

Galit Hasan-Rokem, Hagar Salamon and Shalom Sabar (eds.), *In honorem Tamar Alexander*. [Hebrew] (Jerusalem Studies in Folklore, 30.) Jerusalem: Magnes Press for The Mandel Institute of Jewish Studies, Faculty of Humanities, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2016. xii [English], xx, 273 [Hebrew] pages.

Reviewed by Ephraim Nissan

A shorter version appears in *Fabula*.

The *Festschrift* under review celebrates 35 years Tamar Alexander has been joint editor of *Jerusalem Studies in Folklore*, the other joint editor with her being, since foundation, Galit Hasan-Rokem. Tamar Alexander, born in Jerusalem, is especially known for her research into all genres of the folk literature and folklore of Judaeo-Spanish-speaking Sephardic Jews, yet it is not her only area of research. Prizes she was awarded include Spain's Orden del Mérito Civil.

The dedicatory preface and Alexander's publication list are followed with Dina Stein's article "Rabbinic Tales in the Israel Folklore Archives [IFA]: Holy men and Tricksters". Of IFA's more than 24,000 tales, only 200 "revolve round a rabbinic figure (of Late Antiquity). Half of these tales are hagiographic narratives about Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai (Rashbi) and Rabbi Meir, two characters who are associated with religious practices in the present, because their graves are pilgrimage sites. These tales tell of miraculous interventions of the saintly figures in modern times. Other [late antique] rabbinic figures appear in the rest of the corpus, around 100 tales" (p. vii), mostly about Rabbi Akiva, tales about whom take place in his own days, and curiously, such that he "is presented as a trickster-like figure or is associated with trickster-like discourse" (p. vii). Dina Stein "associates these stories about Rabbi Akiva with a recurring tale-type — AT 759 (God's Justice Vindicated) and offers a generative-poetic account for his prominence in the IFA rabbinic tales, based on Umberto Eco's model of Cult Movies" (p. vii).

Quite importantly, Stein reflects that the subversive position of trickster tales, including those about rabbis from the distant past, may reflect the timing of the story-tellers' performance for the benefit of the archival project in its early days, which was in the nascent years of the State of Israel. "By depicting the rabbis as subversive figures, the story-tellers have been expressing their own attitude toward the hegemonic center", so their stories "may thus be seen as epitomizing the social-political drama of the archival project itself" (p. vii), in its own and the State of Israel's early years.

The next paper is by Osnat Sharon, "Elephant, Leviathan and Nineveh the Great City: *Sibbuv Rabbi Petachia* and *Midrash Yona*, Printed Side by Side". She is concerned with the fact that the *sibbuv* ("circuit", "itinerary") of Petachia was printed in Prague in 1595 together with an exegesis on the biblical book of Jonah. What those two texts in the same booklet share is marvels. "Juxtaposing these texts intensifies the *Sibbuv*'s theological framing and brings into focus the Midrash's special dimension, inviting the reader to perceive it as a travelogue" (p. viii). I agree: in the early medieval homiletic exegesis digest *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*,<sup>1</sup> Jonah saves from Leviathan the Fish inside whose belly he is, by telling Leviathan that he, Jonah, will partake with the other saintly people of Leviathan's flesh at the Latter-Day banquet, and that he, Jonah, has come to see Leviathan in advance; as proof, Jonah (apparently through the fish's eye, which is like a glass window) shows Leviathan that he is circumcised, and Leviathan flees far away.<sup>2</sup> "(Jonah) said to it (*i.e.* the fish). Behold, I have saved thee from the mouth of Leviathan, show me what is in the sea

<sup>1</sup> Gerald Friedlander (ed., trans.), *Pirkê de Rabbi Eliezer* (The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great) According to the Text of the Manuscript Belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna Translated and Annotated with Introduction and Indices. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., & New York: The Bloch Publishing Company 1916. The relevant passage is on pp. 69–71. Osnat Sharon quotes the passage in Hebrew on p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Not in the sense that other travellers would flee a train compartment they shared with an exhibitionist, but in the sense that Jonah has done like a policeman or public officer showing his badge or similar identification. Through the Covenant of Abraham, Jonah is really connected with the powers that be. Jewish readers, vulnerable in the real world, would have been delighted to find that in the wondrous world undersea, their identity is redoubtable.

and in the depths” (Friedlander’s translation). Jonah is then rewarded with a sighting tour underwater (just as Alexander the Great, lowered in a glass submersible, can see underwater).<sup>3</sup> Let us see this in further detail:

“And the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah” (*ibid.* {i.e. *Jonah* 1, verse} 17). Rabbi Tarphon said: That fish was specially appointed from the six days of Creation to swallow up Jonah, as it is said, “And the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah” (*ibid.*). He entered its mouth just as a man enters the great synagogue, and he stood (therein). The two eyes of the fish were like windows of glass giving light to Jonah. Rabbi Meir said: One pearl was suspended inside the belly of the fish and it gave illumination to Jonah, like this sun which shines with its might at noon; and it showed to Jonah all that was in the sea and in the depths, as it is said, “Light is sown for the righteous” (Ps. xcvi. 11).

