Studies in the Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature

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Contents

Let Our Rabbi Teach Us: An Introduction to Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature

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1   The Genre and Its Scope

The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature (TYL) is a midrashic genre comprising *derashot*, that is homilies, mainly on the Five Books of the Pentateuch. The "Tanhuma" component of the name of the genre apparently reflects a medieval attribution of the composition to a sage who was prominent in this genre, the second half of the 4th-century Palestinian sage Rabbi Tanhuma Bar Abba.[1] The other component of the name, "Yelammedenu," refers to a typical textual unit in the TYL that begins with the words "Let our rabbi teach us" (*yelammedenu rabbenu* in Hebrew). These units, which contain halakhic content, will be described below.

TYL reveals its Palestinian (as opposed to Babylonian) roots in its familiarity with tannaitic and Palestinian amoraic traditions (such as Mishnah, Palestinian Talmud, Genesis Rabbah [GenR], Leviticus Rabbah [LevR], and Pesikta de-Rav Kahana [PDRK]); it is therefore part of the Palestinian rabbinic culture of midrash and halakha. Together with this, TYL shows little acquaintance with materials from the Babylonian Talmud, and when it does show such familiarity it is not necessarily with the finite composition that is now the Babylonian Talmud. TYL shares common materials, traditions, and interpretations with the Palestinian *piyyut* and liturgical literature,[2] which points to its affinity with synagogue life. The Palestinian context is also apparent because TYL follows the order of the *sedarim* (singular *seder*), the sequence of the reading

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1   On this topic, see Gila Vachman's contribution in this volume, "'Rabbi Tanhuma Said': A Code Phrase for Quotations from Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature."

2   Marc Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature: Studies in the Evolution of the Versions* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 181–182, 184; Shulamit Elizur, "From Piyyut to Midrash" [in Hebrew], in *Rabbi Mordechai Breuer Festschrift: Collected Papers in Jewish Studies*, Vol. 2, ed. Moshe Bar-Asher (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1992), 383–397.

portions according to the Palestinian cycle of weekly Scripture reading.[3] In this respect, the TYL follows its predecessors, the Palestinian amoraic midrashim.

The most well-known representative of this genre until the end of the 19th century was a book printed in Constantinople in the 16th century, which includes *derashot* on the Pentateuch; this edition is now known as "the Regular Tanhuma" or "the Printed Tanhuma," and is referred to in this volume as TP (short for Tanhuma, the Printed edition). Toward the end of the 19th century, Solomon Buber published a version of the Tanhuma that diverges from TP mainly when it comes to the Books of Genesis and Exodus. Buber claimed that his version was older than TP, and that it was possibly the original one. Nowadays, this claim is not accepted at face value, and the two versions are understood as representing two varieties of TYL. Buber's edition is referred to as TB (Tanhuma, the Buber edition) in this volume. In addition to TP and TB, Pesikta Rabbati (PesR) is also a TYL composition; it contains *derashot* relating to the holidays and the special Shabbats of the Jewish calendar.

Together with the introduction of the Constantinople version rose the obscurity that followed this literature until the present: the printer introduced the book as מדרש תנחומא הנקרא ילמדנו, "The Tanhuma midrash, which is called Yelammedunu", thus assuming that a "Midrash Tanhuma" is named "Yelammedunu." However, quotes that claim to originate in "Tanhuma" in medieval sources are differentiated from those that claim to originate in "Yelammedunu," and sometimes quotes from these two sources are not found in the book printed in Constantinople. What came to be known as "the Tanhuma Riddle," or "the Tanhuma Problem," is therefore this: do the references to Tanhuma and to Yelammedunu in the earlier sources refer to one composition or two, and what is the relation of the composition printed in Constantinople to either of those?

Following Yom-Tov Lipman Zunz's foundational study *Die Gottesdienstlichen Vortraege der Juden historisch Entwickelt* (*The Historical Development of the Sermons of the Jews*), the nature and properties of the TYL was discussed and debated academically. Many fragmentary representations of this genre were then identified both in quotes from still other medieval compositions, as well as from among many unpublished manuscripts. And when the Cairo Genizah texts

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3 As opposed to the Babylonian cycle, in which the weekly portion of reading the Torah took one year to complete. See Marc Bregman, "The Triennial Haftarot and the Perorations of the Midrashic Homilies," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 32, no. 1 (1981): 74–84; Shlomo Naeh, "The Torah Reading Cycle in Early Palestine: A Re-Examination" [in Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 77, no. 2 (1997): 167–187; and Shlomo Naeh, "On the Septennial Cycle of the Torah Reading in Early Palestine" [in Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 84, no. 1 (2004): 43–75.

started to be published,[4] it was recognized that Tanhuma and Tanhuma-like fragments were abundant there; apparently, the TYL genre was prominent in the Genizah community, as well as all throughout medieval Europe.[5]

With the advance of the research into the TYL, it became apparent that according to the existing evidence, it is not possible to establish with certainty the emergence and development of the TYL corpus.[6] Therefore, the current academic discourse relates to TYL as a prevailing and dynamic genre, which flourished during the period between the Palestinian amoraic and medieval Jewish culture.

