

# Studies in the Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature

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## Joseph, Judah, and the Study of Emotions in Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature

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In this article, I want to introduce the study of emotions into the study of Hebrew-speaking and Aramaic-speaking Judaic circles of the first millennium, particularly into the study of rabbinic culture.<sup>1</sup> My focus will be on Tanhuma-Yelammedenu literature (TYL) and the emotional community behind it. After a short introduction to the study of emotions, I will argue for the use of the concept of cultural repertoire, as expounded by Itamar Even-Zohar, and the concept of the emotional community, which was coined by Barbara Rosenwein, as a legitimate and interesting way to study midrash, especially with regard to the prevalent and typical literary form, the proem. To this end, I will focus on one narrative of the biblical Joseph's interaction with his brothers when revealing his identity to them, and will look into how it is reworked in the amoraic midrash Genesis Rabbah (GenR) and in TYL. My contention is that the social reality behind these two corpora consists of two separate emotional communities that share a cultural repertoire, and that they are distinguishable by their *emotionality* in the broad sense of the word.

Studying emotions in antiquity might sound to some as a “problems of the rich”; have we not enough issues and lacunas in our knowledge about ancient culture to focus on emotions of all things? Furthermore, emotions are such an evasive concept, that we can hardly vouch for them in ourselves or in our own modern cultures, let alone in cultures other than ours. Why, then, should we go and look for them in the remnants left by people who are no longer with us, and who cannot help direct us to the correct understanding of their emotions?

In this article, I claim that the opposite is true. The particularity in distribution of emotions between people and social groups makes emotions a marker in situations where neither the integrity of the extant evidence nor its *Sitz im Leben* are clear enough. Such fluidity and fragmentation characterizes the evidence we have of the rabbinic culture of late antiquity and the Byzantine

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1 For works on Greek-speaking Judaic circles, see Françoise Mirguet, *An Early History of Compassion: Emotion and Imagination in Hellenistic Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

period: the collected nature of the texts, as well as the anonymity of their collector(s), inhibit precise knowledge of both the time and the place of their origin and about their authors (or tellers); still further, the fragmentary and diverse nature of most of these texts, obvious to whoever studies them, cloud the integrity of the collections themselves. Emotions, however, when intentionally or unintentionally expressed, are the basis for one's ideologies, and therefore direct the one studying these texts toward understanding the Cognitive reality in which they originated.

All this is particularly true with regard to TYL. The texts in this corpus are the epitome, one could say, of diversity and fragmentation. They are so diverse and fragmented that they are rightly described by Marc Bregman as a genre – and a complex and multilayered one at that! The borders of the genre can only be generally described. Its form, language, and content are diverse and varied, and only a handful of principles serve as a backbone around which the material is constructed: abundant use of the proemic form; the three typical expressions with which a proem begins – “Let our rabbi teach us,” “As it says [in the Prophets or the Writings],” and “As is written earlier in the text” (‘למדנו’ ‘להעניין’ ‘מה כתוב הכתוב’, ‘זה שאמר הכתוב’); the prevalence of circular proems; and the reference to eschatology at the end of a pericope are all markers of the genre, although they are by no means unique to it.<sup>2</sup>

It is true that serious work of cultural translation has to take place when working on emotions. Much has been written on the scholarly process of cultural translation. I side with the approach that was nicely expressed by Daniel Boyarin that “if I want to learn something about Jewish practices – oral, textual, embodied in antiquity, late antiquity, or the Middle Ages – I contend that I cannot do so by reducing those unknowns to the known,” and that “precisely (in the sense of *davka*) trying, as much as possible, to determine ‘how *they* use a word’ is what we need to do.”<sup>3</sup> Cultural translation is an effort, a journey that should always be taken, even if the ultimate goal might not be reached. With regard to emotions, the most important move is to step away from the emotionality we know, and accept that totally different ones are to be found even in texts that we conceive as our predecessors and the source of our cultural heritage.

2 Marc Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature: Studies in the Evolution of the Versions* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003). The fourth chapter (173–188) is dedicated to a detailed description and characterization of the genre, the various textual collections, and the adjacent literature.

3 Daniel Boyarin, *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2018), 7.

One has to be sophisticated in unearthing these emotions, since on face of it, more than anything, these texts exhibit their otherness from our modern reality and emotionality, and this emotionality has developed and changed since these texts crystallized in ways not known to the ancients. It is cultural analysis, more than psychology, which can help us here, using modern concepts developed in the field of cultural studies. Of these, I will use two: the cultural repertoire and the emotional community. I will first briefly describe the two concepts; I will then give a very short explanation on emotions as developed in the work of Lisa Feldman Barrett. Thereafter, I will zoom in on the Jewish context with regard to emotional communities and the way one can gain insight into emotions in midrash. Only then, and after a short introduction about Joseph and Judah in late antique Judaic texts, I will turn to study the actual texts of GenR and TYL, which are the object of this article.

The first concept, cultural repertoire, is used here as proposed by Even-Zohar in his cultural-theoretical notion of the “polysystem.”<sup>4</sup> Even-Zohar developed the concept with regard to literature, which, as a narrow term, is not so relevant to Judaic circles in late antiquity. But Even-Zohar uses the term in a wider sense, one that would encompass also typical oral texts that, even if they were eventually written down, had in most cases not been intended to be written down.<sup>5</sup> Even-Zohar refers to repertoire as “the aggregate of laws and elements [...] that govern the production of texts.”<sup>6</sup> Without going deeply into the theory, I can say that the important point that Even-Zohar makes is to differentiate between an actual element from the repertoire and the way this element was used by a particular group within the polysystem (i.e., a system that is made up of many systems in the sociocultural realm). The term “repertoire” forces us, then, to keep this distinction in mind and to not assume that similar cultural elements point to one and the same cultural group. The term is therefore more useful than the more common term “ideology,” as it refers particularly to textual artifacts (in the broad sense of the word) and not to ideas in the abstract.

It is obvious that late antique Judaic groups knew the basic content behind the biblical text, such as names of protagonists and parts of plotlines, or even knew the biblical text itself; it is obvious that these same groups knew at least some customs and rules expressed or promoted in the Mishnah, or knew the

4 Itamar Even-Zohar, “Polysystem Theory,” *Poetics Today*, 11, no. 1 (1990): 9–26.

5 About the orality of the oral Torah, see the monumental work of Yaacov Sussmann, “Oral Law – Taken Literally: The Power of the Tip of a Yod,” in *Mehqerei Talmud*, Vol. 3, ed. Yaacov Sussman and David Rosenthal (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 209–384.

6 Even-Zohar, “Polysystem Theory,” 17.

Mishnah itself, but the attitude toward this body of knowledge was different in different circles, not only in the sense of accepting or not accepting its dictates, but in a more nuanced manner: how much of it was known, what aspects of it were difficult to accept, which behaviors had to be explained or excused, and so on.

