heger 2005; Kahana 2006, p. 10. On the difference in the concept of authority in scrolls and Jewish Alexandrian commentary see Niehoff 2012c, pp. 456–457.

[17] Fraade 2006c, p. 279. Fraade has often emphasized the fundamental differences between rabbinic commentaries and that found in the scrolls. See, e.g., idem 1991; 1998; 2006a; 2006b; 2007b. Kahana (2006, pp. 10–11) noted further differences between the scroll commentaries and the Halakhic Midrashim: The latter are written in Mishnaic Hebrew whereas the scrolls language is closer to Biblical Hebrew; the Halakhic regulations are much more detailed in the Halakhic Midrashim; in many cases the interpretation in the Halakhic Midrashim is further from the literal meaning of the verses.

(1) In the Midrash, numerous traditions are attributed to various named sages. In the scrolls, by contrast, no *specific* commentary is attributed to any individual, not even to the Teacher of Righteousness.[18]

(2) The sages explicitly point out the exegetical methods they use. That is, there is a reflexivity concerning the techniques used by the commentator. A wide range of technical terms present the exact method implemented in a given instance. In the scroll commentaries, on the other hand, the exegetical process is usually implicit. It is indeed possible that this process was based on various methods used during the teaching of the text.[19] However, our interest lies in the textual product, and, as noted, we do not find in the scrolls an explicit use of the techniques, contrary to the rabbinic texts.

(3) Exegetical intertextuality is common in the Midrashim; that is, the creative use of a biblical verse from elsewhere in order to explain a given verse. This technique is relatively rare in the scrolls. This does not mean, as Fraade once again emphasizes, that in the background of these commentaries there was no use of intertextuality; but even if there was, it is not stated explicitly.[20]

(4) The Midrashic discourse is dialogical and contains question and answers as well as rhetorical alternatives, which are absent from the scrolls.

(5) A distinct feature of rabbinic literature is the appearance of several interpretations for a single verse. In the scroll commentaries only one opinion is presented, whereas in the Halakhic Midrashim there are explicit disagreements between different sages from different generations within a single editorial framework.[21]

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[18] This is also an important difference between the rabbinic and Mesopotamian exegesis. As Frahm notes (2011, p. 377): "[T]he commentators in the Assyrian and Babylonian tradition always remain anonymous".

[19] According to Fraade, the sectarian authors systematically refrain from presenting the exegetical technique which led to the creation of a Halakha, even in cases where it is clear that such a technique was used. The reason for that, in his opinion, is ideological and stems from the belief that the source of the authority of the new halakhot is grounded in inspiration. Shemesh supports Fraade's approach and notes: "Exposing the exegetical moves inherently acknowledges the possibility to offer other interpretations, and this is exactly what the writers of the scrolls seek to avoid" (Werman and Shemesh 2011, p. 64, my translation). The few cases in which the writers of the scrolls reveal their exegetical logic are found in polemical contexts (ibid.).

[20] Fraade 2006c, pp. 270, 279.

[21] Scholars have debated the significance of multiple interpretations in rabbinic literature (i.e, whether it should be understood as polysemy, indeterminacy, pluralism etc.). See, e.g., Stern 1984; 1985; 1996; Handelman 1985; Mack 1992; Boyarin 2002; 2004, pp. 151-201; Yadin 2003; 2004, pp. 69-76; 2014; Fraade 2007a; Hidary 2010a. For the possibility that already in Pesher Habakkuk (1:16–2:10) three distinct interpretations are offered to Hab. 1:5; see Weigold 2012, who discusses other cases from Second Temple literature which possibly contain multiple interpretations. Philo at times offers additional interpretations, but that is part of

These differences might seem at first to be merely external and technical. Yet, in fact, they represent a paradigmatic change in the concept of the text and the role of the commentator: the human commentators are external to the commentated texts.

How can we explain these differences? One possibility is that they are the result of chronological and evolutionary processes.[22] Between the Dead Sea Scrolls and rabbinic literature there is a temporal gap of at least two hundred years. During this "dark" period, Jewish commentaries might have evolved so that they began to approach the rabbinic model. In other words, it is possible that the rabbinic Midrash is the end product of an exegetical development whose inception may be discerned in the scrolls.

In his studies, Menachem Kister has highlighted the continuum between the Qumran commentaries and those of the rabbis, suggesting that some of the differences are anchored in the gradual transition from the biblical to the post-biblical period.[23] In addition, the period between the composition of the scrolls and the appearance of rabbinic literature also included some momentous historical events that might have also impacted the commentaries. So, for example, Kister argues that some of the differences between Qumran and the rabbis are a result of the failure of the revolts, which created a shift from an impending sense of eschatology to a suspended one, impacting the exegetical goals.[24]

Another significant development that occurred between the writing of the scrolls and the appearance of the Halakhic Midrashim was the full canonization of the biblical literature. The fact that it was no longer possible to add books, or even to change the version of the verses, created the need for works that distinguished between the commentators and the canonized text. Moreover, canonization deeply impacts the exegetical methods, as Moshe Halbertal has noted:[25] "Canonizing a text results in increased flexibility in its interpretation,

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his authoritative presentation (see Fraade 1991, p. 16). In the homily of Samson of Ps.-Philo (*de Sam*. 21) the author offers several interpretations and rejects them.

