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MIDRASH ASERET HA-DIBROT: THE PESIQTA RABBATI AND THE LATER RECENSIONS

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
Requirements for Ordination

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I pray that the year I spent living with Midrash Aseret haDibrot (the results of which are to follow) does honor to my teacher. I know of no other way to thank him.

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INTRODUCTION

I have always liked a good story. As an undergraduate, I majored in Humanities with a concentration in English and American literature. As a teacher, I often employed stories for their didactic as well as their entertainment value. As a result, in rabbinical school I was immediately attracted to the field of Midrash. In this case, love at first sight did not diminish and through my five years as a rabbinic student, I have spent innumerable hours "sitting with the rabbis" trying to penetrate, to "get inside of" the Biblical text.

The Midrash was, and still is, the place in which the text really came alive, where imagination and creativity were free, where meanings upon meanings were revealed to the one who could read, not only the words but the letters, and not only the letters but the spaces between the letters as well. And the specific tool of the rabbis to which I was particularly drawn, the one which I most deeply appreciate, is the ma'aseh or mashal, the story, the little bits and pieces of profound wisdom gleaned from everyday life which shed light on the mysteries of God, Israel, and the Torah. The mashal, which is devoid of most fictional elements which we know from modern literature, such as dialogue and characterization, is a small tale of human nature, human foibles as well as heroics. The mashal became for me a mirror of the human experience with keen insights into us all.

When it came time to select a thesis topic, I wanted something both midrashic and literary. The later Midrashim

seemed to be a natural choice, bordering as they do, Midrash on the one hand, and fiction, on the other. I wanted to work on a single text, for I was interested in literary quality as much as midrashic content. It remained only to select the particular text.

This project first presented itself to me during a semester course on the Pesiqta Rabbati. One of the selections we read was drawn from the Aseret haDibrot collection within the Rabbati (pisqaot 20-24),[1] which contained some wonderfully insightful meshalim, including a beautiful mashal comparing God, Israel, and Torah to a king, his bride, and their ketubbah (21:15). In my preliminary search of the literature, I had learned of a collection entitled Midrash Aseret haDibrot. Professor Norman Cohen suggested that the two, the Rabbati and the later recensions, might be connected, though scholarly opinion tended to doubt it. We decided that following up on this suggestion would form the basis for a rabbinic thesis entitled, "Midrash Aseret haDibrot: the Pesiqta Rabbati and the Later Recensions."

A major problem was the lack of scholarship in this area. Not only have the Minor Midrashim in general rarely been studied, but there has been almost no systematic examination of the extant manuscripts of the Midrash Aseret haDibrot.[2] We know nothing of its manuscript transmission, which made a

determination of its connection to and/or reliance upon the Aseret haDibrot of the Pesiqta Rabbati almost impossible. Further, while scholarship has been cognizant of the Pesiqta Rabbati,[3] and attention has been paid to the form and structure of its homilies, the nature of its content and message, etc.,[4] the Aseret haDibrot as a minor literary unit within the larger collection has been largely ignored. In general, it seems that there has been a failure to take seriously these minor midrashic collections.

I originally thought to examine the manuscript tradition of Midrash Aseret haDibrot. However, any attempt to study the manuscripts would have had to include some twenty extant texts, spanning several centuries (10th/11th-17th) and any number of countries. It soon became obvious that such a project was well beyond the scope and time constraints of a rabbinic thesis.

Printed texts proved no less of a challenge. There are literally dozens of printed editions. It was clear that one could not even read them all in the course of a rabbinic thesis, let alone study them. My selection, it soon became apparent, would have to be somewhat arbitrary and limited.

Even those studies which did exist on the Midrash Aseret haDibrot tended to treat individual areas of concern and not the whole text. So, for example, Dov Noy identifies all the folkloristic motifs that exist within the text,[5] and Moses Gaster attempts to trace these texts to some ancient collections

of tales which form the source material for much of the two Talmuds and the midrashic literature.[6] In so doing, both scholars fail to see the texts in their own terms and, as a result, miss much of what the texts have to offer.

I began my study with the Pesiqta Rabbati collection. Any attempt to determine a connection with the later recensions would have to be based on a thorough knowledge of this potential "paradigmatic text." This turned out to be a larger task than at first imagined, because not only did I need to study the Aseret haDibrot (six pisqaot spanning some thirty-seven pages of Hebrew text), but I needed to see how this collection fit into the larger picture of the Rabbati as a whole.

I applied both a structural and thematic analysis to the text, assuming that it was, as its title indicated, a single unit. It soon became clear that there were inconsistencies from pisqa to pisqa. Was this a conscious design, or variant sources sewn together, or merely faulty editing? Was there anything, in fact, unifying the Aseret haDibrot and justifying my assumption that this was one text? I had to go back and apply the same structural and thematic analysis to each of the individual pisqaot to see what, if anything, the pisqaot held in common.

If the Rabbati is truly an anthology culled from a variety of sources, it seemed important to look at some of the major texts from which the Aseret haDibrot might have

borrowed material. After all, these same texts would have been available to the later recensions as well. Again, time constraints made it necessary to limit my choice of texts. Hopefully, in this I did not exclude any important earlier parallels.

Finally, I needed to choose some representative later texts with which to compare the Aseret haDibrot of the Rabbati. Once again, I could not read everything. With the texts I did choose, two very different versions of Midrash Aseret haDibrot, I had to apply the same thematic and structural analysis that I used with the Rabbati collection. Once my data was collected with each of the later parallels, I then had to compare them to the Rabbati to see if, in fact, they shared more than just a title.

This then represents the full sweep of the task of this thesis. In the pages that follow, one may read the results of that task. If it does anything, I hope that this study adds to the appreciation of the midrashic texts about which it endeavors to report. If this thesis will then be fortunate enough to bear fruit, then I hope that fruit will be further study of these too-long neglected, deeply rewarding texts.

CHAPTER ONE

MIDRASH ASERET HA-DIBROT IN THE PESIQTA RABBATI

A. An Overview of the Pesiqta Rabbati

Pesiqta Rabbati is a collection of homilies based upon the cycle of readings for the holidays and special Sabbaths.[1] In this way, it resembles its predecessor, the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana. However, while the Kahana is limited to one discourse (or pisqa) on a Torah portion designated for each festal day, the Rabbati contains any number of sermons based upon alternate pentateuchal lessons as well as the prophetic lessons for these occasions. The Rabbati also includes homilies on certain of the Psalms read on particular days. In our extant collections, the Rabbati begins with Hanukkah and spans the entire year, with only the holiday of Sukkot not represented by any homilies at all.

Although there are three basic views regarding the date of its compilation,[2] the Rabbati is recognized by most scholars to be a composite work, probably Palestinian in origin, dating from the 6th or 7th century.[3] Evidence supporting this dating includes; a) the use of earlier texts such as the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana, the Palestinian Talmud, and the early Rabbot midrashim; b) the lack of reference to Arab rule and Islam; as well as c) language and style which bears great similarity to the early homiletic midrashim.

While earlier scholars, such as Leopold Zunz, argued that the Rabbati was composed in Southern Europe/Greece,

later scholars have refuted him by pointing to the Rabbati's reliance upon Palestinian works, its numerous ascriptions to Palestinian authorities, and deference to Palestinian customs, such as marking only one day of holiday/festival observance by not including homilies for the second day of the festival.[4]

As far as the composite nature of this work, it was Hanokh Albeck who first delineated at least four different literary units in the Rabbati.[5] They are:

1) Yelamdenu-Tanhuma -- This is the most common form in the Rabbati; more than half of its sermons are of this genre. All of these homilies begin with an halakhic question (or proem) which is introduced by the formula, "Let our master teach us." The answer to the question immediately follows, most often introducing the theme of the homily. The answer will end with a statement of the pericope text, drawn from the particular pentateuchal or Haftarah text of the day.

This opening is followed by a regular proem which is introduced, almost always, by the phrase, "Thus did Rabbi Tanhuma begin his discourse."[6] This in turn is followed by any number of other proems interwoven with comments on and exposition of the pericope text, as well as thematic derashot. The conclusion often takes the form of a nehemta, a messianic peroration (most often drawn from the Prophets) whose message is one of comfort and consolation.[7]

2) Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana Parallels -- There are ten homilies in the Pesiqta Rabbati which bear a great resemblance to homilies found in the Kahana. They include, pisqaot 14-18 (PRK 4-8), 29/30 A B (PRK 16), 32 (PRK 18), and 51-52 (PRK 27-28).

These homilies open with a series of proems, some very elaborate, usually based on a verse from the Prophets or Writings. These homilies tend to be highly stylized in comparison to the authentic Rabbati materials with the number of proems tending to overshadow and outweigh the pericope comments and thematic derashot.[8]

3) Midrash Aseret haDibrot -- (pisqaot 20-24). All the pisqaot of this section deal with one or more of the Ten Commandments or with the theme of the giving of the Torah (matan Torah). They all begin with a proemial text (except pisqa 24), but unlike the other homilies in the Rabbati, proems are not generally found in the body of the sermon (except in pisqa 21).

The comments on the pericope text as well as the thematic derashot tend to occupy a greater portion of the sermons than they do in the Rabbati.[9] In addition, this is the only section of the Rabbati that follows several consecutive verses in one Torah portion (Exodus 20:2-14), a format more common in the exegetical midrashim than in the homiletical ones.

4) Those marked by the introductory phrase, "Zo hi she-ne'emar be ruah hakodesh" -- (pisqaot 28,30,34-37, and 50). This opening phrase introduces a proem verse from the Prophets or Writings. These homilies are known for what has been called, "the circular petihta," a long and complex proem which instead of returning to the pericope text, returns to the proemial text itself. Thus, structurally, it creates a full circle, from whence it derives its name.

These homilies contain only one proem -- the one which opens each discourse. This is followed by a series of highly narrative derashot on the pericope text which tend to be thematic in nature and not expositional.[10]

To these four a fifth may be added:

5) Midrash Harneinu -- pisqaot 38-47. All of these homilies begin with a quote from Psalms and are similar in form to the Yelamdenu-Tanhuma homilies in that they open with proems followed by an admixture of comments on the pericope text and thematic derashot. All of the homilies in this section are based on themes for the High Holy Days -- Rosh haShana, Yom Kippur, and Shabbat Shuvah.

Modern opinion tends to agree with Albeck's delineation, although there is some difference of opinion as to the exact number of separate units, as well as which and how many pisqaot fall into each category.[11] However, there can be

no doubt that the section Midrash Aseret haDibrot is a separate unit, with only the number of pisqaot remaining open to debate.[12]

Of course there are other issues which remain open for discussion, such as the dating of the Dibrot, source material, etc., but these have no bearing on the separate literary unit status of this collection within the Rabbati, and as such, are not germaine to our discussion here.

B. Aseret haDibrot as a Separate Literary Unit Within the Rabbati

Arguments for the separate status of the Aseret haDibrot cover both structure and style as well as content. As just pointed out, familiar introductory phrases of literary units 1, 4, and 5 are absent here. More than just phrases, these units present the material within a form that makes them easily identifiable. Such a form and its attendant phrases are absent in the Aseret haDibrot collection.

