ISAAK HEINEMANN'S CLASSIC STUDY OF AGGADAH AND MIDRASH

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Prof. Isaak Heinemann (b. Frankfort a. Main, 1876 - d. Jerusalem, 1957) is primarily known for his many articles and books on Hellenistic Judaism and particularly the works of Philo of Alexandria (l). Thoroughly versed in the Greek and Latin Classics, Bible, Rabbinics and Medieval Jewish literature and an avid student of philosophy, social anthropology, psychology and the history of religions, it is not surprising that this prodigious scholar produced what is regarded by many as the, classical theoretical discussion of Aggadah and Midrash, the chief repository of Jewish thought of the Graeco-Roman period.

The following is an attempt to put before the English reader a brief summary of this important work, Darkhei HaAggadah (The Methods of the Aggadah). I have tried to touch on what seem to me the most important concepts and terms illustrating each with one example from among the many given by the author. There is, of course, an inevitable degree of distortion in the telescoping of such a highly theoretical and complicated work which itself has been the subject of some criticism and discussion (2). The following precis is offered merely as a preliminary survey of the methods of the Aggadah and the Midrash until such time as Heinemann's work in its entirety is available in translation (3).

Since the two terms, Aggadah and Midrash, are not readily translatable and are central to the following discussion it would be useful to first describe and distinguish the way in which the author uses them. Since the middle ages, it has been customary to define Aggadah (the Aramaic form of the Hebrew word, haggadah) as everything in Rabbinic literature which is not Halakhah (i.e. Jewish legal thought) (4). The term Midrash, as used by Heinemann indicates specifically the interpretation of the Bible generally not according to its simple or straightforward meaning (5). Thus the sources distinguish between two kinds of Midrash: Midrash Halakhah which deals with legal matters and Midrash Aggadah which deals with non-legal matters. Darkhei HaAggadah, as its title suggests, deals primarily with this latter type of Midrash (6). It should also be noted that in Hebrew usage, the term Midrash, besides referring to a particular kind of exegetical activity in general, can also indicate any specific example or result of this activity, such as a Midrash on a particular verse, or even entire books of collections which contain midrashim, such as Midrash Rabbah, a collection of midrashic works on the Five Books of Moses and the Five Scrolls (Esther, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations and Ecclesiastes).

The Question and its Solution

The vast spectrum of the Aggadah may be divided into three sectors. At one extreme is located strict philological interpretation which explains the biblical text in a straightforward way. Its methods--grammatical and syntactical analysis--are similar to conventional hermeneutic methods. At the other end of the spectrum is "autonomous" Aggadah--such as stories of post-biblical people and events--which has little or no connection to the biblical text and is similar in method to the folklore of other nations. Midrash Aggadah--the primary focus of this study--occupies a middle ground between these two poles. For it addresses the biblical text which it ostensibly interprets by using philological techniques, but at the same time it construes scripture in an independent way by moving beyond its simple or straightforward meaning (*peshat*). The central question is how to explain this diversion from the plain facts of the biblical text by the Sages of the Rabbinic period who so totally accepted scripture as the word of God.

The Rabbis did not hesitate to interpret the Bible freely because in their view, though "the Torah is from Heaven" (7); "it is not in Heaven" (Deut. 30:12). Rather, the Torah was given in order to be interpreted by man. From this view derives the Rabbinic principle that "one does not rely on a heavenly voice" even in

matters of Halakhah, but decisions are reached by majority vote of the Sages (Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Metzia* 59b). This is similar to the generally accepted legal principle that a law or document, once it has left the hand of its author, is open to interpretation by those who administer it; but it is not the author's subsequent comments which determine its meaning. The Rabbis illustrate their belief that the Torah not only permits, but indeed demands, its own creative interpretation with a parable: a king gave wheat and flax to his servants, not simply to be preserved, but so that they should make these raw materials into bread and cloth (Seder Eliyahu Zuta, Ch. 82). According to the Rabbis, any interpretation proposed with good intention is intrinsically valuable; for "everything which any advanced disciple may teach in the presence of his master at any time in the future, was already told to Moses on Mount Sinai" (Palestinian Talmud, *Pe'ah* 17a) -- all such teachings are in accordance with the divine will. The Rabbis firmly believe that every verse has a multiplicity of meaning (8). Indeed, the same scholar may sometimes offer different interpretations of the same verse (9). It must be remembered that the Rabbis' openness to the creativity and multiplicity of midrashic interpretation applies specifically to biblical texts. Such methods of interpretation were only rarely applied to other texts, even those which were also considered sacred, such as Mishnah (9a).

The midrashic texts which have come down to us are largely the fragmentary remains of sermons preached in synagogues during the Talmudic period. This partly explains the rhetorical and often exaggerated nature of the material which was originally intended to hold the attention of a live audience. The fragmentary nature of the texts may also explain the general absence of simple, straightforward interpretations of scripture and the frequent lack of continuity in midrashic literature. What was preserved often seems mere notes of innovative and interesting interpretations.

Rabbinic thinking shares many of the, characteristics of organic thinking (10) which is characteristic of "natural folk" (11). In primitive societies culture develops like a living organism. Individuals, including the artists and social leaders, see themselves as an extension of the collective group. Thought is not detached from feeling; intuition and trial and error take the place of philosophical speculation and scientific theorization. Intellectual connections between things are often based on externals, such as similarities between names and numbers (12). There is still no fundamental difference between art and the search for truth. The learned employ artistic imagination and do not attempt to distinguish external "reality" from the results of their own spontaneous creativity. Paradox is appreciated; the rationalist "law of contradiction" is not yet fully in force. Similarly, in Rabbinic culture, Aggadah developed organically by oral rather than written transmission. Those who developed and transmitted the Aggadah and the Midrash were rooted in the people from whom they came and to whom they addressed their ideas. Midrash frequently employs analogies based on external similarities between biblical texts. Contradictions are tolerated; even varying Halakhic opinions may be regarded as equally valid (13).

Neither history or philology were objective disciplines for the Rabbis. They were less interested in historical truth than in the moral lessons which could be drawn from the past. They assumed that the study of a literary document might include the associative responses of various readers. Such a subjective approach is perhaps less valid when the object of study has only a temporal, historically determined value. However, for the Rabbis the Bible is a trans-temporal verity. It tells not only of its own historical time; but relates directly to the present. For this reason, subjective interpretation is to be encouraged. Aggadah is, therefore, essentially creative rather than analytical in its approach to biblical historiography and philology.