[22] Fraade 2006c, p. 281.

[23] Kister 1998. See Werman and Shemesh 2011, pp. 63–64 for a comparison between the approaches of Kister and Fraade.

[24] Kister 1998, p. 103 n. 9.

[25] Halbertal 1997, pp. 32–33. See also p. 29: "The degree of canonicity of a text corresponds to the amount of charity it receives in its interpretation. The more canonical a text, the more generous its treatment." For an implementation of these insights to the Homeric corpus see Finkelberg 2004, p. 241 (cf. eadem 2003, p. 92): "In the centuries that followed, the tendency to avoid altering the received text of Homer became the dominant one. What was offered instead were various methods of interpretation. To borrow the terms introduced by Moshe Halbertal in his discussion of the reception of the Hebrew Bible, "textual closure" of the Homeric corpus was accompanied by "hermeneutical openness" towards it – a sure sign of the canonical status that the poems of Homer had acquired."

such as the use of complex hermeneutical devices of accommodation to yield the best possible reading."

These explanations emphasize the continuity between the exegetical communities of Qumran and the rabbis. Another direction is to underscore the ideological differences between the two communities. According to Fraade, it is possible to explain some of the differences by assuming a different social structure with differing concepts of authority.[26] The formation of a rabbinic scholarly community that did not have a single authority, such as the Teacher of Righteousness, enabled the development of a dialogical literature. Menahem Kahana has suggested that the effort to confront opinions that undermined the Pharisaic Halakha motivated the creation of Halakhic Midrashim, at the center of which lies the effort to connect the Halakha to the verses. Kahana further suggested that the accumulation of Halakhic details which had no foundation in the literal sense of the verses, and the growing rift between the biblical law and the Pharisaic Halakha, alongside internal polemics between the different schools, may also provide a reason for the formation of the Halakhic Midrashim.[27]

All these explanations are possible and, moreover, are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Yet they explain in different ways the possibility for change, but do not provide a sufficient answer as to why the Halakhic Midrashim were formed in this very specific mold. [28]

A preliminary overview of the Homeric commentaries, which are the product of the intellectual effort of generations of scholars, reveals that all five of the distinctive features of rabbinic commentary mentioned above also appear in these texts:

(1) The opinions of the scholars are very often cited with their names. So, for example, hundreds of comments state φησὶν Ἀρίσταρχος ("Aristarchus says").

(2) The Homeric commentaries are transparent and reflexive. The commentators usually note their hermeneutical methods, employing a wide array of technical terms.

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[26] See, e.g., Fraade 2006c, p. 283. Cf. Mandel 2001, pp. 167–168: "[T]he tool used by the Qumran sect, and by the early Christians, of reading the Bible as a treasure of hidden historical references may be seen as a major incentive to the rabbis' peculiar reading of Scripture. The authority of the *doresh ha-Torah* at Qumran, understood to come directly from divine inspiration, was transmuted into the authority of the rabbinic *doresh*, who found his inspiration ultimately in the text itself."

[27] Kahana 2006, 11. See also Schremer 2001.

[28] See, e.g., Fraade 2006a; 2006b; 1991, pp. 1–19.

(3) The Homeric scholars frequently use intertextuality as an exegetical tool. They often use citations from Homer and other authors in order to clarify obscure verses. Aristarchus was even credited with the rule "to clarify Homer from Homer".[29]

(4) The Homeric scholarship contains hundreds of questions and answers reflecting a lively dialogue between scholars. It also includes direct references to the reader and the student.[30]

(5) A common phenomenon in the Homeric scholarship is the multiplicity of comments on the same words or verses. The editors of the exegetical compilations collected the opinions of various scholars from different periods, sometimes hundreds of years apart. Occasionally the names of the scholars are not stated explicitly and the various opinions are introduced by such terms as ἔνιοι/τινές φασίν ("some say") and ἄλλοι φησίν ("others say"), identical to the rabbinic editorial terms יש אומרים ("some say") and אחרים אומרים ("others say"), respectively.[31] Alternative opinions taken from separate sources are usually introduced in the scholia by the technical term ἄλλως ("in another way"), equivalent to דבר אחר (*davar aher*, "another way").[32]

This clear similarity between the scholarly product of the Greek scholars and the rabbis justifies and enables a deeper and more comprehensive comparison than previously conducted. It points to the possibility that the essential differences between rabbinic exegesis and the earlier Jewish exegesis may be

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[29] For a discussion of this rule see Chapter 1 Section 2.1.