The fish said to Jonah, Dost thou not know that my day had arrived to be devoured in the midst of Leviathan’s mouth? Jonah replied, Take me beside it, and I will deliver thee and myself from its mouth. It brought him next to the Leviathan. (Jonah) said to the Leviathan, On thy account have I descended to see thy abode in the sea, for, moreover, in the future will I descend and put a rope in thy tongue,<sup>4</sup> and I will bring thee up and prepare thee for the great {latter-day} feast of the righteous.<sup>5</sup> (Jonah) showed it the seal of our father Abraham<sup>6</sup> (saying), Look at the Covenant (seal), and Leviathan saw it and fled before Jonah a distance of two days’ journey.<sup>7</sup> (Jonah) said to it (*i.e.* the fish). Behold, I have saved thee from the mouth of

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<sup>3</sup> Ilana Pardes, “Remapping Jonah’s Voyage: Melville’s *Moby-Dick* and Kitto’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature*”, *Comparative Literature*, 57(2), 135–157, suggests on p. 136 that something that the New York-born Herman Melville wrote in his 1851 novel *Moby-Dick* reflected lore from the *Pirquei de-Rabbi Eliezer* account of Jonah inside the fish. She suggests that Melville was aware of the idea that Jonah saw the submarine environment through the window-like eyes of the fish. I quote from pp. 135–136 in her paper:

In constructing his grand interpretation of the Book of Jonah in *Moby-Dick*, Melville, true to his hermeneutic position, responds to diverse readings of Jonah: Calvin’s commentaries on Jonah, popular sermons of a Calvinistic bent (Mapple’s sermon is modeled on this genre), Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (Crusoe is regarded as a sinful Jonah from the very opening of the book [...]), Pierre Bayle’s account in *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (1697), and John Eadie’s entry on “Jonah” in Kitto’s *Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature* (1845), among them. Less traceable Jonahs also peep out at different junctures. Ishmael’s ruminations about the possibility of painting Jonah’s eye looking through the “bow window” eye of the whale in Captain Colnett’s picture may be an allusion to the famous midrash on Jonah’s sightseeing through the window-like eyes of the big fish while traveling in the deep. And one could conjecture, in light of Sterling Stucky’s studies on Melville’s exposure to African-American culture, that Melville was not unaware of Jonah’s major role in African-American spirituals in his shaping of Pip as Jonah [...]

How could Melville possibly know about the Hebrew source? Pardes (2005) explains in fn. 1 to p. 136: “This midrash appears in *Midrash Jonah* and in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, Chapter 10. It is quoted in Pierre Bayle’s entry on Jonah in *Dictionnaire historique et critique*.” References cited in the quotation include John Kitto, *A Cyclopedia of Biblical Literature* (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1845), and Pierre Bayle, *The Dictionary Historical and Critical of Mr Peter Bayle, 1734–1738* (2nd edn., New York: Garland, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Thus recycling wording from *Job* 40:25 of the Hebrew Bible, = *Job* 41:1 of the Revised Version.

<sup>5</sup> At the latter-day banquet of the righteous, these will be served the flesh of the Leviathan and of the Behemoth; cf. *Babylonian Talmud*, *Bava Batra* 74a, *Hagigah* 14a; and *Matthew* 26:29.

<sup>6</sup> I.e., Jonah shows the Leviathan proof of his having undergone circumcision, just as according to a motif in homiletics, Joseph, having revealed to his brothers that he is Joseph, is believed by them once he shows them that he is circumcised — but in the case of Jonah and the Leviathan, perhaps, just perhaps humour was intended, even though, after all, what Jonah is doing is like a policeman or other public officer showing his card as proof of his authority.