Further, research has shown that parts of the Rabbah midrashim are largely TYL material: Exodus Rabbah 15–52, Numbers Rabbah 15–23, and the two versions of Deuteronomy Rabbah, the regular printed one (the Ashkenazi one) and the one published by Lieberman (the Spanish one). Similarly, large parts of Midrash Shokher Tov (a midrash on Psalms) have the markers of TYL, and can be included in this literature.

TYL material influenced Jewish cultures of the end of the first millennium and the early second millennium as can be deduced from the multiplicity of adjacent literature, such as Aggadat Bereshit and Lekah Tov from the Byzantine Empire, as well as the TYL material found in the school of Moshe Ha-Darshan from Provence, which produced reworked TYL materials found in the first *parshiot* of Exodus Rabbah and Numbers Rabbah. TYL is quoted extensively in medieval collections such as Sefer Haarukh, Yalkut Shimoni, Yalkut Ha-Machiri, and Yalkut Talmud Torah. TYL left its marks in the East as well, as its prominence in the Cairo Genizah materials testifies. Later traces of it can be found in compositions such as Pitron Torah, Midrash Hagadol, and Sefer Maasiot.

Marc Bregman's seminal and systematic research into the TYL uncovered discernable layers within this literature. According to Bregman and others, the original homiletic material in TYL reflects a reality as early as 4th-century Palestine. The markers of this early strata (many of which are from the Cairo

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4 See, for example, Jacob Mann and Isaiah Sonne, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue*, Vol. 1 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1940); Jacob Mann and Isaiah Sonne, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue*, Vol. 2 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1966); and Louis Levi Ginzberg, *Genizah Studies in Memory of Doctor Solomon Schechter*, Vol. 1 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1928).

5 For more on this topic, see the following contributions in this volume: Moshe Lavee, "Tanhuma as a Textual Martyr: On the Reception of Tanhuma Literature in Literary and Documentary Genizah Sources"; and Andreas Lehnardt, "The Transmission of Midrash Tanhuma in Ashkenaz as Reflected in Binding Fragments from Germany."

6 See, for example, Ephraim E. Urbach, "Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Fragments" [in Hebrew], *Kobez al Yad* 6 (1966): 1–54, here 1.

Genizah) are the use of the form האלהים to refer to the Divinity, the use of Palestinian Aramaic (in the later strata, Aramaic material is translated into Hebrew), closeness to amoraic midrashic Hebrew, and Greek and Latin terms that reflect the Roman empirical reality of the period. Overall, this type of material is quite close to the classical amoraic midrashim.[7]

However, the bulk of the material took quite a few generations to develop and crystallize. Here, we find mostly Hebrew material (including translations of earlier Amoraic material that was originally in Aramaic) and the forms and attitudes typical for the TYL that will be described below. So overall, according to Bregman,[8] the crystallization of the bulk of the TYL into collections was between the 5th and 8th centuries, before Islam had an impact on Palestinian society (as no traces of it are found in TYL).

Later material was added to the collections with time, and here we find a distinction between the two major versions, TP and TB, mainly in the Books of Genesis and Exodus.[9] Overall, TP exhibits more knowledge of Babylonian material than TB, and TB probably reflects the reality of Lombard Italy.[10]

2   Characteristics of the Genre

In spite of the diversity and fluidity of TYL, there are some basic characteristics that are common to the various compositions and fragments that make up the genre, and these allow us to identify TYL materials in various contexts.

We have already mentioned the homiletic nature of these texts, and the fact that they exhibit familiarity with Palestinian midrashic traditions; however, unlike the classical midrashim, TYL, at least the bulk of it, is almost only in Hebrew, and contains very little Aramaic material. This fact points to the lateness of TYL relative to the classical Palestinian midrashim.[11]

Another characteristic feature of the TYL is the absence of what is so typical of rabbinic literature, which is the rabbinic chain of reception or transmission chain. In these chains, traditions, sayings, and interpretations are ascribed to a named rabbinic source. The insistence on ascription in rabbinic literature is part of the sages' self-awareness as the responsible and authoritative

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7   Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*, 176–183.
8   Ibid., 183.
9   Ibid., 184–186.
10   Ibid., 186. See the contribution in this volume of Lieve Teugels, "The Provenance of Aggadat Bereshit: A Reassessment of the Origins of the Work as a 'Tanhuma Satellite.'"
11   See also the contribution in this volume of Yonatan Wormser, "The Language of the Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature: The State of Research."

transmitters of the truth of the Scripture and the authority of their institution, the *beit midrash*.[12]

When it comes to TYL texts, however, they do not indicate the precise chain of reception line a fact that points to the chronological distance from the inner amoraic culture they draw on; rather, they adhere to their collective authority. This absence may also be the marker of the rise of authorship awareness, where editors came to see themselves not only as technical transmitters of material but also as actual authors.

Finally, the most recognizable characteristic of the TYL is its intensive use of the poetic form of the proem.