And this is where the second concept, Rosenwein's "emotional community," comes in. The emotions, feelings, and attitudes that a member of a society has toward various aspects (and artifacts) of the cultural repertoire are most revealing about their place in society as well as about the structure of society itself. Rosenwein coined the concept of the emotional community to differentiate between groups that share a repertoire but have differentiated attitudes toward certain aspects of it. She explains it this way:

Emotional communities are largely the same as social communities: families, neighborhoods, syndicates, academic institutions, monasteries, factories, platoons, princely courts. But the researcher looking at them seeks above all to uncover systems of feeling, to establish what these communities [...] assess as valuable or harmful to them (for it is about such things that people express emotions).<sup>7</sup>

This concept of the emotional community is a new way of typifying social groups; the innovative aspect is that it looks through the text into the values, and through the values into the group.

## 1 Emotions and Embodiment

However, before studying the text, some words about emotions are in order. Since the concept of the emotional community was developed with regard to medieval Europe, when using it with regard to rabbinic texts, one needs to conceptualize emotions in a less Eurocentric way, and take a step backward into the biological field.

The strong connection between emotions and embodiment is usually acknowledged, but the nature of the connection is not always clarified: certain bodily expressions are perceived as emotional; such expressions include crying, laughing, smiling, blushing, shivering, nervous movements, and sweating. We customarily observe bodily expressions in order to "read" emotions in

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Rosenwein, "Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions," *Passions in Context* 1, no. 1 (2010): 1–32, here 1.



others. Perceiving these bodily expressions leads us to believe that the emotions that are expressed are universal, since the body is something that all humans have in common.

But in fact, while the bodily expressions themselves seem to indeed be quite universal, and even exist, beyond human biology, in other animals, the emotions that these bodily expressions convey have a strong cultural component: Lisa Feldman Barrett, a leading scientist whose research focuses on the nature of emotion from the perspectives of both psychology and neuroscience, has studied the expression of emotions on the level of the body (heart rate, perspiration, etc.), facial expression, and brain activity cross-culturally, and has thereby developed her theory of “constructed emotions.” She asserts:

Emotion concepts are also [just as words in general] cultural tools. They come with a rich set of rules, all in the service of regulating your body budget or influencing someone else’s. These rules can be specific to a culture, stipulating when it’s acceptable to construct a given emotion in a given situation. [...] Some emotion concepts from other cultures are incredibly complicated, perhaps impossible to translate into English.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, coupling a certain bodily expression with a particular emotion varies immensely between cultures. This might sound counterintuitive, but the difficulty to understand the emotions of a person from a different culture is a common experience. What moves an unfamiliar person might not be what moves the observing person, and the incentive to act might not have a word, let alone an emotion word, in our culture.

Crying is one such embodied emotional expression. While there is a literary convention that crying expresses sadness, in real life, and across cultures, crying appears in connection with many other emotions and drives, such as fear, extreme happiness, and disbelief. With this in mind, it is clear how the embodied emotional narratives from the Bible are a fertile field for interpretation in subsequent generations and cultures.

## 2 Emotional Communities in the Jewish Context and the Question of Proems

Fragmented and obscure as some of these texts may seem to us, the abundance of textual evidence ascribed to the second half of the first millennium – halakhah

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<sup>8</sup> Lisa Feldman Barrett, *How Emotions Are Made: The Secret Life of the Brain* (London: Pan Books, 2018), 146–147.

and aggadah, *targum*, *piyyut*, and the Hekhalot literature – points to vibrant and diverse Jewish cultures. However, it is difficult to know which of these voiced the hegemonic view of its time. For the purpose of this article, the two significant emotional communities of Jewish society are the *beit midrash*, comprising elite Jewish men devoted to halakhic study, and synagogue-goers, comprising the general public, including men and women of various ages and social ranks.

While synagogue culture and *beit midrash* culture are not contradictory terms, they are obviously also not one and the same; and while they both share a cultural repertoire of Bible, Mishnah, midrashic and halakhic knowledge, and other aspects of late antique Jewish culture, they are distinct emotional communities, although they both share a cultural repertoire. In this article, I will focus on aggadah, a genre comprising narratives related to the biblical text, which is constructed out of typical poetic techniques and subgenres, of which a very prominent one is the proem (פתיחתא).

## 2.1 Proems

Proems, arguably the most typical textual form of amoraic and post-amoraic rabbinic literature, are textual units that start off by discussing what seems to be an accidental verse and by using sophisticated rhetorical techniques, and that end up introducing the first (or second) verse of the *seder*, the Torah reading portion of the week.<sup>9</sup> Scholars think that these textual units are connected to homiletic activity, which in late antiquity preceded the reading of the Torah; thus, the proem prepared the audience for the reading, as it ended, artistically, with the first verse that was about to be read.<sup>10</sup> However, these scholars debate about which cultural or social group made up the target audience of the proems. Tamar Kadari<sup>11</sup> gives a compact overview of this debate, pointing to four approaches to the issue: the first is that of Joseph Heinemann, who

9 A *seder* is a portion of the Torah read on a Saturday according to the Palestinian reading cycle, which lasted three-and-a-half years, and not the one-year cycle as is the most used currently, which originated in Babylonia.

10 Regarding the place of the *derashah* in the late antique synagogue, Joseph Heinemann developed the modern study of the proem and its form. His theory is described in a few articles. For an overview of his theory, see 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 Heinnemann*, ed. Jakob J. Petuchowsky and Ezra Fleischer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981), 34–51, here 34, and in n. 1.

11 Tamar Kadari, "On the Question of the Intended Audience of Midrashic Literature: On Strata of Interpretation and Editorial Considerations," in *Preachers, Sermons and Homiletics in Jewish Culture*, ed. Kimmy Caplan et al. (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2012), 29–48.

sees the rabbinic proem as a product of the *beit midrash*: it was subsequently used, then, in the synagogue for a larger audience. The second approach is that of Yonah Fraenkel, who sees in the proems a product of the *beit midrash*, but for its own students and not for an external lay audience. The third approach is that of David Stern, who sees the midrashic compositions as “professional literature” intended for the preachers to use in their sermons, and the fourth approach, that of Ofra Meir and Richard Sarason, sees in the extant compositions late compilations, from which we can learn very little about the original content.

Not being initially focused on the question of audience, my work on TYL led me to a view that harmonizes all these approaches.<sup>12</sup> Formulating the question as a dichotomy between a literary and living sermon is missing the point. Whatever was the performance behind the texts, if at all, the extant proems from late antiquity and the Byzantine period are by now all written documents and are in no way faithful recordings [in writing] of living sermons: they are not texts written in advance by preachers and read in the synagogue, nor are they texts memorized by listeners and written after the Sabbath (as is the case with the sermons of Rabbi Nachman of Breslau). Therefore, as Meir and Sarason have it, we cannot decide on the basis of the data at our disposal at the moment – what is a series of concise proems with no markers of public speaking – whether the proems had been performed or not, and if they were, before whom.<sup>13</sup> However, the concept of a stock list of ideas about how to connect a distant verse and the beginning of *seder* fits well with our data, and such a list may include items that had been performed in the past, or that may be performed in the future (of the text); the difference would not be apparent in the data. In this, then, I agree with Stern. With regard to the intended audience, here is where the idea of a repertoire shared by different emotional communities comes in handy: I suggest that the TYL proems exhibit values that fit neatly with a synagogue emotional community, while the classical proems (such as in GenR) could have been intended for a *beit midrash* audience. In other words,

12 Ronit Nikolsky, “Parables in the Service of Emotional Translation,” in *Parables in Changing Contexts: Essays on the Study of Parables in Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism*, ed. Marcel Poorthuis and Eric Ottenheim (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 37–56; Ronit Nikolsky, “Are Parables an Interpretation?” in *Sources and Interpretation in Ancient Judaism: Studies for Tal Ilan at Sixty*, ed. Meron M. Piotrkowski et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 289–315.

