AN EARLY TECHNIQUE OF AGGADIC EXEGESIS

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Nothing has been more characteristic of Jewish intellectual endeavor than the explication of Scripture. The typical expression of new ideas is not the systematic philosophical treatise but the Biblical commentary, showing that these ideas had been deposited, if not necessarily revealed, in the Biblical text long ago. Not only the midrashim and medieval Bible commentaries, but even Philo's treatises, Maimonides' *Guide*, and the Kabbalists' *Zohar* took the form of Biblical exegesis. The reason for this was expressed concisely by Fritz A. Rothschild:

> ... the view that the Bible contains God's message to man has led to ever new interpretations, since it constantly forced believing readers to reconcile the words of the sacred text with whatever they held to be true on the basis of their own experience, the canons of logic, contemporary science, and their moral insights.[1]

Judaism became a text-centered religion during the Biblical period with the canonization of Deuteronomy under Josiah and of the entire Torah under Ezra, but prophecy still co-existed with scripture as a source of divine revelation. However, with the cessation of prophecy in the Second Temple period, the Bible took on a double burden. Not only was it the repository of past revelation; as interpreted by its scholars it now took the place of prophecy as the source of guidance for the

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1. F. Rothschild "Truth and Metaphor in the Bible," *Conservative Judaism* 25 (1971), p. 4; cf. Solomon Schechter, *Studies in Judaism: A Selection,* New York, 1960 pp. 11–12.

present and near future.[2] Now more than ever[3] it was necessary for scholars to develop a system of Biblical interpretation which would make clear the contemporary message of the ancient text.

In the development of this system ancient Biblical scholars drew upon techniques which had been developed in various disciplines.[4] A

2. See S. Spiegel, "On Medieval Hebrew Poetry," in L. Finkelstein (ed.) *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion*, 1961, 1, pp. 854–856.

3. Several studies trace the beginnings of both halakhic and aggadic exegesis back to the Biblical period, in some cases to pre-exilic times. See I.L. Seeligmann, "Voraussetzungen der Midraschexegese", *VTS* 1 (1953), pp. 150–181; H.L. Ginsberg, *Studies in Daniel*, New York, 1948, p. 78, n. 21b; idem, "Daniel", *EncMiqr*, II, cols. 692–693, 949–952; idem, "The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant," *VT* 3 (1953), pp. 400–404; Y. Kaufmann, *History of Israelite Religion*, Tel Aviv, 1956, IV, pp. 291–293, 327–329, 331–338 (Hebrew. Hereafter: Kaufmann, *HIR*); idem, *Mikivshonah shel HaYesirah HaMiqrait*, 1966, pp. 161–168; M.H. Segal, *Parshanut HaMiqra*, Jerusalem, 1971, pp. 5–7; N.M. Sarna, "Psalm 89: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis", in A. Altmann (ed.) *Biblical and Other Studies* 1963, pp. 29–46; D.R. Hillers, *Lamentations (Anchor Bible)*, Garden City, 1972, p. 25 (on Lam. 1:10); M. Fishbane, "Torah and Tradition", in D.A. Knight (ed.) *Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament*, Philadelphia, 1977, pp. 275–300; E.Z. Melammed, *Bible Commentators*, Jerusalem, 1975, I, pp. 10–12 (Hebrew). Some studies use a loose definition of exegesis, including under it such phenomena as literary allusion, revision, re-use or adaptation, variant tradition, related topic, imitation, and reflexes of exegesis, rather than limiting the inquiry to exegesis proper. Some of the cases discussed may actually reflect interpretations of older passages, but in most studies the difference between these phenomena and exegesis is not considered. These phenomena are what Seeligmann termed *"Voraussetzungen* der Midraschexegese," not Midraschexegese itself (note his definition of the term, pp. 150–152); cf. E.Bickerman, *Four Strange Books of the Bible*, N.Y., 1967, pp. 112–113. See also below, n. 14.

4. See S. Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, N.Y., 1950, pp. 28–37, 47–82 (Hereafter: Lieberman, *Hellenism*). Although rabbinic exegesis is a product of the Hellenistic-Roman world, many exegetical techniques developed earlier in the ancient Near East, where texts were studied intensively in scribal academies. Note the reference to understanding proverbs in Prov. 1:2b, 6. An Egyptian letter refers to a scribe "who can explain the difficulties of the annals like him who composed them" (*ANET*, p. 475b), while another tells a schoolboy that "Another fine occasion is when you penetrate the sense of a papyrus-book" (R.J. Williams, "Scribal Training in Ancient Egypt," *JAOS* 92 [1972], p. 218). For Egyptian commentaries, see J.W.B. Barns, "A Note on the Egyptian Background of the 'Demotic Chronicle'," *apud* C. Rabin, "Notes on the Habakkuk Scroll . . .," *VT* 5 (1955), pp. 151–152, and M. Fishbane, "The Qumran Pesher and Traits of Ancient Hermeneutics", *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1973), Jerusalem, 1977, p. 101, n. 21. Mesopotamian texts refer to "discussing" or "interpreting" *(šutabūlu)* omen series (M. Streck, *VAB* 7/2, p. 254:15 [*CAD* A/1, p. 28a] and "explaining" *(kullumu)* an omen text (*ABL* 688, rev. 10, as understood in *CAD* K, p.523c) and the creation epic (*ANET*, p. 72c; cf. A.L. Oppenheim, "Mesopotamian Mythology I," *Orientalia* 16 [1947], p. 237; cf. Wilcke, "Die Anfänge der akkadischen Epen", *ZA* 67 [1977], pp. 171–174). See also A. W. Sjöberg, "Examenstext A," *ZA* 64 (1975), pp. 140: 13–14, 152–156. There are Akkadian commentaries on texts of various genres (astrological, grammatical,

number of these techniques have been found to resemble mantic techniques, that is, techniques employed in certain types of divination. That the exegesis of Scripture at times resembles the exegesis of dreams was recognized in Midrash Haggadol:

> Behold it says: "A dream carries much implication"
> (Eccl. 5: 2). Now by using the method of *qal vahomer*
> we reason: if the contents of dreams, which have no
> effect, may yield a multitude of interpretations, how
> much more, then, should the important contents of
> the Torah imply many interpretations in every verse.[5]

This tolerance for a multiplicity of interpretations became a major asset of Biblical exegesis. It permitted a text-centered religion to avoid fundamentalism and dogmatism, stimulating the growth of a rich body of legal and homiletic exegesis in response to ever changing conditions and ideas, while at the same time permitting scientific exegetes to state their view of the plain-sense even when that contradicted the *halakha*.[6] These achievements are little diminished despite their degeneration, in the late Middle Ages, into extravagant pilpulistic attempts to find

medical, mythical, wisdom, etc.). The native terminology recognizes four classes of commentary: *sātu*, "excerpt;" *šūt pî*, "according to" (often, but debatably, taken as based on oral tradition); *mukallimtu*, "explanation;" and *maš'altu*, "questioning, inquiry" (cf. *midrāš?*). The precise signification of these terms is not really clear (cf. M. Civil, "Medical Commentaries from Nippur," *JNES* 33 [1974], p. 329). The classification may depend more on format and source of information than exegetical techniques, and commentaries are sometimes described in their colophons as combining several types. On the whole, they are simply glossaries and elementary explanations, although difficult words sometimes call forth fanciful explanations, guesswork, or confessions of ignorance (some typical commentaries may be seen in W.G. Lambert, *Babylonian Wisdom Literature*, Oxford, 1960, pp. 32–56, 70–88; E. Leichty, *The Omen Series Šumma Izbu* [*TCS* 4], Locust Valley, 1970, pp. 22–23, 211–233). The greatest ingenuity is devoted to interpreting gods' names by such techniques as *notariqon* (see below, n. 31). Some passages speak of texts' "secrets" (see Sjöberg, *ZA* 64 [1975], p. 154). Modern scholars have described some commentaries as "esoteric" (e.g., R.D. Biggs, "An Esoteric Babylonian Commentary," *RA* 62 [1968], pp. 51–58), but this characterization may only reflect our difficulty in understanding those commentaries. For an impression of the nature of cuneiform commentaries, see B. Landsberger, "Die babylonische Theodizee, *ZA* 43 (1936), pp. 37–38; W.G. Lambert, "An Address of Marduk to the Demons", *AfO* 17 (1954–56), pp. 311, 318, 320; E. Leichty, "Two Late Commentaries, "*AfO* 24 (1973), pp. 78–86.

