



**HAL**  
open science

# The Date and Provenance of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: The Evidence of Pirqe deRabbi Eliezer and the Chronicles of Moses

Gavin McDowell

► **To cite this version:**

Gavin McDowell. The Date and Provenance of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: The Evidence of Pirqe deRabbi Eliezer and the Chronicles of Moses. *Aramaic Studies*, 2021, 19 (1), pp.121 - 154. 10.1163/17455227-bja10018 . hal-03926966

**HAL Id: hal-03926966**

**<https://hal.science/hal-03926966>**

Submitted on 6 Jan 2023

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

# The Date and Provenance of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: The Evidence of Pirque deRabbi Eliezer and the Chronicles of Moses

*Gavin McDowell*

Université Laval, Québec, Canada  
*gavin.mcdowell.1@ulaval.ca*

## Abstract

The date of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan has been the occasion of much controversy, with propositions ranging from the Second Temple period to the time of the Crusades. Related to the Targum is the late midrashic work Pirque deRabbi Eliezer (eighth century), but the nature of this relationship is disputed. The present article proposes that the Targum depends unilaterally on PRE, based on two principal arguments: 1. PRE does not refer to common Targumic traditions in Pseudo-Jonathan; and 2. Pseudo-Jonathan uses sources that post-date PRE, namely the Chronicles of Moses, which was written around the eleventh century. The Targum's use of late sources places its redaction long after the conclusion of the first millennium. The author proposes a twelfth-century Italian origin, which corresponds to the earliest evidence for the Targum.

## Keywords

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan - Pirque deRabbi Eliezer - Chronicles of Moses - Chronicles of Jerahmeel - Sefer ha-Yashar

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The critical study of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan has always been linked to Pirque deRabbi Eliezer (PRE). Zunz, the first to date PRE correctly to the Islamic period, was also the first to note PRE's close connection to the Targum.<sup>2</sup> The relationship between the two works has also been a longstanding source of controversy. Both share a great deal of aggadic material, including a reference to Aisha and Fatima—the wife and daughter of Muhammad (TgPsJ to Gen. 21:21; PRE 30)—which places their final redaction after the rise of Islam. Despite this, the approach to dating the works varies considerably. The date of PRE is fixed. It is generally agreed to be a literary unity, the product of a specific place and time—eighth-century Palestine.<sup>3</sup> The Targum,

---

<sup>1</sup> Research for this article was funded from a grant provided by Fonds Gérard-Dion. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

<sup>2</sup> L. Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden* (Berlin: A. Asher, 1832) p. 275.

<sup>3</sup> For the date, see (most recently) K.E. Keim, *Pirquei DeRabbi Eliezer: Structure, Coherence, Intertextuality* (Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, 96, Leiden: Brill, 2017) pp. 40–43. For the unity of the composition, see J. Elbaum,

in contrast, has been dated anywhere from the Second Temple period to the Crusades, owing to the possibility that it, like other Targumim, evolved over time and that the ‘late references’ might be glosses. Herein lies the controversy on the relationship between the works: Does PRE depend on Pseudo-Jonathan, does Pseudo-Jonathan depend on PRE, or do both depend on common sources?

The relationship between the two works has significant implications for the study of Pseudo-Jonathan. Since both works share many unusual aggadic traditions, the Targum’s dependence on PRE, if proven, would provide the simplest explanation for much of Pseudo-Jonathan’s unique material relative to other Targumim. It would also change the parameters of the debate over the Targum’s genesis. If the Targum depends on PRE, rather than vice-versa, then PRE becomes the *terminus post quem* rather than the *terminus ante quem* for the final redaction of the Targum. The current consensus is that Targum Pseudo-Jonathan was completed in the early Islamic period, about the same time as PRE. This is not, however, the only option. If the Targum depends on PRE, then it could have been written any time after PRE. PRE is not even the latest source used by the Targum; its latest source is situated at the very end of the spectrum of proposed dates, in the epoch of the Crusades.

Previous scholarship on the relationship between Pseudo-Jonathan and PRE falls into two camps. In one camp are scholars who affirm that the Targum depends on PRE. Gerald Friedlander, who first translated PRE into English (in 1916), supported this view.<sup>4</sup> It is also the position of Grelot, Ohana, Levine, Splansky, Cook, Maher, and Shinan.<sup>5</sup> In some cases (Friedlander, Grelot, Levine, Maher), the priority of PRE is assumed without apology. The other cases cite parallels where the Targum can only be explained in light of PRE. Ohana, for example, writes that the reference to Aisha and Fatima (TgPsJ to Gen. 21:21) alludes to a longer story about Ishmael’s two wives. PRE 30 tells this story, but the Targum does not. Rather, Pseudo-Jonathan presupposes the story of PRE; otherwise, the reference to two wives makes little sense. Similarly, Splansky indicated that the TgPsJ to Gen. 1:16 corrects a calendrical error regarding the *molad* in PRE 7, and Cook found Hebraisms in two Targumic parallels. Shinan applied this method to several selected case studies.

In the other camp are scholars who argue against the priority of PRE. Although some claim that PRE consulted the Targum,<sup>6</sup> the prevailing view is that the two depend on common sources. Miguel Pérez Fernández listed 39 parallels between the Targum and PRE, but he also

---

‘Rhetoric, Motif and Subject-Matter—Toward an Analysis of Narrative Technique in Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer’, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 13–14 (1991), pp. 99–126.

<sup>4</sup> G. Friedlander, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* (New York: Hermon Press, reprint, 1970) p. xix.

<sup>5</sup> P. Grelot, ‘Les Targoums du Pentateuque: Étude comparative d’après Genèse IV,3-16’, *Semitica* 9 (1959), pp. 59–88 (88); M. Ohana, ‘La polémique judéo islamique et l’image d’Ismaël dans Targum Pseudo-Jonathan et dans Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer’, *Augustinianum* 15 (1975), pp. 367–387 (371–374); E. Levine, ‘Some Characteristics of Pseudo-Jonathan Targum to Genesis’, *Augustinianum* 11 (1971), pp. 89–103 (91); D. Splansky, ‘Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Its Relationship to other Targumim, Use of Midrashim, and Date’, (PhD diss., Hebrew Union College, Jewish Institute of Religion, 1981) pp. 100–105; E.M. Cook, ‘Rewriting the Bible: The Text and Language of the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum’ (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1986) pp. 242–243; M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis. Translated, with Introduction and Notes* (The Aramaic Bible, 1B, Collegeville, Minn: The Liturgical Press, 1992) p. 8; A. Shinan, ‘The Relationship between Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and Midrash Pirke De-Rabbi Eliezer’, *Teudah* 11 (1996), pp. 231–243; A. Shinan, *The Embroidered Targum: The Aggadah in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992) pp. 176–185.

<sup>6</sup> P.V.M. Flesher and B. Chilton, *The Targums: A Critical Introduction* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2011) p. 164: ‘Rather than indicating that Pseudo-Jonathan depends on PRE in the verse [Gen. 2:15], it must be that PRE drew from either Pseudo-Jonathan or one of the Palestinian Targums’.

outlined four cases where PRE may have employed the Targum.<sup>7</sup> He concluded that the priority of one over the other could not be established. Hayward came to a similar conclusion in ‘Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer and Targum Pseudo Jonathan’ (1991), which, somewhat ironically, is a systematic refutation of Pérez Fernández.<sup>8</sup> Hayward denied that there was even a close connection between the two works, since the traditions common to both can be found not only in rabbinic sources but in outside literature as well.

The major methodological flaw of Pérez Fernández’ approach is that he did not distinguish between common traditions in rabbinic literature and traditions unique to PRE. PRE is an unusual work that introduced many Christian, Muslim, and Second Temple traditions into rabbinic literature.<sup>9</sup> If Pseudo-Jonathan was produced in the same cultural environment, then it was subject to the same outside influences. In such cases, the use of common sources is credible. However, it becomes incredible when one considers the sheer number of parallels between PRE and Pseudo-Jonathan found nowhere else in Targum, Talmud, or Midrash. In my own research, I have found over fifty, many of which have close verbal correspondences. Parallels alone do not demonstrate the direction of dependence, but they do demonstrate affinity: One work has used the other.

The most natural way to prove the priority of PRE would be to study every instance in the Targum where dependence on PRE is the most logical explanation. Given the potential number of examples, this process would soon grow tedious. However, there is another method, a sort of *via negativa*, that arrives at the same conclusion without reviewing every parallel. This negative approach asks: What is in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan but *not* in Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer? If PRE depends on the Targum, one would expect regular reference to Targumic traditions taken from other sources. However, this is not the case. For example, even though PRE is credited with reviving ancient traditions pertaining to Enoch and the fallen angels within rabbinic literature, it does not identify Enoch with Metatron (cf. TgPsJ to Gen. 5:24), nor does it name Shemhazai and Azazel as the leaders of the Watchers (cf. TgPsJ to Gen. 6:4). Such traditions are known from ‘Minor Midrashim’ (3 Enoch; Midrash Shemhazai and Azazel) but not PRE. Even more surprising, PRE never refers to the long expansions common to the Palestinian Targumim, including Neofiti, the Fragment Targumim, the manuscripts of the Cairo Genizah, and, of course, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan itself. In other words, if Pseudo-Jonathan did not exist, we could not say that PRE knew the Targumic literature at all. Finally, the Targum draws on sources that are unknown to PRE because they were written later. In particular, the Minor Midrash known as the Chronicles of Moses has many points of contact with Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. It is also based on sources later than PRE, showing that Pseudo-Jonathan must postdate PRE. Furthermore, the form of the Chronicles represented in the Targum is not attested before the twelfth century, which is precisely when textual evidence for Pseudo-Jonathan first appears. The inescapable conclusion is that the Targum, as we know it, could not have been written before the twelfth century.

Others have arrived at a twelfth-century date for Targum Pseudo-Jonathan via different routes. Bernhardt pointed to the Targum’s rendition of Num. 24:24—in which Balaam prophesies that, in messianic times, soldiers coming from Italy, Constantinople, and

<sup>7</sup> M. Pérez Fernández, *Los Capítulos de Rabbí Eliezer* (Biblioteca Midrásica, 1, Valencia: Institución S. Jerónimo para la Investigación Bíblica, 1984) pp. 31–36.

<sup>8</sup> R. Hayward, ‘Pirque de Rabbi Eliezer and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan’, *JJS* 42 (1991), pp. 215–246.

<sup>9</sup> R. Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism, 140, Leiden: Brill, 2009) pp. 49–137; Keim, *Pirquei DeRabbi Eliezer*, pp. 141–196; G. McDowell, ‘L’histoire sainte dans l’Antiquité tardive : les *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliézer* et leur relation avec le *Livre des Jubilés* et la *Caverne des trésors*’ (PhD diss., École pratique des hautes études, 2017).

