"Tradunt Hebraei..."
The problem of the origins and function of Jewish midrash in Jerome[1]

(Alison Salvesen)

> 'And Rebecca took with her in the house the garments of Esau her elder son, which were most desirable.' Now in respect of this verse the Hebrews hand on a tradition that first-born sons performed the duty of the priests and possessed the priestly raiment, in which they were clothed as they were offering the victims to God, before Aaron was chosen for the priestly office.
>
> (Jerome's *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, c. 392–3 CE)[2]

For comparison, here is a passage from Midrash Tanhuma A, a rabbinic work edited probably sometime in the fifth century CE:

> 'And God made tunics of skin for the man and his wife and clothed them' (Gen 3:21). What are 'tunics of skin'? The garments of the high priesthood with which the Holy One, Blessed be He, clothed them, because [Adam] was the glory of the world. Furthermore, our masters passed on to us the tradition us that before the Tabernacle was set up, the high places were permitted and sacrificial worship went with the rights of the firstborn. Therefore the Holy One, Blessed be He, clothed Adam in the garments of high priesthood since he was the first-born of the world. Noah came and passed them on to Shem, Shem gave them to Abraham, Abraham gave them to Isaac, and Isaac gave them to Esau who was his firstborn. Esau saw that his wives were engaged in idolatry, and entrusted [the garments] to his mother. When Jacob took the rights of the firstborn from Esau, Rebecca said, 'Since Jacob has taken the rights of the firsborn from Esau, he should wear these garments'. As Scripture says, 'Rebecca took the desirable clothes of Esau her elder son' (Gen. 27:15). Jacob went in to his father and [Isaac] smelt him, as Scripture says, '[Isaac] smelled the fragrance of his garments and blessed him' (Gen 27:27)....'[3]

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1. This study is dedicated to the memory of Isaac Meyers (1979–2008): 'In memoria sempiterna erit iustus; ab auditu malo non timebit. Paratum cor eius confidens in Domino' (IH Psa 111:7).

2. Translation in C.T.R. Hayward, *Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995), p. 63). Jerome, *Liber Quaestionum Hebraicarum in Genesim,* ed. P. de Lagarde, CCSL 72 (Brepols, Turnhout, 1959) p.34, lines 12ff, on Gen. 27.15-16: Et sumpsit Rebecca uestimenta Esau filii sui maioris, quae erant desiderabilia apud se domi *(=* וַתִּקַּח רִבְקָה אֶת־בִּגְדֵי עֵשָׂו בְּנָהּ הַגָּדֹל הַחֲמֻדֹת אֲשֶׁר אִתָּהּ בַּבָּיִת*)*

'Et in hoc loco tradunt Hebraei primogenitos functos officio sacerdotum et habuisse uestimentum sacerdotale, quo induti deo uictimas offerebant, antequam Aaron in sacerdotium eligeretur.'

Note that the LXX speaks of a single garment, which is why only a translation based closely on the Hebrew can support the midrashic interpretation (LXX καὶ λαβοῦσα Ρεβεκκα τὴν στολὴν Ησαυ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτῆς τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου τὴν καλήν).

3. וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם וּלְאִשְׁתּוֹ כָּתְנוֹת עוֹר וַיַּלְבִּשֵׁם (בראשית 3.21) מהו כתנות עור, [בגדי] כהונה גדולה שהלבישן הקב״ה שהיה בכבודו של עולם: ועוד שנו רבותינו עד שלא הוקם משכן היו הבמות מותרות והעבודה בבכורות, לכך הלביש הקב״ה לאדם בגדי כהונה גדולה שהיה בכורו של עולם, בא נח [ומסרן לשם, ושם] מסרן לאברהם, ואברהם מסרן ליצחק, ויצחק מסרן לעשו, שהיה בכורו, ועשו היה רואה את נשיו עובדות ע״ז והפקידן אצל אמו, כשעמד יעקב ולקח הבכורה מן עשו אמרה רבקה הואיל שלקח יעקב את הבכורה מיד עשו, בדין הוא שילבש הבגדים הללו, שנאמר וַתִּקַּח רִבְקָה אֶת־בִּגְדֵי עֵשָׂו בְּנָהּ הַגָּדֹל הַחֲמֻדֹת (27.15), נכנס יעקב אצל אביו והריח בו, שנאמר וַיָּרַח אֶת־רֵיחַ בְּגָדָיו וַיְבָרֲכֵהוּ וגו׳, מה בירכו ממה שקראו בענין ויתן לך האלהים וגו׳. (Ed. S. Buber, *Midrasch Tanchuma* (Ha-Almanah veha-Ahim Rom, Wilna, 1885), to Genesis, 67a.)

The parallel between the Latin and Hebrew passages is cited in passing by L. Ginzberg, 'Die Haggada bei den

The clear parallel between the Hebrew tradition that Jerome briefly mentions and the one recorded in the Tanhuma passage is just one example of the phenomenon that forms the subject of this article. It is typical of Jerome's exegetical approach, especially in his later years, but first it is appropriate to give some background both to Jerome and to modern study of the man and his works.

Jerome is known by most people for what came to be known as the Vulgate rendering of the books of the Jewish canon of the Old Testament. His own term for his version was the *Iuxta Hebraeos*, the version according to the Hebrews. He also wrote a large number of often lengthy letters, homilies, an onomasticon, various anti-heretical works, and a series of commentaries, especially on what Christians consider to be the prophetical books of the Old Testament. In many of these works, and increasingly in the later ones, he appeals to what he calls the 'Hebrew Truth' (effectively the biblical text in Hebrew or according to the Hebrew), and he also refers to Hebrew knowledge and Jewish interpretations.

Though the issue of Jerome's knowledge of Hebrew is not of direct concern here, it certainly has some relevance. According to Jerome himself, he started to learn Hebrew when he was living as a monk in the desert of Chalcis in Syria (c. 375–77 CE) from a Jewish convert to Christianity, and he alleges much later that his motivation was to fend off lustful thoughts.[4] He continued with his Hebrew studies in Constantinople (c. 380), Rome (c. 382–85), and above all in Palestine (386–420), where he spent the last part of his life. The importance of the Hebrew text in his thinking is tied up with his concept of the Hebrew Truth, and had certainly emerged by 391–92 CE, when he first refers explicitly to the *Hebraica veritas*: some scholars such as Adam Kamesar trace the notion back even earlier than this.[5]

However, Jerome's vaunted expertise in Hebrew was doubted from the earlier part of twentieth century even up into the 1980s,[6] on the grounds that Jerome had access to a wealth of relevant material for his work on the Hebrew text. These sources included the LXX and the Three later Jewish revisers, Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion. All these texts had been conveniently gathered up and displayed synoptically in the Hexapla by the early third century Christian scholar Origen. They appeared in parallel columns next to the Hebrew text and its transliteration into Greek: a great crib, one would think. How easy it would have been for Jerome to get to Caesarea to inspect it is hard to say, but it is very likely that individuals made

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Kirchenvätern', *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 43 (1899), p. 535.

4. Ep. 125.12 (411 CE), ed. Hilberg CSEL 56, p.131 lines 9-14: 'Dum essem iuuenis et solitudinis me deserta uallarent, incentiua uitiorum ardoremque naturae ferre non poteram; quae cum crebris ieiuniis frangerem, mens tamen cogitationibus aestuabat. Ad quam edomandam cuidam fratri, qui ex Hebraeis crediderat, me in disciplinam dedi, ut post Quintiliani acumina Ciceronisque fluuios grauitatemque Frontonis et lenitatem Plinii alphabetum discerem, stridentia anhelantiaque uerba meditarer.' See the differing views of Jerome's motives in J.N.D. Kelly, *Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies.* (Duckworth, London, 1975), pp. 49–50, and A. Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship and the Hebrew Bible: a Study of the* Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993).

5. Kamesar, op. cit., p. 42.

6. See for instance the views of Colette Estin and Pierre Nautin: C. Estin, *Les psautiers de Jérôme à la lumière des traductions juives antérieures*. Collectanea Biblica Latina, vol. XV (San Girolamo, Rome, 1984); P. Nautin, 'Hieronymus' in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, Vol. 15 (Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/New York, 1986), pp. 309-310.

copious notes and circulated them.[7] Jerome also drew extensively on Hebrew and Jewish traditions in Origen's own biblical commentaries, and on the work of Eusebius. Therefore some scholars have cast doubt on the reality of the Jewish teachers and informants Jerome refers to at various points in his works, as well as expressing scepticism about his independent competence in Hebrew language. Günther Stemberger in particular is a self-confessed minimalist concerning the reality of Christian exegetical contacts with rabbinic Jews in antiquity. He argues that Jerome's contacts were Jewish Christians or Judaizing Christians, as Jews were not allowed officially in Bethelehem and Jerusalem.[8]

However, the most recent studies have vindicated Jerome's claims to an independent knowledge of both Hebrew language and Jewish traditions. They include those by Adam Kamesar, Mathew Kraus, and Michael Graves.[9] In the case of Jerome's competence in Hebrew, this has been demonstrated by looking at places where Jerome puts forward several different possible meanings of a Hebrew word provided by the various versions and teachers, and makes his own decision. Sometimes this is facilitated by the authority of a Jewish informant, of course, but in other places he really does seem to have had a good passive knowledge of the language. (An active knowledge would suggest that he was able to converse in it like the rabbis: there is no convincing sign of this, and it seems unlikely that he would have had Hebrew conversation lessons with his individual teachers.[10]) In the case of Jewish exegetical traditions, i.e. midrash, possible examples have been subjected to rigorous comparison with parallels from the rabbinic side, and possible alternative sources of the traditions, such as Philo, Josephus or the Three, have been checked.

Below is an example of the difficulty scholars have in deciding how far Jerome's independent Hebrew knowledge went. This passage reveals a typical mixture of what he could pick up from Greek, what his Hebrew teacher said, and what he himself had learned:

> Tyre in Hebrew is written with two letters, Sadeh and Resh, and called Ṣor. Aquila and the Septuagint translate in the same way. The Hebrew who taught me the Scriptures, interpreted it as 'tribulation'. I agree with him, because Symmachus too, who does not render in a blindly literal way but follows the meaning, says 'siege and surrounding of the earth'. For 'siege', which he renders as *poliorkia*, Theodotion has 'strength': he considered it should be read not as

7. See Reinhart Ceulemans, 'A Critical Edition of the Hexaplaric Fragments of the Book of Canticles, with Emphasis on their Reception in Christian Exegesis', PhD thesis Katholieke Universiteit, Leuven, 2009, pp. 39-56.