Further, there is some debate as to whether or not the Aseret haDibrot are truly homiletical midrashim or really exegetical midrashim overlayed with some homiletical-type features in order to allow them to appear as part of the Pesiqta Rabbati collection of homilies.[13] That is to say,

with the exception of pisqa 21, almost all of the other pisqaot contain only a single proem which is almost always found at the beginning of the pisqa. There are practically no examples of proemial texts woven into the body of the sermon as is often the case in a homily. Further, the exegesis of the pericope text as well as thematic derashot dominate each of the homilies. In a true Yelamdenu Tanhuma homily, proems and derashot are balanced.

In other words, the possibility exists that in compiling the Pesiqta Rabbati collection, an editor or later redactor found that there was no (or very little) material for Shavuot. Knowing of (or perhaps even creating) an exegetical Midrash on the Ten Commandments, this same editor added a proem to the beginning of each exposition and placed it (the collection) in the Rabbati as the selections for Shavuot.

Another argument for the separate status of the Aseret haDibrot, one which depends on the content of the material and not on the structure, points to the large number of meshalim/tales found in the collection. The extensive use of the mashal, very common in the Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael (an earlier exegetical midrash on the Book of Exodus which includes a section on the Ten Commandments), also identifies this section on Aseret haDibrot as a separate literary unit because the mashal does not play as significant a part in the other homilies of the Rabbati.

While an exhaustive study of the thematic concerns and interests represented in the Rabbati has never been undertaken, some scholars point to pisqa 20 with its almost antinomian astrological exposition of the time of the giving of the Torah, as well as Moses' ascent to God, very reminiscent of Heikhalot mysticism with its fiery angels, and seven levels of heaven, as pointing to content totally absent from other sections of the Rabbati.[14] It is difficult to evaluate this suggestion without an in-depth scanning of the entire Rabbati. Needless to say, that is well beyond the scope of this study. However, one is struck by the boldness of the material in pisqa 20, and recognizes that it does stand out in sharp contrast to at least the rest of the Aseret haDibrot collection itself.

However, inasmuch as the section on Aseret haDibrot is in and of itself inconsistent thematically, it would be almost impossible to determine what, if anything, would be consistent with the Rabbati as a whole, a Rabbati which contains multiple thematic threads and points of view. What is not difficult, though, is the recognition that the Rabbati is a composite work and that Aseret haDibrot, which forms one of its component parts, is evidence of the lack of homogenity in the collection as a whole.

A more intriguing question, though, is whether or not Aseret haDibrot itself represents a composite effort. Do

the differences in structure and content amongst pisqa 20, pisqa 21, pisqaot 22-23/24, and pisqa 24 represent four different literary units? different sources? author? editors? Clearly, there is imbalance between these pisqaot. There are differences in length/size, style, and theme. In the succeeding chapters on structure and theme, I will attempt to shed some light on these questions, and provide answers wherever possible.

C. Aseret haDibrot as an Integral Part of Rabbati

All this said and done, the question may be asked, "Why does the Aseret haDibrot, which seems so different from the other midrashim in the Pesiqta Rabbati, get put into the collection at all?" And the answer, quite simply, is that it belongs.

The Rabbati is a collection of material/midrashim dealing with the holiday cycle. While there is much scholarly uncertainty as to how these midrashim were utilized -- were they read in the synagogue as sermons? were they scholarly exercises for students and rabbis of the academies? -- there can be no doubt that the Aseret haDibrot occupies the place reserved for Shavuot. Inasmuch as the Rabbati presents multiple selections for each holiday, the Aseret haDibrot certainly fits the bill, offering a number of different

derashot/sermons on the theme of the holiday -- the giving of the Torah.[15]

The fact that the various pisqaot seem unequal or not totally uniform, or even that they differ from the rest of the collection, is really a secondary problem, for we have no way of knowing how this material was gathered and redacted. Perhaps it was meant to be an anthology like our modern day festschriften -- certainly no one expects all the essays in a festschrift to be uniform, so long as they are all devoted to the work of a single scholar.

Further, we see that the sermons for the High Holy Days also stand out as a separate unit. Far from being undesirable or obtrusive, perhaps this was the conscious design of the editor(s) and it is only we, in a later generation, who seek uniformity for all the sermons gathered under one "title." In any event, we have no way of knowing, with any degree of certainty, whether the lack of uniformity was dictated by design, circumstance, or even happenstance. What we can say is that the Aseret haDibrot is a separate literary unit, but one which fits very well into the overall design of the Pesiqta Rabbati collection.

As far as the homiletic status of these pisqaot, it will be argued that they are closer to well-shaped and edited homilies than was at first thought to be the case. In addition, it will also be argued that the Dibrot collection

as a whole displays a remarkable similarity of form, indicating, beyond doubt, the hand of a single, conscious editor. In other words, the Aseret haDibrot, even as we find it in the Pesiqta Rabbati, is not at all a hodge-podge of different styles and redactors/editors. Rather, with the possible exception of pisqa 24, it is the carefully designed and original work of a single editor which occupies a rightful place in the Pesiqta Rabbati collection of homilies for the holiday cycle.

CHAPTER TWO

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

A. The Pisqaot

The exact number of pisqaot in the collection Aseret haDibrot depends upon which chapters are included, as well as how these chapters are divided. Earlier editions numbered only four -- pisqaot 21-24.[1] Meir Friedmann, in his Vienna edition of 1880, separated what was thought to be an addendum to pisqa 23, identified it as a fragmentary pisqa on the fifth commandment, and numbered it separately as 23/24. Braude, in his translation, correctly followed Friedmann's lead.[2] However, these scholars were not quite bold enough. This so-called fragment, which forms the basis of a pisqa itself and conforms to the basic pattern of the Aseret haDibrot material, should have received its own chapter enumeration, thus adding a chapter to the Pesiqta Rabbati itself.[3]

In addition, there is the questionable pisqa 20. In the Friedmann edition, this chapter has a separate title (Aseret haDibrot) as opposed to the title which begins pisqa 21 (Eser Devarim). In spite of that, Friedmann maintains that this chapter is indeed part of the overall collection, serving as an introduction to the theme of the giving of the Torah. For Friedmann, then, there are six chapters, one for each of the six Sabbaths that fall between Pesah and Shavuot.[4]

Friedmann's instincts were correct, in that pisqa 20 does belong to the collection. But perhaps not for the

right reasons. As will be discussed later in this chapter, pisqa 20 introduces the structural underpinning which then becomes the basis for each and every complete pisqa in the collection.[5]

Similarly, Braude thinks that pisqa 25, which discusses the tithing of crops, belongs to this section as well, inasmuch as the theme is germaine to the holiday of Shavuot. While he may be correct,[6] it clearly does not belong to the Aseret haDibrot material and as such falls beyond the purview of this study.

What we have then are six pisqaot in the Aseret haDibrot collection of the Pesiqta Rabbati. They include:

Pisqa 20 -- introduces the theme of matan Torah (the giving of the Torah) the cosmic underpinnings;

Pisqa 21 -- the longest pisqa, which discusses the first commandment, and contains a thematic aside on the Ten Commandments as a whole;

Pisqa 22 -- discusses the third commandment;

Pisqa 23 -- discusses the fourth commandment;

Pisqa 23/24 -- (the "fragment") discusses the fifth commandment;

Pisqa 24 -- the shortest pisqa, contains statements about each of the last five commandments, numbers six through ten.

Clearly, there is imbalance in the treatment of the commandments and one can only speculate as to the reasons why

this is so. Why is pisqa 21 so much longer and fuller than the others? Did the editor run out of time and/or material? Did he lose interest in the project? Was pisqa 21, and only pisqa 21, meant to be the homily for Shavuot, paralleling pisqa 12 of the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana? Or are we missing a part of the original text?

Friedmann's theory regarding six pisqaot for six weeks is appealing, but seems after the fact. He finds six pisqaot and then finds an explanation for that number. While that number does seem more than coincidental, it fails to explain the radical differences in form and structure between pisqa 24 and all the others.[7] In light of the other pisqaot, it would take a great leap of faith (as well as a suspension of critical judgment) to believe that the structure and content of pisqa 24, as we have it, is intentional. In addition, one might very well ask why a collection, ostensibly devoted to the Ten Commandments, discusses, at best, only nine of them, and discusses fully, only three. Perhaps the title, Haggadah Shel Shavuot, found on some of the later collections,[8] was an attempt to give voice to some of the misgivings in calling this the "Midrash of the Ten Commandments."

Yet, one cannot help but feel that if the later medieval collections contain material for each of the Ten Commandments,[9] and demonstrate balance of treatment for each of them, then there must be something missing from our Pesiqta Rabbati collection. It seems that our collection is fragmentary,

either because parts are missing or just never were included. I believe this will be borne out as we turn to a discussion of the structure of the individual pisqaot themselves, for they seem to be whole and complete, showing a remarkable similarity of structure and form, one to the other. If the editor could accomplish this for the individual pisqaot, then it seems likely he could have done so for the entire collection.

B. Homiletical or Exegetical Midrash?

With the exception of pisqa 24, we have in the Aseret haDibrot examples of homiletical midrashim or at least a very good attempt to make exegetical material appear as homilies. Each pisqa begins with a proemial text which leads to the pericope text, i.e., the particular commandment being discussed. The proems are followed by an exegetical style discussion of the pericope text, and the pisqa ends with a nehemta and/or summary statement.[10] Although there are some differences, this pattern is consistent in each of the commandment pisqaot and is, more or less, the format in pisqa 20 as well. None of the pisqaot are so homiletical (pisqa 21 being the sole exception) that they contain multiple proems at the beginning with proems woven throughout the text.

But neither are they so exegetical (pisqa 23 being a possible exception) that they maintain a word by word or even phrase by phrase exegesis; rather, they expound upon a key word or the theme of the commandment under consideration. In short, we have a thorough mixing of the two basic forms of midrashic exposition with an effort to maintain at least the outline of the homiletic pattern.[11]

Our editor does a good job at creating the "illusion" of homily, for it is the homiletic pattern which clearly demonstrates that pisqa 23/24, the pisqa on the fifth commandment, was meant to be a separate pisqa. That is to say, while the theme or subject matter of what had been known as 'pisqa 23:10' lets us know that we are no longer dealing with Sabbath observance, it is only through a structural analysis that we can determine that this material was meant to stand alone and was only attached to pisqa 23 in error.[12]

When we examine the text, we find that what Braude calls paragraph nine of pisqa 23, the last section of this pisqa, offers rewards for those who observe the Sabbath. Although not quite fully developed, these statements, especially the one attributed to R. Joshua of Siknin, serve as the nehemta -- the summary statement of promise and consolation. The very next paragraph begins with a quotation from Psalms 138:4 and ends with the pericope text -- the fifth commandment. This is followed by yet another proem (Proverbs 5:6), a feature quite common in the homiletical midrashim.