5. *Midrash Haggadol*, Genesis (ed. Margulies), p. 39, quoted and translated by S. Lieberman in *Hellenism* p. 70; cf. *Gen. Rabba* 17:5 (ed. Theodor–Albeck), p. 157: גובלת נבואה חלום, "a dream is an inferior variety of prophecy," and TB *Berachot* 57b: חלום אחד משׁשׁים לנבואה, "A dream is one-sixtieth of prophecy."
6. Cf. M. Greenberg in *Judaism* 12 (1963), p. 232, citing Rashbam's introduction to Exod. 21–24.

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hundreds of clever interpretations of a single passage.[7] Whatever we can learn about the origins of this flexibility may contribute to understanding something of the vitality of Judaism itself.

It has often been thought that such exegetical flexibility was first sought in order to permit conforming the Bible to the intellectual and moral standards of later times. As far as mantic techniques are concerned, however, we shall see that the earliest sources in which such techniques are regularly applied to the Bible were motivated primarily by the need to conform the Bible to new geographic and political conditions. It may well be that these conditions gave the major impetus to the use of mantic techniques in Biblical exegesis, and that after their ability to meet these conditions was proven, the use of these techniques was then extended to meet new moral and intellectual needs.

I

Recognition of similarities between interpretation of the Bible and the interpretation of dreams and other kinds of oracles is rooted in the Bible itself, where it is indicated that God reveals himself to prophets other than Moses in visions, dreams, and riddles (Num. 12:6–8). Scripture is but a written counterpart of such modes of revelation, and it was therefore a natural inference that the Bible could be interpreted by techniques similar to those employed in wresting meaning from visions, dreams, and riddles.[8] The Bible itself reports a precedent for a written revelation being interpreted by such techniques, namely the writing on the wall in Daniel 5: the Aramaic names of three weights or coins – mina, shekel, and half-mina *(měně, těqēl,* and *pěrēs)* – being interpreted paronomastically as the homonymous verbs meaning "numbered, weighed, and divided," with *pěrēs* simultaneously taken to refer to Persia *(pārās)*.[9]

At the heart of the common exegetical techniques lay the assumption that the *texts* treated in these ways were valid far beyond the time

7. W. Bacher, "Bible Exegesis – Jewish," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901–1905, III, p. 172.
8. Cf. E.E. Halevy, "Biblical Midrash and Homeric Exegesis,", *Tarbiz* 31 (1961–62), p. 159 (Hebrew); M.P. Miller, "Midrash," *IDB Supplement*, p. 595b; A.S. van der Ploeg, *Bib Or* 16 (1959), p. 163, citing A.S. van der Woude, *Bijbelcommentaren en bijbelse verhalen*, 1958; L.H. Silberman, "Unriddling the Riddle," *RQ* 3 (1961–62), pp. 330–331.
9. Cf. H.L. Ginsberg, (above, n. 3), pp. 24–26; J. Barr, *Comparative Philology and the Text of the Old Testament*, Oxford, 1968, p. 49; Kaufmann, *HIR*, IV, pp. 425–426, n. 14.

of their composition. This is what necessitated their preservation, their accurate transmission, their distinction from extraneous material,[10] and their interpretation in the light of changing conditions. This assumption was at home in omen literature, where the compendia consulted by diviners introduced each omen with the Akkadian conditional particle *šumma*, "if, whenever," or the Hebrew *ha-* functioning as the relative particle, "whoever" (TB *Berachot* 56b-57a). Such introductions mean, "whenever the following phenomenon is observed / whoever sees the following phenomen in a dream, it portends such and such." This wording implies that the applicability of the portent is, in theory, endlessly repeatable. What was new in the application of diviners' techniques in Biblical exegesis was in treating Biblical prophecies and even non-prophetic passages as if they, too, addressed distant generations and spoke in veiled language. In the case of apocalyptic exegesis the prophecies were not thought to be applicable repeatedly, but to apply to the final age, in which the interpreter thought he lived. The innovation was aptly summed up by Bickerman, with reference to Daniel's interpretation of Jeremiah's prophecy of seventy years' destruction:

> The method of *pesher* was not new, but the Daniel of chapter 9 applied it to the already realized prophecy. Here he was a revolutionary innovator.[11] It had occurred to no one that the oracle to Croesus (that he would destroy a great kingdom by crossing the river Halys, his frontier with Persia), already realized in

10. The correspondence between the treatment of Biblical and oracular or mantic literature expressed itself not only in exegetical techniques, but in the very distinction between canonical and uncanonical texts. It is precisely in the case of vital mantic and related ritual texts that we find ancient Mesopotamian scribes distinguishing between passages which are "good," "near" (i.e. belong), "(part) of the series" *(damqu, qurbu, šá iškari)*, on the one hand, and "extraneous," "not part of the series" *(ahû, la ša iškari)*, on the other. See references in *CAD* D, p. 73d sub 9; *CAD* A/1, p. 212 a-b; W.G. Lambert, "A Late Assyrian Catalogue," in B.L. Eichler (ed.), *S.N. Kramer Anniversary Volume*, 1976, p. 314:11, 14; brief discussion by Oppenheim, "Divination and Celestial Observation in the Last Assyrian Empire," *Centaurus* 14 (1969), pp. 123 and 134 n. 54. Note in the passages cited that even "external" omens were sometimes collected and consulted, implying that some significance was attributed to them.
11. But contrast Kaufmann, *HIR*, III, 46–47, on the earlier re-use of old prophecies. Cf. also E. Tov, "Some Aspects of the Textual and Literary History of the Book of Jeremiah", in P.–M. Bogaert (ed.), *Le Livre de Jérémie (Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium* 54), 1981, p. 153 § c.

his defeat, could have a second meaning realizable generations later. The new insight immediately found favor with clerks of Jerusalem. A new and limitless field opened to their ingenuity. For the author of Daniel 11 (33ff.) the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (52) is the figure of the steadfast "enlighteners" (*maskilim*) of Epiphanes' persecution. For the author of First Maccabees (7:17) pious Jews slaughtered by a Seleucid general in 161 died "according to the word of the Psalmist" (79:2). The commentator of Habakkuk whose work has been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls was positive that God told the prophets to write down the things that were to come upon the later age ... The ancient oracles became perennially valid just as astrological predictions were true indefinitely.[12]

This contemporizing, predictive or oracular use of the Bible[13] constitutes one of the earliest significant types of Biblical exegesis. Evidence for this use begins to appear in the second century B.C.E.[14] In Dan. 9–12 such prophecies as Num. 24:24; Jer. 25:11–12; Isa.