8. G. Stemberger, 'Exegetical Contacts between Jews and Christians' in *Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The History of its Interpretation*, vol. 1, ed. M. Saebø (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 1996), pp. 569–86, esp. p. 583.

9. A. Kamesar, *Jerome, Greek Scholarship and the Hebrew Bible: a Study of the Quaestiones Hebraicae in Genesim* (Oxford, 1993); Matthew Kraus, 'Jerome's Translation of the Book of Exodus Iuxta Hebraeos in Relation to Classical, Christian, and Jewish Traditions of Interpretation', PhD University of Michigan, 1996; M. Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology. A Study based on his Commentary on Jeremiah*. SVC 90 (Leiden, 2007). See also John S. Cameron, 'The Rabbinic Vulgate?', in *Jerome of Stridon: Life, Writings and Legacy* eds. A. Cain and J. Lössl (Ashgate, Farnham, Surrey/Burlington, VT, 2009), pp. 117–30.

10. Michael Graves believes that Jerome could understand spoken Hebrew but not speak it (M. Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology. A Study based on his Commentary on Jeremiah*. SVC 90 (Brill, Leiden, 2007), pp. 91 and 95).

> ṣ*ar* or ṣ*or* ('tribulation' or 'Tyre',) but as ṣ*ur*, which properly refers to very hard rock, for which the Greek term is *akrotomos*, and which we can render in Latin as 'silex (flint)'.
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> (Jerome, *Commentary on Amos*, on Amos 3.11)[11]

The difficulty in this verse lies with the ambiguity of the consonantal written form: Hebrew still lacked a fully written vowel system at this period, so the meaning of a word spelt **צר** would vary according to how people pronounced it.[12] The transliterations provided by the LXX and the three later Jewish translators, the *recentiores*, must have given Jerome a strong hint of the different possibilities, as he himself notes. Yet he cites his Hebrew teacher's opinion: is this because his own knowledge was deficient, or because he suspected his readers would doubt his unsupported authority? He gives at least the illusion of weighing up the possibilities and opting for the one adopted by Symmachus, whose translation he often favours. Another reason for bringing in the opinion of his Hebrew teacher may be because of the live reading tradition embodied in this informant, supported by Symmachus' version.[13] Is Jerome's textual decision influenced by the different possible exegetical outcomes, in other words what he could do with the interpretation, rather than decided on purely philogical grounds? This would hardly surprise us. As all other scriptural exegetes of the period, he believed that Scripture was coherent, inspired and in harmony with doctrine. Therefore he would hardly choose a meaning that did not contribute to the larger sense of the passage when interpreted. So we can hardly expect Jerome to be a purely scientific philologist. He had the goal of exegesis in mind at all times.

Though in many ways it is easier to track down Jerome's sources of midrashic knowledge than to discern whether he had an independent knowledge of Hebrew, there are similar difficulties involved, and questions to be asked about the authenticity and function of his information.

It is worth briefly recapitulating the history of modern scholarship on Jerome and midrash, to illustrate the *status quaestionis*. It has been long known that Jerome

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11. לָכֵן כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה צַר וּסְבִיב הָאָרֶץ διὰ τοῦτο τάδε λέγει κύριος ὁ θεός Τύρος, κυκλόθεν ἡ γῆ σου ἐρημωθήσεται

Jerome's Iuxta Hebraeos version (henceforth IH) as given in his commentary: propterea haec dicit Dominus Deus tribulabitur et circumietur terra et detrahetur ex te fortitudo tua et diripientur aedes tuae.

'pro Tyro, quae in Hebraeo duabus litteris scripta est, sade et res, et appellatur Sor, quod et Aquila et Septuaginta similiter transtulerunt. Hebraeus qui me in scripturis sanctis erudiuit, tribulationem interpretatus est, nec renuimus eius sententiam, quia et Symmachus, qui non solet uerborum *kakozêlian*, sed intellegentiae ordinem sequi, ait obsidio et circumdatio terrae. pro obsidione, quae ab eo dicitur *poliorkia*, fortitudo a Theodotione posita est qui putauit non *sar* et *sor*, quod tribulatio, uel Tyrus dicitur, sed *sur* legendum, quod proprie refertur ad petram durissimam, quae graece appellatur *akrotomos*, et quam nos latine silicem dicere possumus.' (ed. M. Adriaen, *S. Hieronymi Commentarii in prophetas minores*, CCSL 76 (Brepols, Turnhout, 1969), I, iii.11, lines 255-66. All subsequent citations from the *Commentaries on the Minor Prophets* are from Adriaen's edition unless otherwise noted.)

12. See J. Barr, 'St Jerome and the Sounds of Hebrew', *JSS* 12 (1967) pp. 1-36.

13. Targum Jonathan to Amos 3:11 also understands the Hebrew to mean 'tribulation', in line with both Symmachus and Jerome's Hebrew teacher: 'Therefore thus says the Lord, *tribulation* (עקא) prevails in the land and your *strength* (תקפיך) shall fail from you and your fortresses shall be plundered.'

had access to Jewish sources, because his works circulated widely. His example acted as a precedent for later medieval Christian scholars to draw on Jewish expertise themselves and to use Hebrew and Jewish references. In the nineteenth century there was particular interest among Jewish scholars in the influence of Jewish traditions on the Church Fathers. They include Graetz, Krauss, and Rahmer,[14] but especially Louis Ginzberg, whose volumes entitled *The Legends of the Jews* are still used today.

Ginzberg was born in Lithuania in 1873, studied in Heidelberg, Germany, where he seems to have been a prodigy, showing up his teachers and examiners. He left for the USA in 1899, and died in New York in 1953. His doctoral thesis *Die Haggada bei den Kirchenvätern* was published in the periodical *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* (1898-99). It covered several Church Fathers, not just Jerome, and focused mainly on the book of Genesis. However, Ginzberg noted many parallels between rabbinic midrash and Jerome, especially in Jerome's book of *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*.

Ginzberg's *Legends of the Jews* represents the culmination of this aspect of the scholar's work, being a final compilation of haggadot and outside parallels, for instance in Second Temple literature or the Church Fathers.[15] It is a mine of parallels, derived from Ginzberg's encyclopaedic knowledge of rabbinic works and extensive familiarity with patristic literature. Jerome is just one of many Fathers included in *The Legends of the Jews*, but he emerges as a prominent exponent of Jewish 'legends'.

However, the limitations of Ginzberg's work for modern study of the phenomenon of Christian knowledge of Jewish haggadah have been clear for some time. First, Ginzberg merely lists parallels without investigating by what routes they may have entered Christian literature. Through no fault of his own, he lacked proper critical editions for many rabbinic and patristic texts. Furthermore, the study of the Jewish Greek versions of Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion has advanced significantly since his day, and we can see that at times Jewish biblical traditions may have entered Christian writing through them. Finally, Ginzberg fails to give a chronological sense of the development of the individual haggadoth he noted. This was something that was not really attempted until Renée Bloch's work in the 1950s.[16] So although the scope of his work is extensive, the general field has moved on a great deal in terms of the development of appropriate methodologies and tools.

Subsequent to the work of the great German Jewish academics, there has been a good deal of scepticism about the genuineness of Jerome's own first hand

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14. E. Lamirande, O.M.I., 'Étude Bibliographique sure les pères de l'église et l'aggadah', *VC* 21 (1967) 1-11, gives a very useful list of lesser known nineteenth scholarship on aggadah in the Church Fathers.

15. L. Ginzberg, tr. H. Szold, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1909-1938, and much reprinted).

16. R. Bloch, 'Note méthodologique pour l'étude de la Littérature rabbinique', *Recherche de Sciences Religieuses* 43 (1955) pp. 194-227, and eadem, 'Midrash', *Supplément du Dictionnaire de la Bible*, V, col 1263-1281 (English translations and re-editions of both of these as 'Methodological Note for the Study of Rabbinic Literature' and 'Midrash' in *Approaches to Ancient Judaism* I, ed. W. S. Green (Scholars Press, Missoula, 1978) pp. 29-50, 51-76); eadem, 'Note sur l'utilisation des fragments de la Geniza du Caire pour l'étude du Targum' *Revue des études juives* n.s. 14 (1955), pp. 5-35.

knowledge of both Hebrew language and Jewish traditions.[17] Perhaps influenced by the eirenic spirit of Vatican II, in 1967 the French Canadian Catholic scholar Lamirande criticised patristics experts for ignoring the many works by German Jewish scholars that were available on the subject.[18] Lamirande points the finger at Gustave Bardy in particular: in a 1934 article Bardy noted that some of the traditions Jerome cites as having been passed on to him by a 'Hebrew' had in fact appeared in earlier Christian writers, principally Origen. Bardy implied that Jerome had plagiarized Christian sources rather than depending on direct Jewish ones.[19] In contrast, Lamirande was able to access the works of the lesser known German Jewish scholars preserved in the libraries of Hebrew Union College and the Jewish Theological Seminary, and so was aware of how many examples of Jewish traditions in the Church Fathers that Bardy and others had overlooked. Lamirande expressed the hope of being able to open up to 'Christian Hebraists' the field of research into the Christian use of midrash that Renée Bloch had indicated in 1955 as crucial for understanding the formation of early Christian literature.

Evidently, the questioning of Jerome's first hand acquaintance with Jewish midrash tended to be voiced by scholars who themselves knew little about rabbinic Judaism as well as ignoring German Jewish scholarship. The most balanced assessments of Jerome have invariably been produced by scholars well versed in the classical, patristic and rabbinic traditions (as Ginzberg himself had been). In the past thirty years these have included Pierre Jay,[20] Jay Braverman,[21] Robert Hayward,[22] Adam Kamesar,[23] and Kamesar's students Matthew Kraus and Michael Graves.[24]

In addition, there have been important developments in scholarship on midrash, often influenced by the work of Renée Bloch, Geza Vermes, Samuel Sandmel and others.[25] As a result, it is no longer sufficient to lump all possible

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17. According to Graves, this scepticism began with de Montfaucon in 1706, and was reiterated by Klostermann in 1897. As for questioning of Jerome's competence in Hebrew language, this was expressed by Eitan Burstein in 1975 and Neil Adkin as recently as 2004, though Pierre Nautin was the most dismissive of Jerome's abilities in *Origène. Sa vie et son oeuvre* (Paris, 1977) and *TRE* 15:309 in 1986 (cited above): Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology*, pp. 3–6.