CREATIVE HISTORIOGRAPHY

Concretization

Unlike scientific thinking, organic thinking does not regard the concrete as subservient to the abstract. Rabbinic thinking, as a particular type of organic thinking, is therefore not methodological, systematic or

philosophical. Like many Eastern cultures, Judaism, particularly in its seminal Talmudic period, expressed itself more through images and stories than through theory; it pays more attention to specific detail than to generalities. Its essential orientation is away from abstraction and toward concretization. The Rabbis are able to formulate the classical question of theodicy in an abstract way; but it is given a concrete setting by being put in the mouth of Moses who addresses it directly to God: "Master of the universe, why do some righteous people prosper and some suffer, while some wicked people prosper and some suffer?" (Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 7a). A painful historical issue -- why the Jewish people was repeatedly conquered by foreign nations -- is aired indirectly, by creating an imaginary meeting between a Jewish and Gentile leader. Hadrian boasted and said: I conquered Jerusalem by my own might. Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai said to him: Don't boast; were it not the will of Heaven you would not have succeeded. Then, he took Hadrian into a cave and showed him Ammorites buried there and one of them was eighteen cubits [about eighteen feet] tall. He said to Hadrian: When we had merit all these fell by our hand; but now because of our sins you have dominated us (Tanhuma, ed. Buber, 7).

The Avoidance of Anonymity and the Search for Specificity

As nature abhors a vacuum, Aggadah abhors anonymity and the lack of specificity. Where details seem missing from the biblical text, the Aggadah fills them in. Genesis 21:21 mentions that Hagar, Ishmael's mother, took a wife for him, but does not mention her name. A late Aggadic source determines that Ishmael had two wives named Fatima and Aisha (14). In adding such specifics the Rabbis do not hesitate to violate the obvious intention of the biblical text and the canons of historical probability in order to stress some message or moral. The statement that Isaac was thirty-seven years old when he was taken by Abraham to be sacrificed on Mt. Moriah is hardly obvious from the biblical story (Genesis Ch. 22); the determination of this detail (see Rashi to Gen. 25:20) serves to attribute merit to Isaac who was old enough to resist this supreme trial and to relate this terrifying incident chronologically to the death of Sarah his mother (Genesis Ch. 23). The Apocrypha may even add entire episodes to the biblical narrative as in the additions to Daniel and Esther found in the Septuagint. For the most part, however, Rabbinic Aggadah, and particularly that of a midrashic nature, put limits on the exercise of free imagination by attempting to anchor such elaborations in the wording of scripture.

Concentration of the Biblical Story

The Aggadah not only preserves the unities of time, place and action; but often creates them where they are not explicit in the biblical narrative. According to the Rabbis, all that happened to Adam from the moment of his conception in the mind of the Creator to his expulsion from the Garden of Eden occurred in one twelve hour period (Midrash on Psalms 92:3). Similarly, the masters of the Aggadah have no hesitation about bringing together Baalam, Job and Jethro to counsel Pharaoh in Egypt (Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 11a). The Aggadah concentrates the action of the biblical narrative by identifying separate details, The donkey that Abraham himself saddled when setting out to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22:3) is the same donkey which Moses rode when he returned to Egypt to redeem Israel (Exod. 4:20) and this same donkey will bring the Messiah to their descendents (Zech. 9:9) (Pirqe deRabbi Eliezer, Ch. 31). The creation of this kind of trans-historical chain of detail is intended to make a serious point: just as the merit of Abraham brought the first redeemer, Moses; so too will it suffice to bring the final redeemer. Biblical characters are also frequently identified with one and other. The name Serah bat Asher occurs in the list of those who went down to Egypt with Jacob (Gen. 46:17) and again, generations later, in the census of Israel after the Exodus from Egypt (Num.26:46). But these two women are considered by the Rabbis to be the same person thus providing an important link between those generations. The legend of Serah also provides a "living" link between the Bible and all succeeding generations, since this biblical figure in aggadic dress is-regarded as one of those who "never tasted the taste of death" (15). In a similar but negative way, Esau, the brutish brother of Jacob, is identified with Rome who ruled over Israel during the Talmudic period.

Bringing the Distant Near -- the Creative Use of Anachronism

The Rabbis frequently describe the life-style of biblical figures as if they were living in rabbinic times. The men of the Generation of the Flood are accused of preempting the husband's right to deflower his bride on the wedding night after the custom of the Alexandrians (16). The Rabbis, who attached primary importance to the study and performance of the commandments, interpret the statement that Rebekah "went to inquire (lidrosh) of the Lord" (Gen. 25:22), that she went to the study-house (*bet-hamidrash*) of Eber. It is significant that this understanding of the verse does provoke the question: "Were there synagogues and study-houses in those days?!" (Genesis Rabbah 63:6). Clearly the Rabbis were self-consciously aware that such anachronistic interpretations were not objective, historical truth, but projections of their culture on the biblical past. It is a commonplace in Rabbinic literature that the patriarchs kept those commandments which were given only at Sinai and even Rabbinic extensions of biblical law. Abraham is said to have kept the Law from Alef to Tav (from A to Z) (17). Such dressing up of Abraham in contemporary garb is remarkably similar in method--though vastly different in religious orientation--to the, statement of Martin Luther: "Abraham was truly a monk, for he rejected the pleasures of this world and with all his heart awaited the coming of Christ" (18).

There is however another kind of anachronism which seems almost unique to Rabbinic literature. Biblical characters frequently quote parts of the Bible which clearly belong to later strata of scripture. And not only Israelites like Jacob and Moses are granted this ability, but gentiles as well, like Nebuchadnezer, Ahashuerus and Haman seem well versed in a scripture. Indeed, the Aggadah's fondness for personification allows even animals, like the serpent (Tanhuma, ed. Buber, Huqqat 8) and intangibles, like the Sabbath (Pirqe deRabbi Eliezer, Ch. 19) to quote the Bible. Biblical characters also frequently demonstrate a knowledge of biblical events that have not yet come to pass. The infant Moses, for example, refuses to have an Egyptian wetnurse, saying: "Shall the mouth that is destined to speak with the divine presence nurse from that which is impure?!" (Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 12b). Such foreknowledge serves to add dramatic tension to the aggadic elaboration of the biblical narrative. Many such characteristics of the Aggadah, which seem strange at first sight, may simply be regarded as the "dramatic conventions" accepted by the Rabbis and their audience. But the Rabbinic tendency to blur the chronological borderlines between biblical incidents (19) and between the biblical past and the present has a deeper implication. For the Rabbis and their followers biblical events were a present and immediate reality which were as near, emotionally and psychologically, as their own day to day existence (20).