<sup>7</sup> That is because Jonah showed proof that he was quite well connected, because of the divine Covenant with Abraham. The Leviathan is not fleeing from Jonah’s display the way right-thinking people on a train would immediately leave their compartment if a fellow traveller uncovered himself, turning out to be a perverted exhibitionist. The Leviathan is fleeing because Jonah stated that he, Jonah, had come deliberately in order to see the Leviathan; and because Jonah explained his motive in doing so being that Jonah is going to eat of

Leviathan, show me what is in the sea and in the depths.<sup>8</sup> It showed him the great river of the waters of the Ocean,<sup>9</sup> as it is said, “The deep was round about me” (Jonah ii. 5), and it showed him the paths of the Reed Sea through which Israel passed {during the Exodus}, as it is said, “The reeds were wrapped about my head” (*ibid.*); and it showed him the place whence the waves of the sea and its billows flow, as it is said, “All thy waves and thy billows passed over me” (*ibid.* 3); and it showed him the pillars of the earth in its foundations, as it is said, “The earth with her bars for the world were by me” (*ibid.* 6);<sup>10</sup> and it showed him the lowest Sheol, as it is said, “Yet hast thou brought up my life from destruction, O Lord, my God” (*ibid.*); and it showed him Gehinnom, as it is said, “Out of the belly of Sheol I cried, and thou didst hear my voice” (*ibid.* 2); and it showed him (what was) beneath the Temple of God, as it is said, “(I went down) to the bottom of the mountains (*ibid.* 6). {I.e., the roots of Jerusalem’s seven mountains. See below.} Hence we may learn that Jerusalem stands upon seven (hills),<sup>11</sup> and he saw there the Eben Shethiyah (Foundation Stone)<sup>12</sup> fixed in the depths. He saw there the sons of Korah standing and praying over it.<sup>13</sup> They said to Jonah, Behold thou dost stand beneath the Temple of God, pray and thou wilt be answered. Forthwith Jonah said to the fish, Stand in the place where thou art standing, because I wish to pray. {...}

The itinerary of Petachia of Regensburg (Ratisbon), a source of wonder for its pre-modern readers, was translated from Hebrew into English by A. Benisch,<sup>14</sup> whose 1856 “Prefatory Remarks” claimed: “Although a native of Ratisbon, which, at the time, from its numerous congregation distinguished for learning, deserved the epithet of Jewish Athens, yet Petachia, like his brother Yizchak,<sup>15</sup> lived, according to Zunz, at Prague, from which city he set out on his travels, probably between 1170 and 1180, certainly prior to 1187, since he described the Holy Land as still in the possession of the Crusaders”.

The elephant in the title of Osnat Sharon’s paper is the elephant Petachia saw in Nineveh (standing for Mossul), the instrument of carrying out death sentences: once so ordered, the elephant takes a man by means of its “lip” (its trunk), and throws him to his death. Petachia also related that when warriors mount into the “constructed city” (the “castle”: cf. Elephant and Castle, a square in London), the elephant “extends its lip” and they climb on it as though it was a bridge”. Sharon discusses several passages (descriptions or folktales) in Petachia’s itinerary because of the function of their wondrous features.

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the flesh of the Leviathan at the Latter-Day banquet reserved to righteous people; and because Jonah substantiated his claims by showing the Leviathan proof of his connection high above.

<sup>8</sup> What follows seizes the opportunity to have Jonah sightseeing the way the mythical tradition about Alexander the Great has the latter sightseeing underwater.

<sup>9</sup> The Ocean here is conceived of as being the water supposed to surround the landmass.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Psalms* 104:5 and *Babylonian Talmud*, *Hagigah* 12b.

<sup>11</sup> This is an instance of the widespread motif of a city’s seven hills, which is very widespread, and is associated with a multitude of cities.

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_cities\\_claimed\\_to\\_be\\_built\\_on\\_seven\\_hills](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_cities_claimed_to_be_built_on_seven_hills)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven\\_hills\\_of\\_Istanbul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_hills_of_Istanbul)

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven\\_hills\\_of\\_Moscow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_hills_of_Moscow) and so forth.

<sup>12</sup> The Foundation Stone (*Even haShtiyah*) is traditionally located in what is now the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. It was called Foundation Stone because the whole world was founded thereon, according to the *Jerusalem Talmud*, tractate *Yoma* 5:4, 42c; see also in the *Babylonian Talmud*, tractates *Yoma* 54b and *Sanhedrin* 26b.

<sup>13</sup> As traditionally, the sons of the rebel Korah repented at the time of their father’s rebellion against Moses, so their punishment in Hell was more lenient than for the rest, and they obtained there a higher place, whence they could pray

<sup>14</sup> A. Benisch (ed., trans.), *Travels of Rabbi Petachia of Ratisbon, who, in the latter end of the twelfth century, visited Poland, Russia, Little Tartary, the Crimea, Armenia, Assyria, Syria, the Holy Land, and Greece*. London: Trubner, 1856. Hebrew and English on facing pages. With long endnotes by A. Benisch and W.F. Ainsworth.

<sup>15</sup> Rabbi Isaac ben Jacob ha-Lavan (White, Weiss?) was a Tosaphist, i.e. a glossator of the Babylonian Talmud.

TRAVELS  
OF  
RABBI PETACHIA,  
OF RATISBON,

WHO, IN THE LATTER END OF THE TWELFTH CENTURY,

VISITED

POLAND, RUSSIA, LITTLE TARTARY, THE  
CRIMEA, ARMENIA, ASSYRIA, SYRIA, THE  
HOLY LAND, AND GREECE.