2.1   *Proems*

The proem, or *petichta* (פתיחתא) in Hebrew,[13] is a homiletic poetic form. It is known mainly from the amoraic midrashim onward, and it is also prominent in the TYL.[14]

In his ground breaking study, Heinemann established[15] that the sermons in late antiquity were said before the reading of the Scripture, and their goal was to frame and lead to the issues of the *seder*, the weekly reading portion. The core of the proem is therefore a homily on the first or second verse of the *seder*. The homilist started with expounding another issue, another verse, which seemingly had no connection to the beginning of the *seder*, and while expounding this other verse the homilist developed the topic so as to arrive (sometimes unexpectedly) at the beginning of the *seder*. This homiletic technique, that is, beginning with a "distant verse," a verse that stands, in the biblical text, far from the beginning of the *seder*,[16] seems to have been entertaining and engaging for the audience because of its wittiness and the speakers' rhetoric skill.[17]

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12   About this issue, see Jacob Elbaum, "Anthological Aspects and Deliberate Editing in Classical and Late Midrashic Literature," *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 86 (2018): 137–154, here 149. The second part of this article focuses on TYL. About rabbinic names that do appear in TYL, see Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*, 183.

13   But it also known as *peticha*, See Yonah Fraenkel, *Darkhei Haagah Vehamidrash*, Vol. 1 (Jerusalem: Hotzaat Yad Latalud, 1996), 678 n. 76.

14   Very few proems are found in tannaitic literature. See Fraenkel, *Darkhei*, 445.

15   Joseph Heinemann, *Derashot Batsibur Bitkufat Hatalmud* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1982), 12–28; Joseph Heinemann, "The Proem in the Aggadic Midrashim: A Form-Critical Study," *Scripta Hierosolymitana* 22 (1971): 100–122; Avigdor Shinan, "Haptichtaot Bemidreshei Aggadah: Mekoran Vetafkidan," *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 2, no. 4 (1969): 43–47; Avigdor Shinan, "Letorat Haptichta," *Jerusalem Studies in Hebrew Literature* 1 (1980): 133–143.

16   See Fraenkel, *Darkhei Haagah Vehamidrash*. Connecting verses from various biblical places into one narrative is at the core of what Fraenkel calls the "unity of the Bible" principle, which is a term he coined.

17   Heinemann, *Derashot Batsibur*, 12–28.

A different approach sees the proems as literary works created by the editor of the midrashic collections.[18] These two approaches do not contradict each other, as we can assume a reality of oral performance of the proem in the synagogue, while the midrashic collections that contain many proems are literary products put together by an editor.

The TYL proems begin with a typical opening formula: "The Scripture says the following" (זה שאמר הכתוב). Then, the distant verse is quoted and elaborated upon typically with no ascription to any rabbinic authority, even if the content itself is derived from earlier midrashim. At the end of the proem, the verse from the *seder* is introduced, sometimes, but not exclusively, with the word הוי, "here is" or "[this is what] is [meant by]" – and then the verse from the *seder* is quoted.

The TYL witnesses that we have today usually contain in the beginning of each *seder* a list of proems, beginning with various distant verses. This is followed by other midrashic material that could be drawn from midrashim like GenR, LevR, and PDRK, either copied almost verbally, or reworked at various levels of intensity, usually in a manner that makes the story element more emphasized than the hermeneutical one. Then comes the ending section, the *hatima*, which in many cases contains consoling words.

There are some subgenres of this poetic form, which are typically found in TYL and which are hardly found in other rabbinic literary genres. Two of these are circular proems and Yelammedenu proems.

2.1.1   Circular Proems

Circular proems are a sub-genre of proem where at the end of the proem the 'distant verse' is quoted again, instead of the verse from the *seder*, as is usually the case. Sometimes the verse from the *seder* is also quoted, after the distant verse.

Circular proems are found in the TYL much more than in the earlier midrashim. Bregman's study points to a midrashic genre that used the formula "This is what was said by the Holy Spirit" as the origin of circular proems.[19] This type of proem not only connects the distant verse with the first verse of the *seder*, but it connects the general topic of the *seder* to the general topic in the text from which the distant verse comes.[20] This, circular, type of proem was a later development in TYL.

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18   Richard S. Sarason, "The 'Petihtot' in Leviticus Rabba: 'Oral Homilies' or Redactional Constructions?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 33, no. 1–2 (1982): 557–567.

19   Marc Bregman, "Circular Proems and Proems Beginning with the Formula 'Zo Hi Shene'emra Beruah Haq-Qodesh,'" in *Studies in the Aggadah, Targum and Jewish Liturgy in Memory of Joseph Heinemann*, ed. Jakob J. Petuchowsky and Ezra Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981), 34–51, here 40–43.

20   Ibid., 45.

2.1.2   Yelammedenu

The most typical subgenre of proems found in the TYL is the Yelammedenu proems, which is the reason why the TYL includes the word "Yelammedenu." The term is part of the expression *yelammedenu rabbenu*, "let our rabbi teach us"; these words introduce a halakhic question, not a distant verse, and therefore such proems are also called "halakhic proems." The homilist then answers the halakhic question, usually introducing the answer with the words "our rabbis taught the following" quoting the tannaitic halakha. This discussion then leads, again, with artistic skill, to the opening verse of the *seder*. This type of proem is very common in TYL, but they are not found in all the *sedarim*.