Simplification and Subtlety

The Aggadah, like folklore in general, tends to make simplistic distinctions, particularly by polarizing good and evil. Even more than in the Bible, the "righteous" and the "wicked" are frequently referred to as two distinct groups. The "nations of the world" are largely identified with the later, being regarded as a homogeneous group who generally oppose Israel. Non-Israelites, who show sympathy for Israelites, like Rahab the harlot who hid Joshua's spies, are said to have converted (Sifre Numbers, section 78). Positive biblical figures, like Aaron, may be idealized and their misdeeds forgivingly explained away; while the deeds of more negative biblical figures, such as Laban or Esau, are generally portrayed in the worst possible light.

But the opposite approach is also found in the Aggadah as it is in the Bible. The sins of the biblical heroes are often not suppressed but elaborated on and their deeds which have no obvious moral quality in the Bible are judged rigorously. Jacob, for example, is criticized for not having ascended the ladder leading to heaven he saw in his dream; the domination of his descendants by foreign powers is a result of this lack of faith (Pesiqta deRav Kahanah 23:2). Nor did the Rabbis hesitate to credit those they regarded as villains with specific good deeds or character traits; for example, Esau (i.e. Rome) is commended for his filial

piety (Deuteronomy Rabbah 1:15). A particular issue may be portrayed simplistically in one context but with impressive subtletey, in all its moral complexity, in another context. The nature of the presentation is determined not by intellectual and rational criteria alone; the artistic and aesthetic considerations at work in each specific context are often a factor as well.

The Unification of the Bible

Unlike most modern scholars, the Rabbis did not regard the Bible as a collection of separate books. Their determination to demonstrate the unity of the Bible is reflected most explicitly in their "stringing together" (*horzim*) of verses chosen specifically from the three great divisions of scripture: Torah, Prophets and Writings (Song of Songs Rabbah 1:10.2). The Aggadah creates inner-biblical connections by assigning (*poter*) anonymous verses to well known biblical figures or relating them to specific biblical events. Similarly, the Rabbis are fond of drawing analogies by using the technical term *ke-neged* ("corresponding to"). This often serves to relate seemingly superficial details to more profound issues. Eliezer gave Rebekah two gold bracelets weighing ten shekels (Gen. 24:22) corresponding to the two tablets of the covenant and the ten commandments inscribed upon them (Genesis Rabbah 60:6); by receiving these gifts, Rebekah joined the people who later received the Torah. The Rabbis' approach to contradictions within the biblical text is, for the most part, not defensive or apologetic. Differences between biblical texts could also be used constructively to derive some lesson. One midrashic text formulates this as a general principle which it then goes on to illustrate: "All words of Torah need each other, for what one passage locks up, another opens. Here it is said: 'Then Israel sent messengers to Sihon' (Nurn. 21:21); but in another place it attributes the sending of the messengers to Moses, 'So I sent messengers to Sihon' (Deut. 2:16). This teaches that the leader of a generation is equivalent to his entire generation." (Tanhuma, ed. Buber, Huqqat 52) (21).

Biblical Details as Historical Archetypes

While insisting on the fundamental unity of the Bible, the Rabbis also stress that each and every one of its narrative details is pregnant with historical significance. For example, the Rabbis may regard the first occurrence of something in the Bible is its first occurrence in history: "From the day that heaven and earth were created, there was no famine until the days of Abraham and not in any land but the land of Canaan (22). Biblical characters and their deeds may serve as precedents for all subsequent examples: Noah began viniculture and drunkenness; Abraham began old age and tribulations (23). Biblical events are the standard, indeed almost the ideal or archetype, by which all similar historical events are comprehended. "Adam is chief (*rosh*) for those created, Cain the chief for killers, Abel the chief for those killed...David is the chief for musicians, Solomon the chief for builders, Ahashuerus the chief for those who destroy" (Esther Rabbah, Petihta 10). For the Rabbis, the Bible is a transcendent reality--a kind of historical "blueprint" which provides the pattern for mundane events (24). Biblical history refracted through the Aggadah becomes a kind of "meta-history". The same creative approach to historiography which the Rabbis applied to the biblical narrative, can be seen in the creative approach to philology which they applied to the biblical text.

CREATIVE PHILOLOGY

The Fundamentals of Midrashic Method

The Rabbis believed that the Bible only occasionally "spoke in the language of men" (25); therefore, canons of interpretation could be applied to scripture which would not normally be applied to human discourse and documents. Indeed, some of these canons -- those explicitly organized into principles -- are referred to as "the hermeneutic rules (*middot*) by which the Torah is interpreted" (26). More significant, however, are the implicit and interrelated assumptions which emerge from the study of midrashic literature. Since the Bible is the word of God, nothing in it is superfluous. Since everything in the text is

meant to teach something, every detail is open to interpretation to discern its possible meanings. This is particularly true of anything which may attract special attention, such as whatever seems either unnecessary or missing in the text or peculiarities in word order, grammar and syntax. Indeed, even the punctuation or the graphic layout of the biblical text may be the object of interpretation: "Why is the weekly section beginning 'And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years' (Gen. 47:28) the only one in the entire Pentateuch which is not separated from that preceding it by a space (*parasha setumah*)? To indicate that when Jacob our patriarch died the Egyptian exile of Israel began." (Genesis Rabbah 96:1). The fact that traditionally the Torah is written with no additional graphic separation at this point in the text, is taken to imply that there was no historical separation between the two events. This example is particularly instructive for it illustrates a general, if implicit, notion. For the Rabbis, the Bible does not just describe events. Rather, the biblical text reflects and bears upon itself the physical traces of historical reality, which can be deciphered using the techniques of the Midrash. These techniques involve searching the text for any suggestive implications in a very exacting way (*diyyug* or *digdug* in the Rabbinic sense of the word) (27). And they frequently involve disregarding what may be called the "logos" of language. This "logos" is the meaning which emerges by understanding each element of language only within its context and it is this "logos" which links the understanding of the reader with the intent of the author. In Midrash, the "logos" of biblical language is often intentionally disregarded. All elements in the text -- letters, words, sentences and whole sections -- may be regarded as independent, thereby liberating the full range of possible meanings.