13 However, the extensive work done nowadays under the leadership of Moshe Lavee (Department of Jewish History and Bible Studies in the University of Haifa), of promoting the accessibility of Hebrew manuscripts, especially those of the TYL, through the integration of digital humanities into the process (<https://elijahlab.haifa.ac.il/index.php/en/about-eng>), will most likely change the situation, and will enable a new stage of Tanhuma-Yelammedenu studies.

in the TYL we can conjecture the existence of authors who are versed in the *beit midrash* culture, but who direct their proems to lay people. I have shown in past work how TYL reworks classical rabbinic content to fit better the emotionality of a wider audience, and this article will continue with this approach.<sup>14</sup>

### 3 The Study of Emotions in Rabbinic Texts

In order to study emotionality in TYL, I will suggest three strategies that TYL uses to rework the emotionality of earlier sources. The first is simply to rework emotional words in the text; we can observe added or changed emotional words in relation to the sources. Here, the all-knowing teller of the TY narrative (the anonymous voice of the midrash) tells us what a character feels by spelling out the emotion, or the embodied emotional terms. This move on the part of the teller suggests to the audience both a particular emotion from the cultural repertoire, and a certain attitude toward the character who has this particular emotion. The second strategy used by TYL texts is to explain the motivation of the character in the narrative. Here, also, the teller could be using emotional words (for example: “The character did this or that because he was afraid”), but the teller is also free to add new components to the story (for example: “The character acted because there was hunger in the land”);<sup>15</sup> in this manner, the teller eliminates other options for explaining a behavior, options that might have conveyed a different message to the audience. While these two techniques are possible in many retellings of a story, such in the retelling of myths, traditional epics, and psychological or political narratives, the third technique is ubiquitous and thrives in exegetical literature in general and in the fragmented rabbinic midrash in particular: here, the teller creates a new context in which the story, while not changed, is to be understood. This is typically done by suggesting an analogy or telling a parable that presents the story (characters or events) from a different perspective. As I have shown in previous studies, the parable or analogy does not have to be minutely and totally parallel in every aspect to the original story; in fact, the analogy should not even be absolutely clear in order to change the audience’s attitude from the original to the desired message of the story.<sup>16</sup> All these narrative strategies keep enough

14 See note 12 above.

15 For a description and a narratological analysis of additions in midrashic stories, see Yehoshua Levinson, *The Twice Told Tale: A Poetics of the Exegetical Narrative in Rabbinic Midrash* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 40–59.

16 Nikolsky, “Emotional Translation.”

of the original story intact to still be of an exegetical nature, which is what is expected in the context of biblical exegesis, but they also smoothly suggest to the audience a new emotionality.

All these strategies are found in one story, a scene from the *seder* Vayigash (Gen 44:18–46:27), and it recounts Joseph's meeting with his brothers in Egypt. As the biblical story at the base of this *seder* is very emotional, and the characters are conspicuous in late antiquity, the story has been reworked extensively in GenR, and the TYL material relies heavily on this reworking. In the sections below, I will focus on parts of the scene where Joseph reveals himself to his brothers in TYL, in comparison to the GenR text. Before I start, however, a few words are in order about the image of Joseph.

#### 4 Joseph, Judah, and the Emotional Community of TYL

##### 4.1 *Joseph and Judah in Late Antique Judaic Circles*

Already in the Bible, Joseph came to represent not only himself, but all the northern tribes – that is, those who settled north of Judah and in the Transjordan.

In contrast, the groups identified as the tribes and offspring of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, the only ones to return from the Babylonian exile (Ez 1:5), comprise the hegemonic voice throughout most biblical texts. This is expressed in Psalms 78:67–68: “He abhorred the tent of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah” (וַיִּמָּאֵס בְּאַהֲלֵ יוֹסֵף, וּבְשֻׁבֶט אֶפְרַיִם לֹא בָחַר, וַיִּבְחַר אֶת שֻׁבֶט יְהוּדָה אֶת הָרַ צִיּוֹן אֲשֶׁר אָהַב). This is where we hear that the tribe of Judah is loved by God, while the tent of Joseph and the tribe of Ephraim (his son) are the non-chosen.<sup>17</sup>

Beyond the Bible, the image of Joseph as a referential name continued to develop, as Jan Doehorn and Anders Klostergaard Petersen<sup>18</sup> explain:

One of the more conspicuous characteristics of early Jewish and Christian literature is the varied character of Joseph. This is [...] more remarkable

17 Matthew Thiessen, “4Q372 1 and the Continuation of Joseph's Exile,” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 14, no. 3 (1990): 380–395, here 385–388.

18 Jan Doehorn and Anders Klostergaard Petersen, “Narratio Ioseph: A Coptic Joseph-Apocryphon,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 30, no. 4 (1999): 431–463; see also Anders Klostergaard Petersen, “Narratio Ioseph: A Rarely Acknowledged Coptic Joseph Apocryphon,” in *The Embroidered Bible: Studies in Biblical Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Honour of Michael E. Stone*, ed. Lorenzo diTommaso et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 809–823, where the issues of Joseph and Judah (to be discussed shortly) are elaborated upon.

taking the scarce references to the Joseph story of Gen 37:1–47:27 in the Old Testament into account. Numerous references to Joseph or the house of Joseph are indeed found across the Old Testament but they serve generally as a symbol of the Northern kingdom or the kingdom of Israel (e.g., Amos 5:6; Ezek 5:6; Obad 18; Zech 10:6; Ps 78:67).<sup>19</sup>

Whatever the nature of the popularity of Joseph in non-scriptural writings, the referential aspect of his image often went hand in hand with his character.

The tension surrounding the image of Joseph is nicely exemplified in Jubilees. According to Cana Werman's analysis, Jubilees, a non-sectarian but priestly composition, sides with the biblical hegemony of Judah and Levi more than some other priestly compositions of the period. It portrays Joseph as a model Sapiential leader, but only in the End of Days: "Joseph propagates the way of God in the world: justice, righteousness, peace, without adversaries or evil doers."<sup>20</sup> Thus his biblical image as a positive ruler preserved, even as it is not relevant to the time period in which Jubilees was written.

An enlightening example is the Prayer of Joseph, a non-sectarian text from Qumran (4Q372.1) that was published by Eileen Schuller.<sup>21</sup> It reports on evil people who build their "high places" on a high mountain, and who by this act invoke Israel's jealousy;<sup>22</sup> at the same time, Joseph "was cast in lands he did not k[now], among a foreign nation, and dispersed in all the world."<sup>23</sup> Schuller conjectures, among other possibilities, that the name Joseph possibly refers to the Samaritans. Hanan Eshel<sup>24</sup> asserted this conjecture and expanded on it: he argued that the "evil people" were the Samaritans and that their "high places" (an intended derogatory term) referred to the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerizim. The Samaritans' referred to themselves as the "offspring of Joseph", inasmuch as they were the original inhabitants of Samaria, who never went into exile. The biblical narratives (2 Kgs 17 and Ez 4) claim differently, viewing the Samaritans as an external group that was brought into the area by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon. "Relating to all the Samaritans as non-Israelites,"

19 Doehorn and Petersen, "Narratio Ioseph," 436. About this, see also James L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 14–15.