An early collection of Yelammedenu proems was found and published by Louis Ginzberg, and discussed widely by Ginzberg, Mann, and others.[21] This resulted in many of the scholars thinking that an ancient Yelammedenu collection was a source of TYL. To what extent the incorporation of Yelammedenu into Tanhuma materials was done systematically – that is, to what extent is Yelammedenu structurally part of Tanhuma, was not established, and overall there is no unanimous opinion about the relationship between Tanhuma and Yelammedenu materials.

3   The TYL Collections

Scholars debate the origin of the TYL collections. Some of them assert that the collections are random, local, and late, and even that they were made for personal use and never intended to be a book (Reifman, Epstein, and others).[22] Bregman, however, put forward the possibility that the original TYL material consisted of single homilies that were written independently on separate folios, and not part of a larger collection, and that they were assembled into a larger collection at a much later stage and outside of the synagogue context.[23]

Now, it is more or less an accepted conviction that the common core of the two collections of TYL, TP and TB, were an intentionally composed book, possibly systematically organizing the various types of proems and other material in a special order, which often ends with salvific ending. In these collections,

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21   Louis Levi Ginzberg, *Ginze Shechter*, Vol. 1 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1928), 23–50 and 449–513; Mann and Sonne, *The Bible as Read and Preached*, 1, 270–271. See also Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*, 3–19.

22   For a thorough overview of the various scholarly opinions, see Bregman, *Literature* 3–19.

23   Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*, 180; Jacob Elbaum, "How Many Benedictions Does One Say Every Day? Methods of Forming a Tanhuma Homily" [in Hebrew], in *Knesset Ezra: Literature and Life in the Synagogue: Studies Presented to Ezra Fleischer*, ed. Shulamit Elizur et al. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994), 149–167, here 167.

the editorial hand loosened the hermeneutic aspect of the homilies, and presented a more unified attitude toward the topic of the *seder*. To this end, the editors used any midrashic material at their disposal.[24] Therefore, we often see a gap between the editors' agenda and the original homiletic material. This may also raise the possibility that the editors of TYL already had at their disposal the midrashic material as full books.

To exemplify the complexity of working with the TYL, as can be discerned from the general description above, we have chosen to present a short textual study of a TYL text.

4   Case Study

Following are a few excerpts from the TYL relating to the *seder* Vayigash (Gen 44:18–46:27) in order to exemplify both the characteristics of the TYL drawn above as well as the challenges that this corpus presents when studying it.

The first excerpt is the first proem from TP:

TABLE 1.1   A look at TP Vayigash

ת״ח ויגש א, כ״י קיימברידג׳ אוסף אדלר 1212	TP Vayigash 1, according to MS Cambridge, Add. 1212	
"ויגש אליו יהודה". ילמדינו רבי׳. אי-זה ערב שהוא חייב לשלם? כך שנו רבותי׳: ר׳ שמעון בן ננס אומר, אי-זהו ערב שהוא חייב? הלוהו ואני נותן לך. ונשא ונתן ביד. הערב חייב.	**Then Judah came near unto him (Gen 44:18).**[a] Let our rabbi teach us: What type of guarantor is responsible for the payment of a loan? Thus learned our rabbis: Rabbi Simeon the son of Nanos says: What type of guarantor is responsible for the payment of a loan? [the one that says] lend him [the money], and I will pay you back. [And also one who] takes [the loan] in his hand [and gives it to the debtor], [then also] the guarantor is responsible for the payment.	1

a The translation largely follows Samuel A. Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma-Yelammedenu: An English Translation of Genesis and Exodus from the Printed Version of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu with an Introduction, Notes and Indexes* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1996), but with deviations.

24   Cf. Elbaum, "Anthological Aspects and Deliberate Editing," 151; and Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*, 166–172.

TABLE 1.1   A look at TP Vayigash (*cont.*)

ת״ח ויגש א, כ״י קיימבּרידג׳ אוסף אדלר 1212	TP Vayigash 1, according to MS Cambridge, Add. 1212	
ומי היה זה הערב? זה יהודה. שנ׳ "תנה אותו על ידי ואני אשיבנו אליך" (בר׳ מב לז) "ויאמר לא ירד בני עמכם ... וקראהו אסון [בדרך אשר תלכו]" (בר׳ מב לח).	Who was one such guarantor? Judah. As it is said: "Send the lad with me […] I will be surety for him" (Gen 2:37). And he (Jacob) said: "My son shall not go down with you […] if harm befalls on him […] [then you would bring me down with sorrow to the grave.] (Gen 42:38).	2
מיכן את למד שהיוצא לדרך השטן מקטרג.	From this verse, you may conclude that Satan brings charges against one who embarks on a journey.	3
אמ׳ ר׳ יוסי בר חנינה. לפי ששנינו. "על שלש עבירות הנשים מיתות בשעת לידתן" (משנה שבת ב, ו) למה בשעת לידתן. שהשטן מקטרג בשעת הסכנה.	R. Yose the son of Hanina declared: We have learned that women die in childbirth because of three transgressions they commit. But why in childbirth? Because Satan always brings charges against a person in a time of danger.	
ירד בנימן עם אחיו ולקחו שבר. צוה יוסף ונתנו את הגביע בשקו. עד שלא הרחיקו שלח אחריהם. אמר להם. "הרעותם אשר עשיתם". אמר.b מי שנמצא הגביע בידו יהיה לי עבד.c כשנמצאא בשקו של בנימן כל אחד ואחד הפךe את פניו. ומי עמד כנגדו. הערב. "ויגש אליו יהודה".	Benjamin descended with his brothers, and they purchased food. Joseph commanded [his stewards] to insert the goblet in Benjamin's sack. When they had gone but a short way, he sent after them, and he said to them: "How could you do this evil deed? Whoever is found to have my goblet in his possession must become my servant." When it was found in Benjamin's sack, each of them turned away. Who, alone, confronted Joseph? The guarantor: "Then Judah approached."	4

b There is an extra ו (*waw*) after this word, which was erased by the editor of Maagarim.