Interpretation of Letters

For the Rabbis, the division of letters into words in the Bible was not binding. This may be related to the fact that in ancient biblical manuscripts the same amount of space was left between each letter and each word. For example, by reading one word as two in "the valley which was full of bones (*atzamot*)" (Ezek. 37:1), the Rabbis learn that Adam ate from a "tree of death" (*etz mavet*) (Seder Eliyahu Rabbah,ch. 5). The alphabetical order of the letters could also provide the springboard for a highly imaginative Aggadah, such as the complaint of the letter Alaf that, though it is the first letter, God created the world with the second letter, Bet, with the words *Bereshit bara* ("In the beginning God created") (Genesis Rabbah 1:10). The belief in the independence of the letters led the Rabbis to interpret even their shape: The Torah was created with the letter Bet because it is closed on three sides and open at the back, to teach that it is not permitted to inquire what is above, below, before or behind the beginning, but only from the day that the world was created and on (Palestinian Talmud, *Haggigah* II.2, 77c). One of the hermeneutic rules by which the Torah may be interpreted goes by the Greek name notarikon: the interpretation of every letter in a word as the abbreviation of a series of words. With this method of interpretation the Rabbis found an illusion to Abraham's hospitality in the verse "And Abraham planted a tamarisk (*eshel* which is written with three letters: A, Sh, L) which stand for *akhilah*, *shetiah*, *leviah* ("food, drink, escorting travellers to protect them") (Midrash on Psalms 37:1). Another hermeneutic rule which goes by a greek name is gematria: computation of the numeric value of letters (28). By such computation it was possible to learn at what age Abraham began to observe the commandments. "Since (*'egev* whose value is 172) Abraham obeyed my voice" (Gen. 26:5) -- if he was observant for 172 years and lived to an age of 175 (Gen. 25:7), he must have begun when he was only 3 years old! (Tanhuma, ed. Buber, Behar 3). The letters of a word could also be read out of order. For example, a name is read backwards in order to identify the character traits of two biblical figures: Laban was a cheat just like "that wretched fellow Nabal. For he is just what his name says: His name means "boor" and he is a boor" (I Sam. 25:25) (Midrash on Psalms 53:1). The Rabbis even play with recombining letters in a way which borders on the techniques characteristic of later Jewish mysticism. God made His name *Yah* (YH in consonantal spelling) the difference between "man" *'ish* ('Sh) and "woman", *ishah* ('ShH), saying "If they observe my commandments, My name is with them and saves them from all trouble; but if not, I remove My name from them and they become only self-devouring "fire" *'esh* ('Sh) (Pirqe deRabbi Eliezer, Ch. 12).

Interpretation of Words

In order to make a point, the rabbis may also ignore the "logos" which unites the words of the Bible into sentences. This can be seen in a Midrash which itself further illustrates their attitude to interpreting the Bible. "For it [the Torah] is not an empty thing for you" (Deut. 32:47). And if it is empty -- for you! It is because you do not know how to interpret it (Gen. Rabba 1:14). Some rabbis were well aware that such midrashic redivision of the words in a verse violated the original intent. When challenged about such an interpretation, one sage answered epigramatically: "A sharp knife cuts up verses" (Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Batra* 111b). Even the more obvious organization of words into phrases may be disregarded in order to anchor a rabbinic statement in a biblical verse. "Great is knowledge since it was placed between two divine names, as it is said: "[a] God [of] knowledge [is the] Lord" (*el de'ot YHWH*) (I Sam. 2:3). The three words are here regarded, not as a sentence, but as three independent items whose spatial relationship indicates their value. Such midrashic statements are based on the popular belief that "the name is the thing itself" (29).

Personal names are a particular object of interpretation, both in the Bible itself and in the Midrash. Since it is God who is ultimately responsible for all names, the relationship between any name and the one named cannot be accidental, but is full of meaning which must be deciphered. Indeed, some names, like that of God, can have an independent life of their own. The Bible contains not only many explicit derivations which relate the names of people to their later deeds and character traits, but also some implicit etymologies, such as Abel (*hevel*) implying short-lived insubstantiality. The Rabbis, however, did not hesitate to take exception with even explicit biblical etymologies. Concerning Noah ("comfort"), of whom it is said: "This one will comfort us" (Gen. 4:29); R. Yohanan commented: "The name is not the Midrash nor the Midrash the name" (Gen. Rabbah 26:2). The same sage also offers an alternative to the derivation of the name Naftali, which the Bible puts in his mother's mouth: Rachel said, "With great wrestlings have I wrestled (*naftulei elohim niftalti*) with my sister" (Gen. 30:8). But according to R. Johanan, Rachel says: "I should have been made a bride (*nimfa hayah li le'asot*) before my sister" (Gen. Rabbah 71:8). This midrash illustrates another interesting phenomenon; the Rabbis did not hesitate to derive biblical names, even from Greek words, such as nimpha ("bride"). But this sage is not the only one to offer alternative etymologies; the Rabbis frequently offer more than one derivation, such as of the place name, Sinai (Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 89a). Name etymologies are found even in the "autonomous" (i.e. non-biblical) Aggadah. The sage known as Nahum "a man from Gimzo" is so called, according to the Rabbis, because whatever would befall him he would say "this too is for the good (*gam zu latovah*)" (Babylonian Talmud, *Ta'anit* 21a).

Many Midrashim are based on the considerable differences between biblical and Rabbinic Hebrew. By reading the biblical word *maqom* ("place") according to its rabbinic meaning of "God, the Omnipresent One" (30), in the verse "and Abraham lifted his eyes and saw the place afar" (Gen. 22:4) the Rabbis learn that Abraham saw the divine presence of God standing on top of Mt. Moriah (Pirqe deRabbi Eliezer, Ch. 31). Grammatical developments, such as the limitation of imperfect verb forms to indicate specifically the future tense, may also provide the basis for Midrash. The Rabbis read the words "Then Moses sang (*yashir* -- imperfect) (Exod. 15:1) as if they were written in rabbinic Hebrew, "then Moses will sing", to suggest that a resurrected Moses will sing again in the world to come (Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael, Shirta 1).