18. Lamirande op. cit., p. 5. Lamirande's own article tries to redress the situation by citing several of these early works from 1854 to 1933 (he notes the tragic significance of the latter date, at which they seem to have stopped appearing).

19. G. Bardy, 'Saint Jérôme et ses maîtres hébreux' *RevBén* 46 (1934), pp. 145–164: 'Saint Jérôme se content de copier son devancier', and yet on the same page (p. 164), Bardy concedes that Jerome's work is so extensive that it is possible to overlook other significant texts. However, it is abundantly clear that Jerome frequently used all kinds of material, including Christian and classical pagan sources, without acknowledgement: see Stefan Rebenich, 'Jerome: the "Vir Trilinguis" and the "Hebraica Veritas"', *VC* 47 (1993), pp. 50-77, esp. 54-55, who also points out that Jerome was far from unique in this respect.

20. P. Jay, *L'exégèse de Saint Jérôme d'après son 'Commentaire sur Isaïe'* (Études Augustinennes, Paris, 1985).

21. J. Braverman, *Jerome's 'Commentary on Daniel': a study of comparative Jewish and Christian interpretations of the Hebrew Bible* (Catholic Biblical Association of America, Washington, D. C., 1978).

22. Hayward, *Jerome's Hebrew Questions on Genesis.*

23. Kamesar, op.cit..

24. See also the work of I. Opelt, 'S. Girolamo e suoi maestri ebraei', *Augustinianum* 28 (1988), pp. 327–38, and S. Leanza, 'Gerolamo e la tradizione ebraica', *Motivi letterari ed esegetici in Gerolamo,* ed. C. Moreschini and G. Menestrina (Morcelliana, 1997), pp. 17–38.

25. S. Sandmel, 'Parallelomania' *JBL* 81 (1962), 1-13. Sandmel defined 'parallelomania' as 'that extravagance among scholars which first overdoes the supposed similarity in passages and then proceeds to describe source

haggadic parallels together, from Josephus to medieval midrash. One needs to consider the development of tradition and thus possible date, source, and lines of influence.

In Jerome's case, in particular, there have been serious attempts to distinguish

a) between 'live', contemporary Jewish sources of midrash, and details he could have acquired from LXX, the *recentiores*, Philo and Josephus, and other Second Temple literature.

b) between midrash and philology: there is often an overlap between the two, but since Jerome's own attitude towards the two is rather different, it is worth making the distinction as far as is possible.

As noted by Hartmann and Graves, in later life Jerome alludes in a letter to Pammachius and Oceanus designed for public consumption the three exegetical approaches he takes in his scriptural commentaries.[26] These approaches are represented by the three very different teachers with whom he studied in three regions: Didymus the Blind in Alexandria, Apollinaris of Laodicea in Antioch, and Baranina in Jerusalem and Bethlehem: in other words, an Antiochene, an Alexandrian, and a Jew. Jerome states that he was proud to be the student of each of these distinguished men, even though the methods of the first two are diametrically opposed and he is a bitter enemy of the 'circumcised'.

The wider context in which he makes this statement in Ep. 84 is to defend himself against the charge of the heresy of Origenism, raised by those who objected to his literal translation of Origen's *First Principles*. He implies that he is able to use his sources selectively, admiring the good and rejecting the bad. He is thus untainted by dubious theological opinions, whether Origenist, Apollinarian, or Jewish. The three teachers do not just represent different schools of thought but also symbolise the most extreme positions of Jerome's exegetical triangle.[27]

Yet it is the extensive use of Hebrew, mediated through largely Jewish sources, that is the main 'novelty' of Jerome's exegetical work, just as his recourse to the *Hebraica veritas* in his revision of the Latin biblical text marked a striking new approach. Much of what Jerome produced in his commentaries is otherwise squarely within the tradition of Greek and Latin commentary, if rather eclectic. Even his use of Jewish traditions is hardly unprecedented, since as he himself argues, they appear

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and derivation as if implying literary connection flowing in an inevitable or predetermined direction...it is in the detailed study rather than in the abstract statement that there can emerge persuasive bases for judgment' (p. 1).

26. Hartmann, 'St Jerome as an Exegete', in *A Monument to St Jerome, Essays on Some Aspects of His Life, Works, and Influence*, ed. F.X. Murphy (New York, 1952), pp. 35–81 [47–49]; Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology,* p. 13. The letter is Ep. 84.3, written c.400 CE.

27. Most recently Williams has stated, 'Jerome grounded his entire exegetical edifice on the disturbing figure of the learned Jew' (M. Hale Williams, *The Monk and the Book. Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London, 2006) p. 222). Against this one could argue that the foundation of Jerome's later exegesis is in fact the 'Hebraica veritas', a rather more scientific and objective concept that Williams rightly argues is an elastic and inclusive one (ibid., p. 89, and see also Jay, *L'exégèse de S. Jérôme*, p. 145, for the relationship between Hebrew text and Hebrew tradition).

in Origen, Eusebius, Clement and others, regardless of whether the Christian author agrees with them. The main task of this essay is to look at some examples of haggadic midrash in the exegetical works of Jerome, to identify possible sources, and to examine their function within his interpretative scheme.

It seems unlikely that midrash or Targum existed extensively in written form during Jerome's lifetime, and even less likely that either would have been available to Jerome if it had been.[28] Although as Graves observes, Jerome sometimes mentions having seen other written works such as Jubilees or a Nazarean Gospel of Matthew,[29] he does not speak of having seen Hebrew traditions or Jewish 'fables' in writing, even though they would arguably have been more authoritative to him and his Christian readers in such a form. All such references as 'tradunt Hebraei' imply oral transmission, and it seems that they were reported in Greek, since when Jerome cites the meaning of a Hebrew word in his Latin commentaries, the definition is usually in Greek which he then renders into Latin.[30]

Parallels to Jerome's Jewish traditions in rabbinic sources redacted at a much later date can be included, since it is highly unlikely that Jerome invented them and that they entered Jewish tradition from his works. It is not uncommon to find traditions in Josephus or Symmachus that then appear in later rabbinic midrash: presumably such traditions were in circulation but emerge in different written sources at various points over the centuries. On the whole what is sought is attestation in rabbinic midrash of any period that Jerome is reporting an authentic haggadic tradition that he is likely to have gleaned from contemporary Jewish sources, and not via a Christian intermediary, Josephus, Philo, the Three, or what Jerome would have regarded as the Apocrypha.[31] In cases where there is no parallel at all, in rabbinic sources or elsewhere, the Jewish tradition that he reports may or may not be genuine. Then we may have to examine the function that it plays in its particular context, to see whether Jerome has invented or embellished it for his own purposes.

The central issue is what Jerome actually does with the midrash and how it functions in its new setting. What was Jerome trying to achieve by including such

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28. Those who argue that Jerome had access to written midrash on occasion refer to the passage in his Ep. 36, '...cum subito Hebraeus interuenit deferens non pauca uolumina, quae de synagoga quasi lecturus acceperat. Et ilico "habes", inquit, "quod postulaueras" meque dubius et, quid facerem, nescientem ita festinus exterruit, ut omnibus praetermissis ad scribendum transuolarem; quod quidem usque ad praesens facio.' (Ep. 36, CSEL 54, p. 268, lines 3ff). Braverman, *Jerome's Commentary on Daniel*, p. 8, believes that these scrolls were 'midrashim'. Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology*, p. 92, n. 62, agrees with Vaccari that Ep. 36.4 refers to a non-biblical aggadic text and Ep. 36.1 is a non-biblical Hebrew work. Yet this letter was written in Rome, before Jerome achieved his later competence in Hebrew, and so it seems rather unlikely that he (or his amanuenses) would have been able to read and transcribe Hebrew or Aramaic scrolls.

In one place Hayward suggests that Jerome may have consulted written Targum (C.T.R. Hayward, 'Jewish Traditions in Jerome's Commentary on Jeremiah and the Targum of Jeremiah', *PIBA* 9 (1985), pp. 100–120, esp. pp. 113-14), but he is more cautious in another article, 'Saint Jerome and the Aramaic Targumim', *JSS* 32 (1987) pp. 105–23.

29. See Graves, op. cit., pp. 91-92.

30. Of course one has to exclude cases where he may be citing the Greek versions Aquila, Symmachus or Theodotion without acknowledgement.

31. See Graves, op. cit., pp. 97–98.

material? (It should be noted that from a rabbinic point of view, midrash includes both halakah — legal interpretation — and haggadah — narrative interpretation, but since Jerome had little time for Jewish law in any form, what he repeats is largely haggadic.)

There are number of different possibilities regarding the function of midrash in Jerome. In Adam Kamesar's review of previous scholarship on rabbinic material in Jerome's *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*[32] he remarks that Cavallera[33] saw the *Hebrew Questions* as a 'hybrid' work, and that Penna[34] regarded the functions of the Jewish traditions in it as 'ornamental'. As for the French scholar Bardy (mentioned above), he believed that Jerome collected rabbinic trads without accepting them himself, and so presumably recorded them out of curiosity. However, given the hostility Christians like Rufinus and Augustine showed to Hebrew as well as to Jews, collecting midrashim as curiosities would be a strange thing to do if Jerome himself thought they had no value at all. Jerome was prepared to court controversy in his works, but not without cause.

