

Midrash Rabbah

1. Dr. Tamar Kadari, למלאכת העריכה במדרש שיר השירים רבה, pp. 391-392

https://www.academia.edu/42878853/Tamar_Kadari_On_the_Redaction_of_Midrash_Shir_haShirim_Rabbah_dissertation_Hebrew

במחקר קיימות ארבע גישות מרכזיות בשאלת קהל היעד עבורו נוצר החומר המצוי בחיבורים המדרשיים. הראשונה סבורה כי החיבורים נוצרו בעיקר מדרשות שנאמרו לפני הציבור הרחב. איסוף החומרים יחד על ידי עורך מאוחר אינו מטשטש את העובדה שהתוכן משקף דרשות שבעל פה שנועדו לקהל רחב של מאזינים. לפי עמדה אחרת, החיבורים נוצרו מדיונים של תלמידי חכמים ומוריהם בין כתלי בית המדרש. החומר יועד לאלוהי מצימצמת של תלמידי חכמים, ובשלב מאוחר יותר כונס וגובש על פי עקרונות הדומים לאופן הלימוד בבית המדרש. עמדה שלישית היא, כי החיבורים נוצרו כספרות מקצועית עבור דרשנים ומורים. המדרשים הם בעצם ספרי מקורות, שנועדו לעזור בהכנת דרשות לקהל או שיעורים לתלמידים. גישה זו מצמצמת עוד יותר את נמעניהם של המדרשים. עמדה רביעית היא, כי החיבורים המדרשיים הורכבו מחומרים שונים, אולם הם כבר אינם מייצגים את המקורות מהם הורכבו. המדרשים משקפים בעיקר את מלאכתם של העורכים ואת טעמים הספרותיים ומטרתיהם.

In the research there are four central approaches to the question of the target audience for which the material found in midrashic compilations was formed.

- The first [approach] thinks that the compilations were formed primarily of midrashim stated before the broad community. The collection of these materials by a later compiler does not change the fact that the material presents oral lectures meant for a broad community of listeners.
- In another view, the compilations were formed from debates of scholars and their teachers between the walls of the study hall. The material is meant for a narrow elite of scholars, and at a later stage it was collected and formed via principles which resemble the style of learning in the study hall.
- A third approach is that the compilations were formed as a professional literature for speakers and teachers. The midrashim are sourcebooks, meant to help prepare lessons for the community or for students. This approach further narrows the target of the midrashim.
- A fourth approach is that the compilations of midrash combined various materials, but they do not represent the sources from which they were combined. The midrashim represent primarily the work of the compilers and their literary reasons and goals.

Rav Saadia Gaon

2. Rav Saadia Gaon, Emunot v'Deiot 6:8

אבל אומר שאנשים ממי שנקראים יהודים, מצאתים אומרים בהשנות, וקוראים אותו ההעתקה, וענינו אצלם שרוח ראובן תשוב אל שמעון, ואחר כן בלוי, ואחד כן ביהודה, ויש מהם רבים שאומרים, יש פעמים שתהיה רוח האדם בבהמה, ורוח הבהמה באדם, ודברים רבים מזה השגוען והערבוב

I say that I have found some people among those who are called Jews who believe in *Gilgul*, and they call it "transmigration." In their minds, this means that Reuven's spirit enters Shimon, and then Levi, and then Yehudah. Some, perhaps most of them, believe that a human soul may enter an animal, or an animal enter a human. The types of foolishness and confusion are legion.

3. Wout Van Bakkum and Naoya Katsumata, *Importance of Saadia Gaon's Poetry for the Construction of a Dictionary of Early Medieval Piyyut: The Example of Essa Misheli*, Journal of Semitic Studies LVI/1 Spring 2011

Saadia Gaon undeniably has played a critical role in the transmission of Hebrew poetic tradition from Palestine to Babylonia and, indirectly, to Spain (through both religious and specifically liturgical poetry). This is evident from Menahem Zulay's publication of Saadia's liturgical poetry, Nehemiah Allony's publication of the *Egron*, and Aharon Dothan's publication of the remnants of Saadia's *Kitaab Usul al-Lugha al-'Ibraaniya*. In fact, modern scholars of Hebrew poetry have found that Saadia discovered, deciphered, reconstructed and redacted thousands of new compositions of liturgical poems — or piyyutim — composed by contemporary paytanim, which has led to the generally accepted conclusion that Saadia wished to play a prominent role in establishing criteria for eloquent Hebrew language and verse.

4. Rambam (12th century Egypt), Letter to the Jews of Yemen

ויש עליכם לדעת, כי בתחלת מלכות ישמעאל עמד איש בעבר הנהר ואמר שהוא משיח, ויצא בכלל עשרת אלפים מישראל, והיה האות שלו שלן מצורע והשכים בריא, ולא נשלם עסקו ולא עמדה עצתו... וכמו כן עמד איש אחד במערב במדינת פאס היום ארבעים ושמנה שנה, ואמר שהוא מבושר ושלוחו של משיח, ואמר שבאותה שנה יגלה, ולא יצא דברו לאור, והתחדשו לישראל בגללו צרות. והודיעני הדבר הזה מי שהיה מצוי בכל. וקודם זה כמו עשר שנים עמד בארצות ספרד במדינות קרטבה איש אחד ואמר שהוא משיח, וכמעט קט היתה כליה על שנאיהם של ישראל בגללו. וקודם זה כמו שלשים שנה עמד אחד בצרפת ואמר שהוא משיח, ועשה אותות לפי סברתם, והרגוהו הצרפתים, והרגו עמו כלל מקהילות הקודש.