Both proems lead to a discussion of the fifth commandment, and while Friedmann and Braude lump all this discussion into one "paragraph," a closer examination reveals separate exegetical threads and thematic questions. I break paragraph two of pisqa 23/24 into five separate sections, with paragraph two being the second proem, and paragraphs three, four and five exegesis of the pericope text, each dealing with a separate issue involved in honoring one's parents.[13] Paragraph six is an attempt at a nehemta, telling us that Israel will be taken out of the exile once Esau is rewarded for honoring his father Jacob.

This nehemta introduces a radically different midrashic portrait of Esau, who is almost always seen as a villain/enemy of Israel, and, as a result, the rabbis feel compelled to explain their viewpoint. Unfortunately, for us, the explanation weakens its impact as a nehemta which should bring the chapter to a close and leave us with a message or a direction. Instead, we get caught up in the argument just at the point in which the text should be ending.[14]

While I have streamlined the discussion here, I have avoided some of the weak spots and problems in this pisqa, such as ordering of material, fragmentary discussions, and incomplete connections. Nevertheless, it is clear that this piece represents a perfect model of the homiletical midrashic syle, which comes to light only when we apply a

structural analysis to the text. Recognized by Friedmann as not belonging to pisqa 23, nor pisqa 24 (in the Breslau edition it is numbered 23:10-11) we can now, through our structural analysis, label pisqa 23/24 as a separate pisqa entirely. Whether its linkage to pisqa 23 was accidental or intentional, perhaps we shall never know. However, I think we can safely say that the former seems the more likely.

Pisqa 21 is an example of an expansive homiletic midrash with multiple proemial texts. In fact, it is the best example of a homily in the Aseret haDibrot collection of the Rabbati. Proemial texts are introduced, then commented and expounded upon in each of the first eleven paragraphs of the pisqa. It is not until paragraph 12 that the exegesis of the pericope text, the first commandment, is begun.

This exegesis is interrupted in paragraph 16 by a thematic thread which will take the reader to paragraph 20. These five sections discuss the Ten Commandments as a whole.[15] In an effort to shape this thematic thread in the framework of the homiletic form, our editor introduces this section with a proem verse -- Jeremiah 20:7. Whether or not this adds to the flow of the pisqa or detracts from it, and whether its very placement here is meaningful, is irrelevant to our discussion. What is relevant is that it demonstrates for us a conscious awareness on the part of the editor of a particular

form to which he remains faithful. We have been reading about the word anochi. Now the editor wants to introduce a body of material which will discuss the Ten Commandments as a whole. Perhaps he sees a connection between the two. Perhaps he feels compelled to "work in" this well known derash.[16] Or perhaps he merely wanted to divide up a piece that he felt was too long. Regardless of his reason, in what is unique to the homiletic form, he gives shape to this material with a proem verse.

Thus we see another example of the homiletic form which is made comprehensible to us only by way of a structural analysis of the text. What might have appeared as haphazard placement of material is, in reality, anything but that. It is carefully shaped, homiletic material.

While pisqa 22 might be seen as the perfect example of a well-shaped, short homily with all the elements of that form (proemial text with comments, exegesis of the pericope text, and a nehemta),[17] even pisqa 23, which is almost entirely straight exegesis of the fourth commandment, and pisqa 20, which never quite "gets off the ground" structurally,[18] begin with a proem and end up with a type of nehemta or summary statement. We must see in this an editorial hand at work, trying to give homiletical shaping to each of the pisqaot in the collection, even those which are clearly exegetical.

However, in all fairness, the proems do work. That is to say, they connect to the text as a whole, open a general thematic discussion, and are never just appended to the beginning of the pisqa. Our editor knew the homiletic form and was masterful in his shaping of this material.

As a final unmistakable, example of our "homiletical" editor at work, we turn our attention to pisqa 24. There, for reasons we once again do not know, we have the total breakdown of the structure we have seen operating with each of the other pisqaot in the collection. We see none of the elements commonly found in the homiletic Midrashim: there are no proems, no development of theme, and no meshalim which illustrate the text.

In this pisqa, we find that for each of the last five commandments, all we have are brief, fragmentary exegetical comments, which appear to us to be part of a list.[19] Perhaps as a way to mitigate against this breakdown in structure, or just to be faithful to the homiletic form, our editor feels compelled to add a final nehemta at the end. Though it appears just "stuck in," it is drawn from Exodus 20:15, a perfect choice for a Midrash on the Ten Commandments. Thus, in true homiletical midrash style, we have a rather upbeat ending which brings all the material together, and provides a framework, albeit a shaky one, for our collection as a whole.

In short, here, as well as throughout the collection, our editor provides all the ingredients of the homiletic Midrash. It is my feeling that these ingredients are not merely imposed upon the material. Rather, they add to the overall "flavor" and flow of the text as a whole.

C. Structural Pattern

Beyond the homiletical midrashic style/structure, I believe there is yet another factor in the shaping of this collection, which is revealed through further structural analysis. The editor, whether consciously or otherwise, arranged the material in such a way as to create a perfect teaching model for the commandments themselves, and provided us with a model, both thematically and structurally, for God's creation of the universe. While Torah is seen in other midrashic collections as the blueprint for creation,[20] here, the giving of the Ten Commandments parallels creation itself. In creating the universe, God moves from the theoretical to the actual. In giving the commandments, as developed in the Aseret haDibrot collection, God also moves from the conceptual to the real. This, as well, is the design of the collection.

While the same format is followed in each of the pisqaot, with each having, to greater or lesser extent, some internal

problems, the best example of what I call the "structural pattern" of the Aseret haDibrot is pisqa 22, the one dealing with the third commandment.

The pattern that is followed in this pisqa, as alluded to earlier, is as follows: a general introduction, often with cosmological implications; a section(s) which attempts to understand the commandment in its own terms; and then the particular implications and/or applications of the commandment itself. To some extent, this is the pattern followed by the collection as a whole, and this chapter will conclude with a discussion of this possibility.

In pisqa 22, then, we see just how this structure is laid out for us:

Paragraphs 1 and 3 -- A discussion of the first two commandments, what Israel heard at Sinai, the nature of revelation, the importance of observance of the commandments.

Paragraphs 4 - 6 -- Interpretation (with examples) of the third commandment, all answering the question, "What does it mean to take God's name in vain?" -- taking on another ruler other than God, participating in a ritual such as tallit and tefillin, sinning/stealing, taking an oath on something which is true, etc.

Paragraphs 6a - 6c -- Application -- the results of false oaths.

Paragraph 7 -- Also application, but with positive, nehemta message -- that is, in the future, Israel will obey this commandment.

Paragraph 2 -- Breaks down the structure in that it is an exegetical comment on the pericope verse, and as such belongs to the section on the interpretation of the commandment. In fact, it presents us with the idea that one who knows/studies Torah and does not teach it, has taken God's name in vain. Paragraph two, then, answers the question which is posed in the middle section of the structural pattern and, as stated above, represents a breakdown in the structure I have presented by being introduced too early into the text.

Thus we see a movement from the general/conceptual to the specific/practical or applied which is more or less repeated in each of the pisqaot (with the exception of pisqa 24).

This structural pattern is paralleled by the editor's presentation of the revelation of the Ten Commandments as a whole. It is for this reason that pisqa 21 begins with a discussion of eschatology and the theme of revelation in general. For the editor, the giving of the commandments is foreshadowed in the creation of the universe -- and is itself a foreshadowing of the future redemption.[21]

The structure of each pisqa, moving from a general to a particular understanding of the theme of commandment and then to the application of each commandment, is really an object lesson in moving from abstraction to physical creation, from God's idea/plan, i.e., Torah/commandments, to God's creation itself, i.e., the world and the people Israel. Plans need to be fulfilled, to be "fleshed out." Commandments,

once understood, need to be fulfilled and acted upon. Through our analysis of this structure, we see a thematic message as well, which is even further developed in the content of the Midrash. In other words, the structure of these pisqaot and this unit parallels its themes. In this subtle shaping process, we once again see the work of a masterful editor who has not only profound religious insight, imagination, and understanding, but one who possesses a keen literary perception as well.

All this becomes perfectly clear when we analyze pisqa 20. On a purely thematic level, it does not work, nor does it seem to fit this collection on the Ten Commandments. From our analysis of the homiletic form, we noticed some similarities, but there are many more weaknesses. It is not until the very last comment of the pisqa, in section 20:4 that we get into the Aseret haDibrot material at all. However, from the point of view of the structural pattern, we see something else, something very different taking shape.

Pisqa 20 seems like it is intended as a general introduction to the giving of the Torah, dealing with the questions of when it is given, what happens in the universe when it is given, Moses' ascension into heaven to receive Torah, and ending with the first commandment, "Anochi." This is spelled out for us in section 20:2, which emphasizes that the giving of the Torah completes the work of creation.

The connection between theme and structure has been made manifest.

In some respects, pisqa 21 duplicates the general introduction, albeit with different material and stylistically smoother. Whether pisqa 20 was seen by the redactor of the Rabbati as inadequate (it is rather choppy and incomplete), or inappropriate (it deals with astrology and mysticism, themes not really a part of the rest of the collection), we perhaps will never know. What we can say, however, is that on a purely structural level, as outlined in this section of this chapter, it does fit rather nicely.

With the addition of the nehemta at the end of pisqa 24, inadequate as it is, we do find a shaping process at work which gives the collection a semblance of a whole. Despite its difficulties and shortcomings, Aseret haDibrot is a well-structured, carefully edited piece of Biblical exposition. This is true, especially within the individual pisqaot, but is also true of the collection on the Ten Commandments as a whole.

CHAPTER THREE

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

A. Thematic Unity

There are two basic modalities functioning in midrashic texts. In the first, attention to structure outweighs thematic unity. This is the case in the classical midrashim -- the exegetical as well as the early homiletical, in which the form is almost always maintained.[1] The second is one in which thematic concerns, first and foremost, outweigh structural concerns. The rule of thumb seems to be that the later the compilation, the less concern for structure. It has been suggested in this regard that the editor of the Pesiqta Rabbati, living at a later time, was less restricted by the structural demands of the classical midrashim, in this case the homiletical form, than were his predecessors.[2] As a result, he was often free, or at least apparently felt free, to disregard structural requirements in order to make a thematic point.[3]

This freedom from structural considerations is readily apparent in the Aseret haDibrot homilies, as well. Let us examine just two of the many examples of this phenomenon.

Paragraph 12 of pisqa 21 begins the exegesis of the pericope text. After numerous acrostic explanations of the word anochi, the text turns to an understanding of the emotions that are evoked by this word. When God speaks the word anochi, both love and/or awe are engendered in the people.

Paragraph 13 continues this thematic exposition in the form of two meshalim.[4] In the first, a critically ill friend

of the king is about to reveal to his son the secrets entrusted to him by the king. Just before he begins, he catches a glimpse of the king, and all he says to his son is, "Honor the king." In the second mashal, the same scene is repeated, this time between the patriarch Jacob and his sons. The heavens open, Jacob sees God, and instead of revealing the secrets which have taken him a lifetime to know and understand, he has his sons promise allegiance to the God of Israel. This they willingly do, and, in the end, Jacob tells his sons that in the future they will know the true God if He uses the password, anochi. In sum, paragraph 13 explores the relationship between God and Israel (the king and his trusted friend). It seems to tell us that it is a mixture of both awe and love which lies behind the intimacy of that relationship, and that the word anochi contains/engenders both emotions.