20 Cana Werman, *The Book of Jubilees: Introduction, Translation, and Interpretation* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, 2015), 478–479.

21 Eileen Schuller, "'4Q372' 1: A Text about Joseph," *Revue de Qumrân* 14, no. 3–4 (1990): 349–376.

22 Schuller, "'4Q372,'" 355, Line 12.

23 *Ibid.*, Lines 10–11.

24 Hanan Eshel, "The Prayer of Joseph, a Papyrus from Masada and the Samaritan Temple on APTAPIZIN," *Zion* 56, no. 2 (1991): 125–136.

said Eshel, “the author of the ‘prayer of Joseph’ continues the biblical ideology of 2Kings 17 and Ezra 4.”<sup>25</sup> In contrast, referring to Joseph, who is “cast in lands he did not know” counters the Samaritan discourse, and identifies Joseph with the tribes that are still in exile; they are the “other’ tribes” (i.e., not Judah, Levi, and Benjamin).<sup>26</sup>

We can now further nuance Joseph’s “otherness”: unlike the Samaritans, who are foreign, and thus complete outsiders, Joseph represents the Israelites in the diaspora, who, while not part of the hegemonic group, are not completely foreign: They are insiders who are “others” or “internal others” to use the concept brought into Jewish studies by Christine Hayes.<sup>27</sup> The name Joseph, then, can be flexibly used to signify a non-hegemonic group, but one which is not outside the border of the Judaic group, while the name Judah stands for those who claim to be the hegemonic group.

As such, the question of how Judah and Joseph are portrayed in any late antique Judaic text becomes indicative of the identity behind it, as these characters’ nature points to that of a whole group, and the quality of their character sends a meta-narratological message to the emotional community regarding its own status. Indeed, narratives of late antique Judaic circles paid careful attention to the balance between the two. We often find a delicate power struggle expressed by presenting each of them in a slightly better or slightly worse light relative to the biblical narrative as an expression of intertextuality. For example, with regard to the selling of Joseph, we find traditions in some pseudepigraphical compositions (Testament of Zebulon, Testament of Simon, *Narratio Ioseph*, the Ethiopian History of Joseph, and Philo’s *De Iosepho*) that present Judah in a more positive light than the biblical narrative does.<sup>28</sup>

25 Eshel, “The Prayer of Joseph,” 128.

26 Another usage of the Josephan affinity is found in the traditions that talk about the Sons of Ephraim, who left Egypt prematurely, and that, according to the rabbinic tradition, died because of it along with the followers of Bar Kokhba in his revolt against the Romans. See Joseph Heinemann, “The Messiah of Ephraim and the Premature Exodus of the Tribe of Ephraim,” *Harvard Theological Review* 68, no. 1 (1975): 1–15; and Gerald J. Blidstein, “The Ephraimite Exodus from Egypt – A Re-Evaluation,” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 5, no. 1 (1986): 1–13.

27 Christine Hayes, “The ‘Other’ in Rabbinic Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature*, ed. Martin S. Jaffee and Charlotte E. Fonrobert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 243–269, here 243, and see, on the flexibility of the term, Reuven Kiperwasser, *Going West: Migrating Persona and Constructing the Self in Rabbinic Culture* (forthcoming).

28 Petersen, “A Rarely Acknowledged Coptic Joseph Apocryphon,” 817–820; Dochhorn and Petersen, “*Narratio Ioseph*,” 436–442.

Maren Niehoff,<sup>29</sup> who studied the image of Joseph in Josephus, Philo, and GenR, concludes that, beyond the difference between the sources, early exegesis tended to exalt Joseph, as for example, Joseph's assertion that the Lord granted him mercy, which is found in *Testament of Joseph* 2:3–4, or the story of his interaction with Potiphar's wife, which is described as a trial of the just in I Maccabees. In contrast, in GenR, Judah is regularly shown in a more positive light, not only in comparison to the biblical narrative, but also in comparison with Joseph, the great administrator of Pharaoh. GenR elaborates much on Joseph, defaming his brothers; the epithet "righteous," while still applied to him, is downplayed. Niehoff focuses on Joseph's youth and his life in Egypt, notably his encounter with Potiphar's wife, and she concludes that "the personality of his youth emerges as especially negative."<sup>30</sup>

The tendency Niehoff outlined is integral to the pronounced discourse of the rabbis, who present themselves in their texts as a direct continuation of the (hegemonic voice of) biblical culture. It is not surprising, then, to see a marked inclination to present the image of Judah in the most positive light possible. Nevertheless, as in other Judaic circles, neither Joseph nor Judah can ever be totally negative in rabbinic text, since both are not only ancestors and characters in the Holy Book, but they also play an important role in the End of Days drama as metonyms for the future two messiahs.

There is one scene in the biblical story in which Judah and Joseph confront each other: this happens when Joseph demands to keep Benjamin in Egypt, after falsely accusing him of theft (Gen 44:18–45:17). Judah, being the one vouching for Benjamin's safety to his father Jacob, entered into a submissive speech to change the mind of the Egyptian ruler. The scene ends emotionally with Joseph revealing his identity to his brothers, crying and kissing them.

Bearing in mind the meanings these two heroes carry with them, it is clear that this scene serves as fertile ground for an elaboration on the power play between the two in GenR. Judah's submissive and careful speech turns into a burst of verbal, almost physical, violence; his valiance is depicted thus: "Rabbi Yochanan said: when he [Judah] became angry, the hair on his heart [i.e., chest] would penetrate his clothes and come out, and he would put lumps of iron in his mouth, and bring them out as powder" (בשעה שהיה אמ' ר' יוחנן. בשעה שהיה מעלה חימה, היו שערות לבו בוקעות כליו ויוצאות, והיה נותן עששיות שלברזל לתוך פיו ומוציאם כאבק).<sup>31</sup> Further in the text, Judah threatens to destroy Egypt, and to physically harm Joseph. This depiction of Judah is very different from the one

29 Maren Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1992).

30 Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph*, 113, 124, 135, 142, 144.

31 GenR 93:6. See Julius Theodor and Hanoach Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba mit Kritischem Apparat und Kommentar*, 2nd ed. (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965), 1157.



in the biblical scene and its emotionality: Judah in the rabbinic imagination is hardly submissive, and presents a force equal to Joseph, if not stronger.

The reworking of this scene in the **TY** text exemplifies the way to study emotions in rabbinic literature, and in particular in **TYL**.<sup>32</sup>

## 5 Joseph and Judah in **TB** Vayigash

GenR on the *seder* Vayigash (Gen 44:18–46:27; GenR 93) from which the **TY** derives much of its material, is a complex text. As customary, we find there a set of proems, the final of which ends with an eschatological message followed by a series of exegetical midrashim on various verses from the *seder*. In Theodor and Albeck's edition, the text is repeated twice: we have two sets of proems and exegetical midrashim relating to this *seder*, the first set on pages 1150–1161 and the second on pages 1161–1171.<sup>33</sup> Some of the material in the two sets is overlapping in terms of content, but is formulated in different words.<sup>34</sup> The second set is considered by scholars<sup>35</sup> as Tanhumaic material; I will refer to the second set as GenR2.