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TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW, AND PUBLISHED, TOGETHER  
WITH THE ORIGINAL ON OPPOSITE PAGES,

BY DR. A. BENISCH,

WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES, BY THE TRANSLATOR AND

WILLIAM F. AINSWORTH, ESQ., F.S.A., F.G.S., F.R.G.S.

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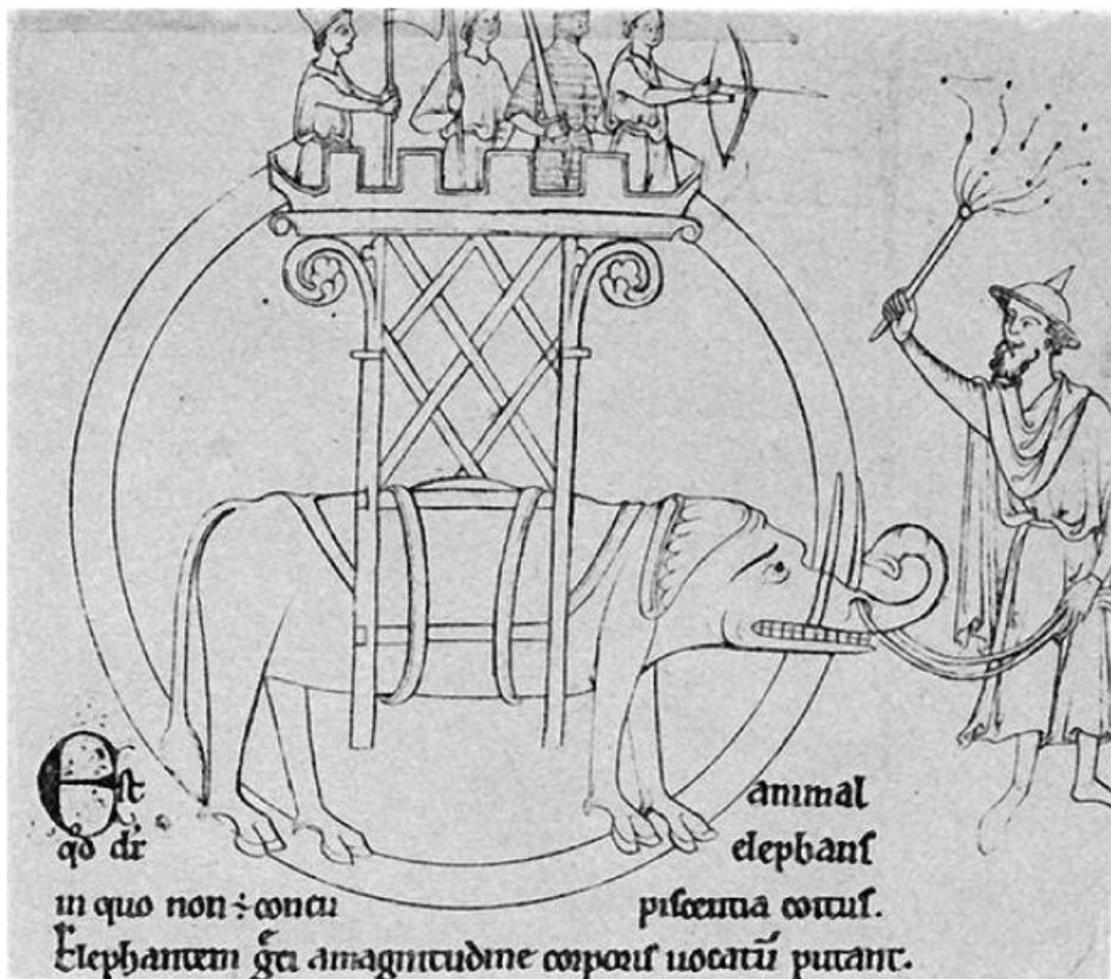
LONDON:

MESSRS. TRUBNER & CO., PATERNOSTER ROW;

AND AT

THE JEWISH CHRONICLE OFFICE, 7, BEVIS MARKS.

1856.



An elephant lashed at by a Jew in the Cambridge Bestiary.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Debra Higgs Strickland, “The Jews, Leviticus, and the Unclean in Medieval English Bestiaries”. Ch. 7 in *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism and Antisemitism in Medieval and Early Modern Visual Culture*, edited by Mitchell B. Merback. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2008, pp. 203–232.

