

SCRIPTA HIEROSOLYMITANA
PUBLICATIONS OF THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY, JERUSALEM

VOLUME XXII

STUDIES IN AGGADAH AND FOLK-LITERATURE

EDITED ON BEHALF OF
THE INSTITUTE OF JEWISH STUDIES

BY

JOSEPH HEINEMANN AND DOV NOY

JERUSALEM, 1971
AT THE MAGNES PRESS, THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY

CONTENTS

EDITORS' PREFACE

I. BEN-AMI: La Qsida chez les Juifs Marocains	1
J. DAN: Rabbi Judah the Pious and Caesarius of Heisterbach — Common Motifs in their Stories.....	18
J. ELBAUM: Rabbi Judah Loew of Prague and his Attitude to the Aggadah	28
D. FLUSSER: <i>Palaea Historica</i> — An Unknown Source of Biblical Legends	48
J. FRAENKEL: Bible Verses quoted in Tales of the Sages	80
J. HEINEMANN: The Proem in the Aggadic Midrashim — A Form- Critical Study	100
M. D. HERR: The Historical Significance of the Dialogues between Jewish Sages and Roman Dignitaries	123
Z. KAGAN: Divergent Tendencies and their Literary Moulding in the Aggadah	151
D. NOY: The Jewish Versions of the "Animal Languages" Folktale (AT 670) — A Typological-Structural Study.....	171
S. SAFRAI: Tales of the Sages in the Palestinian Tradition and the Babylonian Talmud	209
B. UFFENHEIMER: The Consecration of Isaiah in Rabbinic Exegesis.	233
E. E. URBACH: The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and the Expositions of Origin on Canticles, and the Jewish- Christian Disputation	247

THE PROEM IN THE AGGADIC MIDRASHIM

A Form-Critical Study*

JOSEPH HEINEMANN

I. THE PROEM PATTERN

The editors of the classical Midrashim, especially of the so-called homiletical Midrashim, which have come down to us, undoubtedly drew upon material used, in the first place, in public sermons, delivered on Sabbaths and festivals. This is not to say, however, that the midrashic homilies are identical with the sermons as they were actually preached in public.¹ It appears that the compilers of the Midrashim used for each of their homilies a variety of actual sermons, fully or in part, and combined them into a new entity, which we may perhaps call "the literary homily". Consequently we do not know very much, and certainly far less than would appear at first sight, about the forms which served in the public sermon itself.² But there is one pattern

* The following abbreviations will be used throughout:

- Albeck, G.R. = Theodor-Albeck, *Bereshit Rabba*, Vol. III, Introduction
 Albeck, L.R. = "Leviticus Rabba", in L. Ginzberg *Jubilee Volume* (New York 1946, Hebrew Part)
 Bacher = W. Bacher, *D. Proömien der alten jüdischen Homilie* (Leipzig 1913)
 Bacher, E.T. = W. Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie etc.* (Leipzig 1905)
 Bacher, Am. = W. Bacher, *Die Agada d. Pal. Amoräer* (Strassburg, 1892)
 Bacher, Tann. = W. Bacher, *Die Agada d. Tannaiten* (Strassburg 1903)
 Baek = L. Baek, "Zwei Beispiele midraschischer Predigt", in *Aus drei Jahrtausenden*², (1958), pp. 158 f.
 Bloch = P. Bloch, "Studien zur Aggadāh", *MGWJ* XXXIV (1885).
 Mann = J. Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue* (Cincinnati 1940).
 Maybaum = I. Maybaum, *Die ältesten Phasen in der Entwicklung der jüdischen Predigt* (Berlin 1901)
 Maybaum, Hom. = I. Maybaum, *Jüdische Homiletik etc.* (Berlin 1890).
 Strack-Billerbeck = *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament etc.*, Vol. IV, 1, 128
 Theodor = J. Theodor, "Zur Komposition der agadischen Homilien", *MGWJ* XXVIII-XXX (1879-1881)
 Zunz-Albeck = L. Zunz, ed. Albeck, *Ha-Derashot Be-Yisrael* (Jerusalem 1954)

¹ Against the view of Mann, *passim*; cf. below, p. 101 and my article "On the Triennial Lectionary Cycle" *JJS* XIX (1968), p. 41 f.

² A sermon which appears to have been preserved in its entirety, though probably in condensed form, is the one of R. Tanhum of Naveh, Shab. 30a-b. Cf. also below, p. 115.

which can be clearly recognized as a form created for and used in the live sermon: the so-called proem. Such proems appear in practically all the classical Midrashim on the Pentateuch at the beginning of each chapter or pericope. The Midrashim on the Five Scrolls, too, open with proems, notably *Lam. Rabba*, which has no less than 36 of them in a separate introductory section, preceding the exposition of the biblical text verse by verse. According to Bacher's statistics,³ close on 2000 proems have come down to us; by now the total number has increased considerably, owing to new Midrashim discovered and published since Bacher wrote his study.

The proem is significant and deserves detailed study not only because of the vast number of examples available to us, but, first and foremost, because here we have a pattern which clearly reflects the live sermon. It is self-evident that the proem is basically a rhetorical, not a literary form; it was intended for an actual audience and presupposed an auditory impact. That the proem was intended for use in sermons has never been doubted, and the following analysis of its features will both illustrate and confirm that it was planned for rhetorical effect.

The proem — פרום in Hebrew, פרוםא in Aramaic — served, of course, as an opening or introduction.⁴ However, instead of starting from the first verse of the pericope and expounding it, it begins invariably with a verse taken from elsewhere, mostly from the Hagiographa; from this "remote" verse the preacher proceeds to evolve a chain of expositions and interpretations until, at the very end of the proem, he arrives at the first verse of the pericope with which he concludes. The establishment, step by step, of a connection between the two passages, known technically as פרוםא, lit. "stringing beads",⁵ is the main object of the preacher and provides the chief challenge to his rhetorical skill. The opening verse is freely chosen by the preacher,⁶ though not, of course, at random; it is selected mainly because of some inner link or association with the theme of the pericope on which it throws new light. Quite often the passage chosen is an unexpected one, whose connection with the lesson is not at all obvious at first sight; this is done on purpose, for the elements of surprise and tension are a prominent feature of the proem-form. When a proem on the first verse of *Lam. Rabba*, ed. Buber, Proem XXI) opens with "And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent etc." (*Lev. xiii: 45*) and interprets

³ Pp. 105 f., 114 f.

⁴ See below, pp. 104 f., regarding the question to what precisely did the proem serve as an introduction.

⁵ Cf. *Lev. Rabba* xvi:4; *Cant. Rabba* on i:10; P.T. Hag. II 1, 77b.

⁶ Cf. Bloch, pp. 258f.; Bacher, p. 7; Strack-Billerbeck, p. 173. Against the view of Mann, p. 12 and *passim*, and cf. *JJS*, as above, n. 2.