Kamesar admits that the criticisms of Bardy and others are to an extent true, and gives some examples. He believes that Jerome's inclusion of rabbinic material was 'not devoid of ethnographic and antiquarian considerations... he was quite interested in Jewish lore for its own sake'.[35] In the case of the *Hebrew Questions*, which is more unusual in genre, Kamesar argues that 'this [rabbinic] material was an essential element in the study of the Bible'.[36] Kamesar also points to the *Prologue of the Commentary on Jeremiah*, where Jerome says he wants to give to Latin speakers the learning of the Hebrews and the Greeks.[37] Illustrative of Jerome's attitude to Jewish traditions is the remark in his *Commentary on Zechariah*, where he speaks of the *arcana eruditionis Hebraicae*, 'the secrets of Hebrew learning'.[38] Of course, this could refer to Hebrew language and philology rather than midrash, so such a statement needs to be examined in the light of Jerome's actual practice. Kamesar regards Jerome as employing the same principle regarding Jewish exegesis as he does with the works of Christian theologians who were regarded with great suspicion in Jerome's day. Jerome thus defends his use of Origen and Apollinaris, citing St Paul's words in 1 Thess 5:21: *omnia legentes, quae bona sunt, retinentes* (Ep. 61.1): in other words, he is wide-ranging but selective, according to purpose and context. Ultimately, according to Kamesar, Jerome uses rabbinic traditions for his literal exegesis and not for christological prophecy.[39]

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32. See references in Kamesar, op. cit., p.176.
33. F. Cavallera, *Saint Jérôme: sa vie et son oeuvre*. SSL 1-2 (Champion, Louvain, 1922), I.i., p. 146.
34. A. Penna, *S. Gerolamo* (Marietti, Turin, 1949), p. 155.
35. Kamesar, op. cit., pp. 176-77.
36. Kamesar, op. cit., p. 177.
37. Kamesar, op. cit., p. 177.
38. Jerome, *Comm. in Zach.*, II, vi, 9–15, lines 172–75 (on Zech 6:9-15,): 'Semel proposui arcana eruditionis hebraicae, et magistrorum synagogae reconditam disciplinam, eam dumtaxat, quae scripturis sanctis conuenit, latinis auribus prodere.'
'A long time ago I resolved to pass on to Latin speakers the secrets of Hebrew learning and the hidden teaching of the synagogue teachers, as far as it is appropriate to sacred Scripture'.
39. *CommZach* II, viii, 18-19 (on Zech 8:18-19): 'Cogimur igitur ad Hebraeos recurrere, et scientiae ueritatem de

How far do Kamesar's findings for Jerome's earlier work *Hebrew Questions* hold true for later works such as the *Commentary on the Minor Prophets*? There are a number of possible explanations for Jerome's use of midrash in the commentary, including a desire to demonstrate the inferiority of Jewish exegesis compared to its Christian counterpart, or a wish to show off own his own supposedly 'inside line' to Jewish exegesis. Yet in his *Apology* against his erstwhile friend Rufinus, Jerome defends himself against criticism for using Jewish informants by citing the precedent of Origen, who was Rufinus' hero. Jerome also says there that Origen and others appealed to the authority of a 'Hebrew' concerning points in the biblical text.[40] Though this would suggest a recourse to Hebrew philology rather than a justification for using Jewish midrash, precedent in Christian tradition provides another potential reason for employing Jewish tradition.

At the outset it should be observed that Jerome's commentaries are as much an attack on other types of interpretation as a presentation of his own explanations. So 'Jewish' and heretical (often Jewish-Christian) exegesis is criticised, yet Jerome uses and justifies 'Hebrew' interpretations — not merely ones based on Hebrew philology but also effectively midrashim.

The examples chosen here are drawn largely from Jerome's *Commentaries on the Minor Prophets*, since the Hebrew text is often challenging for the exegete. Also, apart from the *Commentary on Jonah* and the *Commentary on Amos*, they have not received much attention.[41] Most examples below are drawn from the commentaries

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fonte magis quam de riuulis quaerere, praesertim cum non prophetia aliqua de Christo, ubi tergiuersari solent, sed historiae ex praecedentibus et consequentibus ordo texatur' (cited by Kamesar, op. cit, p. 178).

40. Jerome, *Apologia c.Rufinum*, 1, 13, 21, ed. P. Lardet, *S. Jérôme, Apologie contre Rufin*, SC 303 (Cerf, Paris 1983), pp. 36–38: Audio praeterea te ... plautino in me sale ludere, eo quod Barabban Iudaeum dixerim praeceptorem meum. Nec mirum si pro 'Baranina', ubi est uocabulorum similitudo, scripseris 'Barabban', cum tantam habeas licentiam nominum mutandorum, ut de Eusebio Pamphilum, de haeretico martyrem feceris.... ego non illum magistrum dixi, sed meum in Scripturas sanctas studium uolui conprobare, ut ostenderem me sic Origenem legisse qumodo et illum audieram. Neque enim hebraeas litteras a te discere debui. ... Ipse Origenes et Eusebius et Clemens aliique conplures, quando de Scripturis aliqua disputant et uolunt approbare quod dicunt, sic solent scribere: 'Referebat mihi Hebraeus'; et: 'Audiui ab Hebraeo'; et: 'Hebraeorum ista sententia est'. Certe Origenes etiam patriarchem Hiullum, qui temporibus eius fuit, nominat.

'I am told, further, that you ... make sport of me with a wit worthy of Plautus, for having said that I had a Jew named Barabbas for my teacher. I do not wonder at your writing Barabbas for Baranina, the letters of the names being somewhat similar, when you allow yourself such a license in changing the names themselves, as to turn Eusebius into Pamphilus, and a heretic into a martyr. ... I never spoke of him as my master; I merely wished to illustrate my method of studying the Holy Scriptures by saying that I had read Origen just in the same way as I had taken lessons from this Jew. [For I should not learn Hebrew from you!] ... Origen himself, and Clement and Eusebius, and many others, when they are discussing scriptural points, and wish to have Jewish authority for what they say, write: "A Hebrew stated this to me," or "I heard from a Hebrew," or, "That is the opinion of the Hebrews." Origen certainly speaks of the Patriarch Huillus who was his contemporary... and he makes no scruple of inserting in his commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures the views of the Hebrew teachers.' (tr. P. Schaff *A select library of Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (Parker & Co., Oxford/Buffalo, The Christian literature company, 1886). See Rebenich, op. cit., pp. 61-62, who uses this interchange to corroborate Jerome's resort to real Hebrew teachers.

41. Y.-M. Duval, *Le livre de Jonas dans la littérature chrétienne grecque et latine; sources et influence du Commentaire sur Jonas de saint Jérôme*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1973); Jenny Dines, 'Jerome's methodology in his Commentary on Amos' in *Origen's Hexapla and Fragments. Papers presented at the Rich Seminar on the Hexapla, Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 25th July–3rd August 1994*, ed. A. Salvesen. TSAJ 58 (J.C.B. Mohr, Tübingen, 1998), pp. 421–436. Braverman, Jay and Graves have already produced illuminating studies of Jerome's commentaries on Daniel, Isaiah and Jeremiah respectively.

on Amos, Zephaniah and Habakkuk. I will attempt to trace possible sources of certain Jewish traditions that Jerome cites, or at least parallels to them, and then examine the use to which Jerome puts them in their new Christian context.

First, one should exclude one group of references to Jewish interpretation which could be categorised as *millennial-messianic*. In a number of places in his commentaries on the Prophets, Jerome mentions that the 'Jewish' interpretation of a particular passage states that the promises given through the prophets have yet to be fulfilled, in a future messianic age, and in material form. This is actually borne out by the exegesis of Targum Jonathan in many places, though much more in the Targum to Isaiah than in the Targum to the Minor Prophets.[42] In certain cases Jerome says that such materialistic, millennarian eschatology is shared by Jews and 'Judaizing' Christians.[43] Then he continues on to what he considers to be the superior, fully Christian, spiritual understanding of the passage in question, namely that the ancient prophecies have already been fulfilled, and that the blessings described in the text of Scripture are to be understood metaphorically and spiritually, as those that Christ has already bestowed on the Church.

An example of this kind is found in Jerome's *Commentary on Amos* 9:11-12:

> Both in this prophetic book and in others, whatever prophecies there are concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Temple and general blessing, the Jews promise themselves these things in the last time in futile expectation, and speak of their material fulfilment. But we who 'do not follow the letter that kills but the spirit that brings life', demonstrate that such things have already been accomplished in the Church and fulfilled everyday in individuals. Those who are ruined through sin are rebuilt through penitence.[44]

In one sense the function of such passages describing 'Jewish' views of the biblical text in question appears little different from those where Jerome is presenting the often Jewish or Hebrew-based *littera* and *historia* as the foundation for the more

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42. E.g. Targum Isaiah chapters 61–63, and see B. Chilton, *The Glory of Israel. The Theology and Provenience of the Isaiah Targum*. JSOTSS 23 (Sheffield Academic Press, Sheffield, 1983), pp. 86–96, 112-17, and K.J. Cathcart and R.P. Gordon, *The Targum of the Minor Prophets*. The Aramaic Bible 14 (T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1989), pp. 6–7. Messianic interpretations are found, however, in the Targum to some Minor Prophets, e.g. at Hos. 3.5; 14.8; Mic. 4.8; 5.1; Hab 3.18; Zech 3.8; 4.7; 6.12; 10.4.

43. See the excellent article by M. Graves, '"Judaizing" Christian Interpretations of the Prophets as seen by Saint Jerome', *VC* 61 (2007), pp. 142–56. Graves focuses on Jerome's criticisms of the 'Iudaizantes', who as Graves demonstrates are Christians with a literalist milllennarian theology, whereas the present writer is more interested in the degree to which this tendency was also found among Jerome's Jewish contemporaries.

44. Jerome, *CommAmos* III, ix, 11-12, lines 380-87: 'et in hoc propheta, et in ceteris quaecumque de aedificatione Hierusalem et templi, et rerum omnium beatitudine praedicantur, *Iudaei in ultimo tempore uana sibi exspectatione promittunt, et carnaliter implenda commemorant. Nos autem qui non occidentem litteram, sed spiritum sequimur uiuificantem,* iam in Ecclesia expleta conuincimus, et cotidie impleri in singulis, qui ruentes per peccatum, reaedificantur per paenitentiam.'

Cf. *Comm. Jer.* VI, Prologue (cited by Graves, '"Judaizing" Christian Interpretations', p. 149 n.21), 'Qui igitur Christum uenisse iam credimus, necesse est, ut ea, quae sub Christo futura dicuntur, expleta doceamus.'

'Since we believe Christ has already come, we must teach that those future things which are said to pertain to Christ have been fulfilled.'

See also Fergus Millar, 'Jews of the Graeco-Roman Diaspora', in *The Jews among Pagans and Christians* in the Roman Empire, eds. J. Lieu, J. North, and T. Rajak (Routledge, London/New York, 1992), pp. 97–123, esp. 113–14)

advanced spiritual sense (*tropologia*) to which Christians must progress. However, while he usually accepts this first, literal sense as a necessary and acceptable preliminary, concerning these prophetic passages which apparently present a future Golden Age he rejects a material interpretation outright.[45] (One suspects that this was not just because of his adherence to a realized eschatology, shared with many other Christians of his time, but that it was also due to his ascetical nature: he personally scorned splendour and wealth, and preferred to dwell on intangible spiritual blessings.)

