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ON THE THREE 'WHO IS SHE . . .' QUESTIONS IN THE SONG OF SONGS

Yair Zakovitch

The Song of Songs contains three poetic fragment-riddles that begin with the words 'Who is she that', followed by a present-tense verb. Two of these questions are left unanswered (3:6; 8:5a) and the answer to the third (6:10) precedes the riddle-question (in vv 4-9). Other appearances of the 'Who is that' question outside the Song of Songs are also examined briefly and help to identify the nature of the riddle genre and their Sitz im Leben: wedding parties during which guests were encouraged to praise the beauty of the bride and groom.

RABBI MEIR, THE BABYLONIAN TALMUD, AND MENIPPEAN SATIRE

Daniel Boyarin

In this article, the suggestion is offered that at least one very revealing context for reading some of the aggadah (especially of the Bavli) is the literary/intellectual context within which Menippean Satire was created and produced. This type of literature is characterized by its mixture of genres, registers, and tonalities (as, famously, is the Bavli itself) and particularly its capacity to both represent its heroes as heroes and 'bring them down to earth' at the same time, thus advancing a theoretical program and critiquing its limits simultaneously. Through readings of some passages from the Babylonian Talmud about Rabbi Meir, it is shown that analyzing them from this viewpoint reveals aspects of them otherwise hidden from view.

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FROM NARRATIVE PRACTICE TO CULTURAL POETICS:
LITERARY ANTHROPOLOGY AND RABBINIC SENSE OF SELF

Joshua Levinson

This article attempts to describe aspects of the ‘literary anthropology’ of the Rabbis; the contours of the rabbinic subject and sense of self that is constructed by both the legal and literary discourses of the rabbinic corpus. One of the bridges that join anthropology and literature is the category of the subject, the specific form or position that the self can take in a given culture. As the literary text fashions characters, so the ideological apparatus of a society fashions subjects, and if rabbinic literature does construct a new sense of self, then we can and must use both halachic and midrashic discourses to understand it. In the first part of this paper I discuss some of the contours of this legal subject, and then move on to investigate the representation of the subject as character in rabbinic literary discourses.

NOAH, HIS FAMILY, AND OTHER ANIMALS: MIDRASH,
FOLKLORE AND THE INTERPRETATION OF A BIBLICAL STORY
(OR: HOMAGE TO STRUCTURALISM)

Dina Stein

The Story of the flood (Genesis 6:5 – 9) tells of a failed attempt to recreate a well-balanced, structured, universe, and it should be read both in relation to the first creation story (Genesis 1-2) and in relation to its immediate context – the coupling of the sons of God with human women, preceding the flood story, and Noha's drunkenness/nakedness after exiting the ark.

Both Midrash and folk narratives have re-told the biblical tale, entertaining a host of what seem random details and expansion, having no ‘legitimate’ bearing in the scriptural account. This article, by employing structuralist methods, argues that in fact both Midrash and folklore are keen readers of the biblical narrative in as much as they both bring to the surface its deep meaning/structure. Both Midrash and folk narratives, from a poetical-phenomenological perspective, have the capacity to expose underlying patterns. Thus, if at the heart of the biblical myth (qua myth) stands the

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question of categorization of and distinction between human/non-human, culture/nature then the midrashic and folk traditions examined here grapple with similar issues of taxonomy, explicitly brought to the fore via their treatment of animals.

‘THE EARTHQUAKE IN THE VALLEY OF ARBEL’: A GALILEAN APOCALYPTIC TRADITION AND ITS HISTORICAL-LITURGICAL CONTEXT

Oded Irshai

Late Antique Galilee served in Jewish tradition as the arena for apocalyptic occurrences ushering in the ultimate ‘End of Days’ scenario which was to take place in Jerusalem. This short note discusses one such Galilean tradition tracing its possible sources and exposing its impact on the communal collective memory, utilizing in the process parallel settings within the surrounding Byzantine society.