this passage allegorically to refer to the Temple, the preacher not only wants to shock his audience by the very comparison of the holy Temple to a leper, but also intends to set them wondering how he will manage eventually to connect this verse with his actual text in Lam. The solution — here as in a good many other proems — is based on a verbal tally: "he shall dwell alone" (verse 46) corresponds to "How does the city dwell alone. . ." (Lam. i:1). Elsewhere, the curiosity of the audience is aroused through a simpler technique; thus the opening verse which is expounded in the first part of the proem lacks, indeed, any connection with the pericope, but the following verse, to which the preacher subsequently turns, provides it. Thus, in *Lev. Rabba* iii:2, a proem on Lev. ii:1, dealing with the meal-offering, opens with Ps. xxii:24 "Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him" etc., on which it offers a series of comments, but only the following verse: "For He hath not despised or abhorred the lowliness of the poor. . ." establishes the required link with the meal-offering which, being cheap, is the typical poor man's offering. The same purpose is achieved in a different manner in the so-called "composite proems"⁷ where a verse from Proverbs, for instance, is applied to a number of biblical figures, one after the other, and only at the end to the one mentioned in the lesson to which the proem relates; in *Lev. Rabba* i:4, e.g., the proem opens with Ps. Lxxxix:20, which is applied first to Abraham, then to David and only at the end to Moses, thus providing the required transition to Lev. i:1 "And the Lord called unto Moses. . ."⁸ However, these and similar devices do not solely serve the technical purpose of establishing, by hook or by crook, the necessary connection with the beginning of the pericope, nor do they merely aim at surprising the audience by choosing arbitrarily an utterly unexpected opening text. Eventually, at the end of the proem, the verse chosen is seen to belong to the subject of the sermon and to illuminate it from a new angle; and if the preacher plays on words or uses verbal tallies, these too serve to evolve a whole train of thought, which connects the two seemingly unrelated passages intimately and organically. Thus the first proem in *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*, relating to the lesson for Hanukkah "And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end (כלה) of setting up the Tabernacle. . ." (Num. vii:1), opens with "I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride (כלה)" (Cant. v:1); but the play on words becomes the starting point for a whole chain of ideas: The setting up of the tabernacle is likened to a bridal canopy celebrating the union between God and Israel; the Divine Presence which, in the course of generations, had withdrawn from earth to heaven, because of the sins of

⁷ Albeck, G. R., p. 17.

⁸ On this proem cf. also below, p. 117.

mankind, has now "come back into its garden", its original dwelling-place. Here, form and contents are clearly indivisible and the similarity of sounds enables the preacher to construct an entire edifice of ideas, both daring and penetrating, which turn the dedication of the tabernacle not only allegorically into a wedding-feast between God and Israel, but into a cosmic event, through which the Shekhinah is re-united with mankind.⁹

The proem, in spite of its infinite variety in details, is a clearly defined form-pattern; its structure is based on the tension between two seemingly unrelated verses, which the preacher succeeds in linking together gradually. His homiletic skill becomes manifest when, at the end, the two passages are seen to complement and illuminate each other. As the preacher approaches his aim, step by step, the sense of anticipation on the part of the audience — who know towards which passage he is striving, but do not know how he is going to forge the required link — mounts up; but while building up tension, the homilist also evolves a set of ideas, which reaches its summit at the very end, when the beginning of the pericope is, at last, quoted. The entire structure of the proem gravitates towards its conclusion, and as the ultimate purpose becomes transparent, the interest of the audience is bound to increase, until, when the final "point" is reached, the tension is resolved and the complete structure — of form and contents alike — stands revealed.¹⁰

In most of the Midrashim, as we have them, the opening verse of the proem is generally preceded by the first verse of the pericope (which of course recurs, at the end),¹¹ after which comes a transition-formula: "this is what Scripture says".¹² This form is so frequent, that some scholars¹³ consider it the outstanding formal characteristic of the proem. Nevertheless, this type of preamble cannot be considered an essential and original part of the proem. For one thing, the quotation of the first verse of the pericope at the beginning is absent, when a proem is cited in the name of its author: R. so-and-so opened; and even in anonymous proems it is mostly lacking in manuscripts.¹⁴ More important still, this addition is not only unnecessary (for the beginning of the pericope is, after all, invariably quoted at the end), but detracts from the perfection of structure of the proem and diminishes its

⁹ Cf. also Baeck, pp. 168f., especially pp. 171f.

¹⁰ On the nature and characteristics of the proem cf. Bloch pp. 183f., 210f.; Maybaum, pp. 16f.; Bacher, *passim*; Strack-Billerbeck, pp. 173f.; S. Mirski, *Horev* VIII (1944), pp. 80f.; idem, *Sura* III (1957–1958), pp. 106f.

¹¹ In some of the Midrashim, the pericope verse is occasionally omitted at the end; this is, clearly, due to mistakes on the part of copyists, at least in the vast majority of cases.

¹² *הדא הוא דכתיב הכתוב*, or, in Aramaic *הדא הוא דכתיב הכתוב*.

¹³ Theodor, *MGWJ* XXVIII, pp. 111f.; Maybaum, pp. 16f.; Bacher, pp. 29f.

¹⁴ Albeck, G. R., p. 12; Albeck, L. R., p. 26; cf. also: S. Mirski, *Sura* III 1957–1958), p. 107.

impact. For even though the audience know, of course, which is the lesson of the day and what verse it starts with, the purpose of the preacher is, as we have seen, to lead up to this passage gradually and to arouse anticipation and curiosity on the part of his listeners as he goes along. Hence, to quote also at the beginning the text which is intended to mark the conclusion of the homily is utterly superfluous. We must conclude that in the live sermon the preacher did not open with the first verse of the pericope, but started straight with the "remote" passage,^{14a} and the frequent openings with the pericope text in our Midrashim must be considered the work of editors or copyists. For in a written work, which constitutes a compilation of homilies on an entire biblical book or on a series of selected chapters, it was necessary to indicate to which pericope each section relates, by quoting the first verse as a kind of chapter-heading at the beginning, but in the live sermon the occasion itself made it clear, which lesson or pericope the preacher was going to expound.

II. THE ORIGIN AND FUNCTION OF THE PROEM*

Even though a good deal of research has been devoted to the proems, their different types and structures, the various formulas which appear in them etc., no agreement has been reached as regards the nature and the purpose of the proem-pattern as such. Most scholars take the view that the proem was but the introduction of the sermon which was delivered in the Synagogue¹⁵

^{14a} Even though it may appear pedantic to insist on this minor point, it is, in fact, necessary to correct the description of the proem, offered by Maybaum and others, in this respect, as it has proved to be misleading to other scholars. Thus Peder Borgen in *Bread from Heaven* (Leiden 1965) establishes a homiletic pattern, found in Philo and John, the chief characteristics of which are: a. a correspondence between the opening and closing parts of the homily; b. the use, in addition to the main quotation from the OT, of a further, subordinate quotation (pp. 46-7). He then proceeds to search for a similar pattern in the Palestinian Midrash and finds it in the proem-form, as described by Maybaum, who lists as its main parts: a. the first verse of the pericope; b. the connecting formula; c. the proemial texts; ... e. repetition of the text from the pericope (*ibid.*, p. 51 f.). However, since, in fact, the repetition of the pericope text at both the beginning and the end is *not* an integral and essential feature of the proem, the identification of the latter with the pattern found in Philo and John on the strength of one characteristic — viz. the use of two OT verses — alone is, of course, quite gratuitous. The same error, among others, underlies the confused and confusing account of the structures of Rabbinic homilies in Asher Finkel, *The Pharisees and the Teacher of Nazareth* (Leiden/Köln 1964), pp. 150 ff., especially p. 155; he claims to have identified in the NT "proem-homilies" (pp. 154 f.), "pericope-homilies" (pp. 159 ff.) and "Yelammedenu-homilies" (pp. 169 ff.).

* This chapter is based on a paper which was published (in Hebrew) in the *Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies — Papers*, (Jerusalem 1969), Vol. II, pp. 43 f.

¹⁵ Theodor, *passim*; Maybaum, pp. 9 f.; Bacher, pp. 1 f.; Albeck, G.R., p. 17; Mann; Strack-Billerbeck, p. 173.

and that it was followed by further sections, in which the preacher would continue to develop his theme, using other forms. However, the advocates of this view do not trouble to state their reasons; apparently the very name *petiḥa*, from p-t-ḥ, "to open", is sufficient, in their opinion, for assuming that the proems are mere opening sections of the sermon. In addition, the fact that a good many — though by no means all — proems are rather brief may have suggested that such comparatively short pieces cannot have made up the sermon in its entirety. Only two scholars, P. Bloch¹⁶ more than eighty years ago and L. Baeck¹⁷ in our time, arrived at the opposite conclusion that the proem was, indeed, an entity complete in itself and that it constituted the entire sermon — at least originally. Bloch's view was rejected out of hand by all later scholars,¹⁸ except Baeck, without any reasoned argument. This was perhaps due to the far-fetched explanation offered by Bloch for the creation of this form-pattern,¹⁹ which is, indeed, the great weakness of his theory. But his detailed analysis of the proem-form demonstrates his grasp of its pattern and his understanding of its rhetorical qualities. As regards matters of form and structure he saw more clearly and penetrated more deeply than his successors. In any case it is still necessary to re-examine the evidence regarding the original nature and function of the proem and to answer the question — hardly ever raised — of its original *Sitz im Leben* and of the purpose for which it came into being.