c Here, the manuscript has the words "אמר להם", which are redundant and are edited out in Maagarim.

d This word is not found in MS Cambridge, University Library, Add. 1212 (Reif, 150), and was added by the editor of Maagarim from MS NY, Columbia University, Butler Library, X 893–M 5843.

e The word הפך is written twice and is a scribal error.

This is a typical Yelammedenu proem. It begins with a halakhic question: what type of guarantor is responsible for returning the loan, that is, what statement of a guarantor would bind him to repaying the loan? This halakhic topic is discussed already in the Mishnah (mBB 10:8) and the Yerushalmi (jBB 10:10), and here we only find the question and the answer, without the discussion but with the addition of the phrase "[And also one who] takes [the loan] in his hand". The proem then continues to the *seder*, and, quoting Gen 42:37, points to Judah as the guarantor for Benjamin. Like the guarantor in the halakhah, Judah convinces Jacob to send Benjamin with the brothers to Egypt, and takes responsibility for returning him safely. Jacob then expresses his fear, lest a disaster befall Benjamin. Next, the text talks about the dangers facing those who go on a journey, as Satan tends to plot against them. And by association with the latter (as both cases are found in the same discussion in the Yerushalmi), the text quotes the Mishnah (mShab 2:6) about women who sometimes die during childbirth because of the same tendency of Satan to interfere. The text then goes on to tell how Joseph hid his goblet in Benjamin's sack, and how he then sent people to find the goblet and accuse Benjamin of stealing. Benjamin is now in danger of remaining in Egypt as Joseph's slave and not returning home. However, the brothers do not take responsibility for Benjamin; they "turned their faces the other way," but Judah takes the responsibility upon himself, and makes the heroic step of "approaching" Joseph, as the first verse of the *seder* says: *vayigash*.

The proem exhibits the classical structure of a Yelammedenu proem: it begins with a halakhic issue, includes a midrashic section, and ends by making a tight connection between the halakhah and the first verse of the *seder*. Other typical points are the simplified way in which the halakhah is introduced; the marker of the oral nature of TYL in the rhetorical question in section 2, "Who was one such guarantor?", and the storied nature of the TYL when telling in section 4 the biblical story without quoting any verse, an uncommon practice in earlier midrash.[25] Further, the proem relies on Palestinian rabbinic literature with materials from the Mishnah, Palestinian Talmud, and GenR.

4.1   *Typical Challenges*

However, the picture is not as clear as it might seem at first sight; this Yelammedenu proem presents more questions than it does answers when it comes to being a clear example of a proem subgenre. To start with, the

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25   The words of Joseph to the brothers, "הרעותם אשר עשיתם", "you have done bad," seem to be quoting a biblical verse, but they are not Joseph's words in the Bible: the very distinct word "הרעותם" is in fact used in the Bible earlier in the narrative by Jacob when he reproaches his sons for promising the Egyptian ruler to bring along their young brother next time they come to Egypt.

halakhah that is quoted is very short; not only does it not include the halakhic discussion and omit the various types of guarantors, it also hardly describes the type of guarantor with which Judah will eventually be identified.

Section 2 starts with identifying the guarantor with a character from the *seder*. The difficulty here is that reaching the "conclusion" of the proem so quickly, with no artistic elaboration or a display of rhetorical skill, is not typical. Further, and this was already mentioned by Ginzberg and by Mann,[26] the verse, quoted as Judah's words, is not said by Judah in the Bible, but by Reuben. In the Bible, at this point, Jacob refuses to send Benjamin, even though Reuben is ready to pawn his two sons as a guarantee for Benjamin.

Section 3 takes the discourse away from the *seder*, and might appear somewhat artificial; the focus is on the dangers that Benjamin might encounter on his journey to Egypt because of Satan's tendency to harm people on a journey. The assertion that Satan harms people on a journey is known from the Palestinian Talmud, where it is discussed at length (jShab 2:6). This assertion is found only in Palestinian sources.[27]

The section then continues with what seems to have no connection to the *seder* at all: counting the reasons for which women die when giving birth. This topic seems to be artificially inserted into the proem and to disturb the fluency of the narrative.

However, looking at the discussion in the Palestinian Talmud it is clear why this second issue is added: Satan's tendency to harm people during their journeys is added to a *gemara*, a discussion about the mishnah about women who die during childbirth (mShab 2:6), as Satan is taken to be accountable for both. The nexus of the two issues, satanic harm on a journey and harm during childbirth, is only made in the Palestinian Talmud. We therefore can conjecture an editorial addition that is based on knowledge of a *sugya* in the Palestinian Talmud.