The **TB** material and the **TP** material on Vayigash follow the same pattern as GenR: a series of proems followed by exegetical material. The rule of thumb in **TY** studies is to look for material common to the two versions (i.e., **TP** and **TB**) in order to conjecture about an earlier stratum of the corpus. However, in the case of the pericope Vayigash, there is no material common to both versions of

32 This scene was not studied by Niehoff, nor was it studied in any depth in James L. Kugel, *Traditions of the Bible: A Guide to the Bible as It Was at the Start of the Common Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), or in Kugel, *In Potiphar's House*.

33 Both MS Vatican ebr. 30 (171r–173r) and MS Vatican ebr. 60 (169v–170v) have only one set of proems and midrashic units (for 30: [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Vat.ebr.30](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ebr.30) [accessed on January 25, 2020]).

34 For example, in the first set we read (1156–1157): “Rabbi Yochanan said: When he [i.e., Judah] was filling with rage, the hair of his chest would penetrate his clothes and come out” (אמר ר' חנן בשעה שהיה מעלה חימה היו שערות לבו בוקעות כליו ויוצאות), and in the second (1163): “There are those that say that he [i.e., Judah] was wearing five layers of clothes, and he had one hair on his chest, and when he got angry it [i.e., the hair] would tear them all” (יש א' חמשה לבושים היה לבוש ונימה היה לו בליבו, וכיון שכעס היה קורע) (את כולן), or in the first set (1160): “Joseph said to his brothers: ‘Come near me’, and they did, he showed them his circumcision and said: ‘I am Joseph your brother’ (Gen 45:4)” (ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו, גשו נא אלי, ויגשו, הראה להן מילה, ויאמר אני יוסף אחיכם) (ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו, גשו נא אלי, ויגשו, הראה להן מילה, ויאמר אני יוסף אחיכם), and in the second (1170): “And they did not believe [i.e., that he was their brother] until he undressed himself and showed them the circumcision” (ולא האמינו עד שפרע עצמו) (והראה להם מילה).

35 Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba*, 1161 n. 5.

the Tanhuma, which is not found also in GenR2. We have four textual witnesses for the TYL reworking of the scene of *seder Vayigash*: TP, TB, Yelammedenu, and GenR2.

### 5.1 *The First Strategy: Following the Emotion Word*

Crying per se is not an emotion; rather, it is a word of embodiment. In modern usage, the word is almost inseparably connected to emotions – that is, the cause of crying is what we would call an “emotion,” as simply shedding tears while slicing an onion does not qualify as crying.

Unlike the modern usage, crying in the Bible is not combined with tears in most cases:<sup>36</sup> a rough estimate accounts for only six out of 22 cases where we find the word “tear” (דמעה) in combination with “crying” (בכה). The biblical usage and, following it, the rabbinic usage have crying involve first and foremost a loud voice, as is seen in the many cases where crying is enacted by people “giving their voice”<sup>37</sup> and “lifting/raising their voice” (וישא קולו or נתן קולו).<sup>38</sup>

36 David Bosworth dedicated a few studies to weeping in the Bible and in other ancient texts (Greek and Akkadian), of which one article is dedicated to weeping in recognition scenes in Genesis (David A. Bosworth, “Weeping in Recognition Scenes in Genesis and the Odyssey,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77, no. 4 [2015]: 619–639.). Bosworth uses for his analysis an attachment theory developed in modern psychology. While Bosworth’s work is serious and thorough (for example, he goes into great length to analyze the scene which is the focus of this study, as it does not fit his theory easily), I doubt, as can be clear from my theoretical introduction, whether a modern theory based upon and directed toward modern people fits as an analytic tool for ancient narratives. But beyond the theoretical differences, I would like to address two issues that skew Bosworth’s research. The first is the use of the word “weeping.” This English word, used in the attachment theory as described by Bosworth, usually entails the shedding of tears, which in the Hebrew word בכה in biblical narrative is not always the case, or even usually, as I state above, and as Bosworth himself recognizes (637); however, he still refers to “tears” when talking about crying where tears are not mentioned (for example, when he refers interchangeably to weeping and tearing on page 636: “Joseph weeps secretly when he recognizes his half-brothers and later his full brother, but he conceals his tears to hide his identity”). Thus, the English usage obscures the results of the research. The second point has to do with Bosworth failing to look into stable combinations of the root בכה with certain nouns, verbs, or prepositions, and thus misses the distinction between the formulaic usage and the narrative one, a distinction that I discuss in this section of the article. With regard to our scene (623–627), I agree with Bosworth’s sensitivity in noticing the interplay between non-formulaic and formulaic crying; however, I do not agree with the emotionality Bosworth suggests there.

37 This combination is used to indicate a loud voice also in cases where crying is not involved. See, for example, 2Sam 22:14, Jer 2:15, Joel 2:11, Amos 1:2, Ps 18:14, Prov 1:20, and Eccl 2:7.

38 As well as from cases where “crying” is said to be heard, such as Joseph’s crying, which was heard in the house of Pharaoh. In this respect, the root בכה is similar to צעק, זעק, etc.,

There are two formulaic usages of “crying” in biblical narratives. The first is crying in recognition scenes, when two people meet after a separation; in such cases, the standard phrase is “crying on the neck of” someone (לִבְכוֹת עַל צוּאָר) (Gen 33:4, 45:15, 46:29). The other formulaic usage is crying over a dead person, and then the standard phrase is either cry “on” (עַל) or “to” (ל) someone, or it can be, with the signifier of the accusative, *et* (אֶת) someone. Other usages of the root “to cry” (בָּכָה) portray an acknowledgment of one’s weak state in the face of a given situation, and it is often coupled with either a complaint to a higher or stronger party (Cf. Num 14:1 – the Israelites complaining to Moses), or a request for help (Cf. Gen 27:38 – Esau cries and asks Isaac for another blessing), and these, as mentioned above, involve a loud voice.

Catherine Hezser treated rabbinic crying in her book about the rabbinic body.<sup>39</sup> She looked into the different contexts of biblical, Hellenistic, monastic, and rabbinic crying, and asserted its rhetorical function in rabbinic literature, being sensitive to cultural differences. She wrote: “The story [about Ulla son of Ishmael lamenting about his dying in Babylonia and not in the Land of Israel] can be seen as a Palestinian rabbinic ‘propaganda’ story stressing the superiority of Palestine over Babylonia (‘unclean’) and dissuading rabbinic scholars from moving there lest they should die in a foreign environment.”<sup>40</sup>

Shulamit Valler<sup>41</sup> studied systematically expressions of sorrow in rabbinic literature; she studied many rabbinic stories, mostly from the Babylonian Talmud but also from other sources, focusing on what it is that rabbis cry about – that is, the object of their crying. Valler concludes that “in most of the stories of weeping, the private sorrow of the sages – both the Tannaim and the Amoraim – was associated with the suffering of the general public, the result of a national or social state of affairs.”<sup>42</sup>

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which are discussed by Elias Brasil de Souza and Diego Barros (Diego Barros and Elias Brasil de Souza, “Israel Cried Out ... the Lord Raised Up a Deliverer: The ‘Moshia’ and the Cry of the Oppressed in the Hebrew Bible,” *Hermeneutica* 11, no. 2 [2011]: 11–33).