[30] For a comprehensive discussion on the genre of questions and answers see Chapter 3. On the different between the scrolls and rabbinic literature in this context see Niehoff 2012c, pp. 457–458. Van der Valk 1963–1964, vol. 1, p. 474, points to the direct addresses to the reader or student in the bT scholia by the common use of interjections such as ὅρα and σκόπει and suggests that this may reflect oral instruction.

[31] On the use of the term אחרים אומרים in Tannaitic literature see Kahana 1999, pp. 334–335; Epstein 2010, p. 19 n. 1. In b. Hor. 13b it is suggested that this term refers to R. Meir.

[32] On *davar aher* see Goldberg 1982. Dating the beginning of the use of ἄλλως (and *aliter*) as a technical term for marking a transition to another source is highly important for dating the rise of scholiography. For a comprehensive discussion see Montana 2011. Previous scholars argued that this is a byzantine development influenced by the emergence of the catena, see Zunz 1975; Wilson 1967; 1968 (who even suggested that the term which appears in the catena of Procopius was influenced by Talmudic literature). In Mesopotamian commentaries, consecutive interpretations are marked by the terms *šanîš* (second), *šalšiš* (thirdly), *rebîš* (fourthly). Uri Gabbay (2015b; 2012, pp. 308–309 n. 128) has suggested that the term *šanîš* should be translated as 'other' and that originally it was used as a general term for introducing an alternative interpretation and not necessarily a second one (*šalšiš* and *rebîš* were therefore introduced only later). Furthermore, it is likely that the term designated the use of another source and not just another interpretation suggested by the same authority. In light of this, Gabbay suggests that the terms *šanîš* and דבר אחר are parallels not only in their scholarly role but also lexically (cf. Frahm 2011, p. 378, n. 1812). I will address the relation between the scholastic terms *šanîš*, ἄλλως, *aliter* and דבר אחר in a future study.

explained in part by the rabbis' direct or indirect acquaintance with contemporary Hellenistic scholarship.[33]

2. Survey of Scholarship

2.1 Rabbinic Literature and the Homeric Commentaries

Many studies have dealt with comparisons between various aspects of Hellenistic culture and rabbinic literature, as well as the impact of Greek on rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic.[34] In the context of the present study, it is important to note those studies that have focused on the impact of Hellenistic rhetoric on the form and content of the rabbinic *derashot*, and in particular on the *chreia* (χρεία), diatribe, and the *progymnasmata* literature.[35] Yet surprisingly there are almost no studies offering a comparison between rabbinic and Hellenistic commentaries, despite the centrality of biblical exegesis for the rabbis and the large corpus of Homeric scholarship that has survived. The main studies dedicated to this comparison remain those of David Daube and Saul Lieberman, written over sixty years ago. Since scholars have cited and referred to these studies dozens of times, I shall now review them in detail.

In his groundbreaking 1949 article "Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and the Hellenistic Rhetoric," Daube argued that "in its beginnings, the Rabbinic

[33] See, e.g., Niehoff 2012c, p. 445: "[T]he scholarly form of commentary culture, known in the Land of Israel from rabbinic sources, seems to have developed as a result of active engagement with Hellenistic culture."

[34] For a general overview of Greco-Roman culture and the rabbis see Schäfer 1998; Levine 1998; Lieberman 1962; 1965; Hidary 2022. For studies on the impact of Greek on Hebrew and Aramaic of the rabbinic literature see Lieberman 1963; 1965; 1991; Rosen 1963; Sperber 2006. On Greek and Latin loanwords in rabbinic literature see Krauss 1898 and the review of Zunz 1956; Sperber 1982; 1984 (and review by Katzoff 1989); Sperber 1986; 2012; Hirshman 2010 and the review by Bar Kokhva 2013; Krivoruchko 2012; Heijmans 2013; Shoval-Dudai 2019. For the impact of Greek philosophy on the rabbis see, e.g., Goldin 1973; Fischel 1973a; 1973b; 2000a; Harvey 1992; Satlow 2003; Niehoff 2022. For the literary impact of the Greek novel see, e.g., Levinson 1996; Stern 1998. See also Kovelman 2004; Boyarin 2009 for the possible impact of Menippean satire. For a comparison between etymological methods used by the rabbis and Hellenistic scholars see Alexander 2004; Zingerman 2011. For an approach which minimizes the impact of Hellenistic culture and language on the rabbis see Alon 1970; Feldman 1983; Wasserstein 1994.

[35] For the impact of Greek rhetorical models and *progymnasmata* on rabbinic literature see Marmorstein 1929; Bickerman 1952; Fischel 1973a; Jaffee 1988; Ulman 1997 (on the diatribe); Visotzky 2006, pp. 120–126; Furstenberg 2012 (on the *agon*); Brodsky 2014; Hidary 2010b; 2018a; 2018b. On the impact of the *chreia* genre see Edelman 1961; Fischel 1968; 1969; 1973a; 1975; Avery-Peck 1993; Hezser 1996; Tropper 2004, pp. 174–184.

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