Not much weight can be attached to the name *petiḥa*, for the root p-t-ḥ may be used also in the sense of "preaching", "delivering a sermon", as clearly emerges from the material collected and analysed by Bacher.²⁰ This usage in itself is, perhaps, surprising, but we may be able, presently, to offer an explanation for it. That much is clear, however, that if in Rabbinic terminology this root also signifies "preaching", we can no longer argue that the *petiḥa* is but an introduction to the sermon on the strength of its name alone. Nor does the comparative briefness of proems in itself constitute a decisive argument that such short compositions cannot have been complete sermons by themselves.²¹ The length of the sermon depends, obviously, on the custom and the taste of each era; there may have been times when the public expected lengthy discourses and others when it had no patience for

¹⁶ Pp. 183 f., 215 f.

¹⁷ Pp. 158 f.

¹⁸ Maybaum, p. 9, n. 2.

¹⁹ Viz. that by using this pattern, which invariably concludes with the first words of the lesson, in their sermons the preachers intended to impress upon the memory of the audience these words which, usually, also serve as the name of the pericope; pp. 216 f.

²⁰ P. 26 f.; idem, E.T., s.v. "פתח".

²¹ Cf. Albeck's argument — in a different context — in Zunz-Albeck, p. 115.

them.²² Besides, we shall presently discover a good reason why the proem-type of homily was liable to be comparatively short. Moreover, a good many extant proems are of quite reasonable length even if we assume them to be complete sermons. And the shorter ones, too, may easily have been more elaborate when they were actually delivered before an audience; they may have been abbreviated or summarized in the course of being handed down orally and, eventually, committed to writing.²³

Serious thought must be given to the pertinent question raised by Bloch²⁴ that if the proems are but opening sections of sermons — where, then, are the sermons themselves? For in most of the classical Midrashim we find at the beginning of each chapter or section a number of proems, followed either by a running commentary, made up of dozens of individual, independent items, on the whole text, verse by verse (as e.g. in *Genesis Rabba*) or else by a number of expositions, again mostly unconnected with one another, all of which together do not, in the majority of cases, equal in extent the proems preceding them (as e.g. in *Leviticus Rabba* or *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana*). Hence the “body of the sermon”, as postulated by most scholars, seems not to have been preserved at all. Moreover, the considerable number of extant proems for each pericope would suggest that a good many such sermons must have been in existence, not a single one of which has, apparently, come down to us! Theodor’s theory²⁵ that each chapter in *Genesis Rabba*, with its several proems and the dozens of disjointed comments following upon them, constitutes the actual sermon as it was delivered in public has been rejected as absurd already by Maybaum.²⁶ But the only alternative theory, that of Maybaum himself²⁷, is hardly more acceptable. He claims that the only part of the sermon which could be shaped freely by each preacher was the introduction, viz. the proem; whereas the “body of the sermon” was fixed by tradition and not variable. This is why the editors of the Midrashim had before them a variety of proems, but only one “version” of the main sermon, in each case. But it seems highly improbable that the preachers

²² We know of sermons of considerable length delivered by talmudic sages; cf. e.g., Bezaḥ 15b. However, some such sermons would appear to have been addressed not to the people at large, but to the disciples of the preacher.

²³ Cf. E. Bin Gorion, *Sheviley Ha-Aggada* (Jerusalem 1940), pp. 170f., who demonstrates how, at times, folktales and other aggadic material were reduced to merest skeletons in talmudic sources. The extreme brevity of formulation of halakhic material — which often causes even the omission of vitally important conditions — is a well-known phenomenon, which need not here be illustrated.

²⁴ Pp. 183f.

²⁵ Mainly: Vol. XXX, pp. 505f.

²⁶ Hom., pp. 8f.

²⁷ Pp. 35f.; Hom., pp. 8f.

would be satisfied to deliver — and the audiences to listen to — the very same sermon, with only a new opening section, every three years²⁸ (or, in the case of the festival lessons, even every year!). Moreover, wherever we possess different Midrashim to the same sections of the Pentateuch (as e.g. *Genesis Rabba* and *Tanhuma* on Genesis) we find, in fact, that not only the proems, but also the sections following them, are utterly different. Hence Bloch’s twofold question: Where do the many proems come from, and why did the sermons, allegedly attached to them, disappear?, has still not lost its force.

Not only has the school which considers the proems mere introductions to the sermon failed to offer any proof for its contention, but a good many pertinent arguments may be raised against it. Baeck²⁹ has demonstrated that some proems, at least, are complete entities from the point of view of their contents, as they develop a complete set of ideas, which does not require any continuation or further elaboration. More important still are considerations of form: if we disregard the unlikely assumption that all those portions of the original sermons, which followed after the proems, have disappeared without leaving a trace, we must regard what comes after the proem or proems in, e.g., *Genesis Rabba* as the sermon itself, if the proems are but introductions of the complete homily. But if so, we are faced by an amazing contrast: The opening section of the sermon, skillfully built to achieve the maximum rhetorical effect, is followed by the body of the sermon which lacks all form or shape and is made up of a hotch-potch of individual comments, joined together mechanically.³⁰ It is impossible to imagine that a preacher, blessed with a sense of form and structure and capable of constructing a proem which is a striking piece of rhetorical art, will suddenly be deserted by his gift and forego any further attempt to impart to his sermon some definite shape. In the opening part of his homily he knew how to build up tension and to arouse anticipation on the part of his audience, but — having done so — he throws away his impressive achievement and continues to offer bits and pieces, devoid of all organic structure and continuity. No such theory of the art and skill of the preacher can be seriously entertained.

There can be little doubt then that the proems were originally complete sermons in themselves. But this inference alone is not enough, for we must also account for the special, striking formal structure of the proem. Why is it

²⁸ In fact, the duration of the so-called triennial cycle seems to have been three years and several months; cf. my articles in *Tarbiz XXXIII* (1964), pp. 367f. and in *JJS*, as above, n. 2.

²⁹ Pp. 162f.

³⁰ A similar argument was put forward by Bloch, p. 186.

that the proem is always arranged "upside-down", that is to say, why does the preacher invariably begin his homily with a verse from some remote part of the Bible and only at the very end arrive at the beginning of the weekly — or festival — lesson? What makes him choose this particular structure in which the beginning of the pericope inevitably becomes the conclusion of the sermon? The incongruity of this pattern is especially noticeable in the so-called "composite" proem in which the preacher offers, one after the other, a variety of interpretations of some verse, e.g. from Proverbs, of which only one connects up with the first verse of the lesson of the day.³¹ But the particular interpretation which establishes the link with the beginning of the pericope invariably comes last, even where a different order would be preferable logically or chronologically. The preacher seemingly finds himself under compulsion to insist on a topsy-turvy arrangement because he must conclude with the first verse of the lesson. Perhaps the most striking example of this phenomenon, apparently inherent in the pattern, may be found in the proem of R. Isaac in *Lamentations Rabba* (ed. Buber, No. XI)³². He opens with "Because thou didst not serve the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart . . . therefore thou shalt serve thy enemy. . ." (Deut. xxviii:47 f.) and illustrates this motif by opposing the verses of the first chapter of Lamentations, one by one, to verses of "blessing" collected from the Pentateuch, using the formula: "If you had been found worthy, you would read in the Torah 'Thou bringest them in, plantest them in the mountain of Thine inheritance' (Exod. xv:17); now that you have not been found worthy, you read 'Let all their wickedness come before Thee; and do unto them as Thou hast done unto me. . .'" (Lam. i:22), etc. However, being obliged to conclude with the *first* verse of Lam. I, he has no choice but to start with the last verse and work back to the beginning of the chapter; thus he quotes the entire chapter upside-down, and this in spite of the fact that it is arranged alphabetically! If the preachers

³¹ Cf. above, p. 102.

