Tustep Conference

VU University

Presentation Lieve Teugels, Utrecht University: Parables and the Partings of the Ways

3-10-2014

Handout

The mashal of the King, his son and his friend

Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael Beshalach 4
And the Lord Said unto Moses: 'Wherefore Criest Thou unto Me? Speak unto the Children of Israel that They Go Forward.'

(A) R. Joshua says: The Holy One, blessed be He, said unto Moses: "Moses, all that Israel has to do is to go forward."

(B) R. Eliezer says: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: "Moses, My children are in distress, the sea forming a bar and the enemy pursuing, and you stand there reciting long prayers; wherefore criest thou unto Me?" For R. Eliezer used to say: There is a time to be brief in prayer and a time to be lengthy. "Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee" (Num. 12.13). This is an instance of being brief. "And I fell down before the Lord as at the first time," etc. (Deut. 9.18). This is an instance of being lengthy.

(C) R. Meir says: "If for Adam the first man, who was but one individual, I made dry land,—as it is said: 'And God said: "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered,"' etc. (Gen. 1.9)—will I not for this assembly of holy men turn the sea into dry land? Wherefore criest thou unto Me," etc. R. Ishmael says: "For the sake of Jerusalem, I will divide the sea for them." For it is said: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean" (Isa. 52.1). And it also says: "Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord; awake, as in the days of old, the generations of the ancient times. Art thou not it that hewed Rahab in pieces, that pierced the dragon? Art thou not it that dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; that made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over?" (ibid., 51.9–10). Another Interpretation: "I will fulfill the promise to divide the sea for them, which I have made to their fathers." For when it was said: "And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east" (Gen. 28.14), it hinted to him: "Break through the sea." R. Judah the son of Bathyra says: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, I have already fulfilled the promise that I made to their fathers. For it is said: "And made the sea dry land" (Ex. 16.18); "But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea" (ibid., 14.29). R. Simon the son of Yohai says: For a long time already the sun and the moon have been their witnesses. For it says: "Thus saith the Lord, who giveth the sun for a light by day, who stirreth up the sea, that the waves thereof roar, The Lord of hosts is His name: If these ordinances depart from before Me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before Me for ever" (Jer. 31.35–36). R. Banaah says: "Because of the merit of the deed which Abraham their father did, I will divide the sea for them." For it is said: "And he cleaved the wood for the burnt-offering" (Gen. 22.3). And here it is written: "And the waters were cleft." Simon of Teman says: "Because of the merit of observing the commandment of circumcision, I will divide the sea for them." For it is said: "Thus saith the Lord: 'If not for My covenant of day and night, I would not have appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth'" (Jer. 33.25). Go and see which covenant obtains by day and by night. You can find none but the commandment of circumcision.

(A') R. Absalom, the elder, giving a parable, says: To what is this like? To a man who got angry with his son and drove him out of his house. His friend then came to him, requesting that he allow the son to come back to the house. He said to his friend: You are only asking me on behalf of my own son. I am already reconciled to my son. So also did the Holy One say to Moses: Wherefore criest thou? Is it not on behalf of My own sons? I am already reconciled to My sons. Speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward.

(B') Rabbi says: "Yesterday you were saying 'For since I came to Pharaoh,' etc. (Ex. 5.23). And now you are standing there reciting long prayers. Wherefore criest thou unto Me?"
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<tr>
<th>Ms Oxf.</th>
<th>Ms. Munich</th>
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<th>T-S C4.8[2 (Geniza fragment)]</th>
<th>Const. 1515 (First print)</th>
<th>parallel: Exodus Rabah 21:8 (Soncino)</th>
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<td>R. Abtulum/s the elder said:</td>
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<td>To one who was angry at his son and he drove him away from his house</td>
<td>to a king who had a son who had provoked him to anger with the result that he sentenced him to a severe punishment.</td>
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<td>His administrator (epitropos) came in to ask from him</td>
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<td>The instructor [of the king’s son] sought to appease the king,</td>
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<td>He said to him: You do not ask anything of me not on behalf of my son</td>
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<td>He said to him: You do not ask anything from me but on behalf of my son</td>
<td>but met with the rejoinder: ‘Is it not on behalf of my son that you are entreating me?</td>
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<td>Well, I have already become reconciled with my son.’</td>
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אמר המה עומד את ועכשיו בתפילה:

"ירושליםأم''ן לא אמר ה' אמר
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ישראל"
1. Overall project: Parables and the Partings of the ways

1. Corpus: Parables in Gospels and other Early Christian texts, and in early rabbinic (tannaitic) literature

2. 3 PhDs (parables about family relations, slaves, and meals)

3. Postdoc project (LT): ‘critical’ edition of ‘all’ the tannaitic parables

4. How do we define tannaitic parables?
   - Tannaitic sources?
   - Students = known tannaim?
   - Text presented as tannaitic (e.g. baraita)

5. Critical edition of texts culled from larger corpora?
   - Some of these corpora have good critical editions; some not
   - There are various textual witnesses for all parables: printed editions, larger manuscripts, geniza fragments

2. Practical issues to resolve

1. digital and/or book presentation

2. delineation of the parable: how much of the literary context (co-text) will be included? (most have exegetical function in midrash).

3. what will we present: transcribed manuscripts? full critical text?

4. translation (which version will be translated)?

5. annotation/commentary?

6. Digital presentation: pop-up windows; vertical or horizontal synoptic; apparatus?

7. which program will we use to generate it?

2.2. Various kinds of scholarly editions – the discussion

- Full-critical editions – diplomatic
  - Distant
  - Eclectic

- Transcriptional editions (Milikowsky)
  - Vertical or horizontal synopses
  - Diplomatic transcriptions

- Milikowsky- Schäfer discussion

- Milikowsky-Ulmer discussion

3. Critical editions of rabbinic texts

2.3. The specific problems of editing rabbinic literature [compared to Bible]

- Many texts
- Very long and fluid transmission history
- Further oral transmission after writing down (cf. M. Jaffee; Elman and Gershoni)
- Creative additions by scribes (cf. Be-Arie)
- Fragmentary texts
- Texts only known because they survived in Medieval yullat (e.g. Miflaš Haggadah)
- Many lost miss.
- Often several recensions
- Sometimes impossible to pick one ‘base manuscript’
- Stemmatic is impossible; no ‘Urtext’
- Outdated ‘critical’ editions made in 19th-20th cent. still used as standard texts

- Bible

4. Case study: Mehilta de Rabbi Ishmael Beshallach 4: 35 ff

The father, the son, and the friend

4.1. The function of the meshal in context (see full text on handout)

1) Interpretation 1: M. (though all they have to do is to go forward)

2) Interpretation 2: B. (Sermon on the Mount: ‘Be not angry with one another’... but rather, be at peace with one another’)

3) Interpretation 3: LT: ‘they may have gone forward now, but I will keep them for them’

4) Interpretation 4: R. (Rabbi says: but W. ‘separate interpretation’... in certain cases, has the passage function in a discussion with the rabbinic teachers...)

- Both have been cut
- Emphasis in handout
- Standard (cf. compare Hasen p. 52)
- You don’t have to discuss at all (which he did not, if it says so in Ex. 16:15)
- I can speak anywhere and to anyone (cf. this passage in a whole because they completely) Therefore not be go forward (and I will keep the one for them)

5) Interpretation 5: B. (Mishnah: ‘separate interpretation’... in other cases, has the passage function in a discussion)” (1)