If we skip ahead for a moment to paragraph 15, we notice that this section begins with another exegetical comment on the word, anochi. In other words, following the structure expected in the homiletical midrashim of proems, exegesis of pericope text and nehemta we are now in the section of exegesis of the pericope text, still dealing with the very first word of that text.[5] We would assume, therefore, that paragraph 14 also contains comments on the word anochi. However, it does not.

Turning back to paragraph 14, we see instead an exegesis of the word, elohecha, the third word of the pericope text.

Has the editor erred? Is this material misplaced? Is this a corrupted text? Based upon strictly structural analysis, knowing the homiletical form as we do, we would have to answer in the affirmative to any and all of the preceeding questions. However, when we apply a thematic analysis, with the understanding that our editor was free from structural constraints, we begin to see things differently.

Paragraph 13, you will remember, left open the possibility that anochi indicates a mixture of both love and awe. Paragraph 15 came to tell us, through a most beautiful mashal, that anochi indicates God's love for Israel. In that mashal, a king goes away on a long journey. His wife, in all that time, is encouraged by her friends to take on another lover, she is wasting herself and her youth on a husband that may never return, they tell her. When she continues to remain faithful, they mock her. In moments of loneliness, she goes up to her chamber and reads her ketubah, paying special attention to the promises contained therein. In the end, when the king returns, even he is amazed at the faithfulness of his wife. So, too, Israel, mocked by the nations, remains faithful to her apparently absent (perhaps gone forever) husband -- God -- by reading her ketubah, the Torah. God returns to Sinai with the word anochi, indicating that the covenant is still intact. The love between Israel and God has not been severed.

Paragraph 14 presents an opposing view to the one presented in paragraph 15. Here, the intimacy between God and Israel is absent. It is the awesome God we see, ready to destroy the people. If there is any love at all, it exists between God and Moses, who acts as an intermediary on behalf of the people.

Thus the thematic pattern which emerges is as follows:

Paragraph 12 -- introduces anochi

Paragraph 13 -- presents the possibility that anochi contains a mixture of both love and awe

Paragraph 14 -- God is awesome; wants to destroy Israel

Paragraph 15 -- God is loving; keeps faith with the people, Israel.

Our editor, in his structuring of the material, sets up a very powerful dialectic tension between love and awe, both contained in a single word. With each paragraph we are swayed, first in one direction and then another. In the end, both remain with us. This is a very complete thematic unit, one which would escape our attention unless we analyzed the text thematically. It also indicates our editor's willingness and ability to go beyond the structural dictates of the homiletical form. He has done that here, and quite successfully, we might add.

Earlier in pisqa 21, we see other evidence of the priority placed on thematic development. In paragraph 7, a new proem based on Psalms 68:18 is introduced. This leads to a discussion of the angels at Sinai -- how many there were, what

were their tasks, etc. Paragraph 8 continues the exegesis on this proem verse with a variety of viewpoints expressed as to the role of the angels.

If we skip ahead to paragraph 10, we see that this section continues and completes the exegesis of the proem verse (Ps.68:18). While this paragraph still deals with the role of the angels, it attempts to bring this discussion to a close by telling us that no matter what the role the angels played in the giving of the Torah, in the end, they are really subservient to their master, God. This is emphasized with a number of emphatic declarations, such as God's name is in each of the angels -- Gabriel, Michael, etc.; they are His courtiers; Sinai is enfolded by His holiness, not vice versa; God is the dwelling place of the world and not the reverse; God feeds the world and not vice versa; and finally, it is a horse (presumably the angels) that does the bidding of the rider (God) and not the opposite.

From a purely structural point of view, we would expect paragraph nine to continue the exegesis of the proem verse. But it does not. However, from a thematic point of view, we could not ask for a better, more appropriate section.

Paragraph 9 is a thematic exposition on the subject of angels. However, far from being an open-ended discussion on angels as was the case in paragraphs 8 and 9, this section begins subtlely to shift our focus of attention away from

angels and toward God, with the angels reduced to a secondary reduced status. This is accomplished through two meshalim. In the first mashal, a king seeks vengeance for his son who was killed by his enemy. The people come to help with weapons of war, but the king tells them, "I do not need you, I will fight alone." Our text tells us that this was the same with God and the liberation of Israel from Egyptian bondage. God needed no help from His angels to vanquish Egypt. In the second mashal, we are told that it is the way of a flesh and blood king to celebrate with a few people from his "inner circle" but to fight a war with many soldiers. However, with God it is not that way. God fights alone, but brings along all the angels to give the Torah; that is, to celebrate with Him.

Whether God is like the king in the first mashal, or unlike him in the second one, in both examples God fights alone. For difficult and dangerous tasks, God requires no one. It is only for joyous, easy tasks that God shares His joy and honor (if you will) with the angels. God does not rely on the angels and by extension we can say that angels are really unnecessary. As we have seen, this message is spelled out for us in the very next paragraph, paragraph 10.

Thus, once again we see a well-constructed thematic unit superceeding any concern for the formal elements of structure

and form. In this example, we moved from an open-ended discussion of the role of angels at Sinai to an ever narrowing view that God is supreme over all His creations. An abrupt shift in focus was avoided when our editor, ignoring the constraints of structural formalities, inserted an additional paragraph that made for smooth thematic flow.

But our editor does not always choose thematic unity over structural integrity, and when he does not, the results are just as obvious.

As noted in the previous chapter,[6] pisqa 23, which deals with the fourth commandment, is almost entirely exegetical in form, with an overlay of homiletical features. In the fifth paragraph, the phrase, "For in six days the Lord made the heaven, and the earth and the sea and all that is them, and rested on the seventh day" (Ex.20:11), is expounded upon.

Inasmuch as we are dealing with Shabbat observance, the first part of the exegesis informs us that "six days" is merely a metaphor to 1) remind the wicked who work (six days) to destroy the world that they will be punished in the messianic seventh day; and 2) to remind the righteous who work to maintain the world that they will be rewarded.[7]

If we skip ahead to the third part of the exegesis, we are told that God rests, not because He is tired, but to remind humankind to rest; that is, resting is for our sake, not God's. Both the first and third parts of the exegesis,

then, follow the exegetical thread of midrashic exposition, and, at the same time, both deal with the theme and meaning of Shabbat.

When we examine the middle part of the exegesis in this same paragraph 5, we find a different picture. There, true to the exegetical form, the exposition deals with the part of the Torah verse which reads, "the earth and the sea." It tells us that the creatures in the sea correspond to the creatures on the earth. However, this middle piece has no thematic connection whatsoever to Shabbat. It merely follows the chronological, phrase by phrase exposition of the Torah text, which is the hallmark of the exegetical midrash. By doing so, it demonstrates both the exegetical quality of this pisqa and the thematic limitations such a structure imposes.

Our editor could not exclude this piece without doing damage to the structural demands of the exegetical midrash, but he could not include it without doing damage to the thematic unity and flow. In this case, structure won over theme. As a result, we have an example (in the breach) which highlights for us the leap our editor takes when he foresakes structure for theme.[8]

In sum, we see the dictates of structure and take note of just how bold our editor is when he chooses to ignore them in an effort to more fully develop a thematic unit. Such editorial consciousness/awareness marks a development in the

midrashic literature which places the Aseret haDibrot somewhere between the classical midrashim and late medieval fiction.[9]

B. Thematic Currents

While we have been able to demonstrate a concern for thematic unity which at times even transcended structure and form, it would be more difficult to identify a single thematic thrust which can be readily seen throughout the Aseret haDibrot collection. Besides there being differences from pisqa to pisqa, there are, in fact, many contrasting and oftentimes contradictory themes expressed in this collection.[10] Furthermore, our editor seems unconcerned with these differences, as there is really no attempt to harmonize them.[11]

Be that as it may, there are what I would call, "thematic currents" which flow throughout the collection, giving it a special, identifiable character. Chief among these thematic currents are: 1) the tendency to elevate each commandment as if it were the most important one; 2) a concentration on the theology of the commandment as opposed to its observance; and most importantly, 3) an exploration of the complex relationship between God and the people Israel.

There is a prevalent feeling, as we move from pisqa to pisqa, that there was no commandment given at Sinai other than the one about which we are reading. In part, this has been discussed in the previous chapter in which we asked whether or not pisqa 21 was meant to stand alone as the sole entry for the holiday of Shavuot.[12] In point of fact, pisqa 21 does take into consideration the full range of thematic concerns relevant to the holiday. It begins with a discussion of the cosmological implications of Torah itself. So, for example, we read that without Torah the world cannot be sustained, or that the commandments served as the blueprint of creation, or that the revelation at Sinai is a foreshadowing of the ultimate revelation which will preceed the messianic redemption (21:4).

Later in the pisqa, all ten commandments are discussed and linked together. We are told of the interconnectedness of the commandments, both from a conceptual point of view as well as a behavioral one. In addition, we read how our actions vis à vis the commandments affect the entire universe (21:18-19). Likewise, in another opinion, we read that transgression of the commandments brings national disaster and ruin for Israel (21:20).

As far as the word anochi is concerned, inasmuch as it is the first word of the first commandment, it comes to symbolize the Torah itself (21:21) as well as the continuation of the covenant God made with Abraham (21:22, 21:13).

Thus we see in our overview of pisqa 21 that the first commandment really encompasses/incorporates the full range of all the commandments, if not the entire Torah, and quite possibly could stand alone as the sermon for the holiday of Shavuot, the time of matan Torah.

But the collection does not end there. Each pisqa goes on to treat the specific commandment discussed as if it were the most important one. So, for example, we read about the third commandment (22:7) that swearing falsely creates a barrier between God and Israel which leads to God cutting Himself off from the people, a situation which can only be reversed in the world to come. Or similarly we read about the fourth commandment (23:1) that Shabbat has a pre-mundane status, just like the Torah itself, and is a part of the plan of creation; and that observance of Shabbat gives us the opportunity to become God-like (23:3). So, too, honoring our parents (23/24:4) is equated with honoring God and coveting, we are told, leads to the violation of all the other commandments (21:17).[13]

While I seriously doubt that the editor of the Aseret haDibrot material would advocate observance of one and only one commandment, one cannot help but feel, in reading each pisqa, that each commandment is made to stand alone as a separate and complete sermon. Both structurally and thematically, the editor accomplishes this task.

In our chapter on structure, we discussed the tripartate design of each pisqa -- general introduction, understanding of the commandment, and application/observance of the commandment.[14] In addition, we discussed the structure of the collection as a whole recognizing that pisqa 20 as well as a sizable portion of pisqa 21 served as an introduction to the overall collection, dealing with, as they do, with the cosmological implications of matan Torah.[15] While the Aseret haDibrot is far from being unconcerned with observance, since in each of pisqaot 22, 23, and 23/24 we have much discussion about and examples of those who observed the particular commandments, it is clearly not its primary focus.