THE LITERARY-PARABLE IN SEDER ELIYAHU RABA, IN LIGHT OF THE HOMILETIC-PARABLE IN RABBINIC LITERATURE

Anat Shapira

Seder Eliyahu Raba (SER) is a unique midrashic text. Its literary designation is tested here while focusing on the literary genre of the Mashal (parable). The analysis demonstrates a tendency to expand the Mashal by literary devices while reducing the Nimshal to the minimum; bible verses are usually quoted for artistic enrichment; the parables are assimilated in their literary context, and their function in it is what sets their meaning; and, finally, most of them tend to be praising-parables. The conclusion is that the changes in the genre of the Mashal in SER are essentially related to the overall character of this composition. We find in it a new concept of the role of literature, and not just a new way to use parables. If Rabbinic parable is often used as a subversive genre – an allegorical story that uses the gaps between the Mashal and the Nimshal to raise questions about the connection between God and Man – the parables in SER are used more as a piece-of-art, whose function is to attract the eyes

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and the heart of the reader. Therefore I suggest the term ‘narrative-literary parable’ for describing the uniqueness of SER’s parables, compared to the ‘Homiletic parable’ of the rabbinic period.

‘UNTO THE VOICE OF THE GIRL’S SONGS’: ON SINGING WOMEN IN MEDIEVAL HEBREW POETRY (THE ANDALUSIAN SCHOOL AND ITS OFFSHOOTS)

Yehoshua Granat

Though we know of almost no Hebrew poetry written by female authors in the Middle Ages, conspicuous and colorful representations of singing women are not a rarity in medieval Hebrew poetry of the Andalusian school, as surveyed, demonstrated and discussed in this article. Some of these representations, to which the first part of the article is dedicated, appear in secular, courtly Hebrew poems, both monorhymed and strophic (*muwaššahat*), directly influenced by depictions of singing slave-girls (*qaayn*) in courtly Arabic poetry. Others, to which the second part of the article is dedicated, occur in nuptial Hebrew poems (mainly by Yehuda Halevi), often liturgical or para-liturgical, in which singing performed by the bride and by her female companions is vividly described and often ‘cited’ as well. These texts seem to reflect a practice of popular female singing in the vernacular that was thriving in medieval Jewish communities of the Iberian peninsula, a practice comparable to those known from various later communities of the Sephardic Diaspora, which are attested in post medieval Hebrew poetry influenced by the Andalusian school (Morocco, Yemen). The article concludes with a brief discussion of the concepts of ‘female voice’ vis-à-vis ‘female authorship’ in light of the texts presented.

INTERTEXTUAL APPROPRIATION AS CODE:
BETWEEN PALESTINE AND SPAIN

Shulamit Elizur

Both the ancient Palestinian *payyetanim* as well as the Hebrew poets of Spain widely appropriated biblical verses into their poetry, but the ways in which they employed such appropriations are entirely different. In the Hebrew poetry of Spain, the majority of appropriations are neutral, i.e., verse-fragments whose effect is predicated on the pleasure and surprise entailed by the encounter with well-known biblical language in a new context, surprising and even foreign in its secularism, the original, biblical context being irrelevant.

Alongside neutral appropriations, there also exist in poems from Spain more meaningful cases, termed ‘charged appropriation’. In these, the biblical context from which the material is appropriated is significant. A ‘contributing charged appropriation’ is one in which knowledge of the original context adds to the poem a dimension that is not inherent in the appropriated words themselves. Such an addition is usually limited and localized, and must moreover be grounded in the inner dynamic of the poem. The opposite effect is achieved in cases of ‘re-signified appropriation’, or ‘allosemic appropriation’. In these cases there is a tension between the biblical context and the poetic usage, and the words of the verse-fragment acquire in the poem a meaning that is new, different, and even opposed to their original meaning. Appropriations belonging to this type frequently create a humoristic effect.

It must be stressed that the very definition of appropriation requires the incorporation of linguistic material that is significant: a string of three or more words, or at least a group of two words that obviously appear together in one specific biblical verse. A single word can never be reckoned as an appropriation.

As opposed to the poets of Spain, the ancient Palestinian *payyetanim* employed biblical material in an entirely different manner. Verse-fragments appearing in a liturgical poem are surprising to a much lesser degree than ones that appear in a secular poem, and their effect is therefore less forceful. The main innovation of the *payyetanim* lies in the charged use of appropriations, which serve as a basis for

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allusion not only to the bible but also to the midrash: they appropriate key verses from aggadic midrashim so as to allude to their known midrashic interpretations. In this way the *payyotanim* may incorporate even a single biblical word by way of bringing to mind a verse and its midrashic interpretation. Spanish liturgical poetry in part follows this traditional *payyotanic* path. On the other hand, it also contains appropriations that are similar to those found in secular poetry, so that it is possible to find an incorporated verse alluding to a midrash alongside a verse appearing as a re-signified and surprising appropriation.

JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN DISPUTE POEMS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE SOUL

Ophir Münz-Manor

The article is devoted to an examination of eight Jewish and Christian liturgical poems that narrate a dispute between the body and the soul; each contender claims that its fellow is responsible for the human sins and at the end the judge, God, declares that both will be punished jointly. The poems under discussion are written in Syriac, Jewish Palestinian Aramaic and Hebrew and represent an interesting case study of intercultural dynamics between the Jewish and Christian cultures in Late Antiquity and the early middle Ages. The article opens with a survey of the dispute poem genre in general and the disputes between body and souls in particular. Then various themes concerning the dispute are explored in detail such as the parable of the lame and the blind known from rabbinic and patristic sources and the thematic and philosophical heterogeneity of the corpus under discussion. In the appendix, three Hebrew disputes between body and soul are printed for the first time based on manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah. The texts appear together with commentary and a critical apparatus.

THE SORCERER BALAAM ACCORDING TO
MIDRASH ME'AM LO'EZ

Tamar Alexander

This article focuses on Parashat (chapter) Balak and the image of Balaam as fashioned by R. Isaac Magriso, the author of *Midrash Me'am Lo'ez* for Numbers (Constantinople 1764).

Following the Sages, Magriso chose to emphasize the negative image of Balaam. He presents him as a sorcerer, a lascivious possessor of an evil eye subjugated to the forces of impurity, and conducting marital relations with his she-ass.

Following the Zohar, Magriso explains that Balaam's prophetic ability is not true prophecy. He adds to the Zohar and specifies how Balaam succeeded in reaching Uza and Azael the sinning angels beyond the mountains of darkness who became sorcery teachers. In order to become a sorcerer a man should deny God and plunge into impurity. Magriso describes precisely the rite that must be followed to achieve that.

It may be that he feels he was carried away in noting so many details on how to become a sorcerer, and he feels the need to apologize and explain the harm that sorcery causes not only to the sorcerers themselves, such as Balaam, but also to those who follow them. To illustrate this principle, Magriso cites a story telling about a father who in order to save his sick son asks for help of the leprous sorcerers who lived in a cave in the desert and used snakes for their rituals. But when the man exited the cave a fire spewed and killed the son.

In the last part of the *parshah*, Balaam constructed a strategic plan on how to draw the Jewish men to whoring and worshipping Baal Peor and then their God would punish them. This plan did indeed work. This worship was a type of ritual that was expressed by excreting before Baal. Here again Magriso does not skimp on details, and also brings few stories to illustrate this ritual. The Hebrews take revenge and kill Balaam even though he was floating in the air. That is how the Magriso's narrative ends with a sense of catharsis that Balaam did indeed receive his punishment.

The Analysis of Magriso's attitude through his descriptions and the stories he brings *describe* Balaam in bold colors that contain a compound of acts of sorcery,

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crude sex, bestiality, and scatology. Balaam is a daring, sophisticated sorcerer, the possessor of an evil eye who knows how to cause damage, a licentious person who engages in bestiality with his own animal and succeeds in causing Israel to pursue licentiousness.

Of Balaam's other facet, the seer and prophet, nothing is mentioned in Magriso's writings. He creates an extreme web that poses a much less complex figure than the biblical one but who is undoubtedly a sensational figure that engages the reader's emotions.

THE PLEBEIAN AND THE CULTIVATED PROVERB IN MIGUEL DE CERVANTES' DON QUIXOTE

Luis Landa

In this essay, the author takes issue with an assumption widespread among certain intellectual elites, and even among scholars of proverbs, who see in the proverb a vessel of stereotypes and prejudices. Here it is rather assumed – following Galit Hasan Rokem's approach – that a proverb can have more than one meaning, and that only an attentive examination of its precise function within a given context, can reveal the different possibilities it contains.