Elephants put to anti-Jewish use appear in Strickland (*ibid.*, pp. 211, 229, and Fig. 5 on p. 498). Her paper is concerned with medieval Christian bestiaries that, while receptive to the partition of animals into clean and unclean camps as set forth in *Leviticus*, use that concept in order to attack the Jews. Fig. 5 on p. 498 in Strickland’s article is taken from a bestiary from the Cambridge University Library, MS. Ii.4.26, folio 7 *recto*, and shows an elephant with cloven hoofs, slim, with a tail as long as the animal is tall, which is not very much: the animal only reaches the waist of a man lashing at it, bearded and wearing a pointed hat (this identifies him as a Jew), and pulling reins attached to nostrils found at the base of the elephant’s short trunk. The elephant has long eyebrows, shows a long row of clenched teeth, but this is not an aggressive display: rather, the elephant has an apparently suffering facial expression, while the animal is staring at the Jew. The elephant’s tusks point upwards (as though it was a boar), and instead of elephants ears, we see a low hairline with, instead of hair, what appears to be feathers on a wing. This is apparently a representation of the ears. The elephant from the early 13th-century Cambridge Bestiary carries on its back a structure (the howdah or “castle”, such as in the emblem that gave Elephant and Castle, a square in South London, its name) with columns ending in flowery capitals, and on top, four warriors are standing. Their body is smaller than the Jew’s, at whom none of them is staring. The archer in front is aiming with his longbow in front, well above the Jew’s hat, but the arrow aims at the knots at the end of the flail that the Jew is holding, with its threads high in the air (Fig. 33). The Cambridge Bestiary is perhaps from the North Midlands — it has been linked to the Cistercians of Lincolnshire (Strickland, *ibid.*, p. 229) — and is dated to 1200–1210. Strickland explains (*ibid.*, p. 211):

The early thirteenth-century Cambridge Bestiary image of the elephant provides an exceptionally gratuitous way into the Christ-killer theme ([her] Fig. 5 [see our Fig. 33]). Its