³² Cf. Buber's comment in the introduction to his edition of *Lam. Rabba*, p. 3. However, there are no real grounds for doubting the authenticity of this proem. Bacher, p. 54, considers this proem authentic; cf. also *Bacher Am.* Vol. II, p. 281. Buber in his notes *ad loc.* claims that the author of the proem intended to provide a twofold alphabetic sequence in reversed order based on the verses from Lam. I and additional verses from various parts of the Pentateuch beginning with the same letters; this is not so, but the complementary verses from the Pentateuch merely correspond to those from Lam. through using the same expression or central concept in the "opposite" context; cf. Bacher, *Am. ibid.*, n. 3. In *Midrash Aggadah*, ed. Buber, p. 281, R. Isaac's proem is quoted in an "improved" version, in which all the verses have been re-arranged according to their order in Lam. I. However, it is obvious that this can not be the original order, for in a proem the verse from the beginning of the pericope must, of course, come at the end.

went to such lengths — to destroy completely the organic order and coherence of an entire chapter of the Bible — in order to obey the formal requirements of the proem-pattern, we are surely entitled to assume that these latter stem from its very nature and from its *Sitz im Leben*.

There is one, and only one, hypothesis which will explain why those who used this pattern found themselves compelled to turn the beginning (of the pericope) into the end (of the proem), even when it involved the complete destruction of the order of the scriptural text, and that is: that the proems were originally sermons delivered before the scriptural lesson itself. If the preacher was striving, by means of his sermon, to provide an introduction to the actual reading of the pericope, which would follow immediately afterwards, we can well understand why he insisted on concluding with the first verse (or verses) of the portion about to be read. The proem and the reading following upon it were conceived as one organic entity, the latter beginning where the former left off. This hypothesis would also account for some of the other characteristics of the proem. Thus, e.g., the relative brevity of a good many proems becomes intelligible. A sermon which serves merely as an introduction may indeed be comparatively short, for the Bible reading which follows occupies the place of central importance in this type of service. Again, a sermon of this pattern must not engage in details of exposition of the biblical passage — which has not yet been read — but will mainly serve the purpose of drawing attention to one of its aspects or implications and to focus the mind of the audience on its general significance. Hence, most verses chosen for opening proems are taken from the Wisdom-Books, from Psalms and the like, that is to say from books in which mostly general ideas are presented in the form of maxims³³ which in the proem are applied to the particular subject matter of the pericope, serving to place it in a wider perspective. Perhaps we are now in a position to understand how it came about that the verb *p-t-h*, lit. "to open", became synonymous in rabbinic usage with "to preach", if it was, indeed, the custom during a considerable period of time — as may be concluded from the enormous number of proems which have come down to us — to deliver sermons before the reading from the Bible, by way of "opening" or introduction to the latter. "The order of the reading", which we assume to have been customary at the time, was composed of three parts: the opening (= *petiḥah*, i.e. the sermon); the reading from the Torah; the *haftarah* (i.e. the reading from the prophets). This arrangement certainly lends support to the view of those scholars who believe that verses from the Hagiographa were preferred for the proems, so

³³ Cf. Maybaum, pp. 37f.; Albeck, *G.R.*, p. 14. Where the texts used are from the Prophets, they are almost invariably chosen from the Later Prophets, in which verses of the type indicated are also frequently found.

as to provide an opportunity to recite passages from all three parts of the Bible: The proem — Hagiographa; the reading — Pentateuch: the *haftarah* — Prophets.³⁴

Is there any evidence at all to support our contention that there was a time when sermons were delivered prior to the reading from the Torah? There would seem to be at least one source which tells us so, if only we understand it to mean exactly what it says. In two passages of the Babylonian Talmud a series of proems has been preserved; namely in Megillah 10b proems relating to the Book of Esther and in Makkot 10b to the law of the cities of refuge. In both cases a more explicit introductory formula than those generally found in the Midrashim is used: "R. So-and-so made an opening for this *parashata* (portion) from here" (after which follows the verse with which the proem opens).³⁵ There can be no doubt that *parasha* or *parashata* refer without exception to biblical texts,³⁶ hence the plain meaning of this formula is: R. So-and-so provided an opening for this biblical reading (e.g. the reading of Esther on Purim); i.e. he preached a sermon before its reading by way of introduction.³⁷

Some further indications confirm our inference. Soferim xiv. 12³⁸ lays down that the number of verses required for the *haftarah* may be reduced "if the lesson has been translated (into Aramaic) or if a sermon has been delivered"; *ergo* — the sermon used to be delivered before the reading of the *haftarah*. A certain analogy can be seen also in the sermons delivered on public fast-days;³⁹ these, too, preceded the special prayers, which occupied the central position in the service. And lastly, most of Yannai's

³⁴ Bacher, pp. 9f.; Albeck, G.R., p. 14; Mann, p. 12. However, the use of texts from the Hagiographa never became an absolute norm, and there are a considerable number of proems on Pentateuch-lessons which use opening verses from the Prophets or even from the Pentateuch itself. The "order of reading" indicated above suggests that the name "Haftarah" for the prophetic reading may, indeed, mean "conclusion" (of the reading) in contrast to *petihah* (opening), as claimed by some scholars, e.g. I. Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst etc.*, p. 175 and Mann, p. 555.

³⁵ Cf. also the similar formula in *Exod. Rabba* i:8. The explanation in M. Mirkin's edition of *Midrash Rabba* (Tel Aviv 1959), Vol. V, p. 18, misses the point; Hos. v:7 served, of course, as the opening verse of a proem relating to *Exod. i:8*, and not *vice versa*. The same applies to S. Lehrman's translation in the Soncino edition of *Midrash Rabba*, Vol. III, 1939, p. 10: "The Rabbis commenced this discourse with this verse"; קרא means a scriptural text, not a discourse! Cf. also M. Lzarus' translation of Makk. 10b, in the Soncino edition of the *Babylonian Talmud*, *Nezikin*, Vol. VIII, 1935, Makkot, p. 66; פירשתיא does not mean discourse.

³⁶ Bacher, E.T., s.v. "פרשה".

³⁷ Against the explanation of Rabbi, Meg. *ibid.*, s.v. "פתח".

³⁸ Higger's edition: XIII 15. Cf. also XII 7 (Higger's edition: XII 6).

³⁹ Mishnah Ta'anit II 1 and Tosefta, *ibid.*, I 8.

liturgical poems, which are, in a sense, a substitute for sermons — as stated explicitly in an introduction by a later poet, which became attached to one of Yannai's poems: "and in place of a sermon I say this"⁴⁰ —, are in the form of *qedushatot*, that is to say, they were intended for the morning service and thus preceded the reading from the Torah. This practice of Yannai's in the fifth or sixth century⁴¹ would seem to reflect an earlier custom of a sermon being delivered before the reading.⁴²

It is not, of course, suggested that all sermons at all times were delivered prior to the scriptural lesson; for we know of sermons preached after the *haftarah*,⁴³ or at the conclusion of the entire morning service,⁴⁴ on Sabbath afternoon⁴⁵ or on Sabbath eve.⁴⁶ But the very existence of the proem-pattern and the frequency of its occurrence make it certain that for a considerable period of time sermons must have been delivered before the reading; because this particular form-pattern could have been evolved only for the purpose of a sermon which served as an introduction to the lesson. This is not to say, however, that all extant proems necessarily played this role in actual practice. It is quite possible that at some later stage, when the proem-pattern had already become popular, preachers would use proems as introductions for sermons of a different and more complex structure, for the purpose of embellishment. And when the editors of the Midrashim began their activities and apparently strove to collect as many proems as possible at the beginning of each of their homilies, they may also have composed additional proems which were never delivered as actual sermons before an audience. The reason for the great popularity which the proem-form seems to have enjoyed is to be found in its formal characteristics; for here we have a pattern which, due to its clearly defined and closely-knit structure and the elements of expectation and surprise inherent in it, was bound to possess a special attraction for the audience.