12. Bickerman (above n. 3), pp. 111–112. The adverb "perennially" in the final sentence is not quite precise; unlike astrological predictions, which could indeed recur repeatedly, the applicability of ancient Biblical prophecies was transferred only to the exegete's own time.
13. What J. Goldin calls "prophetic interpretation"; see his *The Song at the Sea*, New Haven, 1971, pp. 14, 22–23. M.P. Miller (above n. 8), speaks of "mantic characteristics" in Midrash. Cf. R.P.C. Hanson, "Biblical Exegesis in the Early Church", in P.R. Ackroyd and C.F. Evans (eds.), *Cambridge History of the Bible*, I, 1970, pp. 419ff. on the "oracular" view of the Bible in early Christianity (further references in index, p. 620, s.v. "oracles").
14. This is not to deny that the Bible was interpreted by other techniques earlier (cf. n. 3), nor that ancient motifs were applied typologically or as precedents to later events. Allusions in Exod. 15 to the ancient myth of the Lord's suppression of the primordial sea make the crossing of the sea seem like a recurrence of the primordial event (cf. Isa. 51:9–10; see U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, Jerusalem, 1942, pp. 122–125 [Hebrew]); in Isa. 27:1 Leviathan stands for the forces of evil in Isaiah's time (Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath* [Hebrew], pp. 39–40; on Rahab as a designation for Egypt see Sarna, רהב, *EncMiqr*, VII, col. 329). Isaiah 43:16–19 describe the coming redemption as a new crossing of the sea. Cf. also the explicit analogies in Isa. 54:9 and Ps. 83:10–13. However, these passages do not necessarily have specific Biblical verses in mind, nor do they imply that the new event was *intended* by an earlier passage. See Seeligmann (above, n. 3), pp. 169–70, where he distinguishes between historicizing adaptation as such and exegesis.

52:13–53:12 and others are applied to Seleucid times.[15] 1 Macc. 3:48 states that on the eve of the Battle of Emmaus Judah's army "opened the Book of the Law[16] for what the gentiles would have inquired/ searched from the images of their idols" (*exepetasan to biblion tou nomou peri hōn exēreunōn ta ethnē ta homoiōmata tōn eidōlōn autōn*). According to the most plausible interpretation of this passage,[17] the scroll was opened for the purpose of seeking divine guidance, although the method followed is not indicated.[18] Considering the kind of advice normally sought by divination before a battle, the comparison to divination[19] suggests that Judah sought such advice as whether, when,

15. See Ginsberg (above, n. 3); Bickerman (above, n.3), pp. 110–113; Tigay, שבע, *EncMiqr*, VII, col. 477. On Num. 24:24 see below, §III, text accompanying n. 40.
16. Not necessarily the Torah: see W.F. Arndt–F.W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Chicago, 1957, p. 545 sub 4b.
17. See J. Wellhausen, "Über den geschichtlichen Wert des zweiten Makkabaerbuchs," in *Nachrichten von der Königl. Gesellschaft der Wissenshaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch–historische Klasse* (1905), pp. 161–162; F.–M. Abel, *Les Livres des Maccabées*, Paris, 1949, pp. 68–70, where previous views are summarized and discussed; this interpretation is followed in *La Sainte Bible/The Jerusalem Bible* and *The New English Bible*. The practice of the Syrians was to destroy Torah scrolls, which they regarded as subversive (1 Macc. 1:56–57, cf. 49 and see J. Goldstein, *I Maccabees [Anchor Bible]*, Garden City, 1976, pp. 255f.); this (along with linguistic objections) argues against interpretations of the verse to the effect that the Syrians had drawn pictures of their gods on the scrolls or had sought to find support for their own religion and myths in the Torah.
18. According to the account of the same event in 2 Macc. 8:23, Judah had the scroll read by Elazar and afterwards announced the watchword (*synthēma*), "God's help" (*theou boetheias*). In the light of this passage Wellhausen concluded that Judah found the watchword in the scroll. However, the text does not state that the watchword came from the scroll, and later, in 2 Macc. 13:15 Judah announces another watchword ("God's victory," *theou nikēn*) without resort to a holy book. The use of such watchwords was conventional (cf. Y.Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness*, Jerusalem, 1957, p. 53, n. 66 [Hebrew]) and they were not normally chosen by divination; those in 2 Macc. are similar to those in 1QM 4:6–14 and others cited from classical sources by Abel (above, n. 17), p. 392, and virtually identical to some of them. While that in 1 Macc. 3:48 is reminiscent of certain Biblical passages (e.g., Ps. 61:8 [MT 62:8] LXX: *ho theos tes boetheias mou*, J. Moffatt takes it as a play on the name of Elazar who had just read the scroll (see Moffatt in Charles, *APOT*, I, p. 143) and, indeed, the watchword is no less reminiscent of the explanation of that name in Exod. 18:4 (LXX: *ho gar theos tou patros mou boethos mou*); note how the watchwords on the standards of the military divisions in 1QM 4:1–5, play on the names of the divisions, e.g., *'lp-'p-'l, m'h-m't;* see P.R. Weis, "The Date of the Habakkuk Scroll," *JQR* 41 (1950–1951), p. 149, n. 149; W.H. Brownlee, "Biblical Interpretation among the Sectaries of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *BAr* 14 (1951), p. 70; Yadin, pp. 53–54, n. 67, 279; T.H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures*, Garden City, 1976, pp. 404, 453, nn. 26–28.
19. For divination by idols, to which the verse compares Judah's action, cf. Ezek. 21:26; Hab. 2:18–19; Zech. 10:22; and see the passage from Pausanias and

or where to fight, or an indication of the battle's outcome (cf. Judg. 20:28; 1 Sam. 23:2–12; 28:4–24; 1 Kings 22:1–28; Ezek. 20:21). Seeking answers to such questions by opening a sacred scroll suggests bibliomancy, a practice widely known in the classical, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim worlds.[20] One might imagine that the scroll was opened at random, with the passage discovered being regarded as the answer. The predictive implication of many verses discovered this way was naturally not always transparent, and the hermeneutic techniques already established for other forms of divination would be just what was needed to make a recalcitrant text yield its secrets.

Whatever the method may have been, the predictive use of Scripture became widespread. This was especially true among groups which cultivated apocalyptic, as vividly illustrated in the *pešārim* from Qumran. Josephus hinted at this use of Scripture among the Essenes, the group which also produced the dream interpreter Simon the Essene:[21]

> There are some among them who profess to tell the future, being versed from their early years in holy books, various forms of purification and apothegms of prophets; and seldom, if ever, do they err in their ‹predictions (*War* 2.8,12 [§159]).

Note the association of predictive ability with knowledge of Scripture.

II

The similarity of some of the hermeneutic rules of the *aggadah* to techniques used for interpreting dreams and oracles was discussed by

Mesopotamian analogues cited by A.L. Oppenheim, "Sumerian: inim. gar, Akkadian: *egirru* = Greek: *kledon*," *AfO* 17 (1954–1956), p. 54. For diviners accompanying an army see *ARM* 2, 22 (*ANET*, 482c). For pre-battle divination cf. *ARM* 10, 4 (*ANET*, pp. 629–630 and W.L. Moran, "New Evidence from Mari on the History of Prophecy", *Biblica* 50 [1969], pp. 47–50).
20. In the various articles on divination and related topics in J. Hastings (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, N.Y., 1913–1922 note the following: vol. II, p. 611b; IV, pp. 776b, 789a, 790–791a, 813a, 818, 822a, 826d. See also TB Hulin 95b; Kimchi at 2 Kings 22:11; M. Grunwald and K. Kohler, "Bibliomancy," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, III, pp. 202–205; J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, Philadelphia, 1961, pp. 216, 307 n. 16; J. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and Palestine under the Fātimid Caliphs*, New York, 1970, II, 307; J. Blau, *Teshubot HaRambam*, II, Jerusalem, 1960, pp. 321–322 (Hebrew); J. Morier, *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*, New York, 1954, p. 74.
21. Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.7, 3 (§112–113). For prediction among the Essenes see also Thackeray's note at *Jewish War* 2.8, 12 (§159): *Josephus, [LCL]* II, p. 384.