‘Lombarnia’ (למברנייא) will attack the Assyrians and enslave the children of Eber—as a reference to the Crusades.<sup>10</sup> According to Bernhardt, ‘Lombardia’ did not designate this region of Italy before the tenth century, but Cook indicated that the argument rests on flimsy textual evidence—the Targum does not say ‘Lombardia’ but ‘Lombarnia’.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Rieder, in the introduction to his edition of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan,<sup>12</sup> argued for a twelfth-century date based on the silence between Rashi (who does not mention a ‘Targum Yerushalmi’) and the Tosaphists (who do). Klein disapproved of this argument from silence and noted that Rashi’s contemporaries (e.g., Nathan b. Yehiel) knew a Palestinian Targum to the Torah.<sup>13</sup> Gottlieb has independently reached the same conclusion regarding the date of Pseudo-Jonathan based on different evidence: Readings unique to Pseudo-Jonathan are not attested prior to Menahem b. Solomon of Rome, who lived in the mid-twelfth century.<sup>14</sup>

A discussion of the date and provenance of Pseudo-Jonathan must necessarily begin with the available evidence, all of which is paltry, late, and geographically restricted to Italy. The first section of the article will briefly review this evidence. The second section addresses Pseudo-Jonathan’s relationship to PRE—again, not with reference to the many parallels between the two but with reference to what I call the ‘Palestinian Targum tradition’, the long aggadic additions common to the Palestinian Targumim but not found in PRE. The final section examines the Chronicles of Moses and its relationship to Pseudo-Jonathan. The form of the Chronicles used by the Targum was composed late enough that there are few options for the final redaction of the Targum apart from the twelfth century Italy.

## 1 The Evidence for Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is known from a single manuscript, British Museum Add. 27031. The manuscript bears the date of 1598 (though written earlier) and is transcribed in an Italian hand.<sup>15</sup> It has been identified as belonging to Samuel Cases of Mantua.<sup>16</sup> The Targum was first printed in Venice in 1591 by Asher Forins from a manuscript belonging to the Foa family of Reggio.<sup>17</sup> Azariah dei Rossi (d. 1578), a native of Mantua, knew both manuscripts and discussed them in his *magnum opus*, *Me’or Eynayim* (1573–1575).<sup>18</sup> He mentions earlier citations of the work by the Italian Kabbalist Menahem Recanati (fl. 13<sup>th</sup> c.), who draws on the Targum several times in his commentary on the Torah.<sup>19</sup> Elias Levita (d. 1549), who spent the

<sup>10</sup> K. Bernhardt, ‘Zu Eigenart und Alter der messianisch-eschatologischen Zusätze im Targum Jeruschalmi I’, in H. Bardtke et al. (eds.), *Gott und die Gotter: Festgabe für Erich Fascher zum 60. Geburtstag* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1958) pp. 68–83.

<sup>11</sup> Cook, ‘Rewriting the Bible’, pp. 33–34.

<sup>12</sup> D. Rieder, *Pseudo-Jonathan: Targum Jonathan ben Uziel on the Pentateuch* (Jerusalem: Salomon, 1974).

<sup>13</sup> M.L. Klein, ‘A New Edition of Pseudo-Jonathan’, *JBL* 94 (1975), pp. 277–279.

<sup>14</sup> L. Gottlieb, ‘Is Pseudo-Jonathan a European Targum?’, IOTS 9<sup>th</sup> International Meeting (10 July 2018).

<sup>15</sup> H. Barnstein, ‘A Noteworthy Targum MS. in the British Museum’, *JQR* 11 (1899), pp. 167–171 (169): ‘written in the peculiar and characteristic Italian hand’; E. Levine, ‘British Museum Aramaic Additional MS 27013’, *Manuscripta* 16 (1972), pp. 3–13 (3): ‘written in a characteristic Italian hand’.

<sup>16</sup> Azariah dei Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, trans. J. Weinberg (Yale Judaica Series, 31, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) p. 184, n. 13.

<sup>17</sup> Levine, ‘MS 27013’, p. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Azariah dei Rossi, *The Light of the Eyes*, pp. 183–184.

<sup>19</sup> Menahem Recanati, *Be’or al ha-Torah* (Venice, 1545) cites Jonathan ben Uzziel in his comments to Gen. 1:21; 2:3; 3:6; 4:1; 5:24; 6:4; 11:4; 27:25; 27:33; 28:17; Exod. 3:2; 12:29; 33:4; 33:23; 40:4; Lev. 9:2; Lev. 14:7; 16:4; Num. 14:17; 17:11; Deut. 21:8; 21:23; and 29:14.

second half of his life in Italy, also knew the work of Recanati, whom he quotes in the preface to the *Meturgeman* to prove that Jonathan b. Uzziel—and not only Onqelos—translated the Torah into Aramaic.<sup>20</sup> He does not appear to have known Targum Pseudo-Jonathan first-hand. It is difficult to find a citation of Pseudo-Jonathan prior to the work of Recanati. Nathan b. Yehiel of Rome (d. 1106) cites from the Palestinian Targumim numerous times in the *Aruk* (c. 1101), his dictionary of rabbinic literature, but the citations never include a passage exclusive to Pseudo-Jonathan.<sup>21</sup>

Flesher and Chilton, in their introduction to the Targumim, claim that the Palestinian Talmud knows Pseudo-Jonathan based on a Targumic citation found in two parallel passages (y. Ber. 5:3, 9c; y. Meg. 4:10, 75c).<sup>22</sup> The verse cited, Lev. 22:28, is one of the key texts in the discussion of the intersection between the Targumim and the New Testament.<sup>23</sup> The expansion of the Hebrew consists of two parts: 1) an invocation, ‘My people, sons of Israel’ (עמי בני ישראל), which is not only in Pseudo-Jonathan but also in Neofiti and in the Cairo Genizah (F); and 2) an added prescription, ‘As I am merciful in heaven, so shall you be merciful on earth’ (היכמא דאנא רחמן בשמיא כך תהוון רחמנין בארעא) (cf. Luke 6:36//Matt. 5:48), which appears only in the manuscript of Pseudo-Jonathan.<sup>24</sup>

In the Talmudic passages, R. Yose b. Rabbi Bun objects to the prescription (2). Since the invocation is found in several Targum manuscripts, but the controversial segment is not, there are grounds for suspecting that Neofiti and other Targumim have suppressed the passage and only Pseudo-Jonathan has retained it.<sup>25</sup> In this case, the reading is not exclusive to Pseudo-Jonathan. The evidence can be understood in other ways. Díez Macho, the editor of Neofiti, defends that Targum’s shorter reading as original and understands the longer reading as a corruption (*una corruptela*).<sup>26</sup> Still, it is impossible to know if the addition is original to Pseudo-Jonathan or if it belonged to one of its sources—either an earlier Targum or, frankly, the Palestinian Talmud itself.<sup>27</sup>

A better (though still problematic) candidate for the earliest evidence for Pseudo-Jonathan comes from the Sekel Ṭob of Menahem b. Solomon (ca. 1139),<sup>28</sup> who is believed to be of Italian origin due to several Italian loanwords in the work.<sup>29</sup> Sekel Ṭob is a midrashic compilation to the Pentateuch (extant from Genesis 15 to Exodus 11) drawing extensively on earlier works, including PRE.<sup>30</sup> Menahem b. Solomon also uses one or more Palestinian Targumim, cited as

<sup>20</sup> *Meturgemen* (Isny, 1541). He cites TgPsJ to Lev. 14:7 from Recanati.

<sup>21</sup> For a list of citations from the Targumim to the Torah (including Targum Onqelos), see Nathan b. Yehiel, *Aruk Completum*, ed. A. Kohut, 8 vols. (Vienna, 1878–1892) vol. 1, pp. 12–19.

<sup>22</sup> Flesher and Chilton, *The Targums*, pp. 136–138.

<sup>23</sup> M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 2nd ed.) pp. 133–138.

<sup>24</sup> The printed edition has ‘Our Father’ (אבונן) in place of ‘I’.

<sup>25</sup> So McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum*, pp. 137–138.

<sup>26</sup> Alejandro Díez Macho, *Neophyti 1: Targum Palestinense MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana*, Vol. 1. *Genesis* (Madrid-Barcelona: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones, 1968) p. \*63.

<sup>27</sup> As implied by A. Shinan, ‘Live Translation: On the Nature of the Aramaic Targums to the Pentateuch’, *Prooftexts* 3 (1983), pp. 41–49 (42): ‘It is worth noting that the express prohibition of the Yerushalmi did not prevent the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan from translating in violation of the interdiction’.

<sup>28</sup> Menahem b. Solomon, *Sechel Tob*, ed. S. Buber, 2 vols. (Berlin: H. Itzkowski, 1900).

<sup>29</sup> Listed in *Sechel Tob*, vol. 1, pp. x–xi.

<sup>30</sup> *Sechel Tob*, Vol. 1, pp. xxiv–xxxiii, lists: Targum Onqelos, Targum Yerushalmi to the Torah, Targum Jonathan to the Prophets, Targum Job and Targum Proverbs, Mishna, Tosefta, Mekilta deRabbi Ishmael, Sifra, Sifre, the Palestinian Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud, Genesis Rabba, Pesiqta deRab Kahana, Pirke deRabbi Eliezer, Sefer

either a translation of ‘the men of the Holy City’ (אנשי עיר הקודש) or, more directly, as ‘Targum Yerushalmi’. In general, the citations agree with the extant Palestinian Targumim, but in select cases they agree only with Pseudo-Jonathan (barring minor variations):<sup>31</sup>

1. *And he turned the faces of the flock towards the striped ones* (Gen. 30:40). Our teachers, men of the Holy City, translate: ‘And he placed at the head of the flock a leader’ (ויהב בריש ענא משכוכית).<sup>32</sup>

Pseudo-Jonathan: ויהב בריש ענא משכוכיתא

Neofiti: ושוי אפי ענה

Cairo Genizah (E): ושוי אפי ענה

2. *Behold, we were binding sheaves* (Gen. 37:7). These are bundles of wheat. Thus, Targum Onqelos has ‘binding sheaves’ (מאסרין אסרין) and the men of the Holy City translate: ‘binding sheaves’ (מפרכין פרוכין).<sup>33</sup>

Pseudo-Jonathan: מפרכין פירוכין

Neofiti: מכרכין כורכוון

Fragment Targum (P): מכרכין כרוכין

Fragment Targum (V): מ[כ]רכין כורכין

3. *And the flax was in bloom* (Exod. 9:31). That is to say, the cotton that was sown is collected within. Concerning the expression ‘in bloom’ (גבעול), there are a handful of occurrences in the words of our teachers, except that they oppose the words of our teachers from the Targum Yerushalmi, who translate in the Yerushalmi: ‘and the flax produced tufts’ (וכיתנא עבד פקולין).<sup>34</sup>

Pseudo-Jonathan: וכיתנא עבד פוקלין

Neofiti: וכתנה הוות גבעולין

Fragment Targum (V): וכיתנה הוות גבעולין

Cairo Genizah (D): וכיתנא הוה גבעולין

Menahem b. Solomon also refers to Palestinian Targumim in his Hebrew grammar *Eben Boḥan* (1143), but this work has not been published in full.<sup>35</sup> From the available examples, we can deduce a Palestinian Targum text that was similar but not identical to Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. Menahem does not cite the distinctive aggadic traditions from the Targum, nor does

---

ha-Yashar [n.b., not the aggadic work discussed below], Shimush Tefillin, Sheiltot, Halakot Gedolot, ‘books of the Geonim’, Eleazar Qillir, Hananel b. Ḥushiel, Isaac Alfasi, Menahem ibn Saruq, and Leqah Ṭob.

<sup>31</sup> Targumic citations come from the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon (<http://cal.huc.edu/>).