These phenomena are typical in TYL – that is, the freedom the editors (or scribes) felt to add their interpolations into the text or to "correct" it is probably due to the non-canonical nature of the TY texts.[28] This non-canonicity and freedom are possibly at the base of putting Reuben's words in Judah's mouth. This could be the act of the homilist, done to fit the halakhic formulation (הלוהו ואני נותן לך, "lend him [the money], and I will pay you back") to the story of the *seder*.

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26   Ginzberg, *Ginze Shechter*, 467; Mann and Sonne, *The Bible as Read and Preached*, 1, 330.

27   Except for TP and the Palestinian Talmud, it is also found in EccR 3:2, section 2; and EccZ 3:2.

28   See a similar conclusion in the contribution in this volume of Moshe Lavee, "Tanhuma as Textual Martyr: On the Reception of Tanhuma Literature in Literary and Documentary Genizah Sources."

Another possibility is that originally the homilist contrasted the non-valid words of Reuben as a guarantor, as he pawns his children, with the words of Judah, whose promise is based solely on his trustworthy character. This assumes that the version we have is corrupted in some way.

The literary looseness with which TYL presents its ideas might seem unexpected to a reader who is used to fully elaborated textual exposition such as that found in the sermons of the Church Fathers. However, the TYL is not a recording of actual homilies; it should be seen, rather, as similar to a list or a set of "bullet points" for a homilist. An outline should be enough for a homilist when preparing for the Shabbat sermon. This agrees with Bregman's idea of *kuntrasim* as the original TYL material, which were later gathered into collections, and were then elaborated to be of a more literary nature.[29]

We have looked at one Yelammedenu proem and uncovered its structure, some of its poetic techniques, and some typical challenges of working with TYL material. Let us now look broadly at other parts of the TYL material on *seder* Vayigash in the various collections.

4.2   *The Rest of the Material in* TP

Following this Yelammedenu proem, there are two complete proems in TP, and both are circular ones. Following these, the material is less structured and includes parts of proems as well as chunks of midrashic material that, while rooted in verses from the *seder*, is at times quite storied and not hermeneutic. We also find chunks of material identical to what is found in GenR. All sections of this *seder* in TP relate either to surety or to the interaction between Joseph and Judah. The latter is a natural choice, since it is in line with the biblical narrative; the former, however, seems to be a typical TYL tradition, that is, connecting the Benjamin event with the issue of surety.

This *seder* ends with a description of the dramatic meeting between Judah and Joseph, and the eventual reconciliation of Joseph with the brothers. To this a comforting message about the future to come is added at the end:

וכשם שלא פייס את אחיו אלא מתוך בכיה כך כשיגאל הקדוש ברוך הוא את ישראל
מתוך בכיה הוא גואלם שנא׳ ״בבכי יבאו ובתחנונים אובילם אוליכם אל נחלי מים
בדרך ישר לא יכשלו בה כי הייתי לישראל לאב ואפרים בכורי הוא״ (ירמיה לא).

And just as he did not reconcile his brother but out of weeping so when the Holy One Blessed Be He will redeem Israel, He will redeem them with weeping, as it is said "They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them; I will cause them to walk by rivers of waters, in a

29   See Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*, 180.

straight way wherein they shall not stumble; for I am become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My first-born".

> Jer 31:8

The tendency to end the homily on a salvific note, referring to the future end of the world when mercy (or justice) will rule, is again a characteristic of TYL, and seems appropriate more for a popular context such as the synagogue than for an elitist milieu like the *beit midrash*.

4.3   *The Parallel Material in TB*

The version of the *seder* Vayigash in TB is quite different. In TB, there are four proems, none of which is a Yelammedenu one. The proems are followed by midrashic material, and the sequence ends typically with a comforting statement about the End of Days. There is very little overlap with the material in TP, which points to the independent development of the two collections. Also, unlike TP, most of the material in TB is focused on the interaction between Judah and Joseph, and only one proem focuses on surety, the topic which is prevalent in TP. The Vayigash proem is a circular one, and therefore will serve as an example both of a circular proem, as well as a look at how a common topic is worked out differently in TP and TB:

TABLE 1.2   TB Vayigash 4

תנחומא בובר ויגש ד	Tanhuma Buber, Vayigash 4
ד״א ויגש אליו יהודה. זש״ה ״בני אם ערבת לרעך״ וגו׳, ״נוקשת באמרי פיך״ וגו׳, ״עשה זאת איפוא בני והנצל״ (משלי ו א ב ג).	"And Judah approached him." This is what the scripture says: "My son, if you become a guarantor for your neighbor, [if thou have struck your hands for a stranger,] you are snared by the words of your mouth, [you are caught by the words of your mouth]. Do this now, my son, and deliver yourself [from the hand of thy neighbor; go, humble yourself, and magnify your neighbor]."
א״ל יוסף למה אתה מרבה דברים, מסתכל אני שיש גדולים ממך עומדין כאן ואינן מדברים, ואין ראובן גדול ממך, ואין	Joseph told him: Why are you [the one] that talks so much, I look and see that there are brothers older than you, they stand here and do not