As for the reality behind such charges of focusing on the material blessings, it is indeed the case that the Targums, especially Targum Jonathan to Isaiah, do apparently depict future earthly bliss, under either God's own rule or that of his Messiah. However, Jerome's frequent references to 'Jewish', 'corporeal', readings of the text may be as much to a line of theology found among certain Christians (not necessarily 'Jewish' Christians), as to a specific Jewish exegesis of a passage. Thus we should be aware of the function that this alleged feature of Jewish exegesis can also play in Jerome's interpretative scheme. His comments may primarily function as an attack on a Christian line of interpretation to which he objects. Calling such Christian exegesis 'Jewish' is meant to show that he considers it in fact inadequately Christian. Many of these millennial references do not occur in Targum or midrash to the Minor Prophets, and although one wonders whether Jerome was extrapolating from a handful of occurrences attested elsewhere in Jewish exegesis, for instance as attested by Targum Jonathan to Isaiah, he may have in mind current Christian interpretations rather than Jewish ones.

Turning to individual traditions rather than broader theological tendencies, there are a number of interesting examples.

a) In the difficult verse Zeph 3:1, an oracle of woe is pronounced against הָעִיר הַיּוֹנָה. In his commentary Jerome writes that he is aware that 'many' connect the city with Nineveh, mentioned in the preceding passage (LXX 2.13). He raises the objection that Nineveh is nowhere called a 'dove', 'columba' (= LXX). He says that others understand the word יוֹנָה to mean 'Graecia', Yavan. Jerome says that 'thus' the whole passage is a speech against Jerusalem, the city that was once a dove (i.e. innocent?), constantly sinning and exiled. His reasoning is not immediately obvious, but it may involve a double rendering of 'iona'. Jerome's use of the paraphrase 'a facie gladii Iona/Graeciae' indicates the sacking of a city by gentiles and therefore points to Jerusalem.[46] Jerome does not claim to be passing on a Hebrew or Jewish

45. Graves, '"Judaizing" Christian Interpretations', p. 155.

46. Zeph 3.1, הוֹי מֹרְאָה וְנִגְאָלָה הָעִיר הַיּוֹנָה׃ Ὦ ἡ ἐπιφανὴς καὶ ἀπολελυτρωμένη, ἡ πόλις ἡ περιστερά·
The LXX version, according to Jerome (ILXX): O illustris et redempta ciuitas columba
The Hebrew, according to Jerome (IH): uae prouocatrix et redempta ciuitas, columba.
Jerome, *Comm. Soph.* III, 1-7 (ed. Adriaen, CCSL 76A, 1970), lines 36-44, 45-48: 'Sed numquam scriptura Niniuen columbam uocaret, licet in Hieremia a facie gladii columbae de Nabuchodonosor dictum quidam putent. Sed sciendum quod alii econtrario asserant, pro columba, ibi posse intelligi Ἑλλάδα, id est Graeciam, ut sit sensus: A facie gladii Iona, id est a facie gladii Graeciae. Iona enim tam columbam quam Graeciam significat.

tradition here. But coincidentally all three interpretations, Nineveh, dove and Greece, are explicitly mentioned in Proem 31 to Lamentations Rabbah.[47] Jerome's treatment of the various options differs in detail from that of Lamentations Rabbah, but the three possibilities for the word יוֹנָה are the same offered by the rabbinic midrash. The outcome in Jerome, however, is a negative appraisal of Jerusalem, Judah and Israel, whereas the rabbis would hardly have shared his views.

b) On Zephaniah 1:1, where the prophet's forebears are listed, Jerome mentions a Hebrew tradition that when a prophet's father or grandfather are mentioned in a book's title, this indicates that they themselves had also been prophets.[48] The Babylonian Talmud, Meg. 15a, concerning the same introductory formula in Zeph 1:1, has the vaguer statement that where mention is made of righteous man's ancestors, they too were of good character ('a righteous man, son of a righteous man'). However, the context of the passage in bMegillah does refer to the twenty two prophets and seven prophetesses of scripture, so Jerome's comment may well reflect a genuine contemporary tradition.

Why does Jerome mention this Hebrew tradition? At first it appears to serve merely to provide more information on the 'historical' level of the text. But Jerome soon proceeds to an extended allegorical reading of the verse, based on supposed etymologies of the names of Zephaniah's forebears, especially that of 'Chusi'. The latter's name is interpreted as meaning 'my Ethiopian' and Jerome then connects it with various Ethiopians mentioned in Scripture, leading to the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts 8:27–38 who was baptized by Philip, and whom Jerome regards as having made himself a eunuch for the the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Rightly, therefore, says Jerome, did Zephaniah son of Chusi, the 'Ethiopian', write 'Across the rivers of Ethiopia, from there shall they bring offerings to me' (Zeph 3:10). Jerome develops the Jewish tradition about the naming of a prophet's forefathers in order to argue that the names of Zephaniah's ancestors are not merely significant but also prophetic, pointing to a fulfillment in the New Testament.

Vnde et usque hodie Graeci Iones, et mare appellatur Ionium, et apud Hebraeos permanet eorum uetus uocabulum...omnis itaque contra Hierusalem sermo est: uae ciuitas quondam columba, semper peccans, et captiuitatibus tradita, et rursum redempta a domino.'

47. Proem 31, Lamentations Rabbah:

העיר היונה אומה שציינתי אותה במצות ומעשים טובים כיונה אחר כל השבח הזה לא שמעה בקול ה' ולא לקחה מוסר ... מה היא לאו שטותא היא א"ר ראובן לשון יוני הוא צווחין לשטותא מורא הוי מראה ... העיר היונה לא היה לה ללמוד מעירו של יונה מנינוה נביא אחד שלחתי לנינוה והחזירה בתשובה ואילו ישראל בירושלים כמה נביאים שלחתי אליהם...

[Citing Zeph. 3.1: 'what is the meaning of "woe to her that is rebellious"?'] 'The nation that I distinguished through religious duties and good deeds like a dove. .... Said R. Reuben, 'In the Greek language, they call a foolish woman 'mora' [fem.]... Should she not have learned from the city of Jonah which is Nineveh. One prophet did I send to Nineveh and the city repented, but to the Israelites in Jerusalem how many prophets did I send.' (ed. S. Buber, Wilna 1899; tr. based on J. Neusner, *Lamentations Rabbah. An Analytical Translation.* Brown Judaic Studies 193 (Scholars Press, Atlanta, GA, 1989), pp. 92-93.)

The Proems to Lamentations Rabbah are not securely dated: see G. Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (2nd edn. T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1996), pp. 286–87.

48. Jerome, *Comm. in Soph.* i.1, lines 4–6: 'Tradunt Hebraei cuiuscumque prophetae pater aut auus ponatur in titulo, ipsos quoque prophetas fuisse.'

c) On Zeph 3:9 Jerome renders the 'Hebrew' lemma as 'because then I will bring back to the peoples a chosen tongue, so that they may all call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one shoulder'.[49] He justifies his translation of בְּרוּרָה as 'chosen' on the basis of Aquila and Theodotion's rendering, 'electum'. He cites a Jewish interpretation of the Hebrew lemma that relates vv. 8-9 to the future coming of the Messiah. At this time all the nations will be gathered and the Lord will pour out his wrath upon them. All who convert will speak one language, Hebrew, just as before the Tower of Babel was built.

Unsurprisingly Jerome dismisses the Jewish interpretation as 'Jewish fables" in favour of a more Christian one favourable to Gentiles. He may have cited it in order to point out the contrast in focus between the Jewish expectation of the Messiah and of judgment for the Gentiles in vv.8b–9, and his own preference for v.8a, 'wait for me, says the Lord, in the day of my resurrection in testimony'. He follows the LXX lemma in understanding the rulers of the Gentiles to be the recipents of God's wrath, not the nations in general as in the 'Hebrew'. The reference to language he takes as having been fulfilled already in the days of the apostles, who spoke in every tongue at Pentecost ('universis linguis'), but he also speaks of the restoration of a single language of confession.

The Babylonian Talmud (bBer 57b, bAZ 24a) and Targum Jonathan interpret Zeph 3:9 roughly along the same lines that Jerome attributes to 'the Jews'.[50] The Targum renders as 'one chosen language'. However, both Targum and Talmud stress the aspect of conversion to Judaism, and seem to treat שפה ברורה as a metaphor for worship of the Lord and rejection of idolatry, rather than an indication of unity of language in the messianic age. Jerome had every reason to draw attention to the identity of the 'chosen' language, even in the rejected Jewish interpretation, and to connect it with the original language of mankind, because of his championing of the *Hebraica veritas*. But he prefers to think in terms of the Resurrection and Pentecost, and so presents the Jewish interpretation only in order to reject it.

d) For the previous verse, Zeph 3:8, Jerome says that his Hebrew Scripture teacher told him that 'laed' (לעד) in this verse meant εἰς ἔτι ('in futurum') rather than 'in testimonium' (LXX εἰς μαρτύριον). Jerome explains that the word spelt 'ain et daleth' can mean both 'future' and 'witness', though he seems unaware that there is also a

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49. Zeph 3.9 כִּי־אָז אֶהְפֹּךְ אֶל־עַמִּים שָׂפָה בְרוּרָה לִקְרֹא כֻלָּם בְּשֵׁם יְהוָה לְעָבְדוֹ שְׁכֶם אֶחָד׃
IH: quia tunc reddam populis labium electum, ut invocent omnes nomen Domini, et serviant ei humero uno'.
Jerome, *Comm. in Soph.*, iii, 8–9, lines 253-61: 'Haec Iudaei interpretantur in aduentu Christi, quem sperant uenturum esse, et dicunt uniuersis gentibus congregatis, et effuso super eas furore Domini, in igne zeli eius terram deuorandam; et sicut ante aedificationem turris fuit, quando una lingua omnes populi loquebantur, ita conuersis omnibus ad cultum ueri dei, locuturos Hebraice et totum orbem domino seruiturum. Nos autem qui non sequimur occidentem litteram, sed spiritum uiuificantem, nec Iudaicas fabulas...'

50. bBer 57b: R. Simeon b. Eleazar: outside Palestine one should pray for idolators to serve God, because one day they will become proselytes; bAZ 24a: R. Eliezer all will become proselytes in the future: גרים גרורים (both citing Zeph 3:9 as the prooftext): מפני שעתידים להתגייר. Cf. also Targum to Zephaniah ad loc.

difference in vocalisation (*la'ad* for 'in the future').[51] Targum Jonathan renders as 'judgement', reading the Hebrew word as *'ed* as did LXX. It is unclear from Jerome's remarks which interpretation he favours, and he may have preferred to keep his options open.

e) In Hab 3:5 Jerome renders Resheph in the 'Hebrew' lemma as 'diabolus'. He justifies this translation on the basis of a Hebrew tradition. This is that Resheph is the name of the demon who holds sway among the others, just as Beelzebub is named prince of the demons in the gospel. He is called a bird or winged creature because of his swift flight, and is the same being who spoke to the woman in the form of a serpent, and was given his name Resheph by God, since it means 'crawling on the belly'.[52]

Some of this does accord with rabbinic tradition: bBer. 5a states, 'Resheph refers only to demons', in a passage on reciting the Shema' on one's bed in order to drive away demons.[53] However, appears to be no identification in rabbinic literature with Sammael or Satan or the serpent, and the verb רשף does not have this meaning in Jewish Aramaic or Hebrew.[54] Interestingly, the verb *ršp* does occur in Syriac, means 'crawl on the belly', and is used of the serpent in Eden.[55] Perhaps Jerome picked this detail up from a Syriac Christian source rather than a Jewish one?