<sup>32</sup> *Sechel Tob*, vol. 1, p. 154.

<sup>33</sup> *Sechel Tob*, vol. 1, p. 215.

<sup>34</sup> *Sechel Tov*, vol. 2, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> *Sechel Tov*, vol. 1, p. xxv, n. 29, lists examples.

he cite a Targum to the Pentateuch under the name of Jonathan b. Uzziel. For him, Targum Jonathan only refers to the Targum to the Prophets.

Over the course of a few centuries, we can document the fortunes of Pseudo-Jonathan. In the eleventh century, the well-read Nathan b. Yehiel cites multiple Targumim but not Pseudo-Jonathan. In the twelfth century, Menahem b. Solomon cites a text similar to Pseudo-Jonathan but does not know the Targum by name and does not cite its aggadic traditions. In the thirteenth century, Menahem Recanati cites Pseudo-Jonathan by name, and his citations include many of its distinctive legendary flourishes. Between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries, a major change occurs in the Targum's history. Finally, in the sixteenth century, Azariah dei Rossi consults two manuscripts, one of which became the printed edition, while the other survived intact until the present. The late attestations are suggestive rather than determinative for the Targum's date, but it is of interest that all attestations of the Targum's existence are Italian. I will return to this observation at the end of this article.

## 2 Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

Unlike Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, the date of PRE is known with a fair degree of certainty. The apocalyptic coda to PRE 30 contains an unambiguous reference to the construction of the Dome of the Rock in 691–92 (ויבנו בנין בהיכל),<sup>36</sup> and Pirqoi ben Baboi, who lived around 800 CE, cites the opening lines of PRE 3.<sup>37</sup> These two data leave little room for a time of redaction other than the eighth century. The provenance of PRE is also uncontroversial owing to its invocation of specifically Palestinian customs. The best-known example is the Havdala ceremony described in PRE 20.<sup>38</sup> The author-redactor of PRE likely relied on Palestinian sources such as the Palestinian Talmud or Genesis Rabba, which have, for example, similar stories of the first Havdala (y. Ber. 8:5, 12b; Gen. R. 11:2). It would also be natural to assume PRE consulted a Palestinian Targum, but here there is a problem. The evidence that PRE used a Targum is wanting.

There are, of course, many parallels between PRE and the Palestinian Targumim, but such parallels are not exclusive to Targumic literature. They are also found in the classical rabbinic corpora of Talmud and Midrash, particularly Genesis Rabba. By means of illustration, PRE, Genesis Rabba, and (to pick one) Targum Neofiti all share the following common traditions: the Torah was created before the beginning of the world (PRE 3; Gen. R. 1:1; TgNeof to

<sup>36</sup> There is no critical edition of PRE. Following the studies of L.M. Barth, 'Is Every Medieval Hebrew Manuscript a New Composition? The Case of Pirqé Rabbi Eliezer', in M.L. Raphael (ed.), *Agendas for the Study of Midrash in the Twenty-First Century* (Williamsburg: College of William and Mary, 1999) pp. 43–62 (online at <<https://dornsife.usc.edu/pre-text-editing-project/midrash-study-agenda/>>) and E. Treitl, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer: Text, Redaction and a Sample Synopsis* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi 2012), I have taken as my point of reference the Yemenite manuscript JTS Enelow 866 (Treitl's 1ת), probably the *codex optimus*. Its text is available online (<<https://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/Pages/PMain.aspx?mishibbur=640000&page=1>>), as is Treitl's synopsis of all complete manuscripts (<<https://manuscripts.genizah.org/Global/home>> [under 'Mahadura']).

<sup>37</sup> L. Ginzberg, *Ginzei Schechter: Genizah Studies in Memory of Doctor Solomon Schechter*, 3 vols. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1928–1929) vol. 2, pp. 504–573 (543–44). For general information on Pirqoi's missive, see Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) pp. 113–117.

<sup>38</sup> Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed*, pp. 151–167; A. Kadari, 'Narrative and Normative: Havdalah in Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer', *JSQ* 21 (2014), pp. 136–152; A. Kadari, 'A Blessing and its Midrash: Liturgical Formulas as an Interpretive Key in Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer', in U. Erlich (ed.), *Jewish Prayer: New Perspectives* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2016) pp. 327–340.

Gen. 3:24); Abraham was thrown into a fiery furnace (PRE 26; Gen. R. 38:13; TgNeof to Gen. 11:28); Shem is Melchizedek (PRE 8; Gen. R. 44:7 and 56:10; TgNeof to Gen. 14:18); Abraham had a vision of Daniel's four kingdoms (PRE 28; Gen. R. 44:15; TgNeof to Gen. 15:11–12); the stones at Bethel miraculously become one (PRE 35; Gen. R. 68:11; TgNeof to Gen. 28:10); Joseph meets an angel *en route* to his brothers (PRE 38; Gen. R. 84:14; TgNeof to Gen. 37:15); Egyptian girls throw jewellery at Joseph to attract his attention (PRE 39; Gen. R. 98:18; TgNeof to Gen. 49:22). This is not to say that PRE preferred Genesis Rabba to a Palestinian Targum. Despite significant overlap between the two Hebrew works, I do not know a single passage in PRE where Genesis Rabba is appropriated *verbatim*.<sup>39</sup> Rather, the three works share a common background in late antique Palestinian Judaism.

The Palestinian Targumim to the Torah also have a stratum that is exclusive to Targumatic literature in the form of paragraph-length expansions of single verses. They are a common feature of Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti, and the Fragment Targumim, and they also circulated as *toseftot* to Targum Onqelos and independently in different kinds of manuscripts (e.g., liturgical collections). Many of these expansions (frequently speeches) are not found in Talmud or Midrash. They are also not found in PRE. Examples include the messianic prophecy attached to Gen. 3:15, Sarah's complaint in Gen. 16:5, Simeon and Levi's reply to Jacob in Gen. 34:31, Tamar's speech to Judah in Gen. 38:25; Judah's speech to Joseph in Gen. 44:18, the details of Jacob's funeral in Gen. 50:1, and the 'Poem of the Four Nights' in Exod. 12:42. In other words, any material that is distinctive to the Targumim is missing in PRE.

I have discovered one exception, but it is the exception that proves the rule. PRE 46 features a passage (ואני מעביר עליך את כל המלאכים המשרתים) with a close parallel in all the Palestinian Targumim (Pseudo-Jonathan, Neofiti, Fragment Targum P and V) to Exod. 33:23 (ואעבר ית כיתי מלאכיא דקימין ומשמשין קדמי).<sup>40</sup> PRE, however, attaches this tradition to Exod. 33:19, which is quoted as a proof-text immediately afterward. The form in PRE is original; the Targum is secondary. The tradition—that God's ministering angels would pass before Moses—is an interpretation of Exod. 33:19, where the words כל טובי, 'all my [God's] goodness', refers to the angels. In the Targumim, the tradition serves to hide anthropomorphisms in the Hebrew version of Exod. 33:23 (which refers, in a single verse, to God's hand, back, and face), but it is not actually translating any text. A marginal note in Neofiti confirms that the tradition belongs to Exod. 33:19. Wherever this note came from (a lost Targum? a scribal correction?), PRE did not receive the tradition from any extant Targum.

It appears that, for whatever reason, PRE did not consult a Targum—or, at least, not a Palestinian Targum to the Torah.<sup>41</sup> PRE only overlaps with the Palestinian Targumim in cases where the traditions are ubiquitous. It never draws on a tradition exclusive to Targumatic literature apart from the special material shared between PRE and Pseudo-Jonathan. To state the matter differently: Pseudo-Jonathan depends on the Palestinian Targum tradition, but PRE does not. In such a case it is hard to imagine that PRE drew from Pseudo-Jonathan.

<sup>39</sup> PRE rarely adopts passages wholesale from other compositions. The only example I know of is Abot deRabbi Nathan B, which supplies the text of PRE 1–2 and the second half of PRE 13.

<sup>40</sup> Neofiti has also introduced it into Exod. 33:22.

<sup>41</sup> The standard printed edition (Venice, 1544) does include a direct citation of the Babylonian Targum Onqelos in PRE 38 (citing Gen. 45:27), but it is not supported by the manuscript evidence and is an obvious gloss. Additionally, the story of Esther in PRE 49–50 overlaps with Targum Sheni to Esther, whose date (like Pseudo-Jonathan's) is a source of controversy. Whether Targum Sheni knew PRE or vice-versa requires an independent investigation, but it has no bearing on the date of Pseudo-Jonathan.

The key example appears in Gen. 4, which has been something of a crux in debates about the date of Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.<sup>42</sup> The longest Targumic expansion in this chapter is to Gen. 4:8, where Cain and Abel talk about the nature of the world. Cain denies the existence of providence and the afterlife, while Abel affirms both. The argument goes badly for Abel:

Cain said to his brother Abel: 'Come, let us both go to the field'. When the two of them had gone to the field, Cain spoke up and said to Abel: 'I perceive that the world was created with mercy, but it is not guided by the fruit of good deeds, and there is partiality in judgment, since your sacrifice was received with favour, but my sacrifice, for my part, was not received with favour'. Abel replied and said to Cain: 'The world was created with mercy, and it is guided according to the fruit of good deeds, and there is no partiality in judgment, and because the fruit of my deeds was better than yours and prior to yours, my sacrifice was accepted with favour'. Cain replied and said to Abel: 'There is no justice and no judge and no hereafter, and there is neither giving a good reward to the righteous nor meting out punishment to the wicked'. Abel responded and said to Cain: 'There is justice and a judge and a hereafter, and there is both giving a good reward to the righteous and meting out punishment to the wicked'. While they were quarrelling about these matters in the open field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel. **The stone sank into his forehead (וטבע אבנא במיצחיה)** and killed him.

Except for the words in bold, this paragraph-length insertion into Gen. 4:8 is found in Neofiti and the other Palestinian Targumim. The sentence in bold is unique to Pseudo-Jonathan but has a close parallel in PRE 21. Here is how the Hebrew work interprets the same verse:

R. Zadok says: Great hatred entered the heart of Cain because of his brother Abel and because his offering had been accepted. Not only this but also Abel's twin sister was the most beautiful of all women, and he coveted her. He said to himself, 'I will kill my brother Abel and take his twin sister from him', as it is written, *And when they were in the field, Cain rose up* (Gen. 4:8). There is no field. Rather, this is a woman who has been likened to a field. **He took the stone, and it sank into the forehead of Abel (לקח את האבן וטבעה במצחו של הבל)** and killed him, as it is written, *And Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him* (Gen. 4:8).

In these two passages, we see an extraordinary contrast between the Targum's extended expansion of Gen. 4:8 and the briefer treatment in PRE. Only the very end of the Targumic expansion is paralleled in PRE, while the Targum, at least, contains a relic of the explanation for Cain's wrath in PRE (that is, a dispute over their twin sisters: see TgPsJ to Gen. 4:2). The full dialogue between Cain and Abel—found in all Palestinian Targumim (with variations), including Cairo Genizah manuscripts (B, I, X, FF)—is missing in PRE. Only Pseudo-Jonathan has added the manner of Abel's death to the shared Targumic tradition.