39 Catherine Hezser, *Rabbinic Body Language: Non-Verbal Communication in Palestinian Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 217–229.

40 Hezser, *Rabbinic Body*, 221. Hezser’s book is not dedicated primarily to emotions but it is about rabbinic body language, gestures, and appearances, and the section about crying is but a small part of it (218–229). She makes an enlightening comparison between rabbinic crying and that of desert monks (222–224 and 227).

41 Shulamit Valler, *Sorrow and Distress in the Talmud* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2011), 108–186.

42 Valler, *Sorrow and Distress*, 183. An interesting parallel to what Valler describes is found in two TYL witnesses, GenR2 (1170) and Midrash Hadash al HaTorah (Gila Vachman, *Midrash Hadash al Hatorah* [Jerusalem: Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, 2013], 41), in a section which I do not discuss here, where according to the biblical scene Joseph



hidden from his brothers' sight when they first come to Egypt, or when they bring Benjamin with them.

The omission, or ignoring, of the emphasized biblical crying scenes is in itself an action on the part of the midrashist. However, the most we can make of this *argumentum ex silentio* is that the midrashist had a different story in mind with regard to the crying Joseph than the one the biblical teller had.

In Gen 54:2, Joseph cries in front of his brothers, but he does so before revealing his identity; it is therefore not a formulaic crying encounter, but it is also not a “hidden cry” as in previous meetings with the brothers. In the midrash (TP Vayigash 5), this verse is moved to a place in the story where it is blended into a regular encounter of crying, the scene of Gen 45:15; the motivation for crying is also changed, as will be further discussed below when I examine the second strategy. The regular crying encounter of Gen 45:15 – “And he kissed all his brothers and cried over them” (וַיִּנְשֶׁק לְכָל אֶחָיו וַיִּבְדֵּךְ עֲלֵיהֶם) – is reworked using the poetic strategy of “author’s or teller’s diversion,” and will also be further discussed below in its own section.

To summarize this first strategy, the aggression and the equality between Joseph and Judah promoted by GenR together with adding a bit of love on the part of Judah is reworked in TYL into aggression on the part of both brothers and love on the part of Joseph. Joseph’s crying is considerably reduced, and its peculiar nature is blended into formulaic crying.

## 5.2 *The Second Strategy: Change in Motivation*

The second strategy of emotional translation involves interfering with the story by stating the protagonist’s incentive to act. Here, the new teller explains the motivation of the protagonist differently from the original, or adds a motivation where it did not exist earlier. The latter case is common with regard to biblical stories, which are more action-based and do not describe the inner workings of the protagonists (the *akeda* story [Gen 22:1–19] being a classical example). The lack of motivation in biblical stories may indicate that the

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Bereshit Rabbati (Miketz 42:24, 204): “And he turned from them and cried, why? When he heard that his brothers checked their own actions and could not find fault except the punishment of selling him, and he heard that they regretted it, and accepted their trial, he recognized that this was heaven’s plan, that he be sold by his brothers, and not because they hated him, and he cried for making them suffer. Another explanation: why did he cry? When he heard them say that his blood was sought, his and the old man’s, when they mentioned the old man’s suffering, he cried right away.” (למה? ויסוב מעליהם ויבך. למשה? כששמע שאחיו בלשו במעשיהם ולא מצאו בידם עון אלא עגש מכירתו ושמע שהיו מתחרטין ומצדיקין עליהם את הדין הכיר והבין שמן השמים היתה גזרה שימכרוהו אחיו ולא עשו לו משום שנאה ובכה על שצערם. ד”א למה בכה, כששמע שאמרו וגם דמו הנה נדרש, דמו ודם (הזקן), שהזכירו לו צער אביו, מיד בכה. Both are adjacent compositions to the TYL.

audience did not formulate narratives in terms of motivation, or that these were self-evident. Be that as it may, it became a common practice in midrash to add the motivation of the protagonist, and personal motivation is a perfect locus for emotional education.

The ingenuity of this method is that the story still feels very much like the original, since protagonists, their names, events, places, and the eventual objects are kept intact. The new attitude is constructed, then, in an implied manner, which makes it easy for the audience to blend the new with the old. In terms of the concepts underlying this article, we can say that, while the cultural repertoire stays intact, a unique emotional community is constructed.

I will focus now on the sequence of Joseph's crying in front of his brothers just before revealing his identity to them. The reason behind the crying is not intuitively clear to the modern mind: Is it confusion, indecisiveness, or recognition of his inability to win over his brothers? Or did he remember his father? Many such interpretations are found in scholarly literature. In the biblical text, we only hear that Joseph could not stop himself (להתאפק, Gen 45:1), and that he cried. We have seen that crying in Biblical Hebrew and Early Rabbinic Hebrew, when not in a formulaic context, signifies the weak state of the crier. This would serve the GenR ideology fine, since it makes an effort to present Joseph more negatively than the Bible does; Joseph cannot stop himself from crying, that is, from recognizing and presenting himself as weak.

In contrast, the TYL reworks this sequence, and Joseph's motivation is spelled out. We do, however, find a different motivation in each of the textual witnesses that we have for the TYL. The Yelammedenu gives Joseph back the reigns to control himself, when his incentive is formulated as a calculated decision:<sup>45</sup>

כיון שראה יוסף שהסכימה דעתם להחריב את מצרים, אמר יוסף: מוטב שאתודע להם ואל יחריבו את מצרים

When Joseph saw that their [the brothers'] mind was set to destroy Egypt, Joseph said [in his heart]: It is better that I make myself known to them, so that they do not destroy Egypt.<sup>46</sup>

Joseph is here being loyal to the country that enabled his success, so when recognizing the threatening attitude of his brothers (which is a midrashic

45 This passage is found also in TP and GenR2, which will be discussed hereafter.

46 Jacob Mann and Isaiah Sonne, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College, 1940), 340.

addition and is not found in the biblical story), his coming out to them is his calculated solution in order to protect Egypt. Joseph is not a weakling here, and this motivation shows him in a more positive light.

TP follows with the exact same words of the Yelammedenu, but it further adds one last trick that Joseph plays on his brothers, claiming to be the Egyptian who bought the abused brother.<sup>47</sup> GenR2, perhaps from an early Tanhumaic stratum, formulates the incentive in a typical midrashic manner when it says that “since [Judah] mentioned the pain of his father, Joseph could not stand on his own, and he held himself and sat down” (וכיון שהזכיר צער אביו, לא היה) (יכול לעמוד על עצמו, נתחזק וישב): here GenR2 builds on biblical verses from the end of the preceding chapter, just before our verse (Gen 44:34, when ours is 45:1), in which Judah mentions Jacob’s pain. Here, in TP and GenR2, Joseph is not presented as weak, but as a loving son: his sorrow results from his empathy with his father. Further, GenR2 does not mention that Joseph cried, which is again a strategy to avoid presenting him as weak.