⁴⁰ I. Davidson, *Mahzor Yannai* (New York 1919), p. xxxviii; cf. also: Z. M. Rabinowiz, *Halakhah We-Aggadah Be-Fiyutey Yannay* (Tel Aviv 1965).

⁴¹ Cf. J. Schirrmann, *JQR* XLIV (1953), pp. 123f.; also: "Yannay, The Liturgical Poet", *Keshet* VI, (1964), p. 64.

⁴² An echo of such a custom appears to have been preserved also in the Karaite Order of Prayers, which has brief "introductory readings" before the recital of Esther and Lamentations. These do not, of course, include rabbinic expositions, as the proems do, but merely arrangements of selected Bible verses, but of these latter a good many are identical with the ones used in proems to Esther and Lamentations respectively in the Midrashim and in the Talmud. This is by no means the only case where traces of an old Rabbinic custom have been preserved by the Karaites.

⁴³ Luke iv: 19 and Acts xiii: 14; cf. Zunz-Albeck, p. 167 and Maybaum, Hom., p. 11.

⁴⁴ Zunz-Albeck, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Yalqut Shim'oni*, Vol. II, § 964.

⁴⁶ *Lev. Rabba* ix: 9; P.T. Sotah 16d; before the morning service: Berakhot 30a.

III. TANNAITIC PROEMS AND THEIR FORMAL CHARACTERISTICS*

In order to trace the evolution of the proem-pattern we must try to establish when it first came into being and what were its characteristics during this formative period. There is sufficient evidence to point to the tannaitic era as being the time, when the proem first appeared; and various formal deviations, which occur comparatively frequently in the tannaitic proems indicate that the pattern had not as yet become fully established, nor had it yet attained the perfection and polish typical of its later stages of development.

Both Bacher and Albeck have enumerated proems the authors of which are Tanna'im. Bacher's list⁴⁷ includes the following items:

1. The proem of R. Joshua on Exod. xvii:8 ("Then came Amalek"), opening with Job viii:1 (*Mekhilta*, ed. Horowitz-Rabin, p. 176).
2. The proem of R. Eliezer b. Hyrkanos on Gen xiv:1 ("And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel"), opening with Ps. xxxvii:14 (*Gen. Rabba* xli [xlii]:1; cf. *Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, Lekh-lekha 10).
3. R. Akiva's proem on Deut. xxi:22, opening with Isa. v:18⁴⁸ (*Hoffmann Midrash Tannaim*, p. 131).⁴⁹
4. R. Simeon b. Yoḥai's proem on Lev. xi:1, opening with Hab. iii:6 (*Lev. Rabba* xiii:2).⁵⁰
5. A proem by Bar Qappara on Gen. i:1, opening with Ps xxxi:19 (*Gen. Rabba* i:5).
6. By the same on Gen v:1, opening with Ps. Lxix:25 (*Gen. Rabba* xxiv:3).
7. By the same on Lev. xxiv:1, opening with Ps xviii:29 (*Lev. Rabba* xxxi:4).
8. By the same on Lam. i:1, opening with Isa. xxii:12 (*Pesiqta de Rav Kahana* xv:3; ed. Buber, p. 119b).
9. A proem by Abba Kohen b. Daliah on Gen. xxxiv:1, opening with Job vi:7 (*Gen. Rabba* Lxxx:4).

* This chapter is based on a paper read at the Fifth World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem 1969.

⁴⁷ Pp. 20f.

⁴⁸ The choice of the verse "Woe unto them that draw iniquity with cords [lit. ropes] of vanity" as opening of the proem on Deut. xxi:22, dealing with the hanging of the body of a man put to death would seem to be due to the — conscious or unconscious — association with the rope used for hanging.

⁴⁹ Bacher, p. 22, notes that the same exposition is recorded elsewhere not in proem-style.

⁵⁰ The proem ascribed to R. Simeon b. Yoḥai in *Lam. Rabba* (ed. Buber, Proem XXXI), is not, apparently, authentic; cf. Bacher, p. 24, n. 4.

Albeck⁵¹ enumerates three "proem-openings"⁵² to be found in the tannaitic Midrashim, viz. No. 1 of Bacher; *Sifra* on Lev. iv:7 (ed. Weiss, p. 43b): "'And Moses said unto Aaron', this is what Scripture says 'Moses and Aaron among his priests'"; *Sifre* on Deut. iii:23 (§ 26): "'And I besought the Lord at that time saying', this is what Scripture says 'The poor useth entreaties; but the rich answers impudently'" (Prov. xviii:23).⁵³ He further refers to the proem of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai in *Gen. Rabba* iii:3, opening with Prov. xv:23⁵⁴ and to Nos. 2, 5, 6 and 9 of Bacher's list. Apparently this is not meant to be an exhaustive list, nor does Albeck wish to decide finally regarding the authenticity of each item, for he raises queries regarding some of them elsewhere in his commentary on *Gen. Rabba* (see below).

There are, indeed, several among the above proems which must be considered doubtful. In some of the cases it is not certain if they are, in fact, proems (and this includes, as we shall see, all those found in the tannaitic Midrashim). Concerning some others, there remain queries as regards their authorship. This applies to No. 4, which is largely composed of amoraic material, and to Nos. 5, 6 and 9.⁵⁵ On the other hand, No. 2 would appear to be an authentic proem by R. Eliezer, even though in *Gen. Rabba* it is quoted as part of a proem by R. Levi, while in *Tanhuma* (ed. Buber, Lekh-lekha 7) the proem itself is cited in the name of R. Tanḥuma b. Abba and afterwards (§ 10) comes the story about R. Eliezer, which concludes:

On what subject was R. Eliezer preaching at the time? Our sages said: on this subject "And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel" — R. Eliezer b. H. opened "The wicked have drawn out their sword... their sword shall enter into their own heart...", all that which is found at the beginning of the homily (viz. § 7).

⁵¹ G.R., p. 17.

⁵² That is to say, apparently, "incomplete proems", the concluding section of which has not been preserved.

⁵³ The two proems last mentioned are listed in Bacher's book in the second chapter, entitled "Expositions of Pentateuch verses with the aid of verses from Prophets and Hagiographa"; while Chapter III is called "Tanna'im as authors of proems". It follows that the items enumerated in Ch. II are not considered real proems by Bacher, even though he refers to the ones mentioned above in a special paragraph (p. 17), pointing out that they are the only ones in the tannaitic Midrashim which use the formula *וזה שאמר הכתוב*, which, later on, "came to be used generally" (in proems); but cf. above, p. 103. Apparently for this same reason Albeck mentions these two as "proem-openings", even though there are a good many other passages in the halakhic Midrashim, where a Pentateuch verse is expounded by reference to a text from the Hagiographa. On the other hand, both Bacher and Albeck include the proem on Exod. xvii:8, though it does not have the above formula, because it is the only "complete proem" found in the tannaitic Midrashim; for only here is the first verse of the pericope cited again at the end, as required.

⁵⁴ Which was, apparently, overlooked by Bacher; cf. Albeck, G.R., p. 17, n. 5.