Saul Lieberman in 1950.[22] This similarity is underscored by the use of the term *pešer* for the interpretation of scriptural verses in the Dead Sea Scrolls, for in its exegetical sense this term is used in Biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature primarily for the interpretation of dreams and omens.[23] Reflexes of oneirocritical techniques in the Qumran commentaries have since been pointed out in a number of studies.[24] Although Lieberman's study focused on oneirocritical[25] techniques in Hellenistic and rabbinic sources, he noted that these methods "were invented neither by the Jews nor by the Greeks. They go back to hoary antiquity".[26] Their antecedents in the Near East were recently surveyed by M. Fishbane.[27]

For purposes of illustration, Lieberman studied five of the techniques listed in the thirty-two hermeneutic rules of the Aggadah: (1) *mashal*: "parable or allegory or symbol"; (2) *remez*: "paronomasia, amphiboly, playing with homonymous roots"; (3) *gematria*: "computation of the numerical value of letters"; (4) "substitution of letters, the so-called *Athbash* alphabet"; and (5) *notariqon*, interpreting the letters or syllables of a word as abbreviations for other words, or as anagrams. Several of these techniques can be found in mantic literature in the ancient Near East and in the Bible as well as Hellenistic and rabbinic dream interpretation.[28]

22. Lieberman, *Helle ism*, pp. 68ff.; I. Heinemann, *Altjüdische Allegoristik (Bericht des Jud.-Theol. Seminars)*, Breslau, 1935.
23. Cf. J. van der Ploeg, *Bib Or* 8 (1951), p.2. In Dan. 5 the term is used for the explanation of the handwriting on the wall, and in Eccl. 8:1 for the meaning of an adage; see van der Ploeg, *loc. cit.*; K. Elliger, *Studien zum Habakuk-Kommentar*, Tübingen, 1953, p. 123; H.L. Ginsberg, *Koheleth*, 1961, p. 105 (Hebrew). In Akkadian *pašāru* and *pišru* are normally used for dreams and omens (sporadically speech), *kullumu* for interpreting texts. For *pšr* and *ptr* in rabbinic sources see H. Yalon, *Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Hebrew), p. 65; L. Gertner, "Terms of Scriptural Interpretation: A Study in Hebrew Semantics," *BSOAS* 25 (1962), pp. 17-18; W. Bacher, *Erkhei Midrash*, II, pp. 270, 272-274; Silberman (above, n. 8), pp. 326-330; Heinemann (above n. 22), p. 19. On Arabic *tafsir* and *fassara* see C. Rabin, *Qumran Studies*, New York, 1957, p. 117.
24. Silberman (above, n. 8), pp. 330-334; A. Finkel, "The Pesher of Dreams and Scriptures," *RQ* 4 (1963-1964), pp. 357-370; Fishbane (above, n. 4), pp. 97-114.
25. Cf. Lieberman, *Hellenism*, p. 78, n. 249.
26. *Ibid.*, p.75.
27. See n. 24; Fishbane notes the antiquity of such techniques in Israel as well (above, n. 4), pp.105-112.
28. In order to retain the proper perspective on Biblical interpretation and the interpretation of mantic phenomena, it should be kept in mind that the techniques mentioned here are only a small percentage of those used in the Aggadah, and they are likewise only a few of those used in mantic literature. The hermeneutic principles followed in interpreting most omens are not all understood; see Leichty (above,

(1) Parable, allegory, and symbol are well-known in Biblical exegesis, as in the rabbis' frequent reading of water as referring to the Torah (TB *Baba Kama* 82a; *Taanit* 7a), the interpretation of "well" (Num. 21:18) as the Torah at Qumran (C[airo] D[amascus] C[ovenant] 6:4), Philo's interpretation of the serpent in Eden as the symbol of passion (*Questions and Answers on Genesis*, No. 31), and the messianic interpretation of "star" (Num. 24:17) among the Qumran sect and in rabbinic Judaism (CDC 4:18-20; Targum Onkelos Num. 24:17; TP *Taanit* 4:8, 68d). In mantic contexts symbols are found in Biblical dreams, such as Pharaoh's seven cows and seven ears of grain each indicating seven years (Gen. 41:1-31), the Midianite soldier's tumbling barley loaf which represented the sword of Gideon (Judg. 7:13-14), and Daniel's four animals representing four kingdoms (Dan. 7). In Mesopotamian omen literature, if something in the configuration of the liver of a sacrificial animal resembles a ring it indicates that "the land will close ranks and unanimity will prevail" (*YOS* 10, No. 11, II, 7-9); if the liver looks like a corpse and is perforated, it means that "a man's wife will commit adultery (apparently suggested by perforation, i.e. penetration), he will catch her at it and kill her" (*YOS* 10, No. 14:6); "if a ewe gives birth to a lion with matted or unkempt hair (*mali*) it means that there will be a reign of mourning (*mali*, literally unkempt hair, a mourning rite)" (Leichty, *TCS* 4, p. 77: V, 39).

(2) Paronomasia is another standard exegetical technique, as in Ben Azzai's interpretation of *perî 'ēṣ hādār* as the *'etrōg* because it is the fruit which "dwells" (*haddār*) on the tree year-round (Rashi at Lev. 23:40, citing *Sifra 'Emor* 16, 16:3 [ed. Weiss p. 102d]; TB *Sukkah* 35a). In the Qumran commentary on Habakkuk *lō' tûkāl*, "you cannot" (Hab. 1:13) is interpreted as *lō' yĕkaleh*, "he will not destroy" (1QpHab 5:3). In the Bible paronomasia is used mantically in prophetic visions, such as the interpretation of *qayiṣ*[29] as *qēṣ* in Amos 8: 1-2 (cf. *šāqēd* in Jer. 1:11-12). Daniel's interpretation of the writing

n. 4), pp. 6-7; I. Starr, "In Search of Principles of Prognostication in Extispicy," *HUCA* 45 (1974), pp. 17-23. Many of the omen apodoses in cuneiform omen texts are not based on hermeneutic principles but upon observed correlations between ominous phenomena and actual events; see W.W. Hallo, "New Perspectives on Cuneiform Literature," *IEJ* 12 (1962), pp. 17-18; Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, Chicago, 1964, pp. 210-211.
29. In northern Israel, where Amos preached, this word may have been pronounced *qēṣ*, owing to the contraction of diphthongs in north-Israelite Hebrew; see E.Y. Kutscher, *The Language and Linguistic Background of the Isaiah Scroll*, Jerusalem, 1959, p. 47 n. 10 (Hebrew) [Eng. trans., Leiden 1974, p. 64, n. 4.]

on the wall is also paronomastic (Dan. 5:25–28) as is his interpretation of Jeremiah's "seventy" *(šib'îm)* years as "seventy weeks" *(šib'îm šābū'îm)* of years. In Mesopotamian omen literature a mark called an *erištum* indicates a request or desire, also called *erištum (YOS* 10, No. 11, V, 14–21; *RA* 44, 41:26). In a dream a raven *(arbu)* portends income *(irbu).*[29a]