The reason for Jerome's identification of the demon Resheph with the devil of Christian teaching lies in his spiritual interpretation, where he describes the devil

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51. Jerome, *Comm. in Soph.*, iii, 8–9, line 327-35, on Zeph. 3.8: 'Hebraeus qui me in scripturis instituit, asserebat *laed* in praesenti loco magis εἰς ἔτι id est in futurum, debere intellegi, quam in testimonium. *Ed* enim, quod scribitur per litteras ain et daleth, ἔτι, et μαρτύριον, id est et futurum et testimonium, intellegi. Possumus hunc locum et de primo Christi aduentu exponere, quando, omni errore sublato, daemonibus que calcatis, et terrenis operibus destructis, apostoli uniuersis linguis locuti sunt, et ueteri errore sublato, unum confessionis redditum est labium.'

52. Hab 3:5 לְפָנָיו יֵלֶךְ דָּבֶר וְיֵצֵא רֶשֶׁף לְרַגְלָיו׃
IH 'ante faciem eius ibit mors et egredietur diabolus ante pedes eius'
Jerome, *Comm.Hab.* II, 3.5, line 322 ff.: 'Tradunt autem Hebraei, quomodo in euangelio princeps daemonum dicitur esse Beelzebub, ita Reseph daemonis esse nomen, qui principatum teneat inter alios, et propter nimiam uelocitatem atque in diuersa discursum, auis et uolatile nuncupetur, ipsumque esse qui in paradiso sub figura serpentis mulieri sit locutus, et ex maledictione, qua a deo condemnatus est accepisse nomen, siquidem Reseph reptans uentre interpretatur.'
'The Hebrews have a tradition that, just as in the gospel the prince of demons is called Beelzebub, so Resheph is the name of a demon who holds sway among the others. Because he is very swift and ranges widely, he is regarded as a bird and winged creature, and as the one who spoke to the woman in Paradise in the guise of a serpent. It was through the curse that he received from God that he received the name, since Resheph means "crawling on the belly".'

53. bBer. 5a, 'Resheph refers only to demons' ואין רשף אלא מזיקין.

54. Targum to Habakkuk ad loc. demythologises the name and renders as 'flame of fire'. See also Deut 32.24; Psalms 76:4, 78:48; Job 5:7; Cant 8.6. Numbers Rabbah 12.3 also discusses Resheph in the context of demons. For the ancient origins of Resheph, see P. Xella in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible,* eds. van der Toorn, B. Becking and P. van der Horst (Brill, Leiden etc., 2nd edn. 1999).

55. I am grateful to David Taylor for bringing this Syriac meaning to my attention. See A. Levene, *The Early Syrian Fathers on Genesis. From a Syriac MS. on the Pentateuch in the Mingana Collection* (Taylor's Foreign Press, London, 1951), ch. II p. 60 line 16 and p. 78. Aphrahat also uses the verb of the devil appearing to the Sons of the Covenant in the guise of a serpent, though not in the context of Eden (*Dem.* VI.2, ed. J. Parisot, *Aphraatis sapientis persae demonstrationes*. Patrologia Syriaca (Firmin-Didot et socii: Paris 1894), vol. I, p. 256, line 5).

meeting Christ as the latter leaves the waters of baptism, and death standing before his feet, and the ancient serpent who tempted him for forty days in the wilderness. Jerome bases this explicitly on the Greek lemma 'the word shall go before his face, and go out in the fields after his feet', but his interpretation tacitly takes in the Hebrew lemma 'Death shall go before his face and the Devil shall go out before his feet'. The supposed 'Hebrew' tradition of identifying Resheph with the devil has been used to support a Christian reading of Hab 3:5.

f) This tendency to read Christian theology into the Hebrew text is even more marked in Jerome's comments on Hab 3:3.[56] Here he claims that he himself heard a Hebrew explain the passage 'The Lord shall come from the south (and the Holy One from the mountain of Paran)' as meaning that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. The opinion of the Hebrew seems to shade into Jerome's own argument that the one born in Bethlehem is the same God who gave the Law at Sinai, and thus he is also the one who came from nearby Paran. At the same time he gives a patently absurd etymology for Paran, 'os videntis', probably based on Origen's conjecture.[57]

Has Jerome come up with this rather unlikely 'Jewish' interpretation himself and placed it in the mouth of a 'Hebrew' to give it an aura of authenticity, or merely distorted a vaguely similar midrashic tradition for his own purposes? For there appears to be no rabbinic interpretation on these lines. bBK 38a and b'AZ 2b pair Hab. 3:3 and Deut 33:2, in the context of the giving of the Law at Sinai and the rejection of Torah by the nations. The late midrashic compilation Exodus Rabbah 5.9 also links Hab. 3:3 with Deut 33:2, discussing from which direction the Lord comes, but the answer is that Israel cannot tell: the divine voice at Sinai reverberates throughout the world. It may even be that this later midrash is intended to counter the kind of christological geography we see in Jerome.

A further category involves midrash that is completely rejected by Jerome but still performs a function within his schema.

f) The first example occurs in the commentary to Hab 2:15–16. Jerome's extended discussion of these difficult verses demonstrates how Jerome weaves several renderings and concepts together. He commences with the lemmata in Latin: the 'Hebrew' *'Woe to him who gives a drink to his friend, sending his poison and making him drunk, so that he can see his nakedness',* and 'LXX' *Woe to him who*

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56. Jerome, *Comm.Abac.* (ed. Adriaen, CCSL 76A) II, iii, 3, lines 194-201: 'Audiui ego Hebraeum istum locum ita disserere: Quod Bethleem sita sit ad austrum, in qua natus est Dominus atque Saluator, et ipsum esse de quo nunc dicatur: *Dominus ab austro ueniet*, hoc est nascetur in Bethleem, et inde consurget. Et quia ipse qui natus est in Bethleem, legem quondam dedit in monte Sinai, ipse est sanctus qui uenit de monte Pharan. Pharan quippe uicinus est locus monti Sina....'

'I myself heard a Hebrew explain this passage thus: Because Bethlehem (where our Lord and Saviour was born) lies to the south, he is the one of whom it is now said, 'The Lord shall come from the south', that is, he shall be born in Bethlehem, and come forth from there. And because the one who was born in Bethlehem once gave the law on Mount Sinai, he is the holy one who came from Mount Paran. For Paran is next to Mount Sinai.'

57. See L.L. Grabbe, *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation: the Hebrew Names in Philo*, Brown Judaic Studies 115 (Atlanta, GA 1988), p. 212: פארן Φαράν : Origen *Num. Hom.* 7.5 = GCS 7.45 has 'os visibile', Origen Lex στόμα ὁράσεως: yet Jerome gives the meaning as 'ferus eorum' from פרא (Onomastikon 6:15).

makes his neighbour drink of his own violent destruction, and makes him drunk, so that he can look in his caves.[58] First Jerome discusses the widely differing renderings of the *recentiores*. Then he suggests a metaphorical reading, involving the devastation caused in the region by the cup of Nebuchadnezzar's wrath. Next he reports a tradition told him by a respected Hebrew 'Tanna' of Lydda:[59] the story goes that Nebuchadnezzar gave the captive Zedekiah a drink containing laxatives, in order to humiliate him in front of the guests at a feast because he would be unable to control his bowels. Jerome rejects this story with the remark, 'I don't have to tell you how ridiculous this story is!'[60] This is ostensibly because Jerome considers such an interpretation involving an actual drink incompatible with what he interprets as the metaphorical cup of calamities that God will make Nebuchadnezzar drink as punishment for his treatment of Zedekiah.

There are two possible parallels to this story recorded in rabbinic literature. The first is in bShabb. 149b, where Hab 2:16 is interpreted as a reference to Nebuchadnezzar wishing to subject Zedekiah to sexual abuse. However, although the protagonists are the same, and the physical humiliation extreme in both cases, it is not particularly close to the 'fabula' that Jerome reports. (It is the sort of midrash that Jerome probably had in mind when he says in his letter to Algasia that some Jewish legends are too coarse to repeat![61])

A much better parallel to Jerome's version occurs in Esther Rabbah 3.1, interpreting Hab 2:15, where Nebuchadnezzar is said to have given Zedekiah warm barley bread and new wine, in order to loosen his bowels and thus reveal his nakedness.[62]

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58. Habakkuk 2:15-16:

הוֹי מַשְׁקֵה רֵעֵהוּ מְסַפֵּחַ חֲמָתְךָ וְאַף שַׁכֵּר לְמַעַן הַבִּיט עַל־מְעוֹרֵיהֶם׃
שָׂבַעְתָּ קָלוֹן מִכָּבוֹד שְׁתֵה גַּם־אַתָּה וְהֵעָרֵל תִּסּוֹב עָלֶיךָ כּוֹס יְמִין יְהוָה וְקִיקָלוֹן עַל־כְּבוֹדֶךָ׃

ILXX: Vae qui propinat proximo suo subuersione turbida, et inebrians, ut aspiciat in speluncis eorum...circumdedit te calix dexterae Domini...

IH: vae qui potum dat amico suo, mittens fel suum et inebrians, ut aspiciat nuditatem eius...circumdabit te calix dexterae Domini...

The entire passage can be found in Jerome, *Comm.Abac.,* I, ii, 15-17, lines 524-651.

59. 'Audiui Liddae quemdam de Hebraeis, qui sapiens apud illos et δευτερώτης uocabatur, narrantem huiuscemodi fabulam', *Comm. in Abac.* I, ii, lines 578–80.

60. Ibid., lines 592–93, 'Hoc quam ridiculum sit, me tacente, cognoscitis.'

61. Jerome, *Ep.* 121.10 (to Algasia, c. 406), ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 56, p. 48, lines 15-17: 'Quantae traditiones Pharisaeorum sint, quas hodie *deuterôseis* uocant, et quam aniles fabulae, reuoluere nequeo. neque enim libri patitur magnitudo et pleraque tam turpia sunt, ut erubescam dicere.'