A third strategy is taken by TB, which simply spells out Joseph’s emotions: it was not weakness but love that made Joseph cry and reveal himself to his brothers:

כיון ששמע יוסף לא יכול לכבוש רחמיו, שנאמר “ולא יכול יוסף להתאפק” וגו’ “ויתן את קולו בבכי” וגו’ “ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו אני יוסף” (בר’ מה א-ג)

When Joseph heard, he could not hide his love, as it says “And Joseph could not stop himself,” etc. (Gen 45:1), “and he gave his voice crying,” etc. (Gen 45:2), “And he said to his brothers, I am Joseph” (Gen 45:3) [TB Vayigash 7].

This TB version seems to have GenR2 in mind; here, however, the emotion is spelled out: Joseph could not stop his “love” (רחמים). While it is not specified whom Joseph loves, it does seem likely that here, as in GenR2, it is his father. The version in TB is more concise than both TP and GenR2, and it does not walk the reader through the complex poetics of midrash.

In this section, we have looked at three strategies that were used to frame Joseph’s action of revealing his identity to his brothers within an incentive to act. The first is to present Joseph as “in control” of his actions, explaining his actions as a rational calculation (Yelammedenu and TP); the second strategy is to explain Joseph’s decision as a result of his emotionality toward his father (GenR2), but this emotionality does not stop Joseph from still tricking his

47 The printed version is corrupt, but this narrative is found also in GenR2 (Theodor and Albeck, *Bereschit Rabba*, 1169).

brothers (GenR2 and TP); the third strategy is simply to present Joseph as loving; he does not trick his brothers (TB). All these strategies obviously change the audience's understanding of the Joseph character, seeing him in a continuously more positive manner.

## 6 The Use of Parables: The Cry of Reproach and the Teller's Diversion

Parables are one of the ways in which canonic narratives are emotionally translated and diverted in rabbinic literature. As Lauri Thurén<sup>48</sup> stated in his introduction to the study of New Testament parables: "The parables aim to persuade, not to inform [...] He [i.e., Jesus] aims at modifying the hearers' point of view and altering their values and behavior."<sup>49</sup> I have also shown in a previous study how parables redirect emotionality, for example by solving a moral-emotional problem: the biblical flood story of how all humanity is destroyed by God (except Noah and his family) seems to counter what is expected of a just God, since surely not all the people have sinned and deserve to die. Regardless of the message conveyed in the biblical story, the rabbis seem to have found it problematic, and in an attempt to dispel this difficulty, TB added a parable, in which the people of the generation of the flood are paralleled to "grasshoppers" (חגבים).<sup>50</sup> While this does not change the original story, it dispels, on the immediate level, the feeling of injustice, as the destruction of insects is not considered immoral.<sup>51</sup>

A similar process can be seen in our pericope in GenR: in an attempt to present Joseph in a negative light, GenR adds a derogatory analogy, comparing

48 Please refer to his clear and enlightening introduction in which he presents a poignant critique of common scholarly approaches to parables: Lauri Thurén, *Parables Unplugged: Reading the Lukan Parables in Their Rhetorical Context* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 3–50.

49 Thurén, *Parables Unplugged*, 9.

50 My work on parables was done in communication with the project titled "Parables and the Parting of the Ways," which took place from April 2014 until February 2020 at Utrecht University, Protestant Theological University, the University of Groningen, and the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology. It was directed by Eric Ottenheim, Annette Merz, Marcel Poorthuis, and Lieve M. Teugels (researchers) and Albertina Oegema, Jonathan Pater, and Martijn Stoutjesdijk (PhDs). I would like to thank all the members of the project team for their supportive and fruitful cooperation. More information about the project and the resulting studies can be found here: <https://parabelproject.nl/en/about-the-project-parables-and-the-partings-of-the-ways/>.

51 Nikolsky, "Are Parables an Interpretation?," 305–307.



Joseph to the she-ass of Balaam. In contrast, the TYL skips the analogy, and stays only with a midrash.

Here are the texts from TB and GenR:

TABLE 14.1 TB vs. GenR

TB Vayigash 7 (104)	GenR Vayigash 93:2 <sup>a</sup>
<p>ר' אלעזר ב"ר שמעון בשם ר' אלעזר בן עזריה אמר:</p> <p>ומה אם יוסף שאמר לאחיו אני יוסף, וידעו מה שעשו בו, לא יכלו לענות אותו כשיבא הקב"ה להתווכח עם כל אחד ואחד מן הבריות ולומר לו מעשיו כמו שכתוב: "כי הנח יוצר הרים ובורא רוח ומגיד לאדם מה שיחו" (עמוס ד יג) על אחת כמה וכמה שאין בריה יכולה לעמוד.</p>	<p>ר' שמעון בן אלעזר מש' בן עזריה שהיה אומ' דבר משם אבא כוהן בר דלייה:</p> <p>אוי לנו מיום הדין, אוי לנו מיום התוכחה: בלעם חכם הגוים היה ולא יכול לעמוד בתוכחת אתונו "החשכן הסכנתי וגו' [לעשות לך כה ויאמר לא]" (במ' כב ל).</p> <p>יוסף קטנן שלשבטים היה ולא יכלו אחיו לעמוד בתוכחתו הדא היא ולא יכלו אחיו וגו'.</p> <p>לכשיבא הקב"ה להוכיח כל אחד ואחד לפי מה שהוא, אזכיחך ואער' [אני: אערבה לעיניך (תה' נ כא)] על אחת כמה וכמה.</p>

Rabbi Elazar son of Rabbi Shimon in the name of Rabbi Elazar son of Azaria said:

And as the brothers could not answer Joseph, who said to them: "I am Joseph" (Gen 45:3), and they knew what they did to him,

Rabbi Simon son of Elazar in the name of Ben Azaria, who used to say things in the name of Abba Cohen bar Daliah:

Woe to us from the Day of Judgment,  
Woe to us from the Day of Reproach:  
Balaam, was the sage of the gentiles,  
and he could not stand firm against the reproach of his she-ass [who said] "Was I ever wont to do so unto you?" and he said: "No" (Num 22:30).

Joseph was the youngest of the tribes, and his brothers could not stand firm against his reproach, as it is said: "And his brothers could not [answer him because they were frightened]" (Gen 45:3).

<sup>a</sup> MS Vatican 30, 172b–173a.

TABLE 14.1 TB vs. GenR (*cont.*)

TB Vayigash 7 (104)	GenR Vayigash 93:2
<p>how much more so would no creature be able to stand when the Holy One Blessed be He comes to argue with each and every one of the creatures and tell him his doings, as it says: “For, lo, He that [...] declares unto man what is his thought” (Am 4:13).</p>	<p>How much more so when the Holy One Blessed be He will start to reproach each one according to what he is [as it is said:]; “But I will reprove you, and set the cause before your eyes” (Ps 50:21).</p>

The amoraic midrash calls Joseph’s words “reproach” (תוכחה); it explains the brothers’ reaction to Joseph’s crying and to his words by paralleling it with the words of Balaam’s she-ass, who reproaches Balaam for hitting her: Balaam’s act is inequitable, since the she-ass had never been stubborn – as she claims and Balaam agrees; the brothers’ actions toward Joseph were also unjustified, and his reproach rendered them paralyzed. The text continues with the *nimshal*: it argues *a fortiori* about the Day of Judgment: as the brothers were “frightened” (גבהלו) by the reproach of the youngest of them, how much more so will we be frightened when the Holy One Blessed be He reproaches each one according to what he is. In metaphor studies, this is represented as BROTHERS ARE BALAAM and JOSEPH IS SHE-ASS in the parable, and in contrast: BROTHERS ARE US and JOSEPH IS GOD in the *nimshal*. There is certainly a semantic shift between paralleling Joseph to the she-ass and paralleling him to the Almighty.