<sup>42</sup> E.g., Grelot, 'Les Targoums du Pentateuque'; G.J. Kuiper, 'Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: A study of Genesis 4: 7–10, 16', *Augustinianum* 10 (1970), pp. 533-570; G. Vermes, 'The Targumic Versions of Genesis 4:3–16', in *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity, 8, Leiden: Brill, 1975) pp. 92-126; B. Chilton, 'A Comparative Study of Synoptic Development: The Dispute between Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums and the Beelzebul Controversy in the Gospels', *JBL* 101 (1982), pp. 553–562; J.M. Bassler, 'Cain and Abel in the Palestinian Targums: A Brief Note on an Old Controversy', *JSJ* 17 (1986), pp. 56–64.

The three short words **במיצחיה אבנא וטבע** seem unremarkable at first glance. After all, the supposition that Cain used a stone as the first murder weapon is as old as the book of Jubilees (2<sup>nd</sup> c. BCE). It is also in Genesis Rabba, Midrash Tanḥuma, and elsewhere in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim tradition. It is not the content of the tradition but the form, the words themselves, that distinguishes the parallel. Specifically, the rendering of Pseudo-Jonathan uses the same vocabulary as PRE. The word **מצח** is a Hebraism.<sup>43</sup> It is also a *hapax legomenon*, certainly within this Targum and perhaps in all Targumic literature.<sup>44</sup> The intransitive verb **טבע** is also unusual. It diverts agency from Cain, as if the stone decided to implant itself in Abel's forehead of its own volition.

The parallel could scarcely have been a coincidence. A common source is possible, especially since the tradition itself is widespread. The formulation of the tradition in PRE and Pseudo-Jonathan, however, is quite different from the way it appears in other sources:

**TgPsJ to Gen. 4:8:** The stone sank into his forehead (**וטבע אבנא במיצחיה**).

**PRE 21:** He took the stone, and it sank into the forehead of Abel ( **ולקח את האבן וטבעה** ) (במצחו של הבל).

**Jubilees 4:31:** He put Abel to death with a stone (**באבן המית את הבל**).<sup>45</sup>

**Genesis Rabba 22:8:** He killed him with a stone (**באבן הרגו**).<sup>46</sup>

**Midrash Tanḥuma, Bereshit 9:** With a stone he wounded and bruised him in his hands and in his legs—because he did not know from where his soul would depart—until he reached the neck ( **עשה לו פציעות פציעות חבורות חבורות באבן בידיו וברגליו שלא היה יודע** ) (מהיכן נשמתו יוצאת עד שהגיע לצוארו).<sup>47</sup>

The most likely common source is 1 Sam. 17:49 (from the story of David and Goliath), which uses the same vocabulary and has the exact equivalent of the phrase in Pseudo-Jonathan (**ותטבע האבן במצחו**). The biblical phrase might be the source for one of the works, but it is improbable that both are reliant on this verse. Such a coincidence would require that two writers independently:

1. decided that Cain killed Abel with a stone (common, but Gen. R. lists many other possibilities);
2. believed that Cain hit Abel in the forehead (only Midrash Tanḥuma even specifies a body part—and it does not mention the forehead);

<sup>43</sup> Cook, 'Rewriting the Bible', p. 242.

<sup>44</sup> It is the only example given in the dictionaries of M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli, and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (2 vols.; London: Luzac & Co., 1903) vol. 2, p. 825; J. Levy, *Chaldäisches Wörterbuch über die Targumim und einen grossen Theil der rabbinischen Schrifttums* (2 vols.; Leipzig: Gustav Engel, 1867) vol. 2, p. 61; and in the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon.

<sup>45</sup> C. Werman, *The Book of Jubilees: Introduction, Translation, and Interpretation* (Between Bible and Mishnah, Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi Press, 2015) p. 197. This is a 'retroversion' of the Ethiopic text, which reads: **በእግሩ: ቀተሎ: ለእቤል**. See J.C. Vanderkam, *The Book of Jubilees. A Critical Text* (CSCO, 510-511; Leuven: Peeters, 1989) vol. 1, p. 28.

<sup>46</sup> J. Theodor and Ch. Albeck, *Midrash Bereshit Rabba: Critical Edition with Notes and Commentary* (3 vols.; Jerusalem: Wahrman Books, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 1965) vol. 1, p. 214.

<sup>47</sup> *Midrash Tanḥuma* (2 vols.; Vilna, 1833) vol. 1, p. 9b.

3. felt that the context necessitated a biblical allusion (the other examples simply report the fact); and
4. selected a verse that counter-intuitively places Abel in the role of Goliath.

Furthermore, in light of the significant amount of material already shared between PRE and the Targum, direct dependence—where one work found the biblical allusion already embedded (so to speak) in its new context—still seems more probable.

Although Pseudo-Jonathan's rendition more closely resembles the biblical phrase, it is unlikely that PRE used the Targum. This would require that the author-redactor of PRE scanned the Targum, ignored the dispute between Cain and Abel—which does not appear in rabbinic literature—and opted instead for the common tradition that Cain killed Abel with a stone. It is much more likely that Pseudo-Jonathan filled in a common detail from PRE that, for some reason, was missing from Targumic literature. If the Targumist knew this one detail from PRE, then PRE is potentially the source for all the other parallels between the two works.

It might seem absurd to claim that PRE's sources did not include a Targum, especially when the work is tied to the synagogue in other ways. The author-redactor drew on piyyut, especially the poems of his near-contemporary R. Pinhas ha-Cohen,<sup>48</sup> and PRE 26–31 either adapted—or inspired—a homily for Rosh Ha-Shana on the ten trials of Abraham.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, a rabbinic scholar would be expected to know Aramaic in order to study the Talmud. According to Friedlander, however, PRE never cites the Babylonian Talmud.<sup>50</sup> Sacks goes even further and suggests that the author did not know Aramaic at all.<sup>51</sup> Given the evidence, the most that can be said is that the author of PRE did not *use* (as opposed to did not *know*) a Targum to the Torah. This choice might reflect the decline of Aramaic as a spoken dialect. This is the very reason that Pseudo-Jonathan is rarely dated much later than the eighth century, even by those who support the priority of PRE. As Mikva notes, *responsa* from the Geonic period complain of the neglect of Aramaic in the synagogue in favour of the new vernacular, Arabic. In Europe, however, the tradition of reciting Targum was maintained and even further expanded with new material. According to Mikva, the need to supplement the Targum with its own explanation led to the creation of the Minor Midrashim.<sup>52</sup> One of these Minor Midrashim, the Chronicles of Moses, is a fine example of the intersection of Targum and Midrash, although it exhibits the opposite relationship: A Targum dependent on Midrash.

### 3 The Chronicles of Moses and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan

<sup>48</sup> Sh. Elizur, *The Liturgical Poems of Rabbi Pinhas ha-Kohen* (Jerusalem: David Moses and Amalia Rosen Foundation, 2004) pp. 201–202; Treitl, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*, pp. 256–266.

<sup>49</sup> L.M. Barth, 'Lecture for the Second Day of Rosh Hashanah: A Homily Containing the Legend of the Ten Trials of Abraham', *HUCA* 58 (1987), pp. 1–48.

<sup>50</sup> Friedlander, *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer*, p. xix: 'Equally remarkable is the fact that the direct quotations from the Talmud are to be found in the Palestinian Talmud only'. Strictly speaking, PRE quotes neither Talmud, although it has much in common with both.

<sup>51</sup> S.D. Sacks, *Midrash and Multiplicity: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Renewal of Rabbinic Interpretive Culture* (Studia Judaica, 48, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009) p. 87: 'Any assumption that Aramaic is the natural language of PRE cannot be maintained, since the incoherence of this example [a statement in PRE 32 that Solomon's name שלמה is derived from Aramaic שלמא] introduces the possibility that use, or even understanding, of Aramaic cannot be central to the identity of the work'.

<sup>52</sup> R.S. Mikva, 'Midrash in the Synagogue and the Attenuation of Targum', *JSQ* 18 (2011), pp. 319–342 (337): 'In France, Germany and Italy c. 1250 to c. 1500, it appears they fashioned midrashim to accompany the Targum which became integrated into oral Torah explication'.

The introduction posed the question: What is in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan but *not* in PRE? The first response is, surprisingly, the special traditions common to all Palestinian Targumim to the Torah, including Pseudo-Jonathan. The reason for this lacuna in PRE is unclear, but it might be attributed to the decline of Aramaic as a vernacular. The second response to this question is the Chronicles of Moses (דברי הימים של משה רבינו), a legendary life of the prophet from his birth to the giving of the Torah written in pseudo-biblical Hebrew.<sup>53</sup> The reason PRE does not know the Chronicles is that, in the eighth century, it had not yet been written. If Pseudo-Jonathan used the Chronicles as a source, it must postdate PRE. The date of the Chronicles provides additional clues to the date of the Targum. Making sense of the Chronicles' relationship to the Targum means, first of all, determining when the work was initially written. Second, since the Chronicles of Moses exists in more than one version, this second version needs to be dated as well. Only then can we compare the Chronicles to the Targum and draw any conclusions from their relationship.

### 3.1 *The Date of the Chronicles of Moses*

The Chronicles of Moses is first cited in the *Aruk* of Nathan b. Yehiel, the same Nathan b. Yehiel who knew several Targumim but not Pseudo-Jonathan. The citation in the *Aruk* (completed c. 1101) provides a firm *terminus ante quem* for the Chronicles.<sup>54</sup> The *terminus post quem* is trickier. Flusser noted a parallel between the Chronicles and Sefer Yosippon, the Hebrew adaptation of Josephus written in tenth-century Italy. In both works, a biblical hero (Moses in the Chronicles; Daniel in Yosippon) tames lions who are then described as becoming like dogs greeting their masters upon returning from the field.<sup>55</sup> The parallel, based on a cliché and appearing in two different contexts, is insufficient to establish a date for the Chronicles.

Ironically, the Chronicles of Moses is best known for reviving traditions about the life of young Moses from the authentic works of Josephus, including the prophecy of Moses' birth (*Ant.* II.205–209), Moses' portentous handling of Pharaoh's crown (*Ant.* II.232–236), and Moses' military campaign against Ethiopia (*Ant.* II.238–253). All three are in the Chronicles, but Sefer Yosippon passes over the life of Moses completely. Still, the first two traditions had already re-entered Jewish literature before the redaction of the Chronicles. These earlier sources give a more concrete basis for establishing a date.

The prophecy by Pharaoh's magicians of Moses' birth is already in the Babylonian Talmud (b. Soṭa 12b) as part of a sequence of stories about Moses' infancy (11a–14a). As it happens, the version of the story in the Talmud, where Pharaoh's magicians foresee a Hebrew hero who will be punished by water, differs considerably from the version in the Chronicles, where Pharaoh has a disturbing dream in need of interpretation. Despite this, the Chronicles has much in common with the Talmudic narratives, including the story of the three counsellors (Balaam, Jethro, Job) who advise Pharaoh on the matter of the Hebrews (b. Soṭa 11a),<sup>56</sup> God's providential care for the infants thrown into the Nile (b. Soṭa 11b),<sup>57</sup> and Amram's attempt to divorce his wife, for which he is rebuked by his daughter (b. Soṭa 12a).<sup>58</sup> Similar material is

<sup>53</sup> For the *editio princeps* (Constantinople, 1516), see A. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash: Sammlung kleiner Midraschim und vermischter Abhandlungen aus der ältern jüdischen Literatur*, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1853–1877) Vol. 2, pp. 1–11.