As we examine the thematic strands in each pisqa, we see very little actual attention paid to observance of the commandments. Pisqa 20 is pure introduction on the theme of matan Torah. Pisqa 21, by far the longest pisqa, deals with the first commandment which, by definition, cannot be observed. In fact, it has long been debated whether this is really a commandment at all.[16]

In pisqa 22, we do find some meshalim which deal with observance of the commandment against taking God's name in vain. Examples are given of false oaths, even oaths regarding something that is true, but not until the fifth paragraph. (The pisqa only contains seven paragraphs, and the seventh serves as a nehemta). Before that, a discussion of

revelation and what the people actually heard at Sinai is followed by a discussion of what it means to take God's name in vain.

This format -- general introduction, understanding of the commandment, and application/observance of the commandment -- is followed precisely in pisqaot 23 and 23/24, with the equivalent amount of attention paid to actual observance of Shabbat and honoring one's parents respectively. In all three pisqaot, the editor's chief concerns are what the commandment comes to teach us, what observance means, and how one should observe, with concrete observance serving only as illustrative examples. In short, what we have is the theology of observance as well as the theology underpinning matan Torah, as opposed to an emphasis on the actual observance itself.

This tendency toward theology becomes manifest when we discover that more than half of the individual thematic threads of the entire collection deal with God, and Israel's relationship with that God. For the editor, the giving of the Torah, the revelation on Mount Sinai, represented the second great event in the history of the universe, the first being creation itself (pisqa 21:21). It was concrete proof that the covenant made with Abraham was still operative. The collection, as a whole then, attempts to understand or "work out" the complexities of this most important of relationships.

While time and space would not allow for an exhaustive discussion of each of these theological concerns, I think it would be most helpful to examine the relationship of God to His people, Israel, which really dominates the thematic focus of the collection as a whole. What follows, then, is a discussion of some of the more frequently found thematic threads or currents. They represent, I believe, some of the more insightful and profound ones as well.

Although we are told very early in the collection (pisqa 20:1)[17] that human beings are very important to God, it is God's special relationship with Israel that is emphasized throughout the collection. Thus we read, in pisqa 21:5, a mashal of a king who is giving orders. Though every one of his courtiers thinks that he will be the one honored to be chosen as the king's emissary, in the end he gives the honor to his son. This is compared to God giving the commandments. All the angels think that they will receive the commands, but God gives them to Israel, His son, telling Israel, "I am your God."

This metaphor of God as king and Israel as His son is repeated in a few places,[18] but perhaps nowhere more poignantly than in pisqa 21:12, in which we are told that the word anochi denotes God's love for His people Israel. A mashal follows in which a king's son goes overseas and studies in a foreign language. When the son returns, his father greets

him in that foreign language. This is compared to God greeting Israel in the language of Egypt, by beginning the commandments in a foreign language -- anochi. God, the father, recognizing the distance (both physically and chronologically) between Him and His son Israel, meets that son half way; He comes down to his level, if you will, in order to make the connection and continue the relationship, by speaking in His son's language.

Additionally, other relationship metaphors are used. We see: 1) God as King, Torah as His daughter, Israel as the groom (20:1); 2) God as husband, Israel as bride/wife, Torah or the word anochi as the ketubah (21:5 -- two separate meshalim); 3) Israel as the mate of Shabbat, God's representative or daughter (23:6); 4) God and Israel as close friends (23:6); and God as master with Israel as faithful servant (21:22, 22:4, and 23:2).

In all of these metaphors the closeness and the intimacy of the relationship is emphasized. God, we are told, is knowable because we stand in relationship with Him. Just as we can renew our interpersonal relationships through close contact and communication, so, too, will God keep faith with us by renewing the eternal covenant made with our ancestor Abraham.

On a more abstract level, the Aseret haDibrot seems almost driven by the question of God's presence on earth.

There is no question of the reality of God. This is not a modern debate over the existence of the Eternal. Rather, it is a passionate, sometimes painful, attempt to feel the nearness of God, to bring Him closer, or regretfully, to acknowledge His distance. The commandments represent a bridge for us -- God's reaching down, our opportunity to reach up.

The Aseret haDibrot serve as a record of that sacred moment reminding us that we met God at Sinai in the first commandment (20:4). We knew Him there, like we know a salesman selling us His goods (21:6). God listens to all our prayers, appears to each of us according to our own abilities to see and hear Him (21:6). God keeps faith with us if we are righteous, even into the grave (21:6). God never abandoned us. He went with us into slavery, and accompanied us into the land of Israel (21:22). God gave us the Sabbath, a "left-over" from the once perfected universe (23:6), and Shabbat observance leads us back to that perfection as well as to God, who also observes Shabbat (23:8). And finally, God is called our third parent, a partner with our biological parents, both in the creation and raising of a child (23/24:4).[19]

At other times, God's absence is most painfully felt. We are told that false oaths create a barrier between ourselves and God, making it impossible for Him to even hear Israel's prayers. And since it is human nature to lie, this situation

may only be reversed in the world to come (22:7). In another pisqa, we learn that God's presence on earth was diminished by the destruction of the Temple (21:8). And in a very powerful mashal, we read that a king (God) left his wife while she was pregnant and did not return for many years. When he returned, he gave a party in honor of the son, now a young boy, born in his absence. At the party, the boy walks up to each and every man asking them, "Are you my father? Are you my father?"! In the end, the king has to tell him, "I am you father. You are my son!" At Sinai, Israel thought every angel was God, until God told them, "I am your God, you are my son" (21:11). God, the father, was removed for so long that Israel, His son, no longer recognized Him. And yet, as the mashal tells us, there is hope for return.

The poignancy of this quest for the presence of God is made manifest when we compare pisqa 21 with pisqa 22. In the first commandment, God's presence in the word anochi is real. God reveals Himself to the people; they perceive Him, each according to his/her own ability (21:6). By the third commandment, we have moved to symbols of God. Here, it is God's name, as a symbol, which has the power of the Presence itself. All we have left, the text seems to tell us, is God's name. We need to safeguard it by not using it "in vain." As we move to the other commandments, God's

presence will be found or discovered in the understanding or carrying out of the mitzvot, through action and observance, but not by revelation. For that direct, intimate contact we once experienced in the Garden and then at Sinai, we may have to wait until the world to come.

CHAPTER FOUR

EARLIER PARALLELS

A. The Literary Inheritance

It is clear that the editor of the Pesiqta Rabbati made use of earlier material. He had before him, at the very least, much of the literary production of the Tanaim and the Amoraim; that is to say, the Palestinian and perhaps Babylonian Talmuds, and a corpus of Midrash which had to include the Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, the early Rabbot Midrashim, and the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana.[1] Whether he had these in their final written form or knew them orally is irrelevant to us. Suffice it is to say that he knew these works.

What is terribly relevant to us is how the editor utilized his literary sources. Seeing that he does not include everything from these sources, we have to assume he used them selectively. What did he choose to include? Did he copy or rewrite? What is edited or left out? How are the pieces woven together? Do the juxtapositions tell us anything about the meaning or message of the editor? While we can never be certain, some tentative answers can be gleaned through both a structural as well as thematic analysis of our text in light of the older material.

While known parallels in older material exist for almost every passage in the Pesiqta Rabbati,[2] and while a comparison of each and every one would go well beyond the scope and

interests of this study, there are two major works which compel our attention as possible earlier paradigms for our material on the Aseret haDibrot. They are the Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael and the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana. What follows is a comparison of our Rabbati text with each of these, in addition to a selection of key passages from other texts which seem to provide the basis for sections of the Aseret haDibrot material in the Peisqta Rabbati.

B. The Mekhilta d'Rabbi Ishmael

The first text which compels our interest is the Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, a late fourth century, "exegetical Midrash which interprets Exodus verse by verse, and often, too, all the words in a verse."[3] While the Mekhilta does not cover the entire Book of Exodus, it does contain an exegesis of the portion Yitro, which includes the giving of the Ten Commandments.[4]

While we are clearly dealing with two very distinct genres of midrashic literature whose concerns, both stylistically and thematically, are worlds apart, there are some striking similarities of form and structure which bear mentioning. The first of these is the treatment of the last five commandments. The Mekhilta, after a rather expansive

treatment of the first four commandments, spends much less time with the fifth commandment, and then lumps together, in a very cursory fashion, the last five commandments.[5]

These last five all receive a one paragraph treatment (the last commandment actually gets two paragraphs) which is encapsulated by the following formula: A statement of the commandment, the question, "Why is this said?," followed by the answer, "Because it says . . ." This is the only section of the Ten Commandments exegesis in which such a formula/prescription is utilized.

At first glance, we are reminded of pisqa 24 of the Aseret haDibrot which also is distinctive from a structural point of view in comparison to pisqaot 21-23/24. If, indeed, the editor of the Aseret haDibrot in the Rabbati ran out of time and/or material, he may have modelled the last five commandments after the Mekhilta parallel. What seems even more probable is that an editor, finding an incomplete manuscript of the Ten Commandments, added commandments six through ten using the Mekhilta as his model.

Another structural similarity is the section dealing with the Ten Commandments as a whole. In the Aseret haDibrot, as discussed earlier,[6] this section is interpolated into pisqa 21 (paragraphs 16-20). Here, in the Mekhilta, much of the very same material is introduced between the ninth and tenth commandments. Here, too, the section stands out structurally,

though it is meant to connect thematically to the commandment 'not to covet,' which is said to lead to the transgression of all the other commandments.[7] Given the structural problems this section creates, one wonders why the editor of the Dibrot collection chose to include it at all. It is almost as if he could just not let go of this material. He tried to place it closer to where it belongs, in a chapter dealing with the giving of the commandments, and in so doing, he was somewhat more successful. Still, it is a separate thread in both sources, the Aseret haDibrot no less than the Mekhilta, and in both, it is noticeable for its distinctive "otherness."

There are structural differences between the two compilations as well. Primary among these are the very style of the midrashim themselves. The Mekhilta follows a strict textual ordering, as is expected in an exegetical Midrash. In contrast, the Aseret haDibrot takes material from a variety of sources and weaves them together to create a thematically coherent and consistent statement. Literal textual chronology plays no part in this midrashic process of our editor. So, for example, chapter nine of the Mekhilta, based on Exodus 20:15-19 (the verses which follow the Ten Commandments) deals with the thoughts and feelings of the people, Moses' task as intermediary, the angels and their tasks, God's appearance, how and what the people saw and/or heard, and the cosmological implications of the giving of the Torah.[8]

These same strands of the text, including some of the very same material, are woven into pisqa 20 and 21 of the Rabbati, expecially 21:6, a sort of kol bo for these themes. In the Dibrot, however, these themes serve as a type of introduction to the giving of the commandments themselves. The Aseret haDibrot creates a narrative of its own, reenacting the giving of the Ten Commandments, and, as a result, (re)arranges material to fit its new "storyline." It takes material found towards the end of the Mekhilta and places it in its own introduction. This structural option was not open to the editor of an exegetical Midrash, such as the Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael.

Another difference, based on the form of the midrashim, is the exegesis of the entire verse, phrase by phrase. While this is the consistent format of the Mekhilta, especially commandments 1-4, it is almost never the case in the Dibrot collection.