(3) *Gematria* is known from such interpretations as that of the 318 men who accompanied Abraham (Gen. 14:14) as referring to his servant Eliezer, the letters of whose name have the numerical value of 318 (TB *Nedarim* 32a). The use of letters of the alphabet as numeral signs was a relatively late practice among Semites, borrowed from the Greeks.[30] However, cryptographic writing of personal names with numbers is attested in Mesopotamia as early as the seventh century B.C.E., where it is based on the equation of divine names and other cuneiform signs with numbers.[31] It is not so far known to have been used in the interpretation of oracular texts. In Greek dream interpretation, to see a weasel *(galē)* portends a lawsuit or penalty *(dikē)*, since the two Greek words have the same numerical equivalent.[32] The use of numerological interpretation of oracular texts among Christians is required by such passages as Rev. 13:18 where the beast is identified by his number, 666, the reference being to Nero *(nrwn qsr=666*; a variant reading 616 reflects the Latin form *nrw qsr).*[33]

(4) Letter substitution has not yet been found as a technique in mantic interpretation, but cryptographic writing was known.[34]

(5) *Notariqon* is well-illustrated as an exegetical technique. The salutation with which Joseph was greeted, *'abrēk* (Gen. 41:43), was

29a. A.L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, N.S. 46.3), Philadelphia, 1956, p. 241.

30. Lieberman, *Hellenism*, p. 73 n. 211. At the time of Lieberman's writing the earliest examples known in Semitic languages were from coins of the First Jewish Revolt (66–70 C.E.; see Ginsberg, *Studies in Koheleth*, N.Y., 1950, pp. 31–33). Earlier examples were subsequently found on Hasmonean coins (J. Naveh, "Dated Coins of Alexander Jannaeus," *IEJ* 18 [1968], p. 20–25). Prof. F. M. Cross has kindly informed me that an example is now attested on a Phoenician ostracon from Cyprus which he dates to the fourth century B.C.E., which he will shortly publish.

31. E. Leichty, "The Colophon", *Studies Presented to A. Leo Oppenheim*, Chicago, 1964, pp. 152–153.

32. See Lieberman, *Hellenism*, p. 72, citing Artemidorus.

33. See Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, United Bible Societies, 1971, p. 752; cf. Sibylline Oracles I, 144–145 and 326–330 (cited by Y. Kaufmann, "Apokalyptik," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Berlin, 1928–1934, II, 1149) and V, 1–42, in Charles, *APOT*, II, pp. 397–398.

34. Lieberman, *Hellenism*, p. 73; Leichty (above, n. 31), p. 152 n. 18.

taken by some rabbis as composed of two words, either *'āb* and *rak*, yielding "father (in wisdom) though tender (in years)," or *'ab* and Latin *rex*, yielding "father to the king," as Joseph is actually called in Gen. 45:8 *(Sifre Deut.* 2, 1, [ed. Finkelstein, p. 8]; *Gen. Rabba* 90, 3 [Gen. 41:43; ed. Theodor-Albeck, p. 1102]; Targum Onkelos *ad loc.;* cf. Pesh). The interpretation based on Latin *rex* recalls another notariqon employing a foreign language, R. Akiba's explanation that the head *tĕfillîn* consists of four compartments because *totāpôt* consists of two words, one from Coptic (? or Egyptian) and the other from "African" (TB *Menachot* 34b). In Qumran exegesis *'ml* "iniquity" (Hab 1:3) is taken as an anagram for *m'l*, "treachery," and *wysphw* (the reading in Hab 1:15), "gathered it," is taken for two words, one written defectively and the other abbreviated, equivalent to *wywsypw ('t) hwnm*, "they increase their wealth" (1QpHab VI, 1). Analysis of a word as if it consisted of several smaller words or abbreviations is known in non-mantic uses in Israel and Mesopotamia[35] and is found in Greek and Jewish dream interpretations. Lieberman cites from Artemidorus the case of a military commander who saw the letters *iota*, *kappa*, and *theta* on his sword in a dream; the commander died in the Jewish war in Cyrene, and it turned out that the letters had stood for *Ioudaiois, Kurēnaiois,* and *thanatos*, Jews, Cyrenians, death.[36] In rabbinic dream interpretation, seeing barley *(š'wrym)* portends forgiveness of sins, since *š'wrym* can be dissolved into *sār 'āwon*, "sin has departed" (TB *Berachot* 57a).

In addition to specific techniques shared by Biblical exegesis and the interpretation of mantic phenomena, we find other shared features as well. The multiple interpretations tolerated by the same omen or dream *(šaniš*, etc.) are paralleled by the same multiplicity of interpretations which may be proposed for a single Biblical passage simultaneously *(dābār 'aḥēr)*. In Dan 5:28 *pĕrēs* is interpreted as both the verb "divided" *(pĕrîsat)* and the noun "Persia" *(pārās)* while the "seventy weeks" of years in Dan. 9:24 construes the "seventy" *(šib'îm)* of

35. This is quite common in the exegesis of names, as in Abraham = *'ab hămôn...*, Gen. 17:4–5; cf. Lambert (above, n. 4), p.320; see especially the fifty names of Marduk in Enuma Eliš *(ANET*, pp. 69–72) and the discussions of F.M. Th. Böhl, *AfO* 11 (1937), pp. 191–218 = *Opera Minora*, Groningen–Djakarta, 1953, pp. 282–312, 504–508; J. Bottéro, "Les noms de Marduk, l'écriture et la logique en Mésopotamie ancienne," in Maria de Jong Ellis (ed.), *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein* (Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences, Memoirs 19), Hamden, Conn.,1977, pp. 5–28.

36. Lieberman, *Hellenism*, p. 74

Jer. 25:11–12; 29:10 as both "seventy" (*šib'îm*) and "weeks" (*šā-bû'îm*).[37] In the realm of terminology we find not only the shared use of *pišru/pešer*, but also similar formulae. For example, the standard rabbinic lexicographical formula *'ên X 'elā' Y*, "the word X means nothing else than Y" has a Biblical forerunner in the Midianite's interpretation of his companion's dream: *'ên zōt biltî 'im hereb gi-d'ôn* ... "this is nothing else than the sword of Gideon ... " (Judg. 7:14).

III

Most of these similarities between Biblical exegesis and techniques used for interpreting oracular texts have been pointed out by others. To date the question has not been raised as to when, how, and for what reason such techniques first came to be applied to the aggadic interpretation of the Bible. Before offering a suggestion on this subject, we turn to another important technique whose mantic counterpart has rarely been noticed[38] and which can help us focus on a possible explanation for the application of these techniques to Scripture.