'I am unable to recount how many traditions of the Pharisees there are, that nowadays they call *deuteroseis*, and what old wives' tales they are! They are too many to be set down, and many are so improper that I would be ashamed to relate them.'

62. Midrash Esther 3.1 (the older section of Esther Rabbah, to which this passage belongs, is generally dated after 500 CE.):

'הוי משקה' זה נבוכדנצר 'רעהו' זה צדקיהו ... מה היה עושה לו אותו רשע? היה מאכילו פת חמה של שעורים ומשקה אותו יין מן הגת חדש וכל כך למה כדי שיתחללו מעיו הדא הוא דכתיב 'לְמַעַן הַבִּיט עַל־מְעוֹרֵיהֶם'

'"The one who makes to drink" is Nebuchadnezzar, "his neighbour" is Zedekiah...What did that wicked man [Nebuchadnezzar] do to him? He made [Zedekiah] eat hot barley bread and gave him new wine fresh from the vat. Why did he do this? In order that his bowels should be loosened. This is what is written: "In order to look on

In spite of Jerome's dismissal of this midrash in favour of the Christian, spiritual interpretation, he nevertheless employs some of its imagery. The 'woe' is addressed to the Antichrist or the 'perverse teaching of heretics', who cause spiritual inebriation with a murky draught ('potione turbida.... poculo turbido'). This of course relates partly to the 'Hebrew' meaning of the verse that he gives (*woe to him who makes his neighbour drink*), as well as to the Jewish 'fabula'. In the following section referring to heretics, Jerome links together several images involving caves or dens where heretical rites take place, based on the LXX reading of the verse which has 'caves' rather than 'nakedness'.

He crowns this section with the statement,

> Therefore we will not enter the caves of the heretics, nor hide where impious Saul was accustomed to evacuate the filth of his doctrines, but rather, we ascend to the high cave of Mount Sinai, where Elijah saw the Lord, and Moses saw his back. Isaiah proclaims, 'Here he dwells in a high cave'.[63]

The use of the term 'filth', '*stercora*', here, clearly alludes to the midrashic motif of a king voiding his bowels, despite Jerome's explicit rejection of the story.

Thus Jerome has woven together elements and images of several understandings of Hab 2:15–16, to suit his 'spiritual' interpretation of the passage. He frames his commentary on the passage with the image of defecating kings, one a righteous monarch forced to humiliate himself in public by his captors, and the other an impious ruler relieving himself in private during his quest to capture David. He apparently cites the midrash only to mock it. Yet if he had not used it, he would not have been able to employ either the imagery of the drugged cup or the reference to Saul in the cave in his *tropologia*. Moreover, the very earthy, historical approach of the midrash functions at a literary level as a sharp contrast to Jerome's extended interweaving of Scripture and allegory, while theologically it would serve to highlight Jerome's well-worn distinction between the 'Jewish' corporeal exegesis of Scripture and the higher Christian spiritual sense.

g) Such use of haggadic traditions as a kind of 'frame' is also found in Jerome's *Commentary on Amos* 2:1–3:

> The Hebrews have the tradition that the bones are those of the king of Edom, who had gone up with Joram king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah against Moab. He was buried, but his bones were subsequently torn up and set on fire by the Moabites to indulge their animosity.[64] This is the reason, they say, why God said he would send fire on Moab... But just as it is wrong to move the 'perfect captivity', i.e. of Solomon,

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their nakedness".'

Ginzberg comments, 'the coarse form of this legend in Jerome is to be ascribed to his own accounbt, and not to the learned Hebrew.' (Legends of the Jews, VI p. 384). However, the rabbinic form of the legend is no less 'coarse' than Jerome's Latin account of the 'fabula'. Ginzberg also refers to Tanhuma B (Yelammedenu) II.33, but there the allusion is to Belshazzar and his feast in Dan. 5:1-6, and there is no humiliation of another figure.

63. Ibid., lines 640-45: 'Non ingrediamur ergo in speluncas haereticorum, nec abscondamur ibi, ubi impius Saul stercora doctrinarum suarum egerere consueuit, sed magis ascendamus ad speluncam excelsam montis Sina, ubi et Helias uidit Dominum, et Moyses posteriora eius ante conspexit. Et Esaias de domino clamitans: *hic habitabit,* ait*, in spelunca excelsa*.'

64. The Targum says that Moab burned the bones of the king to plaster his house.

> and shut it up in Edom, so as to make high and lofty things low and earthly, in the same way we must not 'burn the bones of the king of Edom and reduce them to dust and ashes. The Jews shift the spiritual understanding onto Edomite flesh, and the significance of the kings, which is changed into the literal reading... They not are the only ones who do this, all the heretics do too...[65]
>
> Whoever reads that Judah went in to Tamar the prostitute and begot from her two sons, if he follows the impropriety of the literal understanding, and does not rise above to the seemliness of the spiritual sense, he 'burns the bones of the king of Edom'. Whoever thinks that Hosea took a whorish wife and sees no more in the account than the plain sense of the words, 'burns the bones of the king of Edom'.[66]

Here Jerome does not object to the midrash per se, as it gives a good historical sense which he appreciated. His criticism is that to understand Scripture properly, one must go beyond this historical, literal sense: Scripture must embrace a higher meaning than mere historical references. Why would the unsavoury episode of Tamar and Judah be included in the Bible unless it pointed to something spiritual? Just as he registers disgust over the 'stercora', the excrement in the midrash to Hab 2:15, he argues that sticking to the 'letter' of scripture alone is tantamount to committing the outrage of burning the bones of a dead king.[67]

Conclusions:

1) *Jerome received some genuine midrashic (aggadic) traditions from his informants*, principally in oral form. However, it is always worth checking to see whether anything could have come via another source (e.g. Origen, Josephus, the *recentiores*, the Apocrypha) so that we can see what is most likely to have been transmitted orally by his teachers to him (though of course he may have both heard a tradition from them and found it in another source as well). This is hardly a new finding, more a re-statement of the most recent scholarly position, which in the main supports Jerome's claims to have access to such knowledge.[68] However, each case

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65. Amos 2.1: IH: 'haec dicit Dominus: super tribus sceleribus Moab et super quattuor non conuertam eum, eo quod incenderit ossa regis Idumaeae usque ad cinerem.'
Jerome, *CommAmos* I, ii, 1/3, CCSL p. 229, lines 20-24, 33-35, 36-45: 'Tradunt Hebraei, ossa, regis Idumaeae iam sepulti, qui cum Ioram rege Israel et Iosaphat rege Iuda ascenderat aduersum Moab, in ultionem doloris a Moabitis postea conuulsa atque succensa. Ob hanc ergo, inquiunt, causam Deus missurum se esse dicit ignem in Moab... Quomodo autem non oportet transferre captiuitatem perfectam, siue Salomonis, et concludere eam in Idumaea, ut de excelsis atque caelestibus humiles faciat atque terrenos..., sic ossa regis Idumaeae comburere non debemus, et in cinerem fauillam que dissoluere. Iudaei transferunt intellegentiam spiritalem in carnes Idumaeas, sensum que regium, qui uersatur in littera, et est solidissimus atque firmissimus, genealogiis quibusdam et traditionibus superfluis eneruant atque comminuunt, et in puluerem redigunt; et non solum illi hoc faciunt, sed omnes haeretici, qui uolunt in modum humanae similitudinis sedere deum in solio excelso et eleuato, et pedes ponere super terram, ne scilicet pendeant.'

66. Ibid., lines 48–54: 'Qui legit introisse Iudam ad Thamar meretricem et ex ea duos filios procreasse, si turpitudinem sequatur litterae, et non ascendat ad decorem intellegentiae spiritalis, comburit ossa regis Idumaeae. Qui putat Osee accepisse uxorem fornicariam, et nihil plus sentit in dicto, quam uerbis simplicibus continetur, ossa comburit regis Idumaeae.' The theme of burning bones also recurs in the same commentary, on p. 231 line 86.

67. Cf. on Amos 1.6-8, *Comm.Amos*. I, i, 6-8, p. 223 lines 354-57, 'Hos ego arbitror Iudaeorum magistros, et omnes qui occidentem sequuntur litteram, noluntque recipere spiritum uiuificantem, sed quaecumque interpretantur et sapiunt, uolunt esse terrena.'

68. Meanings of names in the *Commentary on the Minor Prophets* are rarely credible etymologies. e.g. *Comm.*

needs to be carefully examined, as Jerome was also capable of relying erroneous information, such as the dubious etymologies in Eusebius' *Onomasticon*, rather than consulting his Hebrew informants.

2) The *function* of the midrash he cites, both in terms of its theological role and its stylistic, compositional role, has been less discussed. Individual midrashic traditions always appear in the context of the *littera* and *historia*, the literal/historical/ Antiochene-type basic interpretation, where historical setting, narrative coherence and identity of the protagonists are established. Jerome uses the *littera* as a basis before he goes into the spiritual, moral, *tropologia*, though sometimes the midrash can play a part in the tropologia, but only in a transfigured form.[69]

The midrashic traditions of which Jerome broadly approves are normally flagged up with the formula '*tradunt Hebraei*', 'the Hebrews have the tradition…'. Those traditions that he rejects as unsuitable and erroneous are indicated by different formulae, such as 'the Jews interpret' or '*Iudaicae fabulae*', 'Jewish stories'. (It should be noted that Jerome is equally rude about pagan fables).[70]

Of course these *Hebraei* and *Iudaei* are probably the very same Jews in each case, transmitting what to them would have seemed very similar traditions. But those midrashim that are useful to Jerome are therefore to him part of the authentic, ancient, tradition of the Hebrews, who are effectively the 'Good Jews', the custodians of the mysteries of Scripture. Jerome often refers to *Hebraei* with apparently genuine respect[71] even though he complains of having to pay them handsomely for their knowledge.[72] This financial motif could be interpreted in a number of different ways, not all mutually exclusive: that Jews (even 'Hebraei') are mercenary; that the knowledge they have is valuable and therefore represents an investment (ultimately, it was Jerome's patrons who footed the bill); that if a Jew offered help gratis, one would suspect he had a hidden agenda. Jerome attempts to avoid criticism for his

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in Soph. ii, 3–4, lines 116–17, on Ashdod as 'ignis generationis' ; ibid. ii, 8–11, lines 420–21 'Damascus sanguinem bibens, aut sanguis sacci'; *Comm. in Agg.* i, 1, lines 12–13 Darius means 'generationes factae'; and then with greater accuracy, ibid. line 56 Haggai 'festiuus'; ibid. lines 122–124 Zerrubabbel/Zorobabel 'iste magister de Babylone' (using the rabbinic technique of word segmentation, zo + rob + Babel) and lines 142–43 Jehozadak/ Iosedec as 'Iao iustus'.