A last glaring difference is the absence in the Aseret haDibrot of any exposition of the second commandment. Contrastingly, the exegesis of this commandment occupies a major section in the Mekhilta. It is difficult to believe that this omission in the Rabbati was made intentionally, especially when the material available from the Mekhilta is so rich. Nor does the structure of the Aseret haDibrot warrant such a deletion. I can only believe that the material probably was lost.

When we turn to a consideration of theme and content, although there is some identical material, such as the Torah having been offered to all the other nations before it was accepted by Israel, the differences far outweigh any similarities. The Mekhilta has a decidedly behavioral bent as opposed to the Aseret haDibrot's theological leanings. In general, the Mekhilta seems much more interested and concerned with punishment for violation of the commandments than it is with their observance and meaning. This is especially true in the treatment of the last five commandments, which is basically a list of punishments for the violation of those particular commands.

Perhaps the best example which highlights the different concerns of the two texts can be gleaned from the exposition of the third commandment 'to not take God's name in vain.' The Mekhilta concentrates, almost exclusively, on the Day of Atonement and repentance, i.e., how to clear oneself of the sin of violating this commandment. The Aseret haDibrot, on the other hand, never even mentions the Day of Atonement or repentance, and only once discusses punishment for this serious offense (22:6).[9] Instead, the Rabbati collection, after a discussion of just exactly what the people heard on Sinai, broaches the more philosophical question, "What does it mean to take God's name in vain?," examining this question from any number of vantage points. In short, the Mekhilta seems

much more like a "how-to," text, which is appropriate for an halachic Midrash,[10] while the content of the Aseret haDibrot fits its classification as an homiletic Midrash.

The different concerns of the two texts is made manifest at the conclusion of chapter six, the discussion on the second commandment. This passage talks of Abraham and the prophets, and "those who dwell in the land of Israel and risk their lives for the sake of the commandments." This is followed by examples of martyrdom and punishment for the observance of the mitzvot. The Mekhilta concentrates on the behavioral aspects of the Ten Commandments because it is interested in the consequences and outcome of observance (or failure to observe). It knows of and/or remembers those who martyred themselves in order to remain faithful. At the very least, it wants us to come away with that impression.

The theme of martyrdom is totally absent in the Rabbati Aseret haDibrot, one of the few sections in the Mekhilta that has absolutely no parallel in the Dibrot material. (The other major one, which we have already discussed, is the second commandment.) Once again, this could be accidental, but that seems hardly likely to me. The editor of the Aseret haDibrot, living, perhaps, in Palestine some time between the years 500 and 700, knew relative peace and calm. Martyrdom must have seemed as remote to him as it did to his contemporary "readership." No wonder he chose to edit out this section from the Mekhilta.

Interestingly enough, the theme of martyrdom is picked up again in the later recensions of the Midrash Aseret haDibrot. In these texts, observance will also return as a major thematic thrust. This is not startling since these later recensions begin to be compiled around the 10th-11th centures, coinciding with the Crusades.[11]

In conclusion, we can say the Mekhilta seems to inform some of the structural design of the Aseret haDibrot in the Pesiqta Rabbati, especially the last five commandments as well as the exposition of the Ten Commandments as a whole. But the two are not connected thematically. Their concerns are very different, as is most of the material contained within. The Aseret haDibrot attempts to create a sequence which reenacts the giving of the Ten Commandments, by imposing a structural pattern, moving from the general to the specific for each commandment, as well as for the collection as a whole. This is not at all the case in the Mekhilta, which is a straightforward exegesis of the Ten Commandments as found in the Book of Exodus. The Mekhilta faithfully follows (with an occasional breakdown or an aside) the order of the Biblical text.

If the Mekhilta served as a paradigm for the Aseret haDibrot in the Rabbati, it did not do so for the main body of the sermons. That is to say, only in the section (pisqa 24) in which the Rabbati material failed to be consistent in

its structure and message does it closely resemble the Mekhilta. There, the editor, or a later redactor, found a model for lumping together material which was incomplete and thus found a way, albeit a haphazard one, to complete the Aseret haDibrot collection.

C. The Pesiqta de Rav Kahana

The Pesiqta de Rav Kahana is a 5th century compilation of discourses or homilies based on the Torah and Haftarah readings for special Sabbaths and festival days.[12] As a homiletic Midrash which deals with the holiday cycle, one which the editor of the Pesiqta Rabbati undoubtedly knew very well, it is often compared and contrasted to the Rabbati.[13] Inasmuch as it does contain a homily based on the Torah portion for Shavuot, it is natural for us, in this study, to analyze it as an earlier parallel text. And in fact, pisqa 12 of the Pesiqta de Rav Kahana does provide us with a potential model for at least a portion of the Aseret haDibrot material in the Pesiqta Rabbati.

There are a number of echoes of Pesiqta de Rav Kahana material in pisqaot 20 and 21 of the Rabbati, such as an explanation of why the Torah is given in the third month after the Exodus from Egypt, as well as a discussion of the

number and order of the Ten Commandments. However, it is really paragraphs 22-25 of pisqa 12 in the Kahana, in which the exposition of the first commandment begins, which provides us with a substantive parallel for the Rabbati homily on the first commandment. It is here, too, that the comparison between the two texts begins and ends.

The Kahana devotes one homily (pisqa 12) to the holiday of Shavuot. Its concern is in providing a discourse on the giving and meaning of the Torah. It devotes most of the discourse to the events leading up to the giving of the Torah and concludes with anochi. For the Kahana, this represents the completion of God's action, the epiphanal moment. It does not concern itself with the Ten Commandments, which really have no relevance to the focus of the discourse.

The Rabbati, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the Ten Commandments; after all, it labels this section, "Aseret haDibrot." It, too, concerns itself with the giving of the Torah, but for the Rabbati, this becomes the introduction, the penultimate moment, and not the substance of its discourse.

We really have two different text compilations, then, one beginning where the other one leaves off. In the process, however, there is some overlapping, and it is this overlap which forms the basis of our comparison of the two texts.[14]

The length of pisqa 21 in the Pesiqta Rabbati, especially in comparison to the other pisqaot, plus the additional

introductory material which comprises pisqa 20, leads one to speculate as to the original intention of the editor of the Rabbati. Were the multiple proems and the expansive expositions in pisqa 21 meant to evoke the Kahana in the mind of the "reader?" Was pisqa 21 intended to be the model for the remaining pisqaot? Did the editor of the Rabbati mean to pick up where the Kahana left off, creating a fully expansive Midrash, not only on the giving of the Torah, but on each of the Ten Commandments as well? These questions seem to jump out at us when we compare the two works. Answers, however, come much more haltingly; perhaps they are lost to us entirely.

What we do have, though, are two major sections to compare, and it is to that task that we now turn our attention.[15]

Pisqa 12 of the Pesiqta de Rav Kahana consists of twenty-five subsections or paragraphs.[16] Of these, the first twenty-one discuss the theme of matan Torah and its significance for the people of Israel. Beginning with paragraph 22, the drama switches as we get closer to the actual moment of the first commandment. In paragraph 22 we are introduced to the angels who accompany God -- how many, their appearance and intentions, God's relationship with them, etc. Paragraph 23 brings us back to the overall theme of what the acceptance of the Torah means for Israel, and the special relationship that is thereby created between God and Israel through the giving of Torah.

It is only in paragraph 24 that the Kahana really begins its discussion of the first commandment, but that almost immediately leads to a discussion on the appearance of God -- what God "looked" like, sounded like to each Israelite gathered at the foot of Sinai. A nehemta on the ultimate redemption from all the "slaveries," not just Egypt, follows and completes the pisqa.

In short, pisqa 12 concerns itself almost exclusively with the theme of matan Torah. It follows the order laid out in the Biblical text and leads us to that epiphanal moment when God spoke the word anochi. Revelation thus being assured, the Kahana does not concern itself with the content of that revelation; rather, it is content to let us know that revelation, having thus established/confirmed the unique relationship between God and Israel, provides for or perhaps even guarantees the possibility of ultimate redemption. And it is with that message of ultimate redemption that the Kahana concerns itself, not only here, but in any number of its homilies.

When we begin to examine the structure of pisqa 21 in the Rabbati, a very different picture emerges. Briefly stated, pisqa 21 concerns itself first with the giving of the Torah (paragraphs 1-6); then with the moment the angels descend with God (paragraphs 7-11); and last, with understanding the first commandment (paragraphs 12-15 and 21-22), paragraphs 16-20 being a thematic aside on the Ten Commandments

as a whole.

We see, then, that when we come to the proem (Ps. 68:18) in paragraph 7 which leads to the discussion of the angels and their role, we are only a little bit less than one third of the way into the pisqa. Pisqa 21 will deal more substantially with the first commandment and then with the commandments in general, because its focus is the commandments themselves. The theme of matan Torah is seen as introductory material only, and that is completed by the time we get to the moment of God's descent with the angels. I cannot emphasize this point enough, since it informs the entire shaping of these pisqaot.

Thus we see that the material on the appearances of God, with which the Kahana ends, its chapter on the giving of the Torah, is moved to paragraph 6 of pisqa 21 in the Rabbati. This is seen as introductory material and as such is placed in paragraph 6, a kind of kol bo of introductory comments on God. Also, paragraph 23 of the Kahana, which returns to the theme of acceptance of Torah and Israel's concommitant change in status, is missing entirely from the Rabbati because it would be an interruption in the movement towards the first commandment, and not because of its message.[17] The acceptance of the Torah belongs to the introduction, and by this point in pisqa 21 of the Rabbati, we have left the introductory material behind.

Another difference is the discussion on the angels which occupies merely one section (paragraph 22) of the Kahana and

a full five sections (paragraphs 7-11) in the Rabbati. For the Kahana, this is an important moment, for it represents the actualization of the giving of the Torah. The Rabbati, on the other hand, takes this opportunity, still early in the pisqa, to expound upon the idea of angels, comparing them to God, discussing their relative powers, as well as their ultimate dependence upon the Lord. After this extended discussion on the angels, now only half way through the pisqa, we come to the word anochi. Whereas this is the epiphanal moment in the Kahana, in the Rabbati we still have half of the pisqa to discuss the first commandment, as well as the Ten Commandments as a whole.

By contrast, thematic differences are not as glaring, and in fact do not really separate the two texts. This is due in large measure to the fact that pisqa 21 of the Rabbati is relatively unfocussed thematically, often containing contradictory thematic messages.[18] However, this pisqa primarily deals with the preeminence of God, God's power, dominance, and choice of and/or love for Israel. While there is no emphasis on ultimate redemption, which is the focus of the Kahana's pisqa 12, we are assured that God never abandons Israel, accompanying Israel even into Egyptian slavery.

It would be convenient if pisqa 21 ended with a clear nehemta; then we would have at least some indication of its thrust or direction. Unfortunately, this is not the case,

as the pisqa concludes pretty much in the midst of its exegesis of the pericope text. However, the last word is a quote from Leviticus 25:55. Israel, we are assured, is the servant of the Lord whom God Himself brought out of Egypt. It is as servants of the Lord that we enter into the body of the commandments, without concern for the results of this relationship.