The way this derogatory analogy is reworked in the TYL is very simple: it is omitted. What remains is the *a fortiori* analogy, paralleling the words of Joseph to God’s reproach on the Day of Judgment. TP and GenR2 adopt a similar strategy; they omit the analogy to Balaam’s she-ass, and keep the Day of Judgment analogy.

It is possible to argue the reverse, that is, that GenR added a derogatory analogy to an already existing analogy between the brothers being reproached by Joseph and God’s reproaching people on the Day of Judgment. There are two facts to support such a claim: the first fact is that no such discourse is found regarding Balaam’s she-ass *ad locum* (in the pericope of Bamidbar) – that is, we do not find in TYL an analogy to Joseph and his brothers, nor is there reference there to the Day of Judgment. The second fact is that the earlier stratum of the TYL also does not have the she-ass analogy, as we find in the Yelammedenu:

א"ר יוחנן אוי לו לאדם מיום הדין, אוי לו מיום התוכחה, ומה יוסף כשאמר: "אני יוסף אחיכם" (בר' מה ד), פרחא נשמתם ולא יכלו לענותו ונבהלו מפניו, כשיבא הב"ה לדין על אחת כמה וכמה.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Woe to us from the Day of Judgment, Woe to us from the Day of Reproach: and as with Joseph, as he said "I am Joseph your brother" (Gen 45:4); their soul flew away and they could not answer him and were afraid of him, how much more so when the Holy One Blessed be He comes to the judgment.<sup>52</sup>

However, whether added by GenR or erased by the TYL, the typification of the emotional community is still intact: there is a process of directing emotionality, as the derogatory parable is not found in the TYL and we find here a bifurcation of the classical amoraic and TYL material.

## 7 Conclusion

In this article, I have shown how the study of emotions in Jewish late antiquity, aside from being an interesting subject in its own right, contributes to the understanding of rabbinic texts, of which the milieu is difficult to discern because of their essentially oral, fragmented, and anonymous nature. Using tools from cultural studies (the concepts of "repertoire" and "emotional community"), neurological research on emotions that are culture-sensitive ("constructed emotions"), and respect to the otherness of the texts, allows one to not overlook nuances but to systematically study them and expose at least some aspects of the reality behind the texts. Emotions move people, and narratives are about people, so any text which is concerned with people carries with it indications of emotionality.

I have looked at three narrative strategies that point to a particular emotionality (in the wide sense of the word): the use of emotion words, specifying or altering an incentive to act, and directing the attitude of the audience using rhetorical techniques (a parable in the case studied here).

This study has focused on the reworking of the biblical scene on the interaction between Joseph and Judah in GenR and TYL. The two brothers became eponyms of hegemony and otherness, where the Josephan otherness has a very strong geographical aspect (which in turn entails a lower status, as is the case with any otherness).

<sup>52</sup> Mann and Sonne, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue*, 341.

Working with the first strategy, we found that while the biblical story has two unusual crying scenes (Gen 42:18–24, 43:26–30), these are ignored or changed in the amoraic material and in the TYL. We only find a verse from one of these scenes in TP, and also here the verse is merged with a formulaic crying scene and thus omits the unusualness of the scene. Now, while biblical crying still needs a thorough study, obviously the midrash had different ideas in mind when reworking this scene. Aggression and equality are added in GenR, which strengthens Judah's position vis-à-vis Joseph. TYL adds aggression on the part of Joseph, which again balances differently the two forces.

With regard to specifying the incentive of Joseph's behavior, Yelammedenu and TP explain his behavior as calculated, while GenR2 and TB point to love as the driving force behind his actions.

All of our witnesses of the TYL join forces in the third strategy of avoiding the derogatory parallelism of Joseph with Balaam's ass, and stay with his analogy to God on the Day of Judgment. The process could have been that GenR added the derogatory parallelism, but this does not change the different emotionality suggested by each corpus.

The findings of this study point to a systematic improvement, if you will, in the image of Joseph in TYL in comparison to GenR, while at the same time relying heavily on GenR as a source of cultural knowledge. This points to an emotional community different from that of the *beit midrash*, the origin of the classical amoraic midrashim among which is GenR. The best candidate seems to be the synagogue setup and its communities as the milieu in which the TYL evolved; the synagogue milieu behind the TYL may also be conjectured from the ritualistic Torah reading that is at the core of this literature; and as for the character of the Palestinian synagogue communities, it is sensible to conjecture that while they acknowledged the rabbinic authority, that is, the authority of the *beit midrash*, they did not shy away from affiliating themselves with diasporic communities in Byzantium and Italy, from which the Land's prayer customs later migrated to Ashkenaz,<sup>53</sup> which is apparent from midrashic compositions (*Aggadat Bereshit*)<sup>54</sup> or collections (*Lekakh Tov*)<sup>55</sup> that developed in this area and that rely heavily on TYL.

53 Israel M. Ta-Shma, *The Early Ashkenazic Prayer: Literary and Historical Aspects* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003), 6, 16.

54 Lieve M. Teugels, *Aggadat Bereshit: Translated from the Hebrew with an Introduction and Notes* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), xv; Ezra Kahalani, "Aggadat Bereshit: Introduction, Suggestion for a Critical Edition, and Issues of Content and Structure" [in Hebrew] (PhD diss.: Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2004); see also Teugels' contribution in this volume.

55 Hermann L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 356; Israel M. Ta-Shma, "Midrash Lekah-Tov: Its

This conclusion conforms to Marc Bregman's assertion that the later parts of TYL could have originated in Lombardy.<sup>56</sup> It also shows that the Judah–Joseph coupling persisted until the Byzantine era and beyond.

The name Joseph as an eponym for diasporic others did not persist to this day. Perhaps the rise to dominance of the Babylonian Jewish culture made the dichotomy between the Land and the Diaspora irrelevant. Or it could have been the case that the use of these eponyms to distinguish between the *beit midrash* and the synagogue was forgotten. Perhaps the TYL is one of the last places where this ancient Palestinian motif was used.<sup>57</sup>

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Background and Character" [in Hebrew], in Israel M. Ta-Shma, *Studies in Medieval Rabbinic Literature*, Vol. 3 (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2005), 259–294.

56 Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature*, 186.

57 The Bavli exhibits a positive attitude toward Joseph, as can be seen from the statement "The Evil Eye does not control the offspring of Joseph" (זרעו של יוסף אין עין הרע שולטת) (bBer 20a); we do however find reservation about Joseph's coming into power, as we see in the passage "Why did Joseph die before his brothers? Because he took upon himself manners of a leader" (מפני מה מת יוסף קודם לאחיו – מפני שהנהיג עצמו ברבנות) (bBer 55a) or the presentation of the event with Potiphar's wife as resulting from Joseph becoming the ἀπότροπος (אפוטרופוס) in Potiphar's house (bBer 63a).