TABLE 1.2   TB *Vayigash* 4 (*cont.*)

תנחומא בובר ויגש ד	Tanhuma Buber, Vayigash 4
שמעון ולוי גדולים ממך, ואינם מדברים, ואתה למה תרבה דברים, אמר לו מכל אלו אין אחד מהם חושש בו אלא אני בעצמי שאני ערב שנאמר ״אנכי אערבנו״ (בראשית מג ט), וכן אמרתי לאבי שאם איני מביאו לך ומעמידו לפניך הרי אני חוטא לפניך בשני עולמות שנאמר בעולם הזה ולעולם הבא אם לא אביאנו אליך ״וחטאתי לאבי כל הימים״ (בראשית מד לב) לפיכך אני נותן נפשי עליו.	speak. Isn't Reuben older than you? and Simon, and Levi older than you? And they do not speak; why do you speak so much? He [i.e. Judah] said to him: "None of them fear about him [i.e., Benjamin] except I, because I am his guarantor, as it says "I will be surety for him" (Gen 43:9), and I told my father that if I don't bring him to you and stand him before you, I will be a sinner both in this world and in the next, as it says "If I do not bring him to you, then I shall I bear the blame to my father forever" (Gen 44:32). This is why I am ready to give my soul for him.
למה? ״בני אם ערבת לרעך״ וגו׳.	Why [did he do so]? because [of the verse] "My son, if you [become a guarantor]."

The distant verse of the proem, Prov 6:1–3, talks about a being a guarantor; however, unlike the halakhic framing of surety, the verse in Proverbs asserts that falling into the role of a guarantor is a very a problematic move. This is the framing in which the topic is discussed in TB. TB then moves to associate surety with Judah. Joseph is asking Judah why he is the one speaking on Benjamin's behalf, and not any of the older brothers. Judah explains that he speaks because he is the guarantor, as it is he who made the promise to his father to return Benjamin, and that it was on the basis of this promise that Jacob sent Benjamin to Egypt. The proem ends with quoting the distant verse' again and not with a verse from the *seder*; it is thus a circular proem.

The distant verse used here, namely, Proverbs 6:1, is used also in the second proem in TP. However, each collection develops the proem differently. TP presents Judah as a heroic character precisely because he became Benjamin's guarantor; this is the case in all of the TP proems; in contrast, TB quotes a longer chunk of the verse, including the parts that point to the problems of becoming a guarantor. Judah is thus framed not as a hero, but as someone who had the misfortune to be stuck in the role of guarantor. This example illustrates nicely

how the two collections rework differently similar midrashic material – in this case, an ideological difference is exhibited in the attitude toward Judah.[30]

The same line of thought continues in the rest of the material in TB, which includes a few more proems and much midrashic material. The *seder* ends with a comforting midrash, which compliments Judah's humbling of himself, promising that so will God will be merciful toward the offspring of Judah in the End of Days:

TABLE 1.3   TB Vayigash 8

תנחומא בובר ויגש ח	Tanhuma Buber, Vayigash 8
א״ל הקדוש ברוך הוא 'הרי ריפתה עתה מן הכח הראשון ודברת תחנונים, חייך אעפ״כ שאמרתי "וריב לה׳ עם יהודה" (הושע יב ג), אלא חנון אני וארחם עליך, שנאמר "כי לא לעולם אריב" (ישעיה נז טז).	The Holy One Blessed be He told [Judah]: "Since you now loosened [your grip] from the power [which you] initially [exhibited], and spoke with supplications, I swear that even though I said "The Lord has a controversy with Judah" (Hos 12:3), I am gracious, I will have mercy on you, as it is said "For I will not contend forever" (Isa 57:16).

4.4   *TYL Material in Various Manuscripts*

A fragment of a proem from the *seder* Vayigash was found in a Heidelberg library (Ms. Cod. Heid. Or. 490.3) These are two parchment pages with Hebrew writing, which were used by a printer in Strasbourg in 1485 to create a binding for another book, a printed edition of the Vulgate.[31] There is, of course, very little material on these two pages, but this situation is typical of the TYL. Part of what these pages contain is a Yelammedenu proem to the *seder* Vayigash, one which is not found in the two collections TP and TB. This proem is found, however, in Yalkut Shimoni, Kuntress Acharon (28) in similar but not identical formulations. We will look here at the passage from the Heidelberg manuscript:

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30   About the image of Judah, see the contribution in this volume that discusses other aspects of this *seder* as well: Ronit Nikolsky, "Joseph, Judah, and the Study of Emotions in the Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature." Contrasting Reuben and Judah was one of the conjectures we put forward regarding TP above.

31   About this phenomenon, see the contribution in this volume of Andreas Lehnardt, "The Transmission of Midrash Tanhuma in Ashkenaz as Reflected in Binding Fragments from Germany."