<sup>54</sup> B. Yehiel, *Aruch Completum*, vol. 1, p. 43, on the etymology of 'Aaron' (Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 2, p. 2).

<sup>55</sup> D. Flusser, *The Josippon (Josephus Gorionides): Edited with an Introduction, Commentary, and Notes*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1978) vol. 2, pp. 151–152.

<sup>56</sup> Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 2, p. 4.

<sup>57</sup> Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 2, pp. 1–2.

<sup>58</sup> Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 2, p. 2.

recounted in PRE 48, but the Chronicles hews more closely to the Talmud. Even though the Chronicles of Moses does not reproduce the Talmud's version of the prophecy, the author probably knew the motif from this source.

The second Josephan narrative, the story of Pharaoh's crown, reappears in the standard edition of Midrash Tanḥuma (*Shemot* 8): Moses, as a young child, takes the crown of Pharaoh and casts it to the ground. The same midrash also refers to a peculiar tradition not in Josephus, where Moses is condemned to death for having slain the Egyptian but escapes when the executioner and other witnesses are miraculously rendered deaf, dumb, and blind (*Shemot* 10). Longer versions of both stories are in the Chronicles.<sup>59</sup> The Chronicles' links with Midrash Tanḥuma are important because the same midrash lifts entire passages from PRE, including the description of the Teraphim (PRE 36; *vaYeše* 12), a discourse on the ban (חרם) in PRE 38 (*vaYesheb* 2), and the story of Jonah in PRE 10 (*vaYiqra* 8). The Tanḥuma literature is quite complex, with roots in the Byzantine period, but the standard edition of Midrash Tanḥuma has no special claim to antiquity. It includes excerpts from the Sheiltot of R. Ahai Gaon (e.g., *Bereshit* 2–3), a work that is roughly contemporaneous with PRE (ca. 750). Another indicator of the secondary nature of the insertions from PRE in Midrash Tanḥuma is their absence from the 'Buber' edition. The two editions of Midrash Tanḥuma differ considerably regarding Genesis and Exodus but converge for the rest of the Torah, including Leviticus, where the excerpt from PRE 10 appears—but only in the standard edition.

The Chronicles therefore combines elements of the Talmud and Midrash Tanḥuma, but it is not the first work to do so. Exodus Rabba I (10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> centuries),<sup>60</sup> a 'satellite work' in the Tanḥuma nexus that, according to Bregman, directly uses both the standard edition of Midrash Tanḥuma and the Babylonian Talmud,<sup>61</sup> appears to have directly influenced the Chronicles of Moses. The first chapter of Exodus Rabba contains the same details from b. Soṭa that are in the Chronicles of Moses: the three counsellors (1:9), God's providential care for the children (1:12), and the reunion of Amram with his wife (1:19). Exodus Rabba also features the two Tanḥuma traditions—the story of the crown (1:26) and Moses' near-execution (1:31)—in forms that more closely resemble the versions in the Chronicles of Moses. For example, when Moses places Pharaoh's crown on his own head in Exodus Rabba, the Egyptian courtiers test the child by offering him either a piece of jewellery or a fiery coal. This is also the story in the Chronicles, but in Midrash Tanḥuma (as in Josephus), Moses throws the crown to the ground, and there is no subsequent test. If the Chronicles knew Exodus Rabba I, then its own redaction falls between the composition of Exodus Rabba I and the *Aruk*—not earlier than the tenth century but not later than the eleventh.

### 3.2 *The Two Versions of the Chronicles of Moses*

Further complicating matters, the Chronicles of Moses survives in two distinct versions. So far, I have discussed the shorter, standard version, which has been printed several times since the sixteenth century (Constantinople, 1516; Venice, 1544; Paris, 1629; etc.). The long version is fully preserved in a unique manuscript (ca. 1325) called the Book of Memory (ספר הזכרונות) by

<sup>59</sup> Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 2, pp. 3–4, 5

<sup>60</sup> The critical edition is A. Shinan, *Midrash Shemot Rabbah, Chapters I–XIV* (Jerusalem: Dvir, 1984).

<sup>61</sup> M. Bregman, *The Tanhuma-Yelammedenu Literature: Studies in the Evolution of the Versions* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003) pp. 169–172.

its compiler, Eleazar b. Asher ha-Levi.<sup>62</sup> It is also the version of the Chronicles cited in Yalqut Shim'oni (e.g., *Shemot* §164–168, 176). The Church Slavonic translation that was inserted into the Great Menaion and the *Palaea Interpretata* is also based on this long version.<sup>63</sup> Although the full Hebrew text of the long version was not published before the last century, it was not unknown and, arguably, more influential than its shorter counterpart.

Despite this, our primary source of information about the long version is the Book of Memory. The first and most substantial part of this manuscript is an account of biblical and Second Temple history written by Jerahmeel b. Solomon, hence its alternative title, the Chronicles of Jerahmeel. Jerahmeel lived in the twelfth century. He cites Rashi (d. 1105) and Rashbam (d. 1158) in his other works.<sup>64</sup> In the chronicles, he mentions Abraham ibn Ezra (d. 1167).<sup>65</sup> In turn, he is quoted by authors from the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>66</sup>

The Chronicles of Moses is only one of several works that Jerahmeel employed to build his history. The account of the Hexameron is drawn from PRE 3–9. In addition to the Chronicles of Moses, several other 'Minor Midrashim' appear as chapters within the work. These include Midrash Shemhazai and Azael, Ma'aseh Abraham, and Midrash vaYissa'u. Jerahmeel also translated portions of some Latin works such as Pseudo-Philo's *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*<sup>67</sup> and even the *Historia Scholastica* of Peter Comestor (d. 1178).<sup>68</sup> The last part of Jerahmeel's chronicle is a version of Sefer Yosippon.<sup>69</sup> The Book of Memory contains many other shorter pieces following Sefer Yosippon, but it is uncertain how much is part of Jerahmeel's original work.

The contours of Jerahmeel's chronicle are known because he occasionally inserts his own editorial comments, which Eleazar b. Asher preserved in the Book of Memory. One of these introduces the Chronicles of Moses: 'Jerahmeel. The Book of Generations is finished. I will now begin the Chronicles of Moses our Teacher' (ירחמאל. נשלם ספר תולדות. אתחיל דברי הימים דמשה). The comment demonstrates that the Chronicles was part of the original plan of the work.<sup>70</sup> However, the Chronicles does not begin immediately but is prefaced by a somewhat

<sup>62</sup> E. Yassif (ed.), *The Book of Memory, that is The Chronicles of Jerahmeel: A Critical Edition* (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University, 2001) pp. 158–172. This version of the Chronicles of Moses was previously published by A. Shinan, 'The Chronicles of Moses our Teacher', *HaSifrut* 24 (1977), pp. 100–116.

<sup>63</sup> See M. Taube, 'Jewish-Christian Collaboration in Medieval Slavic Translations from Hebrew', in V. Izmirlieva and B. Gasparov (eds.), *Translation and Tradition in 'Slavia Orthodoxa'* (Slavische Sprachgeschichte, 5, Berlin: LitVerlag, 2012) pp. 26–45. For a translation, see N. Bonwetsch, 'Die Mosessage in der slavischen kirchlichen Literatur', in *Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen: Philologisch-historische Klasse* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1908) pp. 581–607.

<sup>64</sup> A. Neubauer, 'Yerahmeel ben Shelomoh', *JQR* 11 (1899), pp. 364–386.

<sup>65</sup> Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, p. 88.

<sup>66</sup> Neubauer, 'Yerahmeel Ben Shelomoh', p. 368 (Abraham b. Azriel).

<sup>67</sup> See D.J. Harrington, *The Hebrew Fragments of Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum Preserved in the Chronicles of Jerahmeel* (Texts and Translations Pseudepigrapha Series, 3, Missoula, MO: SBL, 1974).

<sup>68</sup> M. Gaster, *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel; or, The Hebrew Bible Historiale* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1899) pp. lviii–cvi, notes the parallels between the Chronicles of Jerahmeel and the *Historia Scholastica*. Gaster thought that Comestor used Jerahmeel (which he, typically, believed to be an ancient chronicle), but Comestor did not know Hebrew, while Jerahmeel certainly knew Latin (since he translated *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*).

<sup>69</sup> J. Reiner, 'The Original Hebrew Yosippon in the Chronicle of Jerahmeel', *JQR* 60 (1969), pp. 128–146.

<sup>70</sup> Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, p. 153. On, pp. 23–31, Yassif attributes the first sentence to Jerahmeel but the second to Eleazar b. Asher. In other words, he does not believe that the Chronicles of Moses was part of the Chronicles of Jerahmeel. I do not know what compels this reading. I have difficulty believing that Jerahmeel would have written a history of the biblical period but deliberately leave out the story of Moses.

redundant prologue taken from diverse sources, including a paragraph from the *Historia Scholastica* (PL 198:1143).<sup>71</sup>

Jerahmeel's *Chronicles of Moses*, when it finally begins, closely follows the standard version. It retains the same three extrabiblical traditions best known from Josephus (the prophecy, the crown, the Ethiopian campaign) and, with one exception, follows the same sequence of events. Many of the differences are cosmetic, even arbitrary. For example, the standard version prefers the name 'Jethro' for Moses' father-in-law, but Jerahmeel's version consistently uses 'Reuel'. Similarly, the Egyptian court magician Mamres becomes Jambres, and the Ethiopian king Niqanos (ניקנוס) becomes Qinqanos (קינקנוס). Balaam, identified with the son of Laban in the standard version (cf. b. Sanh. 105a), is Laban himself in Jerahmeel (TgPsJ to Num. 22:5, 31:8; Tanhuma *vaYeše* 13). The chronology is also different. Moses arrives in Ethiopia at age thirty in the standard version, but at age eighteen in Jerahmeel. In the standard version, Jethro imprisons Moses for seven years, but in Jerahmeel Reuel imprisons Moses for ten years. Finally, Jerahmeel lengthens speeches and adds explanations, such as why Jethro/Reuel possesses a magical staff in his garden. For this reason, I refer to the standard edition as the 'short' version and Jerahmeel's text as the 'long' version.

The most substantial change involves the debate among Pharaoh's three counsellors (Balaam, Job, Jethro/Reuel) regarding the proliferation of Israelites (cf. b. Soṭa 11a). In the short version, it appears between the story of Pharaoh's crown and Moses killing the Egyptian. In the long version, it is inserted as a flashback after the Ethiopian campaign, when Balaam and his sons are driven from the country. It is introduced with the following words: 'These are the magicians and sorcerers that are written about in Sefer ha-Yashar, who counselled Pharaoh to wipe out the name of Jacob from the face of the earth' (המה החרטומים המכשפים) (הכתובים בספר הישר היועצים את פרעה לאבד שם יעקב מעל פני האדמה).<sup>72</sup> The digression stops the narrative while the speeches of Pharaoh's counsellors are given in full.