If our editor is living at a time of peace and prosperity, perhaps he is not predisposed to hoping for the future redemption. Attractive as that might sound, here, too, we are unable to speculate as to an answer.

Both the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana and the Pesiqta Rabbati are homiletical midrashim which deal with the holiday cycle. As such, there are, naturally, similarities in both structure and content. In addition, the editor of the Rabbati most certainly knew the Kahana and borrowed freely from it. As a result, there is a certain familiarity between the two texts -- the "feeling" of one is very much like the other. This is no less true of the pisqaot for the holiday of Shavuot, pisqaot 12 and 21 respectively.

However, and in spite of the direct borrowing of material, the preceeding analysis demonstrated that the differences between the two texts far overshadow any duplication of material. While there are echoes of the Kahana as we read pisqa 21 of

the Rabbati, they remain just echoes and not the voice of the text. The shaping and emphasis of the Aseret haDibrot seems to be independent of its predecessor.

In fact, if anything, it seems to me that in both scale and scope, the editor of pisqa 21 meant to overshadow, if not replace as a text for Shavuot, pisqa 12 of the Kahana. In pisqa 21 of the Rabbati, despite some of its problems, we have a well-balanced, evenly distributed treatment of the theme of matan Torah, as well as a discussion of the first commandment and its implications, and a look at the Ten Commandments as a whole. If pisqa 21 was meant to stand alone as the text/lesson for Shavuot, as indeed it might have been, then it does rival the parallel Kahana material. And in this, ironically, they are the most similar; that is, they both provide an in-depth, richly rewarding teaching on the theme of the Torah and the Commandments.

D. Other Parallels

A comprehensive study of all the parallel texts to the Aseret haDibrot would constitute a thesis in and of itself. Scholars have pointed out parallels, some earlier, others later, to almost every paragraph.[19] In the preceeding pages of this chapter, we examined two larger pieces, each of which

represented an earlier paradigm or parallel for the Aseret haDibrot. Now, let us take a brief look at one of the ways in which smaller segments of material are used.

In each of the pisqaot of the Aseret haDibrot, there is at least one paragraph which focusses on the practical application of the commandments or provides examples of its observance. Occasionally, it will merely illustrate a more complete idea presented earlier in the text. These sections, not coincidentally, often appear to us as a type of list and it is here that the most direct borrowing with the least amount of reshaping takes place.

One example occurs in pisqa 22:6, in which the text attempts to understand the differences between the third commandment and its parallel in Leviticus 19:12, "You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord." The text tells us not to administer oaths to one who is suspected of dishonest oaths nor to one who is eager to swear. The example that follows, a mashal, is taken directly from Leviticus Rabbah 6:3 which discusses one's responsibility as a witness.[20]

A bit later in our Rabbati text, oaths between two people are being discussed with an emphasis on steering people away from oaths even concerning matters which are true. As an example, the Rabbati editor uses the very next tale from Leviticus Rabbah 6:3 about the two women and the denar which falls into the dough.

This same type of direct borrowing of illustrations is present in pisqa 23:6, which contains examples of how the Shabbat is blessed and made holy,[21] and in pisqa 23/24:3-5 where we find examples of how parents are to be honored.[22]

As an anthology, the Rabbati borrows from many sources, but even when it does its most direct borrowing, as indicated in the examples above, the editor carefully reshapes the material. Almost nothing is haphazardly placed together. Illustrations are chosen with care and placed with equal care. The result is a well-woven text which does not "fray" or even show at the seams.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE LATER PARALLELS

A. Key Issues

The debate over the collection of tales known as the Midrash Aseret haDibrot, though not extensive, covers practically every aspect possible -- its dating (from 7th to 10th/11th century), its authorship/editorship and place of origin, its function or use; in fact, its very designation as a Midrash. Before we try to come to grips with these issues, it would be helpful at first to emphasize what we can say, with certainty, about the collection itself.

First, the term 'collection' is a misnomer. Actually, there are multiple collections entitled Midrash Aseret haDibrot with some twenty known extant manuscripts.[1] In these manuscripts, each commandment is followed by a series of tales with the total number of stories ranging from seventeen in the shortest to forty-four in the longest (Parma MS 473). However, inasmuch as some stories appear in certain manuscripts and not in others, there are, in actuality, over fifty known stories in all. Even the Parma manuscript then does not contain all the stories.

At one time it was thought that there was a long version and a short version of Midrash Aseret haDibrot, but the discovery of multiple and varying manuscripts has dispelled that notion. We are no longer certain just how each story was selected for its particular collection; where the text

has not been corrupted (and many are) we can only assume editorial choice. Today, the appelation "long version" and "short version" are merely convenient labels and do not tell us anything about the content.

Each story, ostensibly, tends to illustrate something about that commandment with which it is associated -- its observance, its meaning, individuals who did observe it, etc. Sometimes the connection is rather loose. For example, a tale might be told about someone who was famous for observing a particular commandment, but the story itself, emphasizing the heroic quality of that person, might have little or nothing to do with that commandment.[2] In other tales, the setting might be a Sabbath day with the story connected at best tangentially to Sabbath observance.

Although the quality and size of the manuscripts vary, with some being incomplete, missing tales or parts of tales, all of the manuscripts tend to cover the full range of the Ten Commandments. For example, the tenth commandment might be missing in one collection;[3] or a collection might be missing tales from several of the commandments.[4] Nevertheless, the intention seems to have been to cover all the commands. However, the number of tales following each commandment differs from collection to collection, with the ninth commandment leading all the others with the most number of known tales. The commandment to remember the Sabbath day is a somewhat distant second.[5]

The stories tend to occupy the majority of the focus in each of the commandments. The collections seem more interested in/concerned with the tales that illustrate the commandment than with homiletic material which is relegated to a level of secondary importance.

Most of the stories are folk tales, either rabbinic in origin or non-rabbinic, universal tales retold with Jewish elements, such as names and places, in order to give the appearance of being a Jewish story, to appeal to a Jewish audience. Often, a tale of much older origins (such as Hannah and her Seven Sons who martyr themselves for kiddush ha-shem) is contemporized, again with names and places changed in order to give the tale a new feeling of relevance. In all, fictional elements, such as dialogue, suspense, "stage directions," are prevalent, which give these tales a very modern flavor and really set them apart from their older, more stilted predecessors. In addition, the tales enjoy a remarkable degree of freedom of expression and are often quite frank and/or explicit in dealing with relationships, sexuality, and aberrant behavior. The tales are often quite entertaining, as well as edifying, and make for enjoyable reading.

Although there has not been a great deal of scholarly attention paid to Midrash Aseret haDibrot, a fact not untypical of the Minor Midrashim in general, there has been

a wide variety of opinion even about the most basic of factual information.

I. Dating

Moses Gaster, as was typical of the scholars of his generation, tended to see everything he was studying as early source material. He argues that there were many old, Palestinian aggadic collections which were later utilized in the Talmud and the Midrash. In the process, the old collections were lost, so that all we have remaining are isolated tales. He sees the Midrash Aseret haDibrot as one of these collections and dates it as no later than the 7th/8th century, with roots going back even further.[6]

Rav Judah Lev haCohen Fishman, who put together an annotated text culled from various manuscripts and printed editions, speculates that there were numerous manuscript collections of Midrash Aseret haDibrot which pre-dated the Pesiqta Rabbati collection. He believes that the editor of the Rabbati utilized these manuscripts in putting together his collection.[7]

Both of these theories seem more motivated by romantic notions of "old secret texts" than they are by the collections themselves. The story telling that is evidenced by the Aseret haDibrot is beyond any doubt late in origin. It is more sophisticated and complex than anything we see in

earlier midrashic collections and represents a kind of bridge in the development of fictional literature which begins to take place in the Middle Ages. In fact, Yosi Dan states that the, "stress on the fictional elements is one of the characteristics of the new attitude toward the story introduced in medieval times."[8] Certainly, this new attitude is witnessed in the Dibrot material.

Further, when we examine the development of midrashic literature and see, for example, how the editor of the Rabbati begins to free himself of the structural demands/ constraints of the more classical homiletical style, let us say, of the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana, in an effort to enhance thematic development,[9] it becomes inconceivable for us to imagine how this more sophisticated genre of literature could have preceeded the Talmud or the early Midrashim. Great scholars such as Gaster simply could not have applied modern literary criticism to these collections and, as a result, erred in their dating.

When we consider the thematic thrust of many of the tales -- observance of the commandments even to the point of martyrdom, a theme which calls to mind the Crusades -- in combination with our discussion on the fictional quality of these tales, a 9th or 10th century dating, with a continuing redactional process going on even into the 11th century, seems more plausible. The compilation cannot be any later

Whether or not the collection was utilized in this manner, perhaps we will never know. However, we can be certain that it enjoyed immense popularity as is attested to by the numerous and far-reaching (geographically) manuscripts and later printed editions, some with a pointed Yiddish translation on the lower half of the page.[12]

It also seems certain, both from a stylistic as well as a thematic point of view, that the collection was aimed at a popular audience. The stories have universal appeal, dealing as they do with heroes (often women), reversals of fate, rewards for good people, etc. Variations of the same stories have been found throughout the Jewish as well as non-Jewish world. Even the first commandment contains popular "mysticism."

Jewishly, the tales emphasize complete/simple observance of the commandments as a way to gain the world to come. Perhaps the editor knew the phrase from the Talmud that the people want to "listen to a word of aggadah."[13] Certainly, the Midrash Aseret haDibrot fulfills this need by providing the reader with rich and rewarding material to enhance his understanding of the Ten Commandments.

III. Is it a Midrash?

Aseret haDibrot has been described as an exegetical Midrash on the Ten Commandments, but the question has been

raised whether this really is a Midrash or merely a collection of stories gathered under the same title, tales sewn together by the exegetical thread of the Ten Commandments. From what we know of Midrash, the latter seems more probable, with the word "Midrash" then added to the title to give the stories a certain degree of respectability, or perhaps even to connect them in the mind of the listener/reader to the earlier collection in the Pesiqta Rabbati.

While the tales do connect to the themes of the commandments, they do not serve quite the same function of the mashal in a midrashic work. Exegetical Midrashim tend to explicate a word or phrase in the text, expounding upon it, offering various insights into its potential and varied meanings, then moving on to the next word or phrase in the text. The mashal serves the exposition, becomes a metaphor for the point being made, and is always subservient to the exposition itself. In the later Aseret haDibrot collections, there is almost never any pretense at exegesis. The commandment is announced, summarized, and followed by the tales.[14] Additionally, there is no effort made to connect the tales one to the other, except of course that they each begin with a new commandment. This interweaving is also a quality of true midrashic works.

In sum, Midrash Aseret haDibrot is really no Midrash at all, at least not in the classical sense of the word.

However, as will be discussed immediately following, this does not mean that the collection is just a haphazard lumping together of nice stories; rather, it represents a carefully shaped, well-edited collection of tales, which do, in fact, hold together when analyzed both structurally as well as thematically. This being the case, then perhaps we need to expand our definition of what it is that constitutes Midrash. But now, it is to the task of structural and thematic analysis that we turn our attention.