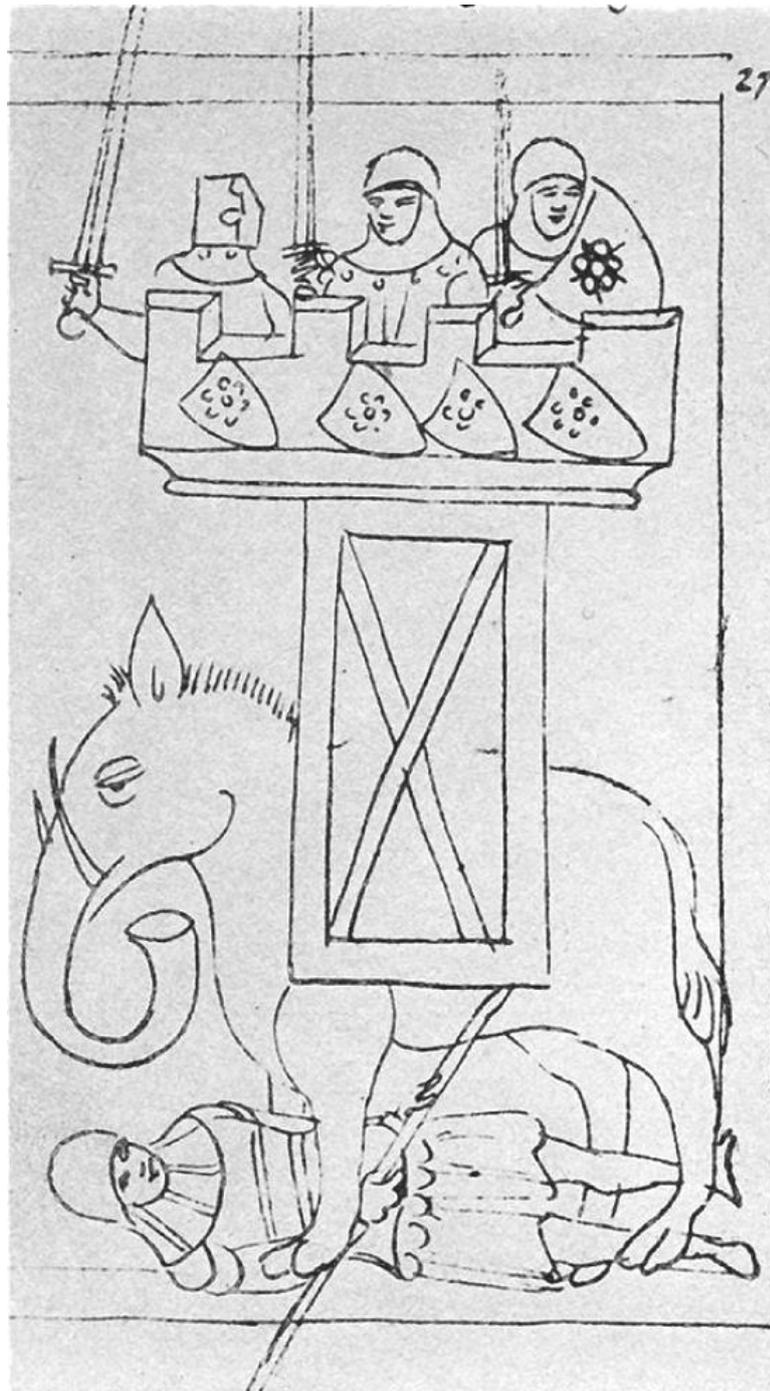


A war elephant, as painted in Spain in the 11th century.<sup>17</sup>

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accompanying text, based on the *Physiologus*, is a lengthy allegory that identifies the elephant as Christ as well as a model for Christian marriage. There is nothing here about the Crucifixion, much less about the Jews' supposed involvement in that event: it is the accompanying image that provides such extra-textual commentary. Once the viewer understands from the text that the fearful, grimacing elephant is a figure of Christ, the meaning of the wicked driver (manhout) wearing the pointed hat and threatening the elephant with a flail becomes clear. The manhout is a Jew, standing in for all contemporary Jews whose ancestors were accused of torturing and murdering Christ. I have suggested elsewhere that the contemporary knights riding inside the elephant's howdah in this and other bestiary elephant images represent Christian crusaders, a reference which in this context suggests another function of the deicide charge, that of justification for the ongoing Christian aggression in the Holy Land.

<sup>17</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Elephant\\_and\\_Castle\\_\(Fresco\\_in\\_San\\_Baudelio,\\_Spain\).jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Elephant_and_Castle_(Fresco_in_San_Baudelio,_Spain).jpg)