The Rabbis frequently seem to be taking the Bible "at its word" in this way. The use of a plural form in the Bible to indicate what is clearly a singular may also provide the basis for a highly fanciful interpretation. "Jephthah died by having his limbs fall off one at a time; wherever he went a limb would fall off and would be buried there, as it says: And Jephthah the Gileadite died and was buried in [one of] the towns of Gilead (Judges 12:7). It is not written, "in a town of Gilead", but "in the towns of Gilead" (Genesis Rabbah 60:3). Similarly, what is merely a figure of speech in the Bible may be read in an ultra-

literal way in order to extract some general lesson. The trope "and the days of Joseph grew near [for him] to die" is interpreted in this way to teach that "the days of the righteous die, but they themselves do not die" (Genesis Rabbah on Gen. 46:29, Ms. Vatican 30, ed. Theodore-Albeck, p. 1237). On the other hand, straightforward language in the Bible may be interpreted metaphorically. "And Samson went down to Timnah and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines" (Judges 14:1) "going down" is written because he degraded himself there (Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah* 10a). There is indeed an element of "trickiness" in taking what is said very literally while ignoring what is meant. According to the Rabbis, Jacob did not lie to his blind and dying father by saying "I [am] Esau your firstborn" (Gen. 27:19); he only tricked him by pausing slightly in midsentence, saying "[It is] I; Esau [is] your firstborn (Tanhuma, ed. Buber, Toledot 10). Such "trickiness" with language was appreciated in the Aggadah, as it was in the ancient world in general (31).

Scientific philology assumes that the meaning of a word in one context can be elucidated by investigating the way the word is used in other contexts. The Rabbis formulate this assumption as it relates to their study of the Bible: "Words of Torah may be poor in their own place, but rich elsewhere" (Palestinian Talmud, *Rosh HaShanah* 58d, end). Rationalistic philogy compares parallels in order to exclude meanings which do not fit the context being studied. However, in the hermeneutical principles of the Midrash, such comparison called *gezerah shevah*, literally, "a declaration of equivalence" may be used to expand the implication of a particular word or phrase beyond its context. By making such an analogy between two occurrences of the word "field", the Rabbis infer from the verse "And Esau came from the field" (Gen. 28:29) that he had raped a betrothed woman there, for it says, "If a man finds a betrothed woman in a field and the man seizes her and lies with her" (Deut. 22:25). Such interpretations based on verbal associations serve largely to find support in the biblical text for ideas which are already present in the mind of the interpreter.

The idea that one word or verse might bear a number of possible interpretations is related to the fact that the biblical text is frequently ambiguous. For example, when scripture says of Jacob "And he set up there an altar and called it (*lo*) God, the God of Israel." (Gen. 33:20) it is difficult to determine with assurance to what the pronoun (*lo*) refers, for it could also be translated "it", "him", or "himself." The first possibility, that accepted by most modern translations, is rejected by the rabbis who refuse to believe that Jacob could have called an altar of stone God. They offer several other ways to construe the sentence. One source paraphrases the verse this way: Jacob said to God: "You are God among the heavenly beings and I am a god among the earthly beings (Genesis Rabbah 89:8). Here the pronoun is understood as referring alternately to Him, to God, and then to "himself," to Jacob. Another source develops the latter alternative, but understands the last part of the verse as the subject of the verb: "And He, the God of Israel, called him god" -- it was God who called Jacob a god! (Babylonian Talmud, *Megillah* 18a).

Such freedom of interpretation is also related to the fact that in Rabbinic times the text of the Hebrew Bible still had no written vocalization (32). This fact allowed Beruria, the learned wife of Rabbi Meir, to teach her husband not to hate the sinner, but the sin: May sinners (*hotim*) "disappear" (Ps. 104:35) is not written; rather "May sins (*hattaim*) disappear" is written (Babylonian Talmud, *Berkhot* 10a). Taking such liberties with language is hardly surprising, since the Greeks whose language had a written vocalization did not hesitate to employ such verbal plays. The Pythagoreans, for example, pointed out the similarity in sound between the words *soma* ("body") and *sema* ("tombstone/grave") to underscore their deprecation of the body. Similarly, the Rabbis do not hesitate to a statement of one of their beliefs, such as the idea that the commandments to not enslave but liberate. "And the writing was the writing of God, engraved (*harut*) upon the tablets" (Exod. 32:16). Do not read *harut*, but *herut* ("freedom") (Babylonian Talmud, *Eruvin* 54b). The expression, "do not read" in this midrash clearly does not mean to suggest that the writing was not in fact engraved on the tablets. This, and many other such midrashic interpretations do not mean to reject the straightforward meaning of the text. Rather they seek to add another dimension -- one that is perhaps more spiritually meaningful -- to the words of the Bible.

The Interpretation of Sentences

The Rabbis feel free to interpret the words of the biblical text as individual units whose meaning was not necessarily determined by their context. Similarly, they did not hesitate to fragment biblical verses into individual sentences. For example, each thought unit may be related to different biblical characters in order to achieve a tour de force of midrashic virtuosity. "What is man that You remember him" -- this refers to Abraham of whom it is said, "And God remembered Abraham" (Gen. 29:30). "And the son of man, that you visit him" -- this refers to Isaac of whose birth it is said, "And the Lord visited Sarah" (Gen 21:1). "For You have made him little lower than the angels" -- this refers to Jacob of whom it is said, "And he strove with an angel and prevailed" (Hosea 12:5) (Midrash on Psalms 8:7). However, this freedom to deal independently with each part of a verse might also be exercised to make a serious theological point. To this end the Rabbis did not hesitate to convert a clearly interrogative statement into a declarative one. "God is not man, that He should lie, or a son of man, that He should repent; will He speak and not act?!" (Num. 23:19). According to Rabbi Shemuel bar Nahman the beginning and end of this verse refer to very different things. When God decrees to bring benefit upon the world he does not lie and he does not repent; but when he decrees to punish the world, "He will speak and not act." He said to Moses, "Let me alone and I will destroy them" (Deut. 9:14), "He spoke but did not fulfill" (Num. 23:19) (Genesis Rabbah 53:4). Neither did the Rabbis hesitate to take an entire verse which refers to a past event and apply it to a future one. "And Abraham made a great feast for the righteous on the day that he will deal out (*yigmol*) His bounty to the descendents of Isaac (Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 119b). The Rabbis also have no hesitation about quoting a biblical phrase out of context. A particularly glaring example of this is their use of the slogan "incline after a multitude" to elevate the majority vote of the Sages even over the authority of a divine voice (Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Metzia* 59b). For this phrase is lifted out of the verse "You shall not speak in a cause to incline after a multitude to wrest judgment" (Exod. 23:2). But the Rabbis are not alone in using biblical phrases as slogans and quoting them out of context. How often do we use the saying "Man does not live by bread alone", without recalling that in its biblical context it actually refers to the manna which was given to teach that "man may live on anything that the Lord decrees" (Deut. 8:3)?

