

Performing Hebrew/Jewish Biblical Characters in Late Medieval Religious Theater
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Although there is no known medieval Jewish drama (i.e., theatrical plays written or performed by Jewish authors), Jewish characters played a significant role on the medieval stage. This paper will examine ways in which characters of the Hebrew Bible were enacted in late medieval Christian theatre. There are two main modes of enactment of such characters: respectful enactment of figures whose appearance is considered significant because they prefigure the narrative of the Christian *Gospels* (mostly biblical fathers, leaders, and prophets); and reproachful enactment of Jewish characters, which are associated with the Passion of Christ. This duality is further complicated by the anachronistic characteristic of medieval theater and performance, which led to theatrical enactment of the biblical past that included performative references to the contemporary present (including body language, gesture, garments, and other attributes). As such, enacting Hebrew/Jewish figures on the medieval stage involved a performative and embodied encounter with the “Other.” The plays to be studied will be taken from the York and Chester cycle plays.

Keywords: Hebrew Bible, Medieval Theater, Biblical Theater, Jewish Characters, Performance, Enactment

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From a Matrimonial Quarrel to Edifying Drama: Jewish and Christian Conceptions of Vashti in Medieval and Renaissance France
Tovi Bibring, Bar-Ilan University

My lecture discusses Medieval and Renaissance literary interpretations of the Book of Esther, specifically the two matrimonial issues that captured medieval imagination: the fateful quarrel between Ahasuerus and Vashti; and the king's remarriage to Esther, a story that was recounted within the background of a courtly system of values. I will examine conjugal dilemmas, misogynistic discourse and feminine resistance, as well as the different literary devices that alternatively rendered the texts parodical, emotional and subversive, and quite independent of the biblical source. Two main works will be examined, though others will be mentioned for comparison. The first is the 14th century *Le Roman d'Esther*, written by the Jewish doctor Crescas du Caylar in Provençal, using the Hebrew alphabet. The second is anonymous, found in *Le mistere du Viel Testament*, a 15th/16th century gigantic compilation of mystery plays based on events from the Hebrew Bible, that is flagrantly understudied.

Keywords: Esther and Vashti in Medieval/Renaissance Literature), Crescas du Caylar, Provençal, *Le Mistere du Viel Testament*

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The Grafting of “All Families of the Earth” onto the Biblical Family: Genesis 12:3 in Midrash, Epistle to the Romans, and Shakespeare
Sanford Budick, Hebrew University of Jerusalem

It has long been suggested that Shakespeare's naming and invention of Paulina is meant to inject ideas of Paul's *Epistle to the Romans* into *The Winter's Tale*. I believe that Paul's epistle really does figure in *The Winter's Tale*, but I suggest that the principal use Shakespeare makes of it is in his echoing of Paul's lengthy, elaborate simile of grafting in *Romans* 11:16-26. Commentators on *Romans* have noted that Paul has here borrowed an early Jewish *Midrash* that was later recorded in the *Talmud* (Tractate *Yivamoth* 63a). That *Midrash* glosses the phrase from *Genesis* 12:3, in which Abraham is told by God “and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” The Hebrew word for *and shall be blessed* is וּנְבָרְכֶךָ. The *Midrash* turns on reading the root of this word, ב ר כ , as that of the Hebrew word for grafting, הִרְכַּבָּה , which thus yields the astounding meaning not that the grafting will lead to blessing but that the grafting is blessing itself. Thus Paul's verses laying out his extended simile of the grafting of Gentile and Jewish believers is both a grafting of Christian and Jewish texts, as well as of all who stand by faith in a new kind of biblical family. My paper explores the significance of this complex of biblical readings for the ideas of grafting and of reinvented family in *The Winter's Tale*.

Keywords: *Epistle to the Romans*, Tractate *Yivamoth*, *The Winter's Tale*, Grafting

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Individuating God: The Motif of God's Wrath from Genesis and Exodus
Piero Capelli, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