⁵⁵ Cf. Albeck, G.R., pp. 16-17.

Bacher⁵⁶ argues convincingly, that there would have been no reason to ascribe just this particular proem to R. Eliezer, unless there had been a definite tradition to this effect. In addition, we shall presently disclose a weighty reason for identifying this proem as a very early, i.e. a tannaitic one. It is, in fact, the oldest proem known to us, for it is ascribed to R. Eliezer in his youth, i.e. before the destruction of the Temple. According to *Tanhuma* the proem reads:

"The wicked have drawn out [lit. opened] their sword. . .", those are the four kings, Amraphel and his associates; for up to that time there had been no war in the world and then they came and "opened with the sword", as it is said "And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel" — they began making war. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: You wicked ones, you have opened with the sword — may the sword enter into the heart of these men, as it is said "Their sword shall enter into their own heart". Immediately Abraham rose up against them and killed them, as it is said "And he divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and smote them. . ." (Gen. xiv:15).

If we momentarily disregard the "proems" in the tannaitic Midrashim, which present a special problem which we shall discuss presently, we may consider the following to be authentic tannaitic proems: The one of R. Simeon in *Genesis Rabba* iii; and Nos. 2, 3, 7, 8 of Bacher's list. These items, though few in number, are nevertheless sufficient to establish beyond doubt that the Tanna'im already employed the proem form in their sermons, though perhaps only on comparatively rare occasions. This is also Bacher's view;⁵⁷ moreover, he argues, that in view of the tannaitic proems which can be definitely identified, we are entitled to assume that among the numerous anonymous proems there also may be quite a number of early ones.⁵⁸ Albeck, too, concludes: "All this goes to prove that already in the days of the Tanna'im it was customary to open sermons with a proem; though such proems were short and simple ones, like that of R. Simeon. . ."⁵⁹

To the proems listed so far we may add one more — a masterpiece of rhetorical art — the sermon of R. Eleazar b. Azariah on Eccl. xii:11, as it is found in *Hagigah* 3a-b. Strack-Billerbeck⁶⁰ in their excursus on the rabbinic sermon cite this homily as their first example of the proem-form; they point out that this sermon was, apparently, delivered on the Sabbath on which Exod. xx:1 f. was the weekly pericope. Let us quote the full text:

⁵⁶ P. 21; cf. also Mann, pp. 105f.

⁵⁷ P. 20.

⁵⁸ P. 110.

⁵⁹ G. R., p. 17; concerning the (relative) brevity of a good many proems, cf. above, p. 109.

⁶⁰ P. 178.

"The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails well planted are the words of masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd". Why are the words of the Torah likened to a goad? To teach you that just as the goad directs the heifer along its furrow in order to bring forth life to the world, so the words of the Torah direct those who study them from the paths of death to the paths of life. But [should you think] that just as the goad is movable so the words of the Torah are movable, therefore the text says "nails". But [should you think] that just as the nail does [not]⁶¹ diminish and does not increase, so too the words of the Torah do [not] diminish and do not increase; therefore the text says "well planted"; just as the plant grows and increases, so the words of the Torah grow and increase. "The masters of assemblies", these are the disciples of the wise, who sit in manifold assemblies and occupy themselves with the Torah; some pronouncing unclean and others pronouncing clean, some prohibiting and others permitting, some declaring unfit and others declaring fit. Perhaps a man might say: If so, how shall I learn Torah? Therefore the text says: (all of them)⁶² "are given from one shepherd"! One God gave them; one leader uttered them, from the mouth of the Lord of all creation, blessed be He; for it is written: "And God spoke all these words". Also do thou make thine ear like the hopper and get thee a perceptive heart to understand the words of those who pronounce unclean and the words of those who pronounce clean, the words of those who prohibit and the words of those who permit, the words of those who declare unfit and the words of those who declare fit!

It must be pointed out, however, that only according to the version in *Hagigah* 3 can this sermon be identified as a proem on Exod. xx:1, since the alternative versions of the story about R. Joshua, who asked his disciples when they came to visit him, what sermon R. Eleazar had preached in Jabneh on the previous Sabbath, either do not have this section at all⁶³ or else omit the quotation of Exod. xx:1,⁶⁴ without which there are no grounds at all for considering this a proem. Nevertheless it appears reasonable to assume in this case that the Babylonian Talmud has preserved the authentic version in approximately the original form.⁶⁵ And though, of course, the opening formula "He opened and preached" is not in itself sufficient proof that this was, indeed, a proem, we may nevertheless identify it as such, because of its form and structure which strikingly conform to the pattern.

⁶¹ Emended according to Tos. Soṭah VII 9; cf. Bacher, *Tann.* Vol. I, p. 224, n. 5, and Strack-Billerbeck, *ibid.*

⁶² Not in Ms. Munich.

⁶³ *Mekhila*, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 58; Yer. Hag. 75 d.

⁶⁴ Tos. Soṭah VII 9; *AdRN* XVIII 2.

⁶⁵ If the text under discussion was, indeed, a sermon on the pericope Exod. xx:1f., it cannot originally have been part of the report about R. Joshua and his disciples, for there it is stated that Deut. xxxi:12 was the lesson read on that particular Sabbath. However, this assumption is supported by the parallel versions, a good many of which do not, in fact, include the sermon on Exod. xx in this frame-work.

Moreover, only if considered as an exposition of Exod. xx, does this homily yield its full meaning and implications. There certainly cannot be any doubt that this is one of the few texts in talmudic and midrashic literature which have preserved a sermon (or, more precisely, the outline of a sermon) as it was actually preached before an audience. This sermon, in spite of its brevity in the version which has come down to us, still exhibits marked rhetorical features, such as the rhythmicallines (which appear again at the end):⁶⁶

Some pronouncing unclean	and others pronouncing clean
Some prohibiting	and others permitting
Some declaring unfit	and others declaring fit

each of which is subdivided into two contrasting halves, the use of rhetorical questions and the vivid figure of speech in the peroration: "make thine ear like a hopper...", in which, by using the second person singular, the preacher addresses himself, as it were, to each member of the audience individually. This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the ideas expressed in this sermon; let us but point out that R. Eleazar purposely opens his homily on the chapter describing the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai with a verse referring to "the words of the wise", in order to emphasize that the written Torah and the "Torah of the Sages" are one and the same. Even though the "words of the wise" are dynamic by nature and manyfaced and "grow and increase", even though they change in each generation and create the impression as if there were many "Torot", they were, nevertheless, "given from one shepherd"; and this "Torah of the Sages" is the "Torah of Life", which "directs those who study it to the paths of life", and without which the written Torah, given from Sinai, would lack its vital force. Undoubtedly, the quotation from Exod. xx "And God spoke all these words" must be understood in this context: "God spoke *all* these words" — those of the written as well as those of the oral Torah.

However, if we accept this homily as a proem by one of the sages of the end of the first century — and in this case we are no longer dealing with a "short and simple" one, but with a sermon in which a complex set of ideas is fully developed and which makes skilful use of all the means of rhetorical art — we must take note of the following significant formal deviation. After citing the first verse of the pericope, with which, by rights, it ought to conclude, the proem continues with a kind of peroration which summarizes its main message in a striking and impressive manner. However, while it is rare for a proem to have any further additions after the opening verse of the pericope, this is not entirely unknown. Nevertheless it seems significant that

⁶⁶ In Ms. Munich they recur a third time: "Perhaps a man might say: since some pronounce unclean and other pronounce clean etc. etc., how shall I learn the Torah?"

we find the same phenomenon once more among the handful of tannaitic proems known to us, viz. in the proem of Bar Qappara on Lev. xxiv:2:

"For Thou dost light my lamp; the Lord my God doth lighten my darkness" (Ps. xviii:29). The Holy One said to man: your lamp is in my hand and my lamp is in your hand; your lamp is in my hand: "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord" (Prov. xx:27); my lamp is in your hand: "To cause a lamp to burn continually". The Holy One said: If you have lit my lamp, I shall light your lamp.