Of course, the Rabbis do often interpret biblical verses in context. In fact they sometimes disagree just how much context should be taken into account. A painful question, such as why innocent children die may hang on such a hermeneutic point. If the phrase "so that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied" (Deut. 11:21) relates specifically to the verse that precedes it, "You shall write them upon the doorposts of your house," then children die because their parents do not fulfill this commandment, mezuzzah. But if it relates to the commandment mentioned two verses before, "you shall teach them to your children," then parents may protect their offspring by not neglecting to teach them the Law (Babylonian Talmud, *Shabbat* 32b). This latter reading seems more likely, since the observance and study of the commandments is the subject of the entire section.

Interpretation of Sections

The Rabbis attribute super-mundane creative power to the smallest units of the biblical text, stating that Bezalel knew how to combine the letters by which the heavens and the earth were created (Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 55a). Similarly, they attribute such esoteric meaning and creative power to the order of whole sections. "Man will not know its arrangement" (Job 28:13). R. Eleazar said: The sections of the Torah were not given in order, for if they were, anyone who would read them would be able to resurrect the dead and create a world. Therefore the order of the Torah is hidden from man and known only to the Holy One, as it says: "And who like Me shall read and shall tell it and shall set it in order before Me?" (Isa. 44:7) (Midrash on Psalms 3:2). Indeed one of the hermeneutic principles (*mugdam u-me'uhar shehu beparashiot*) states that a biblical section may presuppose what is mentioned only later in the biblical

narrative (33). Rabbi Yehuda Ha-Nasi, who arranged the Mishnah, pointed out that many adjacent biblical sections (*parashiot semukhot*) are as different from each other in subject matter as is the east from the west. But Rabbi Akiva, who lived several generations earlier, taught that there is always something to be learned from the order of biblical sections. For example, the verse "And Israel abode in Shittim and the people began to commit harlotry with the daughters of Moab" (Num. 25:1) seems unrelated to the story of Balaam and Balaq which precedes it. But the conjunction (*semukhin*) of these two stories suggests that this fateful transgression came about through the connivance of these enemies of Israel (Sifre Numbers 131 and Midrash Aggadah to Numbers 25:1). The Rabbis' admission that the Bible sometimes seems to lack continuity, combined with their belief that nothing in the Bible is accidental or insignificant led them to search out and even invent (*derash*) meaningful connections between sections.

From Constrictive Interpretation to Allegory

The Rabbis sometimes interpret the Bible in a constrictive way, by applying a general statement to specific cases. For example, the verses which praise the "woman of valor" which conclude the Book of Proverbs are applied to specific biblical figures, post-biblical figures (such as Beruria, the wife of Rabbi Meir) and even personified abstractions such as the Torah (Midrash on Proverbs 31:10 et seq). More frequently, however, they interpret the Bible in an expansive way making biblical details stand for matters of more general significance. Typology, a kind of expansive interpretation much favored by Christian interpreters of the Old Testament, is found to a limited extent in the Midrash. The four kings (Gen. 14:9) whom Abraham defeated are seen as a prefiguration of the four kingdoms, Babylonia, Media, Greece and Edom (i.e. Rome) who dominate Israel from the time of the first exile until the days of the Rabbis themselves (Genesis Rabbah 41:2). The Rabbis found warrant for this approach in the fact that the biblical text often employs metaphoric and metonymic figures of speech, such as synecdoche (the use of a part to indicate the whole or the whole to represent a part). The School of Rabbi Ishmael pointed out several cases in which Scripture implied a general principle but employed more specific language because that was the usual case (*diber ha-katuv behoveh*). For example, the biblical prohibition of rape which specifies that the woman was found "in the field" (Deut. 22:27) must also apply to such a crime committed in a house (Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael, Kaspa 2). Here again the rabbinic interpretation does not mean to invalidate the straightforward implication of the biblical statement but rather to extend it. However, in other cases the Rabbis did wish to replace the primary meaning of the text with a more elevated interpretation. For example, the Song of Songs which tells of the romantic love between a man and a maid, was interpreted as an extended metaphor, for the most part as an allegory of the spiritual love between God and Israel (34).

Creative Depiction and Creative Explication

The Rabbis' approach to historiography and philology described above might also be called creative depiction and creative explication. These two aspects of the Aggadah sometimes come into conflict. For example, in explicating the verse "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses" (Deut. 34:10) the Rabbis could not overlook the phrase "in Israel" which appears superfluous (since Moses was obviously a prophet in Israel) and therefore must be interpreted. Surprisingly, they comment: "In Israel" there was no greater prophet; but among the nations of the world there was a greater prophet -- Baalam! (Sifre Deuteronomy 257). Here the Rabbis' hypersensitivity to every nuance of the biblical text has overcome their historiographic tendency to emphasize the superiority of Israel. Similarly, the Aggadah relates that a non-Jew once employed the rabbinic slogan "incline after a majority" to argue that Jews should incline after the majority of nations and worship other gods. Significantly, the Rabbi who replies does not simply explain that the phrase in its biblical context clearly forbids idolatry for the verse actually says "You shall not incline after a majority to do evil" (Exod. 23:2). Rather he explains that the nations cannot be considered a "majority" since each of them worships a different god (Leviticus Rabbah 4:6). Here we can see that the Rabbis were willing to stand by their creative re-reading of the biblical text, even

when it was turned against their deepest religious convictions. The Rabbis did not interpret the Bible freely simply in order to adapt the ancient text to contemporary taste. Rather, creative depiction and creative explication, the two primary aspects of the Rabbis' organic thinking, exist in a symbiotic relationship. The Rabbis consistently base their historical and theological ideas on their exacting though imaginative reinterpretation of the biblical text. It is the synthesis of these two apparently contradictory aspects of the Aggadah which lends religious authority to Rabbinic thought and distinguishes it from the less textually oriented mythology of folk culture.