It is evident, and acknowledged by a vast critical tradition, that the literary image of God in the Hebrew Bible is loaded with inner contradictions and ambiguities that are often left unsolved. The most relevant tension of this kind is possibly the one between the divine qualities of wrath and mercy. This tension is specifically evident in the biblical narratives about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (*Genesis* 18-19), and in the punishing of the Israelite worshipers of the Golden Calf (*Exodus* 32). How did post-biblical Judaism, in its various forms and traditions of knowledge, try to make sense of this ambiguity within God himself both as a literary character and a religious concept? Answers can be found, first and foremost, in the early Rabbinic homiletic-exegetical tradition (the *Targum* and *Midrash*). Here, the aim of conveying a consistent, reassuring image of God is pursued by stressing only one aspect of his literary personality, usually his mercy, though sometimes his severity is also exalted. A deeper awareness of God's ambiguities is seen in early Rabbinic mysticism found in the *Talmud*, while an articulate doctrine of divine wrath is subsequently formulated in the *Zohar*, where the idea of an "other side" of God finds mediation and solution in the conception of God's inner tension as a polarity or a dialectic between different energies. This is a conception that is most productively investigated by resorting to the categories of Jungian analytical psychology, such as those of syzygy and integration.

Keywords: God's Wrath, *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Midrash*, Jewish Mysticism, Jung, Analytical Psychology

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The End of the Tudors: Comparing Unhappy Families in 2 Samuel and Hamlet.
Lori Anne Ferrell, Claremont Graduate University

The story of David and Bathsheba (2 *Samuel* 11) was a ready source of tropes, both familial and political, for early modern English preachers and theologians. Within these tropes, the two concepts that commanded most attention were David's lust and adultery, and, prompted by that, his fitness to be King. In this talk, I will first explore the *political* (i.e., not primarily theological, even given the claustrophobic, near-incestuously close relationship between religion and politics in this period) uses of the David and Bathsheba story in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean English sermons. I will then map these onto a revisionist reading of the unholy household of Claudius and Gertrude in Shakespeare's tragedy, *Hamlet* (1599/1602). Finally, I will contextualize this interlocking set of readings in the turbulent politics of Tudor decline.

Keywords: II *Samuel* 11, *Hamlet*, Elizabeth I, James VI and I, Kingship, Accession, Lancelot Andrewes

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Psalm 51: From Christian Silencing to Judaic Messianism in Seventeenth-Century England
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Although Christian typology enabled seventeenth-century English writers to silence aspects of Jewish nationalism in the Hebrew Bible, some more radical Christians referred explicitly to Judaism, and issues of exile and return. While Protestants such as Samuel Smith and John Bunyan were reading the Psalter without concern for many of its Hebraic contexts, others (such as Abiezer Coppe and Theaurau John Tany) focused on Jewishness shortly before Oliver Cromwell was in touch with Manasseh ben Israel and considering readmission of the Jews to England. *Psalm 51* provides a useful proof-text that documents these divergent ideological perspectives. Samuel Smith's 537-page "short exposition of the 51 Psalme" (*David's Repentance* 1614) explicitly views David's *Psalm 51* in Christian terms, while John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* (1666) and *Pilgrims Progress* I (1677) silence much that was explicitly Hebraic in biblical verse. On the other hand, in the 1650's, Ranter Abiezer Coppe claimed to be a Jew as he identified with King David and shocked his contemporaries, while Theaurau John Tany promised "the returne of the Jewes from their Captivity." As opposed to the silencing of the Judaic in Smith and Bunyan, Coppe and Tany focus explicitly on Jewishness and national return.

Keywords: *Psalm 51*, Typology, Prodigal Son, Elder Brother, Ranters, Messianism

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From Adam and Eve to the Golden Calf: The Pentateuch/Torah in Middle English Mystery Plays

Monika Fludernik, Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg

English mystery plays, usually existing in cycles (e.g. the York Cycle), provide a story of the main stages of Christianity's myth. This starts with the creation of the world—frequently taking Cain and Abel, the Deluge, the Exodus from Egypt, Moses receiving the tablets of the law, and the Golden Calf story as episodes from the Hebrew Bible—and then moving on to the story of the Gospels—ending with the passion of Christ, the Resurrection and the Pentecost miracle. In this paper the focus will be on the storyline narrated in the first two books of the Pentateuch from the Hebrew Bible, that is from the creation of the world to the return of the Jews to the Holy Land. The initial focus will be on the selection of episodes from the Bible, hence, for example: how many of the dramatic presentations include the Deluge; how many versions include the Golden Calf episode. Secondly, these dramatic presentations of the biblical episodes will be analysed: Are there major differences in presentation?; and how do they compare with the Biblical text? The questions I would like to answer are not only to what extent different cycles represent the same episodes differently (for instance, by having different types of dialogue), but also whether one can observe an ulterior argument in these episodes regarding the (late) medieval and early modern audiences to which these plays were addressed. Such messages will most likely be moral and pastoral, but also relate to questions of theological teaching that may have become controversial in the wake of the rise of proto-Protestantism.