In his book *Diálogo de la Lengua*, Juan de Valdéz, one of the most important intellectual figures in 16th-century Spain, drew a distinction between two major kinds of proverbs: oral proverbs, originating in vernacular Spanish, on the one hand, and cultivated proverbs, which are drawn from the literary tradition, on the other hand. Using the same distinction between literary and plebeian proverbs – preferred over the term 'popular' precisely because of the usually negative connotations of the word 'plebeian', which the author does not share – a series of proverbs from *Don Quixote* are contextually examined. Most of the cultivated proverbs are spoken by Don Quixote, while the plebeian proverbs come from Sancho Panza, as well as his wife Teresa. The examination reveals the dual nature of the proverbs: on the one hand they are independent, standing on their own as closed units of meaning, which appear as clichés; on the other hand, however, they change their form and assume a new significance according to the context in which they are situated. In the dialectic

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interplay between these two aspects, it turns out that Sancho's life trajectory is actually opposed to many of the proverbs he utters: his proverbs offer conciliatory and servile advice, which one would today treat as conservative or reactionary. 'In the darkness, all cats are grey', says Sancho. And yet, the proverbs in *Don Quixote* are not in the least grey or uniform. They give expression to a wide scope of positions and propositions, among them quite a few which encompass a meaning in defiance of the social hegemony. The proverb is usually supposed to function as a pacifying device, drawing its force from social beliefs and conventions, a device whose aim is to convince the interlocutor, console, rebuke or silence him; but in *Don Quixote* the proverb often functions not as a final ruling, beyond repeal, but as a subtle, satirical and rebellious statement. It is for a good reason that Don Quixote tells Sancho: 'I promise you that your proverbs will one day bring you to the gallows'.

'IRME KERO MADRE' (MOTHER, I WISH TO GO): THE CONCEPT OF JERUSALEM IN A JUDEO-SPANISH FOLK SONG AS A MOVEMENT BETWEEN MYTH AND PRAXIS

Michal Held

The article consists of a close reading of a traditional Judeo-Spanish (Ladino) folk song centering on the theme of the yearning for Jerusalem and for Eretz Israel. We have no certain evidence regarding the origin and identification of a writer (if there has ever been one) of the folk song opening with the words 'Irme kero made a Yerushalayim' (Mother, I wish to go to Jerusalem.) Various versions of the song had been documented in the Judeo-Spanish tradition from the late 18th century onwards, and the context for its performance is reported to be the farewell blessing addressed to the members of the community who were leaving for Eretz Israel, as well as Passover and other meaningful events in the individual and the collective life.

Multidisciplinary tools are employed to approach the song, combining folkloristic and literary principles in order to decipher the multi-faceted folk creation in the widest way possible. The discussion shows that the folk song corresponds to the Judeo-Spanish ethnic conception of Jerusalem, while emphasizing the dynamics of an ongoing movement between the perception of the holy city's physical and sublime

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landscape and the hermeneutic insight constructed in reaction to it.

The analysis relates to the different versions of the song collected from various communities and representing the unique concept of Jerusalem created by the Sephardic group, as well as the flexibility within this concept, reflecting a coexistence of different standpoints in the scope of the one ethnic tradition that unites them. A key questions dealt with is that of the concept of place, as it is perceived in the song, which provides an understanding of the perception of Jerusalem in the Sephardic culture and within a wider Jewish context. Finally, the article relates to some reflexive reactions to the traditional folk song that is incorporated into the works of contemporary artists whose music and poetry refer back to it as an inspiration.

Relevant research from the fields of Folklore, Literature and Judeo-Spanish Studies enriches the discussion while being integrated into it.

INDESCRIBABLE FEMALE BEAUTY: SEPHARDIC WASFS, THE SONG OF SONGS, AND BAFFLED READERS

Edwin Seroussi

Known among researchers as *Las prendas de la novia* ('The Gifts of the Bride'), the Judeo-Spanish wedding song whose opening line is 'Dize la nuestra novia', 'Anzi/Anzina dice la nuestra novia', or, in one particular path of transmission, 'El novio le dice a la novia', consists of a dialogue between the bride and a second voice (an individual or a community choir) whose identity remains open. The bride inquires how to 'say' each part of her body and the second voice answers with a metaphor for each part, starting from the head and down to the feet in a cumulative progression. This Sephardic song has been extensively documented in the twentieth century throughout the Ottoman Sephardic diaspora as well as in the Spanish-speaking enclaves of North Morocco. It has also been the subject of studies by authors from different disciplines. This article aims to destabilize previous readings of it, most especially its undisputed status as a 'women' or 'wedding' song. Moreover, the identity of the speaking subjects in this song and their relationship are open to alternative interpretations. The metaphors for each part of the body are addressed in light of the widespread genre of folksongs describing feminine (and

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rarely masculine) beauty (and rarely ugliness) in a serial sequence. Songs in this genre are found throughout the Middle East as well as in the Western Latin Christendom. An imposing precedent to these songs, found in cultures spreading throughout the Mediterranean basin, is the metaphorical body descriptions in the Song of Songs. The Biblical 'clout' of these verses positions them as a latent background for any later manifestation of this poetic topic including the present Sephardic song.