The long passage that follows indeed comes from the work known as *Sefer ha-Yashar*.<sup>73</sup> The citation has not always been recognised due to a difference of opinion on the date of this book, which has not survived in manuscript. *Sefer ha-Yashar* is a biblical history from creation to the conquest of Canaan written in pseudo-biblical Hebrew. Like the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, it employs a panoply of sources, but they are much better integrated into the main narrative. Among these sources are late works such as the *Chronicles of Moses* and *Sefer Yosippon*, meaning that *Sefer ha-Yashar* could not have been written before the eleventh century. According to Dan, *Sefer ha-Yashar* was composed even later. Owing to a fictitious prologue tracing the work from its retrieval from the Second Temple to its arrival, via Spain,

<sup>71</sup> D. Barbu, 'Variations sur le veau d'or: Apis, Sarapis, et un taureau volant', in D. Barbu et al. (eds.), *Le savoir des religions. Fragments d'historiographie religieuse* (Asdiwal Supplements, 2, Gollion: Infolio, 2014) pp. 411–442 (431): 'Les similarités avec le texte de Petrus Comestor sont évidentes [...] L'on serait tenté de penser que le texte préservé dans le manuscrit d'Éléazar ben Asher dépend en fait directement de l'*Historia scholastica*'. However, despite noting the absence of any parallel to Comestor's tradition (p. 423), he opts for a common source.

<sup>72</sup> Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, p. 164.

<sup>73</sup> Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, pp 164–165 (from רעואל to ויען רעואל). For the corresponding text in *Sefer ha-Yashar*, see J. Dan, *Sefer Hayashar: Edited with Introduction* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2nd ed., 2005) pp. 284–286. The speech of Reuel is, significantly, the mirror image of a speech Balaam gives when he counsels Pharaoh to kill the child Moses during the crown affair. This speech does not appear in the shorter *Chronicles of Moses*.

in sixteenth-century Naples, Dan argued that it was not written much earlier than the *editio princeps* (Venice, 1625).<sup>74</sup> This is undoubtedly true of the prologue but not of the work itself.

The reference to Sefer ha-Yashar in the Chronicles of Jerahmeel has not gone unnoticed, but it has been explained away. Poorthuis, for example, has argued that it is ‘a poetic reference to the Torah’.<sup>75</sup> The merit of this argument is that the term ‘Sefer ha-Yashar’ is certainly used this way in rabbinic literature. The title comes from the Hebrew Bible (Josh. 10:13; 2 Sam. 1:18) and refers to a lost book of uncertain contents. The rabbis, abhorring a vacuum, applied the title to all or parts of the Torah (b. ‘Abod. Zar. 25a). An example of this usage appears at the very end of both versions of the Chronicles of Moses, where the narrator rhetorically asks whether the rest of Moses’ life is recorded in Sefer ha-Yashar.<sup>76</sup> The first reference to Sefer ha-Yashar in the longer Chronicles of Moses, however, cannot be a poetic reference to the Torah.<sup>77</sup> The story of Pharaoh’s counsellors does not come from the Torah. It comes from Sefer ha-Yashar, as do all the other differences between the long and short versions of the Chronicles of Moses—the new chronology, the longer speeches, the different names, and so on.

Jerahmeel’s Chronicles of Moses, then, is an adaptation of the standard version based directly on Sefer ha-Yashar. If Jerahmeel b. Solomon did not write this new version himself, it must have come into being between the composition of Sefer ha-Yashar (not before the eleventh century—but after the shorter Chronicles of Moses) and the Chronicles of Jerahmeel (second half of the twelfth century), that is, around 1050–1150 CE.

### 3.3 *Pseudo-Jonathan’s Use of the Chronicles of Moses*

We finally arrive at the traditions shared between the Chronicles of Moses and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. The Chronicles, as mentioned above, is distinguished by its use of Second Temple traditions which, however, reappear in new forms. These traditions are the ones also found in the Targum. They include the prophecy of Moses’ birth, the names of the court magicians (Jannes and Jambres), and the Ethiopian campaign. In each of these cases, the Targum follows the unique form in the Chronicles rather than other extrabiblical sources about Moses. Two other traditions, involving Moses’ rod and the death of Balaam, indicate that the Targumist specifically followed the long version of the Chronicles.

#### 3.3.1 Pharaoh’s Dream

The first tradition concerns the prophecy of Moses’ birth. According to Josephus, an Egyptian scribe predicted the birth of a saviour who would redeem the Hebrew people. Pharaoh decreed the killing of the Hebrew children in response to this prophecy (*Ant.* II.205-209). A variation of the tradition is found in the Babylonian Talmud, where the court magicians foresee that a future saviour will be punished by water. Hence, they recommend throwing the Hebrew children into the Nile (b. *Soṭa* 12b). Similarly, in PRE 48, the court magicians foresee the birth of Moses, and Pharaoh enslaves the Hebrew people after he fails to prevent Moses’

<sup>74</sup> J. Dan, ‘When Was Sefer Ha-Yashar Written?’, in S. Werses, N. Rotenstreich, and Ch. Shmeruk (eds.), *Sefer Dov Sadan* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1977) pp. 105–110. See also Dan, *Sefer ha-Yashar*, pp. 7–17.

<sup>75</sup> M. Poorthuis, ‘Moses’ Rod in Zipporah’s Garden’, in A. Houtman, M. Poorthuis, and J. Schwartz (eds.), *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity* (Jewish and Christian Perspectives Series, 1, Leiden: Brill, 1998) pp. 231–264 (262, n. 44).

<sup>76</sup> Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 2, p. 11; Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, p. 172.

<sup>77</sup> In fact, the passage in Jerahmeel directly adapts a parallel passage in Sefer ha-Yashar (J. Dan, p. 297), which does refer to *Sefer ha-Torah*, but the context is different. The magicians in Ethiopia are said to be the magicians Moses later encountered in Egypt, as found in the Torah.

birth. Christian and Muslim sources also report that Pharaoh's counsellors foresaw the birth of a future saviour.<sup>78</sup>

Neither version of the Chronicles follows these older accounts. They add a dream—an inessential and, in fact, uncommon detail—which prompts Pharaoh's courtiers to predict the birth of Moses. The story begins when Pharaoh dreams that an elderly man weighs the inhabitants of Egypt in the balance against a single lamb (טלה). His courtiers suggest that the dream is an omen of evil to come. Pharaoh then commands the slaughter of the male infants. The details of the dream, namely the image of the scales and the lamb (טליא) weighed in the balance, are repeated in the Targum:

**Chronicles of Moses (Long Version):** In the one hundred and thirtieth year since Israel went down to Egypt, Pharaoh dreamed, and—behold—he was sitting on the throne of his kingdom, and he looked up and saw an old man standing opposite him, and in his hand were scales like the scales of merchants. The old man took the scales and dangled them before Pharaoh. He took all the elders of Egypt and its princes and all its magnates and bound them and placed them together in one balance of the scales. After this, he took a suckling lamb (טלה) and placed him in the second balance of the scales. The lamb weighed down all of them. Pharaoh was astounded at this terrifying vision. Why did the lamb outweigh all of them? Pharaoh awoke, and—behold—it was a dream!<sup>79</sup>

**Pseudo-Jonathan (Exod. 1:15):** Pharaoh said: [While] he was sleeping, he saw in his dream all the land of Egypt standing in the balance of one scale, and a lamb (טליא), the offspring [of an ewe]<sup>80</sup> in the balance of the other scale, and the balance of the scale with the lamb in it weighed down. Immediately Pharaoh summoned all the magicians of Egypt and repeated to them his dream. Then Jannes and Jambres, the chief magicians, opened their mouths and said to Pharaoh: 'A son is to be born in the assembly of Israel, and by his hand all the land of Egypt shall be laid waste'.

The vivid contents of the dream are what set Pseudo-Jonathan and the Chronicles apart from all other accounts of the prophecies of Moses' birth. The main difference between the Targum and the Chronicles is that the Targum specifies that Jannes and Jambres are the magicians who interpret Pharaoh's dream. In the Chronicles, they do not play this role, although they are named later. This is the second intersection between the Targum and the Chronicles.

### 3.3.2 Jannes, Jambres, and Balaam

Jannes and Jambres appear three times in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. In addition to the reference in Exod. 1:15, Pseudo-Jonathan identifies Jannes (יניס) and Jambres (ימבריס) as Pharaoh's chief magicians in Exod. 7:11 and as Balaam's servants in Num. 22:22. The names,

<sup>78</sup> To cite one of each: Abu Ishaq Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ibrahim al-Tha'labi, *Arā'is al-Majālis fī Qiṣaṣ al-Anbiyā* or 'Lives of the Prophets', trans. W. M. Brinner (Studies in Arabic Literature, 24, Leiden: Brill, 2002) pp. 279–280; J. Issaverdens, 'The History of Moses', in *The Uncanonical Writings of the Old Testament: Found in the Armenian Manuscripts of the Library of St. Lazarus* (Venice: Armenian Monastery of St. Lazarus, 1901) pp. 161–175 (p. 165).

<sup>79</sup> Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, p. 158 (cf. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 2, p. 1)

<sup>80</sup> Supplied from the printed edition.

which are not from the Hebrew Bible, are nevertheless well-known from later tradition. Jannes and Jambres—or variants (e.g., Yohana, Mamre, Mamres)—are mentioned in the New Testament (2 Tim. 3:8) and even in the Talmud (b. Men. 85a), among other sources.<sup>81</sup> The third Targumic reference is the most important. It is distinguished from earlier traditions about Jannes and Jambres in two ways: 1) They are subordinate to Balaam; and 2) They are called ‘his servants’ or ‘his boys’ (עולימוי, translating נערייו). Similarly, whenever Jannes and Jambres are mentioned in the Chronicles of Moses, they are *always* qualified as Balaam’s sons:

**Chronicles of Moses (Short Version):** And he [Balaam] went to King Niqanos with *his two sons Jannes and Mamres* (שני בניו יניס וממריס) [...] He [Niqanos] left behind Balaam the enchanter, the son of Laban the Aramaean, *and his two sons, Jannes and Mamres* (ושני בניו יניס וממריס), to guard the city and the poor of the land with them.<sup>82</sup>

**Chronicles of Moses (Long Version):** He [Qinqanos] left Balaam the enchanter (he is Laban the Aramaean, who came from Pethor) *and his two sons with him, Jannes and Jambres* (ושני בניו עמו יניס וימברס), to guard the city and the nation’s poor with him.<sup>83</sup>

**Chronicles of Moses (Long Version):** After their [Moses and Aaron’s] departure, Pharaoh summoned Balaam the enchanter and *his sons Jannes and Jambres* (יניס וימבריס בניו), the magicians, and all the sorcerers of Egypt with them.<sup>84</sup>

In the Targum, the two magicians are not unambiguously identified as Balaam’s sons, but it is still remarkable that they are connected to Balaam at all. The Chronicles of Moses presents Balaam, rather than Jannes and Jambres, as Moses’ primary antagonist in the Egyptian court. Consequently, in an apparent innovation, the Chronicles subordinates Jannes and Jambres to Balaam. Even a work as late as Midrash vaYosha’ (roughly contemporaneous with the Chronicles) prominently features Jannes and Jambres but does not mention Balaam.<sup>85</sup> The Chronicles is the earliest source to associate the two. Other works that subscribe to this tradition (e.g., Zohar, *Balak* 194a; Yalqut Re’uveni, *Balak* 146b) are demonstrably later. Although it seems like a minor detail, the Targum’s passing reference to Jannes and Jambres in a passage otherwise dedicated to Balaam betrays the influence of the Chronicles. It is also worth noting that Pseudo-Jonathan’s preference for ‘Jambres’ over ‘Mamres’ suggests dependence on the long version.