In applying Scripture to contemporary events, it was necessary for exegetes to find in it hints of their own times. This was often accomplished by identifying nations mentioned in the Biblical text as other nations of the interpreter's time. This type of symbolism was crucial for preventing an ancient text from becoming outdated with the rise and fall of nations.[39] An early example of this technique employed in finding contemporary meaning in ancient prophecy is reflected in the Bible itself, in Dan. 11:30, where Balaam's prophecy about the Kittim, Asshur and Eber of Num. 24:24 are taken as the Romans, Seleucid Syrians, and Hebrews (these interpretations are partly reflected in the versions as well).[40] The Habakkuk commentary from Qumran

(IQpHab 2:10–12) identifies the Chaldeans of Hab. 1:6 etc. as "the Kittim" (itself an archaism), and various later sources took Esau/Edom and Amalek as Rome and Byzantium.[41]

Such interpretations presuppose that the ethnic and geographic names used in ancient texts refer to something other than what they mean literally. In principle this supposition seems simply to recognize two commonplace linguistic phenomena: on the one hand, old places acquire new names; on the other hand, words develop new and non-literal meanings, including archaic ethnic and geographic terms which outlasted their original referents and came to be used for people and places other than those to which they originally and literally referred. Even the plain-sense interpretation of ancient texts often has to deal with such developments.[41a] The Biblical text itself sometimes glosses antiquated place names with their subsequent replacements, for example *'ēmeq haśśiddîm hû' yam hammelaḥ* (Gen. 14:3, with many more examples throughout the chapter),[42] and translations frequently render the old names with those in contemporary use (see, e.g., the renderings of "Ararat" [Gen. 8:4] in the Targums, Vulgate, and Peshitta). The Near East has witnessed many shifts in the meaning of geographic and ethnic terms. Certain ethnic terms lost all ethnic meaning and came to refer to professions or social types. Thus "Canaanite" developed into a common noun for "merchant,"[43] "Chaldean" for "magician/soothsayer," and the like,[44] and, in Sumerian, "Subarian" for "slave."[45] Hittite scribes borrowed the name of a Mesopotamian nomadic tribe, the

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37. Tigay, שבע, *EncMiqr*, VII, col. 477.

38. I have found this noted only by Bickerman (above, n. 3), p. 81.

39. For the homiletic use of *pšr* in the sense of matching the words of Scripture to contemporary personalities and events see Yalon, *Qiryat Sefer* 27 (1951), pp. 172–173 = *Studies*, p. 65; cf. Seeligmann, *Qiryat Sefer* 30 (1954–1955), pp. 41–42. Ph. Bloch pointed out that this "petirah" technique is present in many midrashim even when the verb *ptr* is not used (Ph. Bloch, "Studien zur Aggadah," *MGWJ* 34 [1885], pp. 268–269).

40. See Ginsberg (above, n. 3), p. 78 n. 21; J.C. Greenfield, "Kittim," *IDB* III, p.41; cf. J. Goldstein, *I Maccabees (Anchor Bible)*, Garden City, 1976, pp. 191–192. On the contemporarizing interpretation of Kittim in Num. 24:24 see the Vulgate and the

Targums; on Eber there see LXX and the Vulgate; on Kittim in Dan. 11 see LXX and Vulgate.

41. See J. Heinemann, *Darke HaAggadah*, p. 209, n. 71 (Hebrew); M.D. Herr, "Edom, In the Aggadah" and "Esau, In the Aggadah," *EJ*, VI, pp. 379, 858–859; K. Kohler, "Amalek, Amalekites–In Rabbinical Literature," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, I, p. 483; Seeligmann (above, n. 3), pp. 168–171.

41a. Cf. the interpretation of Gen. 15:19 in Gen. Rabba 44, 23 and parallels cited in ed. Theodor-Albeck, pp. 445–446.

42. Note that antiquarian glosses and contemporizing exegetical glosses are often phrased in the same way: "A *hû'/hî'* (etc.) B" or "A B *hû'* (etc.)" (Gen. 14:13; I Kgs. 6:1, etc.; IQpHab 12: 3–4; CDC 7:15–20). This is a standard form for any sort of explanatory note (e.g., Exod. 16:36; Isa. 9:14; Esther 2:7; 3:7 twice; A.E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford, 1923, p.10, No. 5:1, etc.; E. Reiner, *Šurpu*, Graz, 1958, p.50 [Akkadian *šû*, etc.]).

43. See J. Liver, כנען ממכרא, *EncMiqr*, IV, col. 204.

44. L. Koehler and W. Baumgartner (eds.), *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament*³, Leiden, 1967, pp. 477–478.

45. For *šubur*, "Subarian," as "slave" in Sumerian see *CAD* A/II, p. 243d, lexical section, and the variants *šubur* and *ir*, "slave," in *Gilgamesh and Agga*, line 42, cited by C. Wilcke, *Das Lugalbandaepos*, p. 44:116. Hallo compares the derivation

"Sutaeans" (*Sutu*), and applied it to the barbarian tribes (the Gaš-gaeans) of Anatolia.[46] In other cases ancient tribal names are simply transferred to newly-encountered ethnic groups. A Babylonian text of the Hellenistic period "foretelling" the succession of empires ruling Mesopotamia in a manner reminiscent of the book of Daniel,[47] refers to "the army of the Hanaeans" ($^{lú}ummāni^{meš\ kur}Ha-ni-i$). According to A. K. Grayson,

> The context as well as internal clues strongly indicate that [this passage describes] the invasion of Asia by Alexander the Great. The term Hanû, which was originally the name of an Amorite tribe in the Old Babylonian period, is known from other late cuneiform contexts to refer to inhabitants of Thrace. Its use here, rather than Makkadunû, with reference to the conquerors who had come by way of Thrace, reflects an archaizing tendency.[48]

The geographic term "Palestine," originally *hē Syria hē Palaistinē*, "Philistine Syria," was based on the Philistines and later extended to cover the entire country long after the Philistines had disappeared as a distinctive group.[49] An earlier name for the Syro-Palestinian region, $^{kur}Hatti$, "Hatti-land," developed similarly from the Neo-Hittite kingdoms of Syria.[50] The terms "Magan" and "Meluhha,' which refer in first millennium cuneiform literary texts to Egypt and Ethiopia, are

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of "slave" from "Slav" (W.W. Hallo and W.K. Simpson, *The Ancient Near East – A History*, N.Y., 1971, p. 24 n. 47; cf. *Oxford English Dictionary* s.v. "slave"); cf. also "vandal" and "gypsy".

46. H.G. Güterbock, "The Deeds of Suppiluliuma as Told by His Son, Mursili II," *JCS* 10 (1956), pp. 62^c, 126.

47. The literature on Akkadian prophetic or apocalyptic literature continues to grow. For the most recent survey (with previous bibliography) see Hallo, "The Expansion of Cuneiform Literature," *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research* 46–47 (1979–80), pp. 307–322.

48. A.K.Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, Toronto, 1975, pp. 26, 34–35.

49. See M. Noth, "Zur Geschichte des Namens Palästina," *ZDPV* 62 (1939), pp. 125–144; idem, *The Old Testament World*, Philadelphia, 1966, pp. 7–9; B. Mazar, ארץ ישראל, *EncMiqr*, I, col. 615; M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, I, Jerusalem, 1974, pp. 3, 6. On the extension of originally narrow geographic terms cf. Hallo (above, n. 45), p. 23, n. 45, and I.J. Gelb, "Makkan and Maluhha in Early Mesopotamian Sources, " *RA* 64 (1970), pp. 6–7; O. Weber, in J.A. Knudtzon, *Die El-Amarna-Tafeln*, II, p. 1173; W.F. Albright in *BASOR* 70 (1938), p.22.