Here too the summing-up of the main idea follows after the citation from the beginning of the pericope "to cause a lamp to burn continually".⁶⁷

However, such appendixes are found, though rarely, also in proems of a later date, e.g. in a proem on Lev. xxvi:42: "Then I will remember My covenant with Jacob etc.",⁶⁸ which evolves the theme that whenever a series of things are enumerated in the Torah in different places in varying order, it is to show that they are equal to each other, and concludes:

"I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and also My covenant with Isaac etc.", this teaches that all three are equal to each other⁶⁹ (Lev. Rabba xxxvi:1).

At times the verse from the Hagiographa which opens the proem is applied to a number of cases and only at the end to the one mentioned in the pericope; here again it may happen that this last interpretation demands some additional brief comment after the citation of the first verse of the pericope, as in Lev. Rabba i:4 on Lev. i:1:

"Then thou spokest in vision to Thy godly ones, and saidst: I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Ps. lxxxix:20) — this refers to Moses... all Israel stand before Mount Sinai and say "if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die" (Deut. v:22), but Moses hears the voice of the the word itself and lives... for, from among all of them, the word called only Moses, as it is said "And the Lord called unto Moses etc." (Lev i:1). "I have exalted one chosen out of the people" — "Had not Moses his chosen stood before Him in the breach etc." (Ps. cvi:23).⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Obviously, the phrase "to cause a lamp etc." constitutes the required citation from the beginning of the pericope, and there is neither need nor justification for adding again, at the end, "Command the children of Israel," as is done by M. Margulies in his edition, p. 717.

⁶⁸ This pericope is not otherwise known, but clearly was part of the lectionary reflected in Lev. Rabba; cf. my article "Chapters of Doubtful Authenticity in Lev. Rabba", *Tarbiz* XXXVII (1968), p. 340f. (Hebrew).

⁶⁹ Cf. Margulies in his commentary *ad loc.*, that in some manuscripts the concluding phrase has been omitted, apparently "in order not to spoil the proem form".

⁷⁰ Other examples: Gen. Rabba i:1; i:6; xix:1; xxiv:5 (cf. variant readings and notes in the Theodor-Albeck edition); Lev. Rabba xx:1; Deut. Rabba, ed. Lieberman, p. 2, end of § 3, etc.

Hence an addition at the end of the proem, though unusual, cannot be considered to break or destroy the pattern. Nevertheless, it seems that some of the (later) preachers were faced with a dilemma in such cases, whether to prefer the full development of the theme at the expense of a deviation from the form-pattern, or rather to leave the sermon incomplete at its end, so as to be able to conclude with the first verse from the pericope. Hence the cases where a series of expositions of a text from the Hagiographa, for example, refer to a number of events one after the other, but when the preacher has reached the beginning of the pericope, he refrains from the further exposition of the (second half of the) verse, as, e.g., in *Lev. Rabba* xi:4.⁷¹ It seems that in the course of time, as the proem-pattern became more fully established, most preachers would leave their sermons incomplete rather than "spoil the form" by adding further comments at the end; but this never became a definite rule, and certainly was not insisted upon in the tannaitic period when the pattern had not yet become fully stabilized.

A far more radical departure from the pattern, however, must be noted in one of the other tannaitic proems, that of R. Eliezer b. Hyrkanos. R. Eliezer joins the first half of the verse "The wicked ones have drawn out their sword" to the beginning of the pericope "And it came to pass in the days of Amraphel" (*Gen. xiv:1*), but then goes on to interpret the second half as referring to *xiv:15* "And he divided himself against them... and smote them", thus concluding the proem by quoting the fifteenth verse of the pericope, instead of the first or second one! This type of deviation is to be found nowhere else among the proems known to us.⁷² But, strangely enough, we find it again, though in a less extreme form, in another of the tannaitic proems listed above. R. Simeon's proem on the beginning of Genesis quotes *Prov. xv:23* and interprets its first half as referring to *Gen. i:3*, and then goes on to apply its second half to the fourth verse of the pericope, with the quotation of which the proem concludes (*Gen. Rabba* iii:3).⁷³ It would seem that we are entitled to add together the two phenomena observed —

⁷¹ Cf. Margulies *ad loc.* Other examples: *Pesiqta de Rav Kahana* vi:2 (ed. Buber, pp. 59a–60a), where the second half of *Prov. xiii:25* is not expounded in the concluding section; *ibid.* ii:6 (ed. Buber, pp. 14a–b and 14b–15b); *Gen. Rabba* Liii:4; compare also *Gen. Rabba* xl:1 to xlv:1 and Albeck's Introduction, p. 8.

⁷² The only apparent exception to this rule, the first proem in *Lev. Rabba* v (Margulies' edition, p. 98–109) is due to the mistaken assumption that the chapter relates to the pericope beginning with *Lev. iv:1*, whereas, in fact, it is a homily on a pericope which started *Lev. iv:13*; hence, it concludes correctly with this verse; cf. my article in *Tarbiz* XXXVII, pp. 349–350.

⁷³ Albeck, G.R., p. 12, mentions this as an example of a proem concluding with the second verse of the pericope; however, it is self-evident that the pericope started with *Gen. i:1*, hence the proem quotes its fourth verse at its conclusion.

that of an additional exposition at the end of the proem and that of proems concluding with a verse not from the beginning of the pericope but following later on in the chapter — and consider them evidence that the proem-form had not yet been "worked out" fully in tannaitic times. It can hardly be a coincidence that each of the two formal deviations discussed should occur twice among the few tannaitic proems extant. Surely this proves that in the tannaitic period the proem was still in its formative stage, when no rigorous "rules" had yet become accepted as regards the details of its form and structure. The preachers still considered themselves at liberty to introduce formal variations as they thought fit. Hence we may consider the radical deviation occurring in the proem on *Gen. xiv* clear-cut evidence that this is, indeed, a very early proem, and therefore, presumably R. Eliezer really was its author; for neither R. Levi nor R. Tanhuma b. Abba would have permitted themselves any longer such a far-reaching departure from the conventional pattern. Taken together with the small number of tannaitic proems known to us (among which, again, a large percentage belongs to Bar Qappara of the last generation of Tanna'im), these phenomena enable us to arrive at a definite chronological conclusion: till the end of the tannaitic period the proem-pattern does not appear to have been in frequent use and certainly had not yet become the most favoured form of the sermon. No definite rules or norms regarding the details of its form had yet come to be accepted, the pattern being still relatively flexible and, hence, less polished and less elegant. We shall find further confirmation of this conclusion, when we now examine the alleged proems found in the tannaitic Midrashim.