Keywords: English Mystery Plays, Cycle Plays, Bible, Narrative Technique

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A Consideration of Hermeneutic Perspectives on the Book of Ecclesiastes
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My paper will discuss varied hermeneutic perspectives in reading the biblical *Book of Ecclesiastes*. In recent years, there has been an increasing diversity of methods and literary approaches for interpreting the Bible (e.g., reader response criticism, rhetorical criticism, feminist interpretation, ideological criticism). Though any interpretation rests on the shoulders of previous scholars, my commentary is designed to reflect collaboration between myself and my co-author Katharine J. Dell, Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge. This collaboration, between scholars from divergent cultural and religious backgrounds, integrates the respective hermeneutical considerations, theological perspectives, and angles of cultural contextualization. Our hermeneutic perspective combines a careful linguistically-focused approach with a conceptual and ideational discussion. Both of these aspects are examined through identification of key words and key themes that highlight the social context and cultural worldview of the author of *Ecclesiastes*. Such an investigation into the book reveals a deep-seated ambiguity—as opposed to ambivalence—intentionally lends itself to an enhanced role for the reader. The challenge then, is not so much in pinning down one true meaning, as in navigating between different and even opposing attitudes towards the meaning of life that different readers might find.

Keywords: Royal Fiction, Authorship, Dissonance, Ambiguity, Futility, Cultural Context, Literary Unity, Skepticism

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The Parable of the Poor Man's Ewe Lamb: Dimensions of Judgement and Interpretation

Chanita Goodblatt, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

The *Parable of the Poor Man's Ewe Lamb* (2 Samuel 11-12) is primarily concerned with David's (self-)judgement for his sins of adultery and murder. Uriel Simon has been influential in reading this parable as an example of a juridical parable, "a realistic story about a violation of the law, related to someone who had committed a similar offence with the purpose of leading the unsuspecting hearer to pass judgment on himself." Such an emphasis on judgement also delineates the issue of interpretation—whether it is Robert Alter's statement about the parable's "rhetoric of entrapment" or Meir Sternberg's statement that it is a "*veiled parable*, a trap reserved for kings." What these definitions share is an emphasis on the biblical parable as a complex, multi-layered speech act: either as a "verdictive" in which the parable's speaker delivers an official verdict to establish the truth, pass judgement and determine justice; or as an act of interpretation in terms of the participation of both the parabolic addressee and the reader of the biblical text. These dimensions of the parable will be studied as they are particularly enacted in early modern dramatic and poetic texts, which transform the (narrative, interpretive) gaps inherent in the biblical text into distinct performative actions and poetic strategies.

Keywords: Juridical Parable, Chorus, George Peele, Antoine de Montchrestien, Francis Sabie, Robert Aylett, *David and Bersheba*

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The Book of Job and its Renaissance Readers
Hannibal Hamlin, Ohio State University

For millennia, Jews and Christians have turned to the *Book of Job* as one of the most powerful explorations of the most fundamental human problems. Why do the innocent suffer? Why me? Is there a reason? If bad things do happen to good people, how can God be just? These questions preoccupied Renaissance men and women as they did earlier ones, but for the first time, at least in England, they were able to read the *Book of Job* in their own language. This book was available in English Bibles, but it was also paraphrased and adapted into a variety of literary forms, including plays, dialogues, and epic poems. This paper will explore these adaptations to discover what it was in the *Book of Job* that particularly preoccupied, consoled, frustrated, or disturbed English Renaissance readers. It will also consult popular sermons and commentaries on the book, especially those of John Calvin. That Calvin preached 159 sermons on the *Book of Job*, delivered every day for almost six months, testifies to his interest in the book, and how it presented a particular challenge to Protestant theology. The God of Job is terrifying enough, but that Job was a man “perfect and upright,” as the *King James* translation has it, was unacceptable to Christians who believed all of humanity to be fundamentally corrupt. Job could not be innocent, since no man is. But then what is his fault? Why does God make him suffer? Or is this the wrong question entirely? Calvin struggled to answer these questions, but were his answers satisfactory?