69. See Graves, '"Judaizing" Christian Interpretations', pp. 146–49 for some other examples.

70. E.g. *CommAmos* II, v, 7/9 p.280 lines 274-79 on Orion and Arcturus, quoting *Aeneid* III: 516-7 ('Quando autem audimus Arcturum et Oriona, non debemus sequi fabulas poetarum, et ridicula ac portentosa mendacia, quibis etiam caelum infamare conantur… When we hear Arcturus and Orion, we should not follow the poets' tales, the ridiculous and revolting lies by which they try to defame the very heavens…..')

71. E.g. 'Hebraeus…qui nos in Scripturis sanctis erudivit', *Comm. in Amos* ii, 5, 8 line 272; 'Hebraeus qui me in scripturis erudiuit, ita legi posse asseruit…' *Comm. in Naum*, iii, 8–12, lines 274–75.

72. E.g. 'quo pretio Baraninam nocturnum habui praeceptorem' (Ep. 84.3), 'non parvis redemisse nummis' (*Praef. in libr. Iob* IH). Williams, *The Monk and the Book,* p. 226, sees the financial motif as symbolizing the role that Jewish informants played in Jerome's literary economy (as opposed to his unpaid Christian teachers). Jay, *L'exégèse de S. Jérôme*, interprets it as demonstrating Jerome's lack of personal attachment to his Jewish teachers — it was a merely mercenary arrangement. One suspects, however, that the reality was as complex as Jerome himself. Note that the theme of buying knowledge occurs again in Ep. 84, but this time regarding Jerome's acquisition of Origen's writings: 'legi, inquam, legi Origenem et, si in legendo crimen est, fateor — et nostrum marsuppium alexandrinae chartae euacuarunt'. Jerome also reminds Rufinus that the latter had acquired copies of the *recentiores* at great expense (*Apol.c.Rufin.* II, 34, ed. Lardet p. 194 lines 8-10). From such examples it seems more probable that Jerome is calling attention to the value that the buyer places on what is purchased, rather than to the relationship between buyer and seller.

use of the Hebrew text, Hebrew language and Hebrew teachers, by separating these from the beliefs and practice of Judaism. Megan Hale Williams's recent assessment of Jerome's attitude describes it as 'paradoxical'.[73] However, Jerome's contrasting comments concerning Jewish traditions, at times respectful and at others derogatory, are surely meant to deflect possible criticism for using such sources by indicating to the reader that Jerome is evaluating each individual interpretation and accepts nothing blindly.

Those midrashim that are not of use to Christians are part of Jewish self-delusion, especially concerning their alleged eschatological expectations, shared with 'Judaizing' Christians. Alternatively the haggadah reflects what Jerome writes off as the typical Jewish (*Iudaice)* fleshly (*carnaliter*) approach to Scripture.[74] These are cited to show the superiority of Christian, spiritual, exegesis over both Jewish and Jewish-Christian interpretation.

Another function of Jerome's use of midrash is to demonstrate to Jerome's detractors that for all his use of Jewish and Hebrew learning and traditions, he was not uncritical of what he learned from Jews, and that he was more than capable of distinguishing between what was useful to Christians and what was not. So he selects examples of midrash to disparage. Such would include the two last examples where *stercora* alludes to the coarseness of some Jewish interpretations and *ossa* to the obsolescence and destructive nature of Jewish exegesis, as Jerome saw it. This disparagement is almost as important to him as citing midrash that plays a positive exegetical role in his commentaries.

A further clue to the function of midrash in Jerome's work is the context in which we tend to find it. Midrash appears rather rarely in his Iuxta Hebraeos version, as he seemed keen to promote a simple, rather open-ended text, ready to receive a theological going-over in his exegetical works.[75] There is also very little haggadah in his homilies, because in them he was mostly promoting the *tropologia* or moral message.[76] Midrash appears most often in works such as the *Hebrew Questions on Genesis*, the *Onomasticon*, and in his commentaries on the Prophets, where he is expounding the sense of the Hebrew text.[77]

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73. M.H. Williams, *The Monk and the Book. Jerome and the Making of Christian Scholarship* (Chicago/ London, 2006), pp. 221-25.

74. E.g. 'Haec Iudaice dicta sint', *Comm. in Soph.* ii, 12–15, line 517, also 'Iudaicas fabulas', *Comm. in Soph.* iii.8–9, lines 260–61; 'neque enim putandum est secundum Iudaicas fabulas et inepta figmenta', *Comm. in Agg.* ii, 16-18, lines 534–35.

75. However, there are traces of midrash in the IH: see on the book of Exodus, M.A. Kraus, "Jerome, the Book of Exodus, and the World of Late Antiquity," in *Midrash and Context: Proceedings of the 2004 and 2005 SBL Consultation on Midrash*, eds. L.M. Teugels and R. Ulmer. Judaism in Context 5 (Gorgias, Piscataway, N.J., 2007), pp. 17–37. John Cameron's study of the IH Psalms found rather fewer examples of midrashic interpretation in that book, but concludes that this is because Jerome supplied the exegesis in his commentaries on Psalms (J.S. Cameron, 'The Vir Tricultus: an Investigation of the Classical, Jewish and Christian Influences on Jerome's Translation of the Psalter Iuxta Hebraeos', DPhil thesis, Oxford 2006), esp. 173–75.

76. There is a passing reference in *Hom.Ps.* 30 on Ps 103(104) to Jewish views of Leviathan, and in *Hom.Ps.* 61, on Ps 15(16), to the meaning of מכתם. In *Hom.Ps.* 10 on Ps 76(77) Jerome denies the possibility of a literal interpretation with the words, 'Hic quid facis, Iudaee?', and in *Hom.Ps* 23 on Ps 95(96) he rejects the Jewish interpretation of the title and its context in favour of a mystical and universal message (ed. G. Morin, *Tractatus sive homeliae in Psalmos*, CCSL 78 (Brepols, Turnhout, 1958)).

77. For the Christian exegesis of Jerome's *Commentary on Isaiah*, see Jay, *L'exégèse de S. Jérôme d'après son*

In fact Adam Kamesar argues that one cannot really separate the use of rabbinic sources fron Jerome's quest for the meaning of the Hebrew text, and that midrash is sometimes necessary even to understand the *recentiores*.[78] By this Kamesar means that the reason for a particular rendering of the Three was not always obvious unless one knew the Hebrew philological explanation or the midrashic background to the passage. This is particularly the case with Symmachus, whose readings often are like the tip of a midrashic iceberg. Midrash is thus the key to interpreting even the Jewish Greek revisions.

Kamesar also maintains that Jerome's criterion for choosing a rendering or midrash was the sense of the passage.[79] He cites Jerome's remark in the *Apology against Rufinus* that 'everyone selects whatever among the uncertain senses seems to him to be the most coherent (*consequentius*)'.[80]

However, it is worth considering the criticism of Jerome's contemporary Julian of Eclanum. Julian was a fan of the Antiochene exegete Theodore of Mopsuestia, and was also trying to recommend his own commentary on some Minor Prophets, so he is hardly an unbiassed critic. But Julian does say that the problem with Jerome's commentaries on the Prophets was that not only did Jerome eddy between allegory and midrash, he was also no good at sustaining the 'perquirenda consequentia', the *akolouthia* or logical coherence of the wording of Scripture.[81] Despite Jerome's own claim in *contra Rufinum* about offering different possibilities so that the reader could choose what seemed most coherent in sense (*conseqentius)*, his weighing up of all the options in such detail and complexity (as in the long passage on Hab 2:15-16) may have overloaded some readers, who may well have felt that both they and Jerome had 'lost the plot'.

Clearly Christian doctrine played a major role in Jerome's decision whether a particular rabbinic interpretation was a 'Hebrew tradition' or a 'Jewish fable'. Both could be of value to Jerome, either to understand better the meaning of the Hebrew

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'Commentaire sur Isaïe', who gives full explanations and examples of Jerome's use of terms such as *littera, historia, figura, tropologia, spiritus*. For the Jewish elements used in his *Commentary on Jeremiah*, see Graves, *Jerome's Hebrew Philology,* passim.

78. Kamesar, op. cit., p. 181.

79. Op. cit., p. 181.

80. Jerome, *Apol. c. Rufinum* I, 20 (ed. Lardet, p. 56, lines 13-16): 'Et uideres quanta silua sit apud Hebraeos ambiguorum nominum atque uerborum. Quae res diuersae interpretationi materiam praebuit, dum unusquisque inter dubia quod sibi *consequentius* videtur, hoc transfert.'

'Tu verrais tout ce maquis de noms et de verbes ambigus qu'il ya chez les Hébreux! C'est ce qui fournit matière à la divergence des traductions, tandis que chacun, entre des sens incertains, choisit celui qui lui paraît le plus cohérent.**'** (tr. Lardet). See also Graves, '"Judaizing" Interpretations', p. 1 and n. 1.

81. Julian of Eclanum, Prologue to *Tract. Hosea, Joel and Amos* (*Iuliani Aeclanensis Expositio libri Iob ; tractatus prophetarum Osee, Iohel et Amos*, ed. L. de Coninck and M.J. d'Hont, CCSL 88 (Brepols, Turnhout, 1977), p.116, lines 48–53; the context is Julian's recommendation of his own commentary and comparison of it with those of Origen, John Chrysostom and Jerome): 'Hieronymus porro, et ingenii capacis uir et studii pertinacis, in prophetarum quidem libros commenta digessit, sed quasi inter geminas traditiones ire contentus, de perquirenda consequentia nihil aut uoluit aut potuit sustinare curarum. Ita uel per allegorias Origenis uel per fabulosas Iudaeorum traditiones tota eius defluxit oratio.'

'Jerome is a man of great ability and steadfast application who has produced commentaries on the Prophets. However, as if satisfied with eddying between two traditions, he was neither willing nor able to maintain attention to the necessary coherence [i.e. the *akolouthia*]. Thus the whole of his discourse drifted through either Origen's allegories or the fictitious traditions of the Jews.'

text, or in promoting a specifically Christian reading of it in contradistinction to the alleged Jewish interpretation. Either way, one wonders how Jerome's Hebrew teachers would have reacted, had they understood what their pupil was doing with the traditions they passed on to him.