So far we have been dealing with deviations regarding some formal detail or other, which do not affect the proem-pattern as such. But when we turn to the so-called proems in the tannaitic Midrashim, we find them so radically different from the standard form, in spite of a certain superficial similarity, that we cannot consider them proems at all. There is, indeed, a common feature: namely, the openings under discussion expound a verse from the Pentateuch in the light of a text from the Hagiographa, as do the proems; and Bacher rightly believes this hermeneutical method of the Tanna'im to have been the foundation for the development of the proem-form. But in the examples found in the tannaitic Midrashim the relationship between the two verses is precisely the opposite one from that typical of the proems. In the latter, the verse taken from "elsewhere" serves as starting point, while the one from the beginning of the pericope is the "destination", which the preacher strives to reach at the end; whereas in the tannaitic Midrashim the preacher uses the text of the pericope as his point of departure and, having quoted it, he interprets it with the aid of the verse from the Hagiographa. Consequently here the first verse of the lesson must be quoted at the

outset, whereas in the proem, there is no need to cite it at the beginning at all. On the other hand, in the above type of exposition the first verse of the pericope need not be quoted again at the end of the exposition, and in most cases it is, indeed, not repeated. But a proem which does not have the beginning of the pericope at its conclusion is no proem at all. This basic difference between the two forms is underlined by the connecting formulas used in the tannaitic Midrashim, e.g.: "That the congregation of the Lord be not as sheep which have no shepherd" this is explained in the Hagiographa: "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon" (Cant. i:7)" (*Sifre* Num. § 139)⁷⁴. This applies also to the exposition on Ex. xvii:8: "Then came Amalek", which Bacher considers a proem, because the above verse recurs again at the end of the passage; for here, too, the connecting formula between the two verses, "This verse is written here but has been explained by Job", makes it evident that the verse from the pericope serves as point of departure. Likewise the two examples quoted by Albeck as "proem-openings", even though they use the formula "This is what Scripture says", are no proems, for at least in the first of them (*Sifra* on Lev. ix:7) the beginning of the pericope is not quoted again at the end; hence its appearance at the beginning of the exposition is vital and the structure as a whole is the opposite of that of the proem. As regards the formula "This is what Scripture says", we have already pointed out⁷⁵ that it is not an essential part of the proem and did not appear at all in live sermons in proem-form, hence the apparent "similarity" is but an illusion. The relatively large number of such tannaitic "pseudo-proems", which possess all the elements necessary for creating a proem and could easily have been presented in proem-form,⁷⁶ is additional evidence that the proem was still comparatively rare in tannaitic times and had not yet attained the "preferred" status which it possesses in later generations.

Only with regard to one of the above examples is it possible to consider whether it is not, after all, a proem, namely the one on Deut. iii:23, opening with Prov. xviii:23. After a number of comments, comparing Moses and David and their respective prayers, there is a further section, starting: "By ten names is prayer called..." and concluding by again citing Deut. iii:23. If we consider this section, too, as part of the original sermon, then the pericope-verse is quoted at the end;⁷⁷ in this case we may therefore

⁷⁴ For further examples cf. Bacher, pp. 14f.

⁷⁵ Cf. above, p. 103f.

⁷⁶ Cf. Bacher, pp. 22-23.

⁷⁷ The homily, as it has been preserved, would fit the assumption that this is, indeed, the outline of an actual sermon, preached in public, even though some parts of it appear

consider its citation at the beginning of the sermon, followed by "This is what Scripture says" an addition of the editor, similar to the ones found in most aggadic Midrashim. Yet even this case is far from certain, for the frequent occurrence of "pseudo-proems" in the tannaitic Midrashim makes it quite possible, even probable, that here, too, the quotation of the pericope-text is authentic, and that this homily also belongs to the type which takes the beginning of the lesson for its starting point.

To sum up: All the data concerning proems in the tannaitic period point to the same conclusions. The relatively rare occurrence of genuine proems, taken together with the comparative frequency of pseudo-proems, both testify that the proem had not yet become the most favoured form of the sermon. In amoraic times, when the proem attains the favourite position, "pseudo-proems" are no longer found. The various formal deviations noted above either disappear altogether in later times or occur in special cases only, when they are unavoidable; and even when the full development of the theme would demand "spoiling the form", most preachers prefer an incomplete proem to one marred by a formal deviation. In the amoraic era the proem-pattern reaches its full development and acquires strict conventional rules of structure, formal perfection and polish. But in tannaitic times, when it was but one of many rhetorical forms used in the public sermon, the proem was still flexible and less stereotype.⁷⁸

to have been curtailed in transmission (there is no exposition of the second half of Prov. xviii:23; the section about the ten names by which prayer is called also appears rudimentary when compared to the version in *Deut. Rabba* ii:1).

Concerning the significance of the parable about the woman who ate unripe figs grown during the Sabbatical year, cf. S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York 1942), pp. 162f. However, it does not follow from Lieberman's analysis that the parable, as it is presented here, cannot be part of a genuine sermon delivered in tannaitic times; even though the parable underwent various mutations, all these could have occurred prior to the end of the second century. Finkelstein in his edition considers this parable not an authentic part of the text of *Sifre*, because "it has no connection with what goes before and what comes after it"; I entirely fail to understand his reasons for this assertion.

The second parable about "one who borrowed from the king" is given by I. Ziegler, *D. Königsgleichnisse* etc., p. 251, in a faulty version; the same applies to the translation in Strack-Billerbeck, p. 178.

⁷⁸ J.W. Bowker, "Speeches in Acts: A study in Proem and Yellammedenu form", *N.T. Studies* XIV (1967), p. 96, claims to have discovered in Acts xiii:16-41 a sermon in proem-form. There are rudiments of an opening-verse from I Sam. xiii:14 (*ibid.*, verse 22), he assumes the sermon to have related to a pericope Deut. iv:25-46. If this reconstruction were acceptable, it would lend support not only to the claim that the proem-form began to appear already in the first century, but also to our contention that in its formative stages the pattern exhibited various deviations from what later on became the standard form, since we have here, as B. points out, an introductory section, preceding the opening-verse from I Sam., which serves to establish a link between the pericope and the proem-text.

Since we have identified the proem as a pattern created to serve in comparatively brief sermons, preceding the scriptural reading, we may venture to suggest that towards the end of the second century the longer sermons, following upon the reading of the *haftara*, which had originally formed part of the morning service on Sabbaths and festivals,⁷⁹ were felt to be too much of a burden, perhaps because the service itself had become more extensive and cumbersome. Hence the sermon became divorced from the service and was delivered on Sabbath afternoons or, at times, on Friday night (in winter?). In order not to leave the morning service with its scriptural lesson devoid of any form of instruction, the short proem-form, preceding the reading, was developed and, eventually, from the third century onwards, became extremely popular.⁸⁰

It goes without saying that such introductory sections are not found in the classical proems known to us. According to Bowker, this departure from the standard form indicates that though "the proem-form was very nearly stabilized" at the time, there was "still room left for manoeuvre" (p. 104) — a conclusion which would fit in well enough with our own analysis. However, it seems to me that B. has failed signally to make out his case that the sermon in Acts is, indeed, a proem. Not only does the "opening-verse" appear in the middle of the homily, instead of at the beginning; it is not even quoted in full, but a partial paraphrase of it is interwoven into the words of the preacher himself. Nor can I discover any reference at all to the alleged pericope from Deut.; what is more, instead of concluding with a quotation from the beginning of the latter, as a proem ought to do, it quotes at its end — verbally and in full — a verse from the Prophets (Hab. i:5) instead (*ibid.* verse 41).

⁷⁹ Cf. above, p. 111 and n. 43.

⁸⁰ A further change of custom appears to have taken place by the fifth century, when the *qerovah* began to take the place of the sermon in the morning service; cf. above, p. 111.

Dr. Peter Schäfer, in his article "Die Petiḥa — ein Prooemium?", *Das Institutum Judaicum der Universität Tübingen* 1968–70, p. 83 f., while endorsing the view that the proems were complete sermons, takes issue with my theory (as published in my Hebrew paper, cf. above, p. 104), which believes them to be sermons preceding the actual reading from Scripture. His discussion concerning the possible meanings of the root p-t-ḥ in the various introductory formulas fails to convince me; the precise meaning of the term can, in any case, hardly be decisive, as it is never used by the preachers themselves. His attempt to explain the "topsy-turvy" arrangement of the *petiḥah* in terms of its inner structure — the description of which I accept — avoids the question, as to how and why this structure and its inner dynamics came into being — a perfectly legitimate and basic question in terms of form-criticism, which can not be ignored. Admittedly, there is little factual evidence for the existence of a custom of delivering sermons before the scriptural reading, but there is some; and what evidence there is can certainly not be said to be contradicted by those sources which speak of sermons after the *haftarah* or on Sabbath afternoon etc. — just as those sources can not be held to contradict one another, but, clearly, reflect the customs of different times (or places).