### 3.3.3 The Ethiopian Campaign

Moses’ military campaign against Ethiopia on behalf of Pharaoh appears in not one but two different Second Temple sources. Josephus gives the more famous account (*Ant.* II.238–253), but an earlier version, different in many details, comes from Artapanus of Alexandria (cited in Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* IX.27). Christian historians (e.g., George Syncellus, Pseudo-

<sup>81</sup> See A. Pietersma, *The Apocryphon of Jannes and Jambres the Magicians* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World, 119, Leiden: Brill, 1994) pp. 3–35.

<sup>82</sup> Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 2, p. 5

<sup>83</sup> Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, p. 162.

<sup>84</sup> Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, p. 168.

<sup>85</sup> R.S. Mikva, *Midrash vaYosha: A Medieval Midrash on the Song at the Sea* (Texts and Studies in Medieval and Early Modern Judaism, 28, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012) pp. 173–180.

Eustathius, John Zonaras) inherited the Hellenistic Jewish accounts and repeated them in their own chronicles, including works that focus exclusively on biblical history such as the Greek *Palaea Historica* and the Latin *Historia Scholastica* (PL 198:1144).<sup>86</sup> The story is notably absent from Islamic literature. Josephus' version is normative: Following an act of Ethiopian aggression, Moses leads an Egyptian army into Ethiopia, traverses a snake-infested territory with the help of snake-devouring ibises, and captures the Ethiopian capital with the help of Tharbis, the king's daughter.

In the Chronicles of Moses, the circumstances of the war are completely different and turn on the Chronicles' portrayal of Balaam as a supervillain. In the Chronicles, Balaam decamps to Ethiopia when he perceives his influence dwindling in the Egyptian court. He wins the trust of the Ethiopian king, who leaves him in charge of domestic affairs while he wages war against the peoples of the East. Balaam immediately usurps the throne, and so the Ethiopian campaign is, in reality, a protracted civil war in which the king of Ethiopia must besiege his own capital. Moses arrives either at the beginning (long version) or the end (short version) of the nine-year siege, not as an Egyptian general but as a fugitive. He devises the stratagem that leads to the recapture of the city (snake-eating birds, in this case storks), but, by that point, the king has died. Balaam returns to Egypt, and Moses marries the widowed queen. The entire episode becomes one of a series of confrontations between Moses and Balaam.

The Targumist views the Ethiopian campaign as an explanation for Moses' Ethiopian wife mentioned in Num. 12:1. Pseudo-Jonathan has left enough details to indicate that his source is the Chronicles of Moses and not Josephus:

Miriam and Aaron spoke words that were not proper against Moses regarding the affair of the Ethiopian woman—whom the Ethiopians gave to Moses **following his flight from Pharaoh** and whom he sent away—because they gave him **the Queen of Ethiopia** as a wife, but **he separated from her**.

The first indication that the Chronicles is the source is that Moses' wife is the Ethiopian queen, while in Josephus she is the Ethiopian princess, the daughter of the enemy king who falls in love with Moses and aids him in conquering the city. The second detail is that, in the Targum, Moses divorces the queen. Josephus never mentions the marriage again, but the separation of Moses from the queen is a major plot point in the Chronicles. Moses never consummates the marriage (directly contradicting Josephus) and is eventually driven from both the throne and the land of Ethiopia, whence Moses travels to Midian. The third and most striking detail is that the Targumist specifies that this marriage occurred *after* his flight from Egypt, a detail that only occurs in the Chronicles. In Josephus, Artapanus, and dependent literature, the Ethiopian campaign *always* precedes the flight from Egypt since Moses is conducting the campaign as an Egyptian general.

### 3.3.4 Moses' Rod

The first three traditions are common to both versions of the Chronicles, but the next two are only in the long version. After Moses arrives in Midian, he finds the rod by which he will later perform miracles. The story of the rod's origin is a rabbinic legend with no precedent in Second Temple literature. Mishna Abot lists the rod as one of the sacred objects created on the eve

---

<sup>86</sup> For a summary of the sources, see A. Shinan, 'Moses and the Ethiopian Woman: Sources of a Story in the Chronicles of Moses', in J. Heinemann and S. Werses (eds.), *Studies in Hebrew Narrative Art throughout the Ages* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978) pp. 66–78.

of the first Sabbath (m. Ab. 5:6). The beginning of PRE 40 gives a full genealogy of the rod, explaining how Adam took it from the Garden of Eden. It was passed down among his descendants until Joseph. It then resided in Egypt until Jethro stole it. In addition to Pseudo-Jonathan, variations of the story are found in both versions of the Chronicles, Sefer ha-Yashar, and Midrash vaYosha'. A Christian version appears in Solomon of Basra's Book of the Bee (c. 1222). The basic story is also widely diffused in Muslim literature.<sup>87</sup>

Both versions of the Chronicles mention the rod, but the long version differs in at least three details. First, Jethro is consistently called Reuel in the long version. The short version only calls Moses' father-in-law by this name following a reference to Exod. 2:18, the only place where 'Reuel' appears in the book of Exodus. Otherwise, he is called Jethro. Second, Moses finds the rod only after Reuel has imprisoned him for ten years. Moses' imprisonment, an unexpected wrinkle in the story, is also found both in the short version of the Chronicles and in the closely related Midrash vaYosha'.<sup>88</sup> In these works, Moses' remains Jethro's prisoner for only seven years rather than the full decade in the longer Chronicles of Moses. Finally, the long version gives the rod's origin in a passage taken directly from Sefer ha-Yashar.<sup>89</sup> The short version never explains the rod's prehistory. All three changes manifest themselves in a single verse (TgPsJ to Exod. 2:21):

When **Reuel** knew that Moses had fled before Pharaoh, he threw him into a pit, but Zipporah, the daughter of his son, was supporting him with food in secret **for a period of ten years. At the end of the ten years**, he brought him out of the pit. Moses entered the garden of **Reuel**, where he gave thanks and prayed before the Lord, who had performed miracles and mighty deeds for him. He noticed the rod **which was created on the Eve of the Sabbath**, and the great and glorious Name was engraved and elaborated on it. With it, he would perform wonders in Egypt, and with it he would split the Red Sea and bring forth water from a rock. It was planted in the middle of the garden. Immediately, he stretched forth his hand and took it. Behold, then Moses was willing to dwell with the man, who gave him Zipporah, the daughter of his son, to Moses.

Again, three small details indicate that the source is the longer Chronicles of Moses. First, the Targum uses the name Reuel twice instead of Jethro. The difference is even more pronounced in the Targum because the Targumist distinguishes between Jethro and Reuel. In the above passage, Reuel is identified as the grandfather of Zipporah (cf. Num. 10:29) while Jethro is his son, Moses' father-in-law (Exod. 3:1). Yet Jethro is identified as Moses' captor in the shorter Chronicles and in Midrash vaYosha' while Reuel fulfils this role in Sefer ha-Yashar and the longer Chronicles. There is no particular reason why the Targumist should have preferred one name over the other except that this was the name he found in his source.

The second detail is the length of Moses' incarceration. The shorter Chronicles and Midrash vaYosha' imprison Moses for seven years, but Sefer ha-Yashar and the longer Chronicles extend the stay to ten years. Both versions of the Chronicles (and Sefer ha-Yashar)

---

<sup>87</sup> Studies of the sources of the rod story include: Poorthuis, 'Moses' Rod in Zipporah's Garden'; M. Maher, 'Targum Pseudo-Jonathan of Exodus 2.21', in M. Maher and K. J. Cathcart (eds.), *Targumic and Cognate Studies: Essays in Honour of Martin McNamara* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) pp. 81–99; J.C. Reeves, 'The Eschatological Appearance of the Staff of Moses', in *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Resources for Biblical Study, 45, Atlanta: SBL, 2005) pp. 181–199.

<sup>88</sup> Mikva, *Midrash vaYosha'*, pp. 85–104.

<sup>89</sup> See Yassif, *Book of Memory*, pp. 166–167 and Dan, *Sefer ha-Yashar*, p. 307.

meticulously date important events in the life of Moses. Thus, the incident with Pharaoh's crown occurs when Moses is three, and Moses kills the Egyptian at age eighteen. After this, the versions diverge. In the short version, Moses arrives in Ethiopia at age thirty, at the end of the war, with no explanation of what he did in the twelve-year interim. The long version fills this narrative void. Moses, at age eighteen, immediately journeys from Egypt to Ethiopia and spends all nine years aiding the Ethiopians. Both versions agree that Moses ruled Ethiopia forty years and, after his imprisonment, spent three years with Zipporah before his divine calling at the biblically mandated age of eighty (Exod. 7:7). The difference in prison terms is intended to realign the three-year difference in the two chronologies:

Event	Moses' Age (Short Version)	Moses' Age (Long Version)
Crown Incident	3	3
Leaves Egypt	18	18
Rules Ethiopia	30	27
Imprisoned in Midian	70	67
Marries Zipporah	77	77
Burning Bush	80	80

Again, the Targumist sides with Yashar and the longer Chronicles against the short version and Midrash vaYosha', providing another indication of the Targum's source.

The last detail is the prehistory of the rod itself, unmentioned in the shorter Chronicles. It is, however, found in Midrash vaYosha' as well as Sefer ha-Yashar and the longer Chronicles. In this case, the Targumist does not repeat the entire genealogy of the rod but only gives the most salient part, that it was one of the last things created before the first Sabbath. This is the oldest part of the tradition, going back to Mishna Abot. Still, the Targumist would not have known it from reading the shorter Chronicles of Moses. Rather, it is consistent with dependence on the long version.

### 3.3.5 The Death of Balaam

Of the works that make up the Chronicles of Moses complex (the two versions—but also Midrash vaYosha' and Sefer ha-Yashar), the death of Balaam is only recounted in the longer Chronicles. Balaam's death is mentioned in the Bible (Num. 31:8), but the long version of the Chronicles expands the Bible's terse declaration ('They killed Balaam, son of Beor, with the sword') into a narrative. Pseudo-Jonathan to Num. 31:8 agrees with the longer Chronicles on the essential details: Balaam attempts to fly away, but Phinehas brings him down through the invocation of God's name. The two passages also have several verbal parallels, with many synonymous or near-synonymous phrases (cf. Yal. S., *Maṭṭot* §785 and Zohar, *Balak* 194a–b):

**Chronicles of Moses (Long Version):** *Balaam the enchanter* (בלעם הקוסם), *when he saw* (בראות) Eleazar b. Aaron the priest and Phinehas his son, leaders of the hosts of Israel, *pursuing him* (רודפים אחריו) to kill him, *uttered his spells and flew into heaven* (וינחש) as the eagle glides. *They hastened and recalled the venerable and awesome Name* (וימהרו ויזכירו את השם הנכבד והגורא)

(ויפילוהו ארצה). They captured him and killed him with the sword upon the slain of the rulers of Midian (cf. Num. 31:8).<sup>90</sup>

**Pseudo-Jonathan (Num. 31:8):** They killed the kings of Midian upon the slain of their troops [...] *Balaam the impious* (בלעם חייבא), *when he saw* (כיון דחמא) Phinehas the priest *pursuing him* (רדיף מן בתרוי), *said a spell of enchantments and flew into the air of heaven* (עבד מילתא דקוסמין ופרח באויר שמיא). Phinehas *immediately remembered the great and holy Name* (מן יד אדכר שמא רבא וקדישא) and flew after him. He seized him by his head and *brought him down* (ואחתייהו). He unsheathed a sword and sought to kill him...