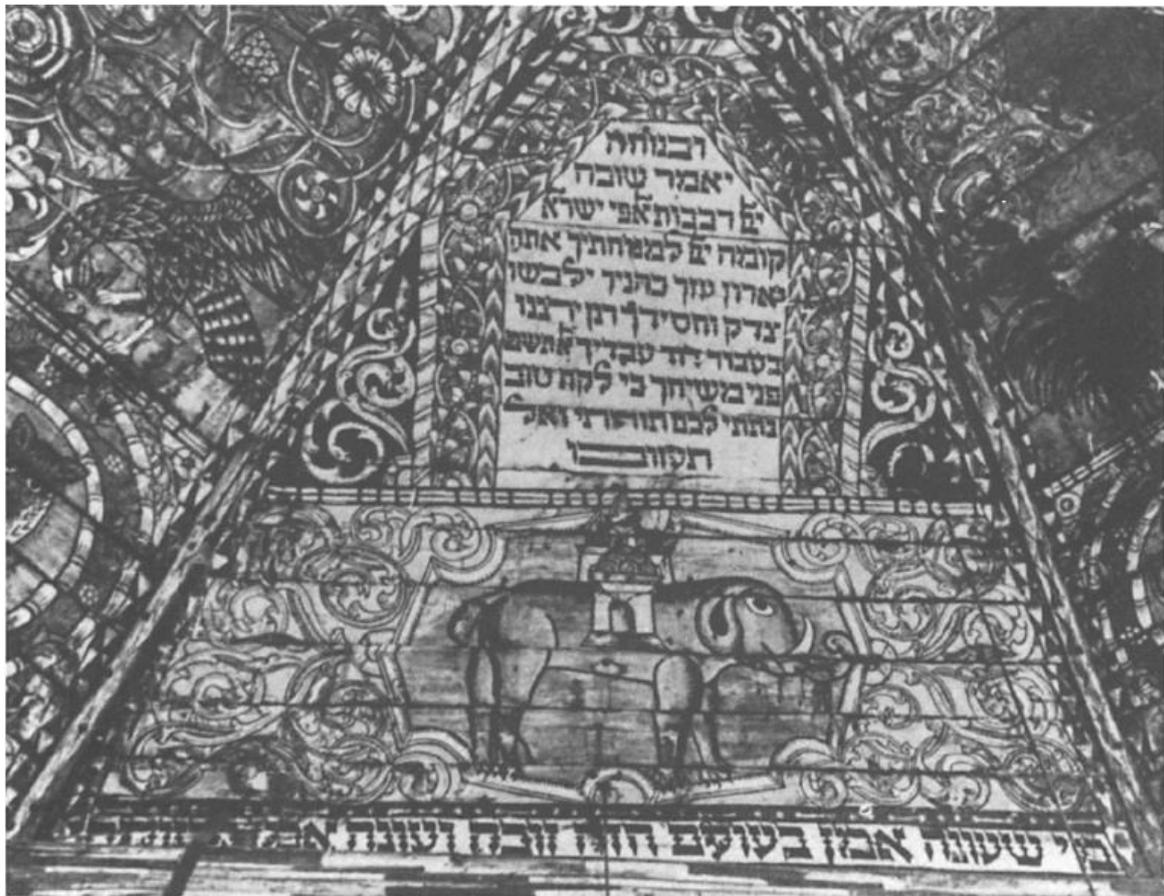


Eleazar's death, trampled upon by an elephant (rather than crushed by the falling elephant), in a *Speculum humanae salvationis* from 1324 (MS Munich *clm.* 146, folio 27 *recto*). According to Ch. 6 in the First Book of Maccabees, one of the Maccabee brothers, Eleazar, died, crushed by an elephant whose belly he had cut open, while fighting against the Seleucid royal army. in 1324 in the *Speculum humanae salvationis* "was adduced as a prefiguration of Christ's sacrificial death on the Cross" (Heckscher, *infra*, p. 160). This was because Eleazar's death was an episode of self-sacrifice from the Old Testament. William S. Heckscher, "Bernini's Elephant and Obelisk", *The Art Bulletin*, 29(3), 1947, pp. 155–182. Elephants in warfare, as well as Eleazar, are the subject of E. Nissan, Elephants in warfare:] "Eude and Eglon, Eleazar the Maccabee, and Two Early Modern Indian Narratives: Factors Explaining the Convergence of Phylogenetically Unconnected Tales", *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies*, 10 (2009), pp. 81–92. Cf. E. Nissan, "Imagined Elephants in the History of European Ideas: Varejka's Pataphysical Way to the Subject". *International Studies in Humour*, 2(1), 2013, pp. 100–177.

ובנינוה היה פיל: ואין ראשו בולט חוץ. והוא  
 גדול. ואוכל כשתי עגלות תבן בפעם אחת: ופיו  
 בחזה. וכשחפץ לאכול מוציא שפתו כאמתיים.  
 ובה מקבץ התבן ומכניס בפיו: וכשנתחייב אדם  
 לשלמון הריגה. אומרים לפיל, זה נתחייב. והוא  
 יקחהו בשפתו ומשליכו למעלה וממיתו: וכמו  
 שאדם עושה ביד, כך הוא עושה בשפתו. ומשונה  
 ומפואר הוא: ועל הפיל בניין עיר. ושנים עשר  
 פרשים עליו עם שריונים. ומוציא שפתו ועולין בו  
 כגשר:

At Nineveh there was an elephant. Its head is not at all protruding. It is big, eats about two waggon loads of straw at once; its mouth is in its breast, and when it wants to eat it protrudes its lips about two cubits, takes up with it the straw, and puts it into its mouth. When the sultan condemns anybody to death, they say to the elephant, This person is guilty. It then seizes him with its lip, casts him aloft, and kills him. Whatever a human being performs with his hand it performs with its lip; this is exceedingly strange and marvellous. Upon the elephant is the structure of a city,<sup>21</sup> upon which there are twelve armed warriors; when it stretches forth its lip they ascend as over a bridge.

Benisch's translation of the elephant episode from Petachia's itinerary. The first two lines are from p. 11, the rest from p. 12 of his 1856 edition.



An elephant surmounted by a houdah in a wall painting in the dome interior as existed at the Gwodiecz synagogue prior to its destruction. D. Davidovitch, *Tsiyyurei-kir be-vatei-knesset be-Polin*, Jerusalem, 1968, plate 11. See a discussion in Marc Michael Epstein, “The Elephant and the Law: The Medieval Jewish Minority Adapts a Christian Motif”. *The Art Bulletin*, 76(3), 1994, pp. 465–478.



Enlarged detail of the previous image.



An elephant with a houdah in a wall painting from the dome interior of the synagogue at Hodorow, prior to its destruction. D. Davidovitch, *Tsiyyurei-kir be-vatei-knesset be-Polin*, Jerusalem, 1968, plate 16. See a discussion in Marc Michael Epstein, “The Elephant and the Law: The Medieval Jewish Minority Adapts a Christian Motif”. *The Art Bulletin*, 76(3), 1994, pp. 465–478.

“The *Piropo* as a Bridge between Cultures in Tetuan (Northern Morocco)”, by Nina Pinto-Abecassis,<sup>18</sup> discusses a facet of the acculturation, under Spanish rule in Tetuan, of Judaeo-Spanish-speaking Jews. That facet is those Jews’ adoption of the Spanish cultural practice of the *piropo* (a witticism or striking remark, usually about body features of a passing woman, flattering or unflattering),<sup>19</sup> something that would not have happened in traditional Jewish society. Pinto-Abecassis examines *piropos* documented from Tetuan from the period of the Spanish protectorate (1912–1956) and the next decade, until the city was emptied of its Jews. She considers the poetics, metaphor and humour of those *piropos*, and their function in Tetuan’s urban space, where Christians, Muslim, and Jewish communities co-existed.