The "Seriousness" of the Aggadah

Rabbinic culture, then, represents a transition phase between the spontaneous, organic thinking of primitive society and the consistent seriousness of scientific thinking which subjects its perceptions and ideas to the test of historical and textual fact. The Rabbis themselves deal with the question of the seriousness of the Aggadah and, as one would expect, they evolve their discussion from the interpretation of a biblical text. "The Lord talked with you face(s) to face(s)" (Deut. 5:4). The first "face(s) is two and the second "face(s)" (*panim*) is two; thus there are four faces to the divine word. Scripture has a frightening face; Mishnah has a dispassionate face; Talmud has an understanding face, but Aggadah has a playful face (35). A radical distinction is made here between the biblical text, the object of midrashic interpretation; and Aggadah, the result of such interpretation. The Rabbis believe that the sacred text not only may, but must be interpreted for to that end it was revealed by God and by studying His word we perform His will. Aggadah, as it were, dares to play with Scripture. But "play" which almost always treats its object with the utmost seriousness (36). This is play in the artistic sense of the word, such as playing music or playing a character in a drama which may well deal with the deepest human concerns. And just as the theatre, and other forms of art, do not appeal primarily to the rational faculty; so too the Aggadah does not hesitate to appeal to the emotions and arouse the imagination in order to stimulate in us an inner response to profound issues.

The "dramatic conventions" of the Aggadah have not always been understood and accepted. The rationalist philosophers of the Middle Ages, such as Maimonides, reduced the Midrash to "poetical conceits" (*melitzat hashir*) which are not intended to bring out the meaning of the biblical text (Guide for the Perplexed III.43). Others denied the Aggadah any religious authority (37). Indeed, even in rabbinic times there were those scholars who sometimes "missed the point" as the following story illustrates: Once when they were sitting at a meal, Rabbi Nahman said to Rabbi Yitzhaq: Let the Master teach something. He replied: Thus taught Rabbi Yohanan: Jacob our father never died! Rabbi Nahman bar Yaakov said: But how could it be, for they embalmed, eulogized and buried him?! (see Genesis Ch. 50). He replied: I am interpreting a verse. It says: "Therefore fear not, O Jacob my servant...for lo, I will save you from afar, and your offspring from the land of their captivity" (Jer. 30:1). Scripture here equates (*magish*) Jacob with his offspring; just as his offspring are alive; so too is he still alive! (38). The fact that many such fanciful interpretations survive indicates that many people have not only accepted but even appreciated the intellectual playfulness and verbal "trickiness" of this and other Aggadot. The Rabbis and their followers were able to disregard the facts of history and nature in order to perceive a more transcendental truth -- that Jacob, our father, who is dead and gone still lives on in us and we live more fully in him. In order to understand the Bible profoundly, the Rabbis identified personally with its characters and events. And their approach to the Bible points the way for our understanding of the rabbinic Aggadah. For you can truly understand only what you resemble. "Only those who in their souls the voices of serious investigation and imaginative play can mingle -- and only those who can believe with the Rabbis that the Bible was given both to provoke and to beguile us -- only they will appreciate the character and beauty of the Aggadah" (39).

FOOTNOTES

1. A bibliography of his publications from 1897-1936 compiled by Hanna Emmrich may be found in Maustsschrifts fur Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums 80 (1936), pp. 294-297. A supplement (1937 and on) was published in The Breslau Seminary Memorial Volume, ed. Guido Kisch, Tubingen, 1963. Pp. 395-397.
2. From the time of its original publication until the present day, Heinemann has been criticized for his presenting the Aggadah as a unified whole and failing to address himself to intellectual and historical developments which took place during the Rabbinic period. See E.E. Urbach's review in Kiryat Sefer 26 (1950), pp. 223-228 and most recently, S.D. Fraade's comment in Hebrew Union College Annual 54 (1983), p. 249, n. 11.
3. A complete English translation is presently being prepared by Dr. Barry Wallfish of Toronto and is to be published by The Magnes Press of the Hebrew University, Jerusalem.
4. Such a negative definition is found in Mavo HaTalmud, ascribed to Rabbi Shmuel HaNagid (d. 1055). A discussion of the etymology of the term, Aggadah, is found in Joseph Heinemann's, Aggadot ve-Toledotehen, Ch. I "The Nature of the Aggadah".
5. See Eliezer ben Yehudah, Milon HaLashon HaIvrit (Jerusalem), s.v. darash, p.1006a. In a series of articles which compliment his book, Heinemann discussed the history and etymology of the most common exegetical terms, Leshonenu 14-16 (1946-49); his extensive discussion of the term darash is found in vol. 14, pp. 182-189. For a more precise distinction between the terms Aggadah and Midrash, Heinemann refers his reader to W. Bacher, Revue des Etudes Juives 22, p. 37. See also M.Z. Segal, "Darash, Midrash, Bet Midrash" Tarbiz 17 (1946), pp. 194-196 and E. Margaliot, "HaMunah 'Darash' BeTalmud u-VeMidrashim", Leshonenu 20 (1957), pp. 50-61. A brief discussion of this and other terms may be found in M. Gertner, "Terms, of Scriptural Interpretation: A Study in Hebrew Semantics", Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 25(1962), pp. 4-14.
6. Heinemann dealt more specifically with Halakhah and particularly the rationale and purpose of the commandments in another important work, Taiamei HaMitzvot BeSifrut Yisrael (Jerusalem, 1942-57).
7. See A.J. Heschel, Torah Min HaShammayim
8. See the interpretations of Ps. 62:12 and Jer. 23:29 in Sifre Numbers , section 42; BT Sanhedrin 35a. (Article by Susan Handleman on "Hammer Breaks the Rock" given as talk at AJS in Boston, 1983 -- when available) Note the statement that the Torah can be interpreted in 49 (or even 343!) different ways (Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer, ed. Enelow, p. 46 and the parallels cited there).
9. See Genesis Rabbah 52:11 (R. Hannan) and 70:3 (R. Hamma); BT Avodah Zarah 35b (R. Nahman bar Hisda); Pesiqta de Rav Kahanah 51:1 (R. Azariah).

9a. As noted by Yehudah HaLevi, HaKuzari 3:69. Midrashic techniques were, it seems, occasionally applied to the interpretation of marriage documents and contracts (see Tosefta, Ketubot Chapter 4), to dreams, see S. Lieberman, "The Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture", Hellenism in Jewish Palestine(New York, 1962), pp. 47-82, personal names of non-biblical figures and to other non-scriptural material, see E. Margaliot, "HaMunah 'Darash' BeTalmud u-VeMidrashim", Leshonenu 20 (1957), pp. 57ff.