TABLE 1.4   A proem from book bindings

Heidelberg 362, n 28 xii Hebr	Heidelberg 362, n 28 xii Hebr
ילמדנו רבינו: למה אמרו חכמים שאדם צריך להחניף [...]? כך אמרו רבותינו: אשתו ובעל חובו ורבו. אשתו משום שלום ביתו ובעל חובו [...]. רבו בשביל שילמדנו תורה.	Let our rabbi teach us: whom, did our sages say, should a person flatter [...]? This is what our rabbis said: [one should flatter] his wife, his debtor, and his rabbi [i.e., his teacher]. His wife, for domestic harmony, his debtor [...], his rabbi, so that he will teach him the Torah.
אבל מי שהוא מחניף באחרים אינו רואה בישועת אלי״ם [...] וכן אתה מוצא כשירדו אחי יוסף למצרים והיו שבטים אומרים נחניף לשלטון, שלא היו יודעין שהוא יוסף אחיהן. ויהודה לא ביקש להחניף לו והוא עמד ביוסף אחיו.	But whoever flatters others, will not see God's salvation [...] Thus you see also when the brothers of Joseph went to Egypt. The tribes [i.e., the brothers] said: let us flatter the ruler, as they did not know that it was Joseph, their brother. Judah did not want to flatter him, and he was standing [against] Joseph, his brother.
ולמה לא עמד לו לא ראובן ולא שמע׳ אלא יהודה? הרי כתיב בראובן ״כחי וראשית אוני״ (בר׳ מט ג), והוא היה צריך לעמוד כנגדו, שנ׳ ״ורוב תבואות בכח שור״ (משלי יד ד). וכן שמע׳ וכן לוי. ולמה לא עמד אלא יהוד׳?	Why did not Reuben stand against [Joseph], nor did Simon but [only] Judah [did]? After all, it is said about Reuben: "Reuben, you are my first-born, my might, and the first-fruits of my strength" (Gen 49:3), and he should have been the one to stand against him, as it is said: "Much increase is by the strength of the ox" (Prov 14:4). And so Simon, and so Levi. Why [was it] only Judah [that] stood [against Joseph]?
שמש[ום] ״ולא ישוב מפני כל״ (משלי ל ל), מפני יוסף שכת׳ בו ״ויכלכל״ (בר׳ מז יב). הבהמה לא נתיראה אלא מפני האריה, שנאמר ״ליש גבור בבהמה״ (משלי ל ל) וג׳ והבהמה אלו המצריים [...]ᵃ	Because "And he will not turn away for any" (Prov 30:30), [even] not for Joseph about whom it is written "And he sustained" (Gen 47:12). The beast does not fear [anyone] except the lion, as it says: "The lion is the mightiest among beasts" (Prov 30:30), and the "beast" means "the Egyptians."

a   Ephraim E. Urbach, "Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Fragments," *Kobez al Yad* 6 (1966): 1–54, here
     54; the text quoted here is from the Maagarim database (https://maagarim.hebrew-academy
     .org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx), which corrects portions of Urbach's initial reading.

This text is very concise and at times only hints at what it wants to say, assuming an expertise of the part of the reading audience. The halakhic issue of this Yelammedenu proem is flattering: is flattering a desirable action? The answer is that one should flatter only three types of people: one's wife (for the sake of domestic harmony), one's debtor (there is a lacuna here, so we do not have the reason for this), and one's rabbi, so that he will teach one the Torah. Any other kind of flattery will result in one not living long enough to see salvation (i.e., the End of Days).

Jacob's sons were ready to flatter Joseph; Judah, on the other hand, was not ready to do so, but he is the the one that eventually stood against Joseph to protect Benjamin. The text explains that it was Judah and none of the older brothers because Judah is [like] a lion (it is his traditional image, as stated in Jacob's blessing before his death in Gen 49:9), and the Egyptians are a beast, and the beast fears only the lion. This is why Judah had to be the one to stand against Joseph's demand.

The combination of aspects is familiar from other TYL materials and those that are different nicely exemplify the complexity of the interconnectedness of the various corpora, and the difficulty involved in conceptualizing the milieu that gave rise to all these witnesses. Overall, the short excerpt that we have here uses the midrashic type of discourse more than we saw in the TP and TB excerpts, as it bases its statements on biblical verses more regularly. For example, explaining that Judah the lion stood against Joseph is a midrashic move: the verse from Prov 30:30 includes the word כל ("all"), and it is explained as referring to Joseph being a מכלכל, a sustainer, which is a typical move for a discourse highly versed in midrashic tradition.

Unique to this excerpt is the halakhic issue. We did not encounter this in any of the other Yelammedenu proems of this *seder*. However, the verse that is used for the crux of the message of this proem, Prov 30:30 "The lion, which is mightiest among beasts, and turns not away for any," is the distant verse of one of the proems in TP (TP Vayigash 3), and is also quoted (albeit not as the major verse of the proem) in TB (TB Vayigash 3). The various witnesses of TYL present a Wittgensteinian family resemblance as far as the common midrashic traditions in them are concerned.

We end here our introduction to TYL. Our aim was not to exhaust the issue, but to point to the nature of the material, its beauty, and the challenges it poses to its student. A comprehensive and nuanced introduction to TYL can be found in Marc Bregman's work.[32] We also think that such an overview makes apparent the importance of the volume that you are holding, the first book in a long time that is dedicated to the "Riddle of the Tanhuma."

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32   See especially Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*.