Keywords: *Book of Job*, William Shakespeare, Francis Quarles, John Milton, Suffering, Theodicy

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This paper presents the artistic uniqueness of Artemisia Gentileschi, as reflected in her work *Esther before Ahasuerus* (1630-1635). The painting describes the biblical scene in which the Jewish Queen Esther appears before the King, in order to beg him to spare her people. Through Artemisia's colorful and theatrical interpretation, I will discuss the ways in which she managed to cast the roll of the female character as strong, brave and active, without compromising the contemporary social rules, artistic codes and patrons' demands. For in this painting, the delicate brush strokes, the lavish clothing, and the vibrant exchange of light and shade are all directed to convey Esther as a strong, capable woman within a most dangerous setting. This consequently uses her femininity in a subtle yet assertive way, without breaking the conventional gender power relations of the late 17th-century. Moreover, a close reading of the painting beyond a traditional art historical analysis, will enable a careful examination of the play of gazes presented in Artemisia's work. For in my opinion, her paintings display for the first time an innovative use of the woman's gaze, which potentially convey multiple meanings when meeting the eyes of the male viewer. The dialectical relationship—between the restrictions cast upon a woman's gaze and the challenging gazes Artemisia depicted—will be the center of my discussion. This reading will call for an examination of the ways in which Baroque men and women looked at works of art—and from within them—as an expression of gender differences, and how these differences influenced Artemisia's creation.

Keywords: Female Character, Social Status of Women, Gaze, Gender

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Peshat (Plain Meaning) and Polemics in Medieval Jewish Commentaries on Genesis and Exodus
Martin Lockshin, York University

Two parallel developments occurred in the history of Jewish Bible exegesis in the Middle Ages, almost at the same time. First, Jewish exegetes, started to pay more attention to the *peshat*, the plain or contextual meaning of the Bible. For the first time in history, they produced Bible commentaries that were dedicated in whole or in part to this enterprise. Some of the most impressive Jewish Bible commentaries of all time were written in or around the twelfth century, including those of Rashi (1040-1105), Rashbam (c.1080–c.1165), Abraham ibn Ezra (1089-1167), and Joseph Bekhor Shor (second half of the 12th-century), commentaries that are still studied today by Bible scholars and by traditional Jews. Secondly, Jewish Bible commentaries also began around this point in history to include many passages that were polemical reactions to Christianity or to Christian Bible exegesis. Some scholars have argued that these two phenomena are connected, and that the flourishing of *peshat* exegesis in and around the twelfth century may have its roots in the desire to polemicize against Christianity. Through careful examination of passages in medieval Jewish Bible commentaries on *Genesis* and *Exodus*, this talk will examine such an alleged connection and raise some doubts about the interconnectedness of these two phenomena.

Keywords: *Peshat*, *Midrash*, Exegesis, Polemics, Christianity, Judaism

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Illuminating the Creation in Medieval Hebrew Bibles from Ashkenaz
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The Creation is one of the main scenes portrayed in illuminated Bibles from the thirteenth century onwards. The theme of Creation has a polemic context at this time, since in Christian art it is the image of Jesus who is portrayed as the creator. This is the case, for example, in the well-known *Bible Moralisée*, a French manuscript probably produced for the King in the 1230's. On their part, in many Hebrew illuminated manuscripts the iconography and style of the images are closely related to Christian art, but only in rare cases can we actually discern whether the work was produced by a Jewish illuminator or a Christian one. This is because the patron, or a person acting on his behalf (such as the scribe), would order the artist to design and illustrate the scenes in a particular manner and thus alter their meaning. In this paper, against the background of contemporary textual and artistic evidence, I shall examine Creation scenes in the light of Jewish-Christian medieval relations in *Ashkenaz* (German lands and France).

Keywords: Ashkenazi Bibles, Biblical Exegesis, *Hasidei Ashkenaz*, Hebrew Bible, Illuminated Manuscripts, Jewish-Christian Relations, Medieval Ashkenaz, Micrography Decoration

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The biblical story of the *Binding of Isaac* has played a central role in Jewish culture since Antiquity, and can be considered part of the foundation myth of the Jewish people. This story has been retold by generation after generation of Jews. While the 19-verse text in *Genesis* 22 leaves many details untold, later retellings of the story have attempted to fill in those lacunae—often projecting the thoughts and feelings of current readers onto the ancient text. My paper reviews a corpus of poems retelling the *Binding of Isaac*, composed by Ashkenazic Jews: *Akeda Piyyutim*, some 40 medieval liturgical poems written in Hebrew; and *Yudisher Shtam*, an early modern epic poem written in Yiddish. These texts reflect historical and cultural aspects of their contemporary Jewish existence—particularly evident in professions, within the classic narrative, of the Jewish position in Jewish-Christian polemics, including reaction to the Christian appropriation of “the Sacrifice of Isaac” as a prefiguration of the Crucifixion. These liturgical and epic poems also associate the biblical story with Jewish martyrdom (*Kiddush Hashem*) during the Crusades, presenting the persecuted Jews as Abraham, Sarah and Isaac. My paper will review the differences between the Hebrew and Yiddish poems. Thus while the Hebrew *Piyyutim* are meant for a liturgical setting, the Yiddish poem is considered to be part of a belletristic genre (and perhaps included some *avant la lettre* theatrical aspects) and exhibits strong influences of the German epic.