50. See J. D. Hawkins, "Hatti," *RLA*, III, pp. 152–159.

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thought by many scholars to have referred in third and second millennium texts to eastern Arabia and India.[51] "Gutium" was still used as a geographic term long after the Gutians had ceased to exist in an ethnic and political sense; Sargon even undertook a campaign against Muṣaṣir in Urartu (south of Lake Van) partly on the strength of an omen portending "the defeat of Gutium" (*šulput* $^{kur}Guti^{ki}$).[52]

Such shifts in the meaning of geographic and ethnic names are a natural consequence of the rise and fall of nations, and they are variously facilitated by (1) the location of contemporary nations in or near the territory occupied by ancient nations; (2) a sense of analogy and recognition of typological similarity between the role, actions, or characteristics of contemporary people and nations and ancient nations; and, perhaps, (3) coincidental similarity of names between unrelated nations. Usages such as those described in the previous paragraphs established the precedent that a name appearing in a text may mean something other than what it seems to mean. This is precisely what is supposed by the ancient interpreters of mantic texts. Omens often specify that they refer to a specific land or group, sometimes ancient ones such as Akkad or Amurru. By the first millennium B.C.E. at least some of these referents had become ambiguous. "The land of Akkad" was no longer an independent political entity, and its name had come to be used sometimes for other places, such as Babylon.[53] The Amorite states of Syria had long since lost their independence.[54] Still, the ancient omens had spoken of Akkad and Amurru, and they were presumed to be still valid. When astral phenomena indicated a recurrence of these omens in Neo-Assyrian times, it was vital to know what *contemporary* city or state was the object of the portent. When royal astrologers reported their observations to the king and quoted the omen which covered what they had observed, they added notes identifying the contemporary equivalents of the ancient nations. One report to the

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51. Oppenheim (above, n. 28), p. 398; Gelb (above, n. 49), p. 108; contrast S.N. Kramer, *The Sumerians*, Chicago, 1963, pp. 276–281.

52. Luckenbill, *ARAB*, II, §170; cf. Hallo, "Gutium," *RLA*, III, pp. 717–719.

53. Cf. H. Weiss, "Kish, Akkad and Agade," *JAOS* 95 (1975), pp. 446–447; B. Landsberger, *Brief des Bischofs von Esagila an König Asarhaddon*, (*MKNAW*, N.R. 28 no. 6), Amsterdam, 1965, pp. 46–49.

54. Cf. Honigmann, "Amurru," *RLA*, I, p. 100. The meaning of the ancient geographic term Subartu, though still used as a name for Assyria, had to be explained even to an Assyrian in R.C. Thompson, *The Reports of the Magicians and Astrologers of Nineveh and Babylon*, London, 1900, II, no. 62 obv. 4 (also cited in *CAD* A/II, p. 123a).

king of Assyria reports on omens that portend an attack of the Umman-manda and well-being for Akkad. In the course of the report the writer pauses to identify the mysterious Umman-manda as the Cimmerians of the Caucasus (ERIM- *manda* ᴸᵘ*Gimirajē*) and to indicate that the land of Assyria is what is meant by Akkad (ᵏᵘʳ*Aššur*ᵏⁱ ᵏᵘʳ*Akkadim-ma*; *ABL* 1391: obv. 16, rev. 22).[55] Another report tells of an eclipse which portends evil for the Land of Amurru, which the writer explains as follows: "The Amurru-land is the Hatti-land (i.e. Syria) or, alternatively, the Land of Chaldea" (ᵏᵘʳ*Amurru* ᵏᵘʳ*Hattu šaniš* ᵏᵘʳ*Kaldu*; *ABL* 337: rev. 14'-15'; Parpola 278). A third report does the latter one better. With reference to an eclipse which portends evil for the land of Amurru the author writes:

> The king of the Amurru-land will die, his land will diminish, or, alternatively, it will be lost. Perhaps the scholars can tell the king my lord something about the Amurru-land: the Amurru-land means the Hatti-land (i.e., Syria) and the Sutu (i.e., desert nomads)-land or, alternatively, the land of Chaldea. Someone or other of the kings of the land of Hatti or the land of Chaldea or of Arabia must bear this portent ... Either the king of Cush or the King of [Tyre ?] or Mugallu (ruler of Tabal in Asia Minor) must [meet] the ap[pointed] death ... (*ABL* 629: obv. 17- rev. 2)[56]

This technique of finding a contemporary meaning for the geographic objects of ancient omens enabled the omens to retain significance in later generations. Biblical exegetes, as we have seen, helped to perpetuate the significance of the Bible in the same way. It is another

55. S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to Kings Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal*, Pt. I (*AOAT* 5/1) Neukirchen–Vluyn, 1970, no. 110. The text is discussed at length by L. Hartman, "The Date of the Cimmerian Threat against Ashurbanipal according to *ABL* 1391," *JNES* 21 (1962), pp. 25–37.

56. Parpola (above, n. 55), no 279; *ANET*³, p. 626. It is interesting to note how these identifications are rooted in historical reality but move away from it. To identify Amurru as the land of Hatti (Syria-Palestine) is historically reasonable, for "Hatti" was the contemporary name of the region which once included the homeland of the Amorites and where the Amorite states had existed. But to interpret Amurru as Chaldea is stretching things. It can rest at most on the fact that a thousand years earlier southern Mesopotamia had come under the domination of Amorite dynasties, or upon similarities in the way of life of the Chaldeans and the old Amorites. cf. A. Schott, *ZA* 47 (1958), p. 111.

example of techniques shared by Biblical exegesis and the interpretation of dreams, omens, and oracles.

IV

In the remaining discussion it will be helpful to view the phenomena we are discussing from two perspectives: that of the author of a text, who uses such phenomena as symbols, paronomasia, archaic geographic terms, or cryptographs, etc., as literary *devices*; and that of the interpreter whose explanation of the text or oracular manifestation as if it contains such devices constitutes an interpretive *technique*.

The techniques we have been discussing were never *specifically* mantic techniques, because the corresponding literary devices were not limited to oracular manifestations. The techniques were always used in plain-sense exegesis because the corresponding literary devices were more or less commonly used by authors. Such devices as parables, allegories, and symbols are often part of a writer's intention, as indeed are paronomastic allusions such as the double entendre (e.g. Isa. 54:9 *ky-my* "for the waters/like the days"; Jonah 4:6 *lhsyl* "to save/ shade"). Even devices such as *gematria, notariqon* abbreviations, and cryptographs are sometimes employed intentionally by writers and scribes.[57] The updating of a text's geographic references is often a reasonable act of clarification necessitated by changed nomenclature or social and political conditions (cf. Gen. 14). Akkadian writers did sometimes use the names of ancient lands and peoples to refer to contemporary ones, and at least some of the identifications of Amurru in the Assyrian astrologers' reports are accurate in a geographical though not a political sense. The normal use of these devices by authors indicates that techniques which treat a text as if it contained such devices do not of themselves point to an affinity with mantic literature. Indeed these techniques must have been employed in a reasonable way in interpreting some passages as soon as they were composed. What demands explanation is the forced use of these techniques in an aggadic manner to produce far-fetched interpretations in passages where these devices were never intended. It is in these extremes, which

57. See Lieberman, *Hellenism*, pp. 73 top, 75 top; Leichty (above, n. 31), pp. 152–153; Fishbane (above, n. 4), p. 111 and idem, "Abbreviations," *IDB Supplement*, pp. 3–4 with bibliography.

eventually became common, that Biblical exegesis seems indebted to mantic interpretation.