The title of the next paper, by Adam Ratzon, begins with an Egyptian proverb. “*Al ma yisma‘š kbiru, ya alt tadbiru* [Whoever would not listen to elders will not manage in life]: A Literary-Cultural Reading of the Proverbs and Personal Narratives of an Egyptian-Israeli Woman” discusses proverbs the author heard from his grandmother — born in Cairo in 1930, and who has been an Israeli nearly 60 years — as well as her life experience as she related it.

<sup>18</sup> The paper by Pinto-Abecassis (pp. 75–100) is supplemented (on pp. 257–264) by Angy Cohen’s review of her Hebrew book *The Peacock, the Ironed Man and the Half-Woman: Nicknames, Humor and Folklore in the Day-to-Day Speech of Tetuan’s Haketia-Speaking Jews* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Pinto-Abecassis cites webpages dedicated to the *piropo* genre, and one such filename is quite eloquent indeed: “piropos-bonitos-para-conquistar-al-verdadero-amor”. To say the least, it is not a cultural practice that would be applauded by polite, educated members of the public present-day Britain, where “wolf whistles” tend to be stereotypically ascribed to construction workers, expected to be coarse.

Having surveyed Jewish life in mid-20th-century Cairo, Ratzon “analyzes twelve proverbs within their biographical and narrative contexts, while addressing three themes: nostalgia and glorification of the past; family relations; and fate, or what the elderly narrator calls *maktub*,<sup>20</sup> referring mainly to family tragedies” (p. x).

Jacqueline Laznow is the author of the paper “‘I didn’t know I wanted to be a rabbi, there was no name for what I wanted to be’: Life Stories of Women Rabbis Living in Israel”. “Israel’s non-Orthodox movements did not begin to ordain women until twenty years after the first woman rabbi was ordained in the United States” (p. x). “The Israeli cultural context, with its characteristic polyphony, constitutes a unique background for the formation of a new tradition that seeks to become institutionalised” (p. xi). In Laznow’s article, she set to “analyze and interpret Israeli women rabbis’ shared experiences as extracted from their life stories. Analyzing these stories using the narrative-package model revealed their commonalities with Vladimir Propp’s fairy tale narrative structure” (p. xi).

As an aside I am making here: at (Orthodox) rabbinic courts, in family law cases, there exists now the lawyer role of *to’enet rabbanit*, literally “rabbinic arguer (f.)”. This only spans a specialised jurisprudential role of a rabbi, while not the congregational or pastoral role. In Judaism and Islam, unlike with Catholic priests, to what a rabbi or a *qāḍi* can celebrate no sacramental value accrues from the very fact of his being a rabbi or a *qāḍi*: in principle, a layman could officiate instead, even though custom discourages, say, a wedding being celebrated by other than a rabbi.

Laznow’s paper is the last one under the rubric “Articles”, and is followed with the only item under the rubric “Towards a History of Floklöre”, namely, Meir Nizri’s “Israel<sup>21</sup> and the Sabbath as Bride and Groom in Various Sabbath Hymns”. It *is* an article, but it is a detailed survey (an exemplifying rather than an exhaustive one) of occurrences of the motif, ending with a tabulation.<sup>22</sup> Nizri identified 11 elements of analogy between a real-life wedding and the symbolic marriage between Israel the groom and Sabbath the bride, as found in such hymns.

I would like to signal, in the Levantine Hebrew hymn for the Feast of Tabernacles, *Sukká ve-Luláv* (‘A Booth and a Palm-Branch’), King David being likened to a beautiful bride: according to the sixth (and penultimate) stanza, “The myrtle alludes to the three Patriarchs” (i.e., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), as there are three myrtle branches; “Moses and Aaron are [the two] boughs of willow. / David for the *etróg* is a beautiful bride” (this idiosyncratic metaphor, *kalla kelula*, stands for ‘a perfect match’ in the allegory). The tradition is involved, about the Seven Guests (*’ushpizin*), biblical characters, one for each of the seven evening banquets in the booth.

Four book reviews, mostly log ones, conclude the volume. Typos are rare. On p. xx, “in print” should be “in press”. This *Festschrift* doubles as a journal issue, and its high quality is what we have come to expect of that journal, in part thanks to Tamar Alexander. Therefore, the Jubilarian has good reasons to be doubly satisfied.

<sup>20</sup> Literally, an Arabic past participle for “written”, here a participial noun.

<sup>21</sup> “Israel” here is used in the traditional sense “the Jewish people”.

<sup>22</sup> All five articles, including Nizri’s, have English abstracts on pp. vii–viii opening the book from left.