Keynote Words: Piyyut, Old Yiddish, Crusades, Diglossia, Binding of Isaac, Sacrifice of Isaac, Jewish-Christian Polemics

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“Blessed Joseph! I would thou hadst more fellows”: John Bunyan’s Joseph
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The figure of Joseph in the *Book of Genesis* might now be called a Renaissance man. For while he is a talented economist and CEO both on the local and national level, his ability as well to interpret dreams also indicates his brilliance as a psychologist. What is more, for those interested in family roles and their expression—whether in ancient mythology or in the more recent bildungsroman—Joseph is an archetype of the motherless younger son, favored by his father but thoroughly disliked by his siblings, and banished from home to face a series of challenges that will test and mature him. For the seventeenth-century English writer and preacher John Bunyan, steeped as he was in Holy Scripture, Joseph served as a moral exemplar in his response to sexual temptation and false accusation on the part of his master’s wife. Bunyan himself had been falsely accused of patronizing so-called loose women; he notes that “When *Joseph’s* Mistress tempted him to lie with her, he was afraid of the *Word* of God; *How shall I do this great wickedness*, said he and *sin against God?*” As did Joseph, Bunyan spent many years confined to a prison cell, having bound “lies and slanders to [himself] as an ornament.” This paper examines Bunyan’s appropriation of Joseph’s story in various prose works: *Grace Abounding*, *Mr. Badman* and “The Acceptable Sacrifice.”

Keywords: Allegory, Imprisonment, Nonconformity, Pilgrimage, Preaching

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The Gang Rape in Judges 19: Saul, Sodom, Isaac, and the Power of Translation
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Judges 19, in the modern world, is not a well-known biblical text. The passage appears towards the end of the book of *Judges*, itself not commonly read, and the horror of the story lead many to avoid it. Despite this, the better-known narratives in the Bible dealing with the destruction of the city of Sodom (*Genesis* 19), the sacrifice of Isaac (*Genesis* 22), and Saul's victory against Nahash, the Ammonite (I *Samuel* 11) are all connected to *Judges* 19 through the gang rape of the female protagonist. The Hebrew text does this through specific terminology used in these narratives, as well as through unique themes. The relationship of these other biblical narratives to *Judges* 19 creates a dialogue, almost demanding of the reader to consider how to evaluate the various characters in the various texts in light of each other. Translating the Hebrew text, however, modifies how such narratives relate to each other. This paper will begin by providing an overview of the key aspects of *Judges* 19 in relation to the three other narratives. The main part of the paper will then focus on how the *King James Bible* translates a few key terms in those episodes, thereby modifying the relationship of *Judges* 19 to the other biblical narratives. Finally, how the text was treated in the early modern period will suggest how those shifts were interpreted.

Keywords: Gang Rape, *King James Bible*, Translation

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The Story of Rachel and Leah and their Image in the Zohar
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While the *Zohar* is the most important literary work of Medieval *Kabbalah*, it also belongs to the late Midrashic and Aggadic literature. Thus the homilies in the Zoharic corpus tell the biblical stories anew from a Medieval-Kabbalistic point of view. This paper focuses on the way in which the biblical story of Rachel and Leah is shaped by the *Zohar* in comparison to the biblical and early Aggadic versions. The analysis in the *Zohar* of aspects of continuity on the one hand, and aspects of change on the other hand, reveals not merely its literary quality or creativity, but also spiritual distress, mystical orientation and self-consciousness. Given that the Kabbalistic image of Rachel and Leah is a rare case in which the *Zohar* makes use of female figures, it also provides an opportunity to examine the role of the stories in the Kabbalistic world concerning biblical matriarchs from a Gender Perspective. In addition, this Zoharic story will be discussed within the context of Jewish-Christian relationships.

Keywords: *Zohar, Kabbalah, Medieval Literature, Midrash, Aggadah*

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