These two passages should be compared to an earlier form of the tradition in the standard edition of Midrash Tanḥuma (see also Num. R. 22:5), which differs in both substance and wording:

**Midrash Tanḥuma, Maṭṭot 4:** Moses said to Phinehas and the assembled men, ‘I know that Balaam the wicked is there, that he has come to collect his payment. Before the wolf comes to the sheep, lay a snare for him. If you see him, the wicked one, performing magic, show him the breastplate on which is written “Holy to the LORD”, and he will fall’. They killed him and the kings of Midian. *They killed [them] on their slain* (Num. 31:8), for they were practicing magic with Balaam and flying in the air. They showed them the breastplate, and they fell upon their slain.<sup>91</sup>

Midrash Tanḥuma turns on the interpretation of על, ‘on’ or ‘upon’, in the phrase ‘on their slain’, leading to the explanation that not only Balaam but also his Midianite clients attempted to fly away before falling ‘upon’ the corpses of those who had already been killed. This tradition was known to Rashi (see his commentary to Num. 31:6), and a variant is as old as the Palestinian Talmud (y. Sanh. 10:2, 29a, citing instead Josh. 13:22).

The longer Chronicles and the Targum present Balaam’s death as a more direct confrontation between the sorcerer and the priests of Israel (particularly Phinehas, the one constant in all three passages). The Targum explicitly turns his capture into a flying contest reminiscent of the aerial combat between Yeshu and Yehuda (i.e., Jesus and Judas) in the Jewish ‘anti-Gospel’ Toledot Yeshu. Yeshu, an impostor and deceiver, performs miracles with the aid of the Divine Name, and Yehuda must in turn employ the Name to apprehend Yeshu.<sup>92</sup> In medieval Jewish literature ranging from the Talmud to the Zohar, Balaam is something of a ‘type’ of Jesus.<sup>93</sup> They are linked by the twin themes of deception and sorcery. The shorter Chronicles sharpens this polemic by placing Balaam in direct opposition to Moses throughout the lawgiver’s life. The longer Chronicles has added the natural climax, the sorcerer’s literal

<sup>90</sup> Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, p. 171.

<sup>91</sup> *Midrash Tanḥuma*, vol. 2, p. 95a.

<sup>92</sup> The most recent collection is M. Meerson and P. Schäfer (eds.), *Toledot Yeshu: The Life Story of Jesus: Two Volumes and Database* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 159, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014).

<sup>93</sup> T. Murcia, *Jésus dans le Talmud et la littérature rabbinique ancienne* (Judaïsme ancien et origines du Christianisme, Turnhout: Brepols, 2014) pp. 497–669; E. D. Haskell, *Mystical Resistance: Uncovering the Zohar’s Conversations with Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) pp. 66–106.

downfall, which resembles the existing Tanḥuma tradition but is modified in light of the Toledot Yeshu tradition. The Targum follows the path established by the longer Chronicles.

The five traditions, taken together, reveal a pattern. Although the Targumist could have taken any one of them from different sources (the shorter Chronicles, Midrash vaYosha', Sefer ha-Yashar, even Midrash Tanḥuma), the five only appear together in the longer Chronicles of Moses. The simplest explanation is that the Targumist drew directly from the long version. The reverse relationship, that the longer Chronicles depends on the Targum, is unlikely, since on certain points (e.g., the Ethiopian campaign or Moses' rod) the Targum alludes to narratives that are told in their full form only in the Chronicles. Moreover, the changes both works make to the short version are warranted in the longer Chronicles (e.g., fixing the chronology) but unmotivated in the Targum (Why should Moses be imprisoned for ten years instead of seven?). A common source, such as oral tradition, is both unnecessary and unlikely. Pharaoh's dream and especially Balaam's death show traces of literary dependence and differ substantially from parallel accounts of the same traditions. The long version of the Chronicles of Moses was written sometime between the end of the eleventh century (when the Chronicles—it could be either version—is first cited in the *Aruk*) and the beginning of the twelfth (before Jerahmeel used the long version in his own Chronicles). This date range is the *terminus post quem* for Targum Pseudo-Jonathan.

## Conclusion

The course of this study has revealed three key aspects about Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. First, all independent attestations of its existence prior to the *editio princeps* (Menahem b. Solomon, Menahem Recanati, Azariah dei Rossi) are uniformly late—and Italian. Second, PRE does not cite a Targum to the Torah; any unique material shared between PRE and the Targum is the result of the Targum adapting PRE. Finally, PRE is not even the latest source used by the Targum. The Targumist has also drawn from the long version of the Chronicles of Moses, which is first cited in the twelfth century and could not have been written much earlier. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, therefore, was completed at some point after this date, possibly in Italy, where all the extant evidence is found.

This conclusion fits well with the view that Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is a literary unity, a Palestinian Targum that was conflated with Targum Onqelos and various midrashim. Such a text did not need to develop gradually. It could be the work of a single author. Menahem b. Solomon, for example, had all the necessary resources to produce a text like Targum Pseudo-Jonathan. First, he knew a Palestinian Targum similar to the one that must have served as the base of Pseudo-Jonathan. Second, he knew Targum Onqelos, which he cites in *Sekel Ṭob*. Third, he was conversant with the entire rabbinic corpus, not only the classical canon of Talmud and Midrash but also later works such as PRE. He also seems to have known the Chronicles of Moses: While discussing the fourth plague, he refers to the *silonit* (סילונית), an extremely rare word which, in the Chronicles of Moses, designates a sea monster that ravaged Egypt during this plague.<sup>94</sup> That an Italian author such as Menahem b. Solomon might

---

<sup>94</sup> *Sechel Tov*, vol. 2, p. 47 (ויש אומרים סילונית שמה). See also Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 2, p. 9, and Yassif, *The Book of Memory*, p. 169.

compose an original Aramaic work at such a late date, although unusual, is not more so than the appearance of the Zohar in thirteenth-century Spain.<sup>95</sup>

A late date and Italian provenance could explain some of the mysteries surrounding the Targum. Splansky recognised the Targum's use of late sources, yet he hesitated to date it later than the ninth century because it lacks anti-Karaite polemic and any reference to the Crusades.<sup>96</sup> In the twelfth century, Karaism may have been a pressing issue in Egypt, Palestine, and even Byzantium, but not in Italy. As for the Crusades, the Targum's rendition of Num. 24:24 might well be a reference to this conflict. Leaving aside the issue of 'Lombardia', it is an unusual verse. Why, for instance, does Pseudo-Jonathan mention both Rome and Constantinople instead of just Rome, like the other Targumim? At what other point in human history did Rome and Constantinople jointly attack 'Assyrians'? Although the Crusades are generally thought of as a papal initiative, they began when the Byzantine emperor dispatched ambassadors to 'Old Rome' to request military assistance against the Seljuk Turks.<sup>97</sup>

Lastly, a twelfth-century Italian provenance could also explain the absence of Arabic loanwords. This absence has been used to justify an early date for the Targum,<sup>98</sup> but a Targum written in twelfth-century Italy, though it could have included Arabic loanwords (Italian, after all, has Arabic loanwords), would hardly be expected to have them. Greek and Latin loanwords, in contrast, could have come from classical rabbinic literature, if not from the surrounding culture.

In the end, the Targumist reveals himself as an antiquarian with encyclopaedist tendencies. The Targum culls from as many sources as possible, explaining its propensity for unusual aggada and non-rabbinic halaka. This method is also in keeping with the medieval penchant for anthologies. In this respect, it is not much different from *Sefer ha-Yashar* or the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*. Moses Gaster called the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel* 'the Hebrew *Bible Historiale*',<sup>99</sup> referring to a medieval French translation of the Vulgate that was augmented with selections from the *Historia Scholastica* and other sources.<sup>100</sup> If *Jerahmeel* is the Hebrew *Bible Historiale*, then perhaps Pseudo-Jonathan is the Aramaic version.

---

<sup>95</sup> On this note, A. Shinan, 'The "Palestinian" Targums: Repetitions, Internal Unity, Contradictions', *JJS* 36 (1985), pp. 72–87 (85), indicates that *Sekel Tob* is the sole source for a tradition in TgPsJ to Gen. 37:32 (Billah and Zilpah's children brought back Joseph's bloodied coat), which, furthermore, contradicts an established Targumic tradition in TgPsJ to Gen. 38:26 (Judah brought back the coat).

<sup>96</sup> Splansky, 'Targum Pseudo-Jonathan', p. 91: 'Only Ps-J among the extant targumim makes use of material found in such late works as *Lekach Tov*, *Sechel Tov*, *Midrash Aggadah*, *Exodus Rabbah* I, and *Midrash Mishle*, which were all compiled in the 11th and 12th centuries. Ps-J itself in all probability could not date to such a late time because if it did, we would expect to find in it more anti-Karaite material and, certainly, some reference to the First and Second Crusades'.

<sup>97</sup> See J. Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2014) p. 55.

<sup>98</sup> Flesher and Chilton, *The Targums*, p. 158: 'All three Targums contain loan words from both Greek and Latin, the primary languages used by the Roman Empire in their centuries-long governing of Palestine. By contrast, none of the Pentateuchal Targums—not even Pseudo-Jonathan, the latest one—show evidence of linguistic borrowing from the next dominant empire over Palestine—namely, Arabic. While this does not change any ranges of dates mentioned above, it does cement the conclusion that all these Targums are pre-Islamic'.

<sup>99</sup> M. Gaster, *The Chronicles of Jerahmeel; or, The Hebrew Bible Historiale*.

<sup>100</sup> G. Lobrechton, 'The Story of a Success: The *Bible Historiale* in French (1295-ca. 1500)', in E. Pöleg and L. Light (eds.), *Form and Function in the Late Medieval Bible* (Library of the Written World, 27, Leiden: Brill, 2013) pp. 307–331.

## Appendix: Table of the Relationship Between Primary Sources

Midrash Tanḥ (9th c.?)	Exodus Rabba I (10th or 11th c.)	Short Chron. Moses (11th c.)	Sefer ha-Yashar (11th or 12th c.)	Long Chron. Moses (12th c.)	Chron. Jerahmeel (12th c.)	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (12th c. or later)
Older Tanḥ. Midrash	Talmud (b. Soṭa)	Exodus Rabba I	PRE	Short Chron. Moses	PRE	Pal. Targum to the Torah
PRE	Midrash Tanḥ.	Sefer Yosippon (?)	Shorter Chron. Moses	Sefer ha-Yashar	Long Chron. Moses	Targum Onqelos
Sheiltot		Original Material	Other Minor Midrash		Other Minor Midrash	PRE
			Sefer Yosippon		Latin sources ( <i>LAB</i> ; <i>Historia Scholastica</i> )	Long Chron. Moses
					Sefer Yosippon	Other Midrash Major & Minor