THE IMAGE OF THE JEW IN YIDDISH PROVERBS

Dan Ben-Amos

In 1933 the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research published a small booklet by the then leading Yiddish folklorist Y. L. Cahan, titled 'Der Yid vege zikh un vege Andere' (the Jew about himself and about others) consisting of 243 proverbs assembled from diverse sources. Cahan divided the proverbs into four chapters: 1. Yiddish and Jewishness, 2. Jewish Troubles and Jewish Joys, 3. Good and Bad traits, and 4. Gentiles and Jews. The Jewish proverbs, representing an internal perspective, express an ironic attitude toward religion which generally is considered an essential Jewish distinctive feature. According to the proverbs the distinctive features of Jewish identity are: language, wisdom, compassion, troubles and lack of luck. The gentile's image is the inverse.

MIDRASH ELIYAHU, MENDELSSOHN'S VERSION

Ruth HaCohen-Pinczower

This article seeks to read Felix Mendelssohn's oratorical work *Elijah* as an 'experiential Midrash'. Linking biblical verses of different biblical books, projecting them against each other in a midrashic way, the work, I argue, attempts to create a total experience for its listeners, constituting them as an abstract community of faith. More specifically, the work utilizes various tools, textual, performative and musical, which shape protagonists and events in a clear interpretive orientation that both

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converses with the historical moment of its birth and shapes its own future hermeneutic frames. The interpretation of the *Elijah* Midrash proposed in this article identifies four foci of events in the prophet's life: solitude, revelation, admonishment and redemption. These are further examined in terms of the vocal rendition of the oratorical speech that drives the unfolding of the narrative of the prophet and its audiences; the contribution of the genre of oratorio in general, and the way it is conceived by Mendelssohn in particular, for shaping a shared experiential space for the internal and the external community. My analysis further refers to the Jewish-Christian theological debate about the compassionate God, which molds the relations between the prophet, its herd and opponents. Discussing the medium of revelation, a surprising affinity emerges between an ancient Midrash and this modern one. Also, the praying gesture comes across as a major axis in establishing a modern community of faith. The special place the work occupies in the repertory of the Jewish communities in Third Reich Germany is assessed against these insights.

FREUD AND THE TOPOS OF THE WANDERING JEW

Shuli Barzilai

The question that gave rise to this essay concerns Sigmund Freud's inability to bring himself to leave Vienna during the years before and, then, the days after the Nazi annexation and invasion of Austria in March 1938. Why did Freud delay the decision to escape until it was almost too late? To try and understand such near-fatal intransience in the face of imminent danger, my essay explores two models of mobility: the first is the convoluted folk tale, legend, or chronicle of the Wandering Jew; the second is what I have called 'Freud's train connections', that is, his theoretical thinking about and personal experience of trains and railroad journeys. However, since Freud's points of contact with the Wandering Jew and his train connections intersect at several junctures, this essay does not (and indeed cannot) keep them strictly or neatly apart.

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THE RETURN OF THE WANDERING JEW(S) IN
SAMUEL HIRSZENBERG'S ART

Richard I. Cohen and Mirjam Rajner

Samuel Hirszenberg's haunting painting *The Wandering Jew* (1899) remains one of the classic works of fin-de-siècle artists of Jewish origin. The essay revisits the painting by broadening the perspective in which it can be seen and by juxtaposing it with a work the artist created in 1908, *At the Wailing Wall*, when he was then in Jerusalem. During these nine years the artist underwent many tribulations, relocated from Łódź to Krakow, and eventually to Palestine. Hirszenberg was deeply troubled by the deteriorating situation of the Jews in Eastern Europe and sensitive to the changing contours of Jewish life. His art during these years gave expression to these vicissitudes.