You should know that in the beginning of the Arab Empire, a man arose from the bank of the river and said he was Mashiach, and about ten thousand Jews went with him. His sign was that he went to bed as a *metzora* and he awoke healthy. His pursuit was not completed and his counsel did not endure... And likewise a man arose in the west, in the land of Fez, 48 years ago, saying that he was the herald and emissary of Mashiach. He said that [Mashiach] would be revealed that year, and his words did not come true, and new troubles began for the Jews because of him. Someone who was there for all of it told me about it. And about ten years before this, in the lands of Spain, the region of Cordova, a man declared that he was Mashiach, and destruction almost came upon the "enemies of Israel" because of him. And about thirty years before this, one arose in France and said he was Mashiach, and he performed signs, as they thought, and the French killed him – and with him they killed from the holy communities.

5. Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi (11th century Spain), Kuzari 3:65, Hirschfeld tr.

The next generation was that of the High Priest Simon the Just and his disciples and friends. He was followed by Antigonos of Sōchō of great fame. His disciples were Šādōk and Boethos who were the originators of the sects called after them Saddōcaeans and Boethosians... After him came Judah b. Tabbāi and Simon b. Shētaḥ, with the friends of both. At this period arose the doctrine of the Karaites in consequence of an incident between the Sages and King Jannai who was a priest. His mother was under suspicion of being a 'profane' woman. One of the Sages alluded to this, saying to him: 'Be satisfied, O king Jannai, with the royal crown, but leave the priestly crown to the seed of Aaron.' His friends prejudiced him against the Sages, advising him to browbeat, expel, and scatter or kill them. He replied: 'If I destroy the Sages what will become of our Law?' 'There is the written law,' they replied, whoever wishes to study it may come and do so; take no heed of the oral law.' He followed their advice and expelled the Sages and among them Simon b. Shētaḥ, his son-in-law. Rabbanism was laid low for some time. The other party tried to establish a law built on their own conception, but failed, till Simon b. Shētaḥ returned with his disciples from Alexandria, and restored tradition to its former condition. Karaism had, however, taken root among people who rejected the oral law, and called all kinds of proofs to their aid, as we see to-day... The Karaites turned their attention to the fundamental principles, deducing the special laws from them by means of arguments. The damage often extended to the roots, through their ignorance rather than intention.

6. Rabbi Avraham Ibn Daud I (12th century Spain), Sefer haKabbalah, Seder haGaonim: Dor Shlishi

ובימי היה ענן ושאוול בנו שר", וענן זה מבית צור היה ותלמיד חכם היה בתחלה והכירו בו שמץ פסול, מפני כן לא נסמך לגאון וגם לא סייעוהו מן השמים להיות ראש גלות. ומפני הטינא שהיתה בלבו העלתה שירטון ועמד להסית את ישראל מעל קבלת חכמים מפי הנביאים עדים כשרים מפי עדים כשרים כמו שסדרנו ספר זה, ונעשה זקן ממרא על פי ב"ד לבלתי שמוע אל השופטים. וחבר ספרים והעמיד תלמידים ובדא מלבו חוקים לא טובים כי אחר החרבן נדלדלו המינים עד שעמד ענן וחזקם...

And in his days was Anan, and his son Shaul, may the name of the wicked rot. And this Anan was from the house of Tzur, and he was a Torah scholar at first, but they saw in him an element of disqualification. Therefore he was not ordained as Gaon, and he was also not aided from Heaven to become Exilarch. And because of the filth in his heart, silt accumulated and he arose to seduce Israel away from the tradition of the Sages, from the prophets, righteous witnesses from righteous witnesses, as we have put in order in this book. He became a rebellious elder against the word of the beit din, not listening to the judges. And he composed books and established students and invented from his own heart bad laws, for after the Churban the heretics became weaker until Anan came and strengthened them...

7. Some calendar facts

- In Jewish law, the hour is divided into 1080 *chalakim*. (Each *chelek* is 3.33 seconds.)
- The *molad* is the purported time of conjunction of the Sun and the Moon – the moment of the New Moon

- Two rules
 - 1: Rosh haShanah cannot start on Sunday, Wednesday or Friday
 - 2: If the *molad* is after midday, Rosh Chodesh is postponed until the next day
 - So if the *molad* for Tishrei occurs on Shabbat afternoon, Rosh haShanah is pushed to Monday.

Parshah Questions: Vayera – What's in a Word?

8. Bereishit 18:9

9. Talmud, Bava Metzia 87a

להודיע ששרה אמנו צנועה היתה. אמר רב יהודה אמר רב ואיתימא רבי יצחק: יודעים היו מלאכי השרת ששרה אמנו באהל היתה, אלא מאי 'באהל'? כדי לחבבה על בעלה.

רבי יוסי ברבי חנינא אמר כדי לשגר לה כוס של ברכה.
תני משום רבי יוסי: למה נקוד על 'איו' שב'אליו'? לימדה תורה דרך ארץ שישאל אדם באכסניא שלו. והאמר שמואל אין שואלין בשלום אשה כלל? על ידי בעלה שאני.

To inform that our matriarch Sarah was private. Rav Yehudah cited Rav, or Rabbi Yitzchak, said: The ministering *malachim* knew that our matriarch Sarah was in the tent. What is "in the tent"? To endear her to her husband.

Rav Yosi b'Rabbi Chanina said: To send her the cup of blessing.

It was taught in the name of Rabbi Yosi: Why are there dots on איו in אליו? The Torah taught proper conduct, that one should ask after his host's well-being. But didn't Shemuel say, "[A man] may never ask after a woman's well-being?" Via her husband is different.

10. Bereishit 19:5, 22:7