10. See the works of Max Kaddushin listed in the bibliography, particularly, Organic Thinking and The Rabbinic Mind.
11. "Natural folk" is Heinemann's non-pejorative term for primitive people. This usage and the notion of organic thinking are derived from the German translation, entitled Denken der Naturvolker, of L. Levy-Bruhl's, Les fonctions mentales dans les societes inferieures (Paris, 1922); English translation by L. Clare, How Natives Think (New York, 1926).
12. See E. Cassirer, Philosophie der symbolischen Formen II, p.116.
13. See, for example, BT Eruvin 13b: "For three years the School of Shammai and the school of Hillel differed, each claiming that the Halakha was according to their own opinion. A heavenly voice came forth and proclaimed: 'Both these and these are the words of the living God -- but the Halakhah is according the opinion of the School of Hillel".
14. Pirqe deRabbi Eliezer, Ch. 30. The fact that these are the names of Muhammad's daughter and wife according to Muslim tradition is related to the notion that Ishmael is the progenitor of the Arabs.
15. See Yalqut Shimoni, Ezekiel, section 367. (On the legend of Serah, see now, J. Heinemann, Aggadot ve-Toledotehen, pp. 56-63.)
16. See Genesis Rabbah 26:5 and compare Tosefta, Ketubot 4:9; Philo, De Specialibus Legibus III.72. [See also Midrash LeHannukah, Otzar HaMidrashim (ed. J.E. Eisenstein), p. 192). R.B. Cohen, "Betrothal in Jewish and Roman Law", Proceedinings of the American Academy of Jewish Research 18 (1948-49),pp. 124-125. 93).]

17. See Midrash on Psalms 112:1. But compare Mishnat Rabbi Eliezer, ed. Enelow, p. 54; where it is specifically stated that Abraham was not commanded concerning the fine points of the law. [Concerning the Patriarchs' observance of the commandments, see now J.P. Schultz, "Two Views of the Patriarchs: Noahides and Pre-Sinai Israelites", Texts and Responses (Nahum Glatzer Volume) (Leiden 1975), pp. 43 ff.]
18. Quoted by F. Parpert, Das Monchtum und die evangelischen Kirch (Munchen, 1930), p. 57.
19. Note the statement: "There is no earlier or later in the Torah" (BT Pesahim 6b.)
20. [See now, Marc Bregman, "Past and Present in Midrashic Literature", Hebrew Annual Review 2 (1978), pp. 45-59.]
21. See the similar statement of principle in Philo, Questions and Answers on Genesis III.3 on Genesis 15:9.
22. Pirqe deRabbi Eliezer, Chapt. 26. This midrash seems to be based on the fact that this famine (Gen. 12:10) is later called "the first famine that was in the days of Abraham" (Gen. 26:1). According to Genesis Rabbah 64:2 there were two prior famines in the days of Adam and Lemech.
23. See Tanhuma, Noah 14 (ed. Buber, Noah 20). According to Philo, On Abraham 270, Abraham was the first person in human history called "elder".
24. See Genesis Rabbah 1:1 and compare Philo, De Opificio Mundi 16-25.
25. [See now J. Weingreen, "Dibrah Torah Kileshon Benei-Adam", Interpreting the Hebrew Bible -- Essays in honor of E.I.J. Rosenthal, edited by J.A. Emerton and Stefan C. Reif, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ?), pp. 267-275.]
26. For a very brief summary, see H.L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, pp, 92-93.
27. See Bacher, Die exetische Terminologie I, s.v. digdug, pp. 23-24.
28. On these two rules, see S. Lieberman, Hellenism, pp. 69 ff.
29. See E. Cassirer, Philosophie der symbolischen Formen II, p. 54.
30. [On this and other divine epithets, see now E.E. Urbach, The Sages, Vol. I, pp. 66ff.]
31. See for example, Cicero, De officiis I 33, who tells of a Greek king who "kept" his oath to preserve a truce for thirty days by attacking only during the nights.
32. In the Tannaitic period, there was considerable discussion of whether the tradition of vocalizing the Bible handed down by actually reading it aloud (migra) was authoritative in matters of Halakhah, or only the written consonantal text (mesorah), see BT Sanhedrin 4b and Bacher, Exegetische Terminologie I, s.v. Migra.
33. For example, compare Numbers 1:1 with Numbers 7:1 and 9:1 (BT Pesahim 6b) and see Bachar, I, s.v. qadam.
34. [See now E. E. Urbach, "The Homiletical Interpretations of , Canticles" Studies in Aggadah and Folk-Literature -- Scripta Hieroslymitanta Vol. 22 (Jerusalem, 1971), pp, 247-275, On the use of allegory in Rabbinic and Hellenistic Literature, see Heinamann's separate articles, "Altjudische Allegoristik", Bericht der Judisch-Theologisches Seminar in Breslau fur 1935, pp. 85-?, "Die wissenschaftliche Allegoristik des judischen Mittelaltars", Hebrew Union College Annual 23:1 (1950-51), pp. 611-643; "Die Allegoristik der hellenistischen Juden ausser Philon", Mnemosyne 5 (1952), pp. 130-138. A Hebrew version of the latter article appeared in Sefer Yochanan Levi (Jerusalem, 1945), pp. 46-58.]
35. Sofrim 16:2 (according to the emendation of the Vilna Gaon). [On the various disciplines mentioned in this statement and its parallels, see now L. Finkelstein, "Midrash, Halakhah and Aggadot", Yitzhak F. Baer Jubilee Volume, ed. S.W. Baron et al. (Jerusalem, 1960), pp. 28-47 and the article by Judah Goldin "The Freedom and Restraint of Haggadah", Midrash and Literature ed G. Hartmann and S. Budick, Yale: New Haven (in press).
36. On the seriousness of "play" in human culture, see Huizinga, Homo Ludens, 1948.
37. [See Goldin, op. cit]
38. BT Ta'anit 5b [See now the discussion of this passage in Joseph Heinemann, "The Attitude of the Babylonian Sages to the Aggadah", Aggadot ve-Toledotehn, pp. 164-165. Heinemann notes that R. Nahman's objection reflects the hardheaded, fundamentalism of the Babylonian Amoraim who mistakenly subjected the Aggadah to the same reasoning which they applied to the Halakhah.
39. I. Heinemann, Darkhei HaAggadah, p. 195.