V

We may now pose the question of why Biblical exegesis began to use these techniques in an aggadic manner. Num. 12:6–8 implies a theoretical readiness to interpret Scripture as oracular in early times. How did this readiness first come to be applied in practice? Studies of allegorical interpretation often account for this development in terms such as the following:

> Whenever the literature of a people has become an inseparable part of its intellectual possession, and the ancient and venerated letter of this literature is in the course of time no longer in consonance with more modern views, to enable the people to preserve their allegiance to the tradition it becomes necessary to make that tradition carry and contain the newer thought as well.[58]
> The allegorical interpretation marks a stage in the history of any civilized people whose literature is 'primitive.' They dispose of what conflicts with their present moral and intellectual standards by reading their past as an allegory.[59]

Both of these quotations indicate that allegorical interpretation arises out of the need to depart from the plain-sense of Scripture. But the earliest examples of the regular use of these techniques in an aggadic way in Biblical exegesis were prompted not by a conflict with "more modern views" or contemporary "moral and intellectual standards" to which Scripture had to be conformed, but primarily by new geopolitical conditions.[60] In Daniel, at Qumran, and generally in apocalyptic and in messianic speculation these were the conditions that had to be faced, and under these conditions the assumption that Biblical prophecies were still applicable necessitated maximum flexibility and avoidance of literalism. To meet this need Biblical exegetes began to apply

58. L. Ginzberg, *On Jewish Law and Lore,* Philadelphia, 1962, p. 127.
59. B. Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages,* Notre Dame, 1970, p. 2.
60. Similarly what Kaufmann calls the earliest halakhic midrash (Ezra 9; cf. Neh. 13:1–3) was prompted by new ethnic conditions in Ezra's time; see Kaufmann, *HIR,* IV, pp. 291–293.

exegetical techniques in a way which had long met similar needs in mantic practice. They were preceded in this by the Egyptian author of the "Demotic Chronicle" (ca. 300 B.C.E.), who applied ancient oracles to the geopolitical situation of his own time by means of symbolic and paronomastic interpretations.[61]

The earliest Jewish source attesting to this kind of scriptural exegesis is Daniel 9–12. It is probably no accident that the Book of Daniel describes its hero not only as understanding the true meaning of ancient Biblical prophecies, but also as a master interpreter of dreams, visions, and oracular inscriptions, just as the Essenes, who responded to a similar historical challenge with the same kind of Biblical exegesis, were also known for their dream interpreters and prognosticators (see above, p. 176). Chapters 9–12 of Daniel were composed in a time of political and religious crisis, the days of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Among the questions confronted in these chapters was the apparent delay in the end of the seventy years' punishment prophecied by Jeremiah (Jer. 25:11–12; cf. 29:10). To earlier writers (Zech. 1:12; 7:5; 2 Chr. 36:21) it seemed that the prophecy had been fulfilled during the Return to Zion; but to the author of Dan. 9, writing in the days of the Antiochian decrees, it seemed that the redemption had not come and therefore Jeremiah's prophecy limiting the punishment to seventy years had not been confirmed. The problem was solved by a paronomastic double interpretation of "seventy" (*šib'im*) as "seventy weeks," i.e. heptads (*šib'im šābū'im*) of years namely 490 years, whose culmination was approaching. In Dan. 11 allusions to other ancient prophecies imply that the current crisis and its eventual outcome were foretold. This is accomplished in part by understanding the personalities and nations mentioned in those prophecies as those involved in the current events; for example the Kittim, Assyria, and Eber of Num. 24:24 are understood as the Romans, Seleucid Syria, and Israel, as noted above.

This "new exegesis" enabled Biblical exegetes – Daniel, the "Teacher of Righteousness," and their successors – to find in the text a preconceived meaning, namely hints of a historical situation or event. In this the predictive use of Scripture shares the aim of much of rabbinic legal and aggadic exegesis, which seek to find in Scripture indications of, respectively, a predetermined law or spiritual or moral

61. See the passage quoted by Rabin (above, n. 4), p. 149, where earlier bibliography is cited.

teaching. Typical of rabbinic exegesis was the sermon which, often following similar techniques, identified concisely expressed spiritual and moral teachings in the Hagiographa and proceeded by means of the hermeneutic rules of the *aggadah* to find these teachings expressed in the Torah as well.[62] This form of exegesis retained its popularity long after centuries of frustration had deprived the oracular use of Scripture of its early predominance.[63] In the long run these techniques made their most extensive contribution to Biblical exegesis through the moral and spiritual interpretation of the Bible, but they owe their original place in the interpreter's repertoire to the contemporizing, predictive or oracular use of Scripture which was so visible from the second century B.C.E. onward and which has not been entirely abandoned even in modern times.

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62. For an example of moralizing exegesis at Qumran see CDC 4:14–18.
63. For prediction on the basis of the Torah in early Islamic times see Rabin (above, n. 23), p. 116.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABL	R.F. Harper (ed.), Assyrian and Babylonian Letters, I–XIV, London/Chicago, 1892–1914
AfO	Archiv für Orientforschung
AHw	W. von Soden, Akkadisches Handwörterbuch, Wiesbaden, 1965–1981
AJSL	American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
ANEP	J.B. Pritchard (ed.), The Ancient Near East in Pictures Relating to the Old Testament, Princeton, 1954
ANET	J.B. Pritchard (ed.), Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament, Princeton, 1969[3]
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS	American Oriental Series
APOT	R.H. Charles (ed.), The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament, I–II, Oxford, 1913
ARAB	D.D. Luckenbill (ed.), Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia, I–II, Chicago, 1926–1927
ARMT	Archives royales de Mari, Textes
BAr	The Biblical Archaeologist
BAs	Beiträge zur Assyriologie
Bagh Mitt	Baghdader Mitteilungen
BASOR	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BE	Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania, Series A: Cuneiform Texts
Bib Or	Bibliotheca Orientalis
BSOAS	Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
CAD	The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
CT	Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum
CTA	A. Herdner (ed.), Corpus des tablettes en cunéiformes alphabétiques

EJ	Encyclopaedia Judaica, I–XVI, Jerusalem, 1972
Enc Miqr	Encyclopaedia Miqra'it, I–VIII, Jerusalem, 1950–1982
FRLANT	Forschungen für Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HSM	Harvard Semitic Monographs
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
IDB	The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, I–IV, New York/Nashville, 1962; Supplement, 1976
JANES	Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JCS	Journal of Cuneiform Studies
JEA	Journal of Egyptian Archaeology
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNES	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JSS	Journal of Semitic Studies
KAI	H. Donner and W. Röllig, Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften, I–III, Wiesbaden, 1962–1964
KBo	Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi
KUB	Keilschrifturkunden aus Boghazköi
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	H.G. Liddell, R. Scott, and H.S. Jones, A Greek-English Lexicon, Oxford, 1968
MDOG	Mitteilungen der deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
MGWJ	Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums
MKNAW	Mededelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wettenschappen, afdeeling letterkunde
MSL	Materialien zum sumerischen Lexikon, Roma
MVAG	Mitteilungen der vorderasiatisch-ägyptischen Gesellschaft
OECT	Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OLZ	Orientalistische Literaturzeitung
OTS	Oudtestamentische Studiën
PEQ	Palestine Exploration Quarterly
PRU	Le Palais royal d'Ugarit
PSBA	Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology

RA	Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale
RAI	Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
RLA	Reallexikon der Assyriologie, I–II, Berlin/Leipzig, 1932–1938, III–VI, Berlin/New York, 1957–1982
RQ	Revue de Qumran
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature, Monograph Series
StBoT	Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten
TB	Babylonian Talmud
TCL	Textes cunéiformes du Louvre
TCS	Texts from Cuneiform Sources
ThLZ	Theologische Literaturzeitung
TLB	Tabulae cuneiformes a F.M.Th. de Liagre Böhl collectae
TP	Palestinian Talmud
UET	Ur Excavations Texts, London
UF	Ugarit-Forschungen
UVB	Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka
VAB	Vorderasiatische Bibliothek
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTS	Vetus Testamentum Supplement
WO	Die Welt des Orients
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
YOS	Yale Oriental Series
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie
ZÄS	Zeitschrift für die ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZDPV	Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins

HISTORY, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND INTERPRETATION

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