B. The Texts

While I fully recognize that separation of Midrash Aseret haDibrot collections into short and long versions does not, in and of itself, reveal anything to us about the texts themselves, I have somewhat arbitrarily chosen two of the more well-known collections, (one short, the other long) to analyze here. I see them as a representative cross section of the larger body of the Aseret haDibrot collections. If clear-cut patterns emerge in our analysis of both texts, then it will be assumed that such patterns are typical and can be found in any and all of the Midrash Aseret haDibrot collections.[15]

I. Adolph Jellinek, Bet haMidrash

Adolph Jellinek, the early pioneer in the collection of minor midrashim, reproduced the Verona edition (1642) of the Midrash Aseret haDibrot in his Bet haMidrash, vol. 1; pp. 62-90.[16] It contains seventeen tales, culled from a variety of sources and dealing with only nine of the Ten Commandments. Inasmuch as it is the tenth commandment which is missing, we must assume that the text is fragmentary.

a. Structure

Most of this Midrash follows the same pattern: a short introduction, usually a warning of some type, is followed by varying numbers of tales relating in some way to the commandment. Some of the commandments conclude with a moral. In some respects, the moral serves the same function as a nehemta, with the reassurance that observance leads to a future reward. However, since the moral does not appear with regularity, it is difficult to assess its place. Only the first commandment, which presents us with introductory material, and the sixth commandment, which contains no formal tales as such, vary from this overall pattern.

Thus we have in the second commandment an introduction in which God reminds us of who He is and warns us against the teachings of the Gentiles, i.e., other gods, idol worship. This is followed by the assurance that God saves Jews who

observe the mitzvot and trust in Him, a theme which is found throughout the text, with an allusion to the patriarch Abraham who was saved from the fires of Nimrod who had sentenced him to death for refusing to bow down to him. This is followed by a further warning. The fear of death, we are told, is the reason one does not or should not involve oneself in idol worship. In keeping to this pattern, this introduction is followed by two tales. The first one, which occupies most of this section, is a story of a woman and her seven sons, all of whom martyr themselves in an act of kiddush ha-shem; they will not bow down to the monarch or anyone other than the One God. As a result, their reward is to sit among the righteous in the world to come. In this tale, we recognize the familiar apocryphal story of Hannah and her seven sons.[17] Here, it is retold with more dialogue, especially between the mother and her youngest son. In our version, the mother remains anonymous and unidentified, giving the story an eternal or timeless quality, as if this is the story of all Jewish mothers in all times. In addition, the tale is clearly well-suited as an illustration of obediance to the second commandment. In the second tale, an apostate challenges Rabbi Akiva as to the faithfulness of God, by saying that there are some who worship idols in order to heal themselves of disease or affliction, and sometimes they are healed.[18]

Rabbi Akiva's response is that those people have been healed naturally and that it is not the way of God to interfere with nature. He then assures the apostate that God will keep faith with and do the right thing (such as heal) for those who maintain their faith in Him. While this tale is a little weaker, lacking the story-like features of the first tale and appearing much more like a mashal than a ma'aseh, it, too, is well-suited as an illustration of the meaning of the second commandment.

In what is probably the best example from this recension of the structure of the Midrash Aseret haDibrot pisqaot, we turn to the seventh commandment -- the prohibition against adultery. There, a very short introduction which warns us against a variety of behaviors, especially looking at women, and which tells us that it is God who makes marriages and only the yetzer ha-ra which is responsible for breaking this commandment, is followed by some five tales all dealing with the problem of adultery and related sexual/marital issues.[19]

In the first tale, we have an illustration of the warning against looking at women which was made in the introduction to this commandment. There we learn of the great Rabbi Matva b. Heresh who never looked at another man's wife and who, when tempted by Satan in the guise of a most beautiful woman, has his eyes put out by hot irons rather than risk looking at or even catching a glance of her beauty.

Thus we are told that the yetzer ha-ra has no power over the one who does not look at another man's wife, so that we may assume he is safe from the sin of adultery.

The fact that we are not really dealing with an actual act of adultery, does not seem to bother the editor. In fact, of the five tales in this section, only one (the third) deals with the actual sin; and even there, the true message of the story is to honor Rabbi Meir who is not punished for his "sin." Of the wicked wife who is truly guilty, we learn nothing, but this tale does open the way for the editor to select two tales about good wives whose faithfulness saves their husbands.

As for the second tale, there, too, the main thrust seems to be other than the sin of adultery. It is a story often told around the holiday of Yom Kippur becuase it deals with the ideal of true repentance. In this case, the sin for which the penitent is being punished is the murder of an engaged girl after whom he lusted. The moral, which follows the third tale in an effort to connect the two, is to stay away from married and/or engaged women. Such contact can only lead to adultery/sins for which one will burn in Gehenna.

This section shows clear editorial shaping. After the introduction, we move from a story which illustrates one who succeeded at heeding the warning set forth in the introduction,

structural pattern, the first and sixth commandments, and we need to pay some attention to them in order to determine whether they are so structured by design or because of some other factor. If it is by design, we have to ask "Why? Do these sections fit in with the rest of the collection? Do they detract? How so?" If it seems not by design, then we have to try to figure out what happened.

The sixth commandment, which begins much like all the others, with a warning against staying in the company of murderers lest we become like them, does not include any illustrative tales. After the warning, we have a very "midrashic style" exposition of God who knows all from the moment of conception and who speaks to the embryos before they are born, imploring them to be tzaddikim and not evil doers. The section concludes with a portrait of murder victims coming before God, demanding and receiving justice. God throws the murderers into Gehenna and the victims rejoice. While some might argue that this last portrait is really a tale, it lacks the story-like qualities so readily apparent throughout the collection. In addition, the tales are almost always introduced by the word מעשה and that, too, is missing here.

While the sixth commandment does not follow the pattern of the other commandments in the collection, its break with that pattern is not a radical one. It does not create a

A discussion of the pre-mundane status of the Torah is followed by a visual conception of the universe and then a description of the seven heavens and Moses' ascent to receive the Torah (Moses being selected because, like the letter Aleph which was chosen to begin the Ten Commandments, he was so humble). Then, abruptly, a new train of thought is begun with the phrase, Bahodesh haShlishi. What follows is exegesis of this phrase, pure and simple.[23] This is then followed by a מאיר דרש on the same phrase, another explanation/exposition of why the third month was chosen for the giving of the Torah. The מאיר דרש is a midrashic tool and is found only in this portion of the Midrash Aseret haDibrot collection.

The second dibbur rishon describes what happens when the people hear the first commandment; actually, the first word, with distinct interpretations being provided.[24] Whether this represents a conflation of sources or a continuation of the exegesis, since the two do not overlap in terms of content and do provide a chronological sequence, is not important to us. What is important is that both vary from the pattern of the collection -- introduction followed by tales -- and both appear to us more like a Midrash as we know it. As a result, both stand out structurally from the other sections of the collection.

The question remains, "Why do we have this breakdown of structure?" Do we have a careless editor who cannot follow

his own clear-cut pattern? Are there no illustrative tales available to him for the first commandment? Is this design a purposeful introduction to the theme of the Ten Commandments which establishes a connection to the same design in the more classical, better know Pesiqta Rabbati collection? Or, is this a clever ploy to establish in the reader the mindset that this is indeed a midrashic text, since the editor knows full well that what will follow can hardly classify as true Midrash? Inasmuch as our editor seems quite capable, I am convinced that this is purposeful design, and so I would answer in the affirmative to the last two rhetorical questions posed.[25]

Of course, there are some other structural breakdowns which could hardly be considered purposeful. Our editor is not always perfect. An example occurs in the discussion on the fifth commandment in which a one line reference to the familiar story of the two sons, the one who does not honor his father, though he provides lavishly for him, and the other who does honor his father by putting him to work at the millstone and thereby removing him from potential danger, is followed by the fuller version of the story of the first son, with only a glancing reference to the second son. This is followed by yet another version of the story of the second son. Careful editing could have fused the stories or, at the very least, warned the reader of another version.

As it stands, the three overlap without any attempt to smooth over the differences. They appear to us as separate sources merely lumped together without any shaping whatsoever.

A bit later in this same section, several examples of sons who honored their parents, which are retold with more dialogue and less narrative, are followed by the moral that God honors those who honor their parents.[26] This seems to be, and in fact should be, the end of the section, but two more tales are added on. While both tales connect thematically to the moral, from a structural point of view they are unnecessary. In addition, the repetition of the moral three times lets us know that each of these tales could have been, perhaps should have been, the ending to the section. While this might be in keeping with good rabbinic style -- the more examples the stronger the argument -- from a literary point of view, it is not in keeping with the very structure so carefully laid out by our editor.

Be that as it may, such breakdowns in structure are the exception, not the rule, and they in no way harm the overall structure of each of the commandment sections.

c. Theme

There are three main thematic threads that are woven throughout the Jellinek Midrash Aseret haDibrot collection. They are: 1) an emphasis on observance of the commandments,

especially in ritual matters; 2) a focus on Jews who suffer and/or martyr themselves for their observance or their identification with the Jewish people or with God; and 3) a God who rewards the faithful both in this world and in the world to come.

Examples of observance can be found in every section on every commandment and generally occupy the bulk of the tales themselves. This is as true with a conceptual commandment as it is with a ritual one. Thus we have in the third commandment the story of the father and son who were extremely punctilious in their efforts never to swear, despite all the hardships that commandment engendered. Similarly, in the ninth commandment we find a tale of a Torah scholar who receives improper burial in what was thought to be a case of mistaken identity. In the end we learn that it was the will of God because one time the scholar had erred in the putting on of his tefillin.

If the Midrash Aseret haDibrot is meant for simple people or non-scholars, then the emphasis on observance certainly makes sense. One need not be a scholar nor be able to understand complex subtleties or nuances of meaning, these tales seem to be telling us. Rather, one must simply do his/her best to observe the commandments. As is foreshadowed in the second section of the first commandment, the Torah is all encompassing. We are commanded to observe

mitzvot with all of our being every day of our lives, and these tales tell us of those who fulfill this obligation, urging us to become one of them.

While examples of martyrs are not as numerous as examples of observance, they do set the tone in the second commandment, in which we have the story of the woman and her seven sons followed by a Rabbi Akiva tale (also a martyr, but not here), and then in the third commandment, which contains the Job-like story of a man who lost everything because he would not take an oath. In addition, there are examples of self-sacrifice in order to observe the Sabbath or even to honor one's parents.

In all these examples, those who suffer are lauded as heroes. The understanding is made clear: the faithful may need to suffer for their faith. If we set this in the backdrop of the 10th or 11th century, in which martyrdom is being extolled as a virtue in some communities and Jews are suffering at the hands of the Crusaders, then this theme becomes all the more poignant as well as significant. We have no way of knowing if the average Jew was reading these tales during this time period, but if s/he was, then s/he certainly could have taken heart from its message.

In almost every section there is the promise of or the actual giving of a reward, although in some cases that reward

is to be saved for the world to come. In addition, we are told that punishment will come to those who violate the commandments, though this, too, is sometimes meted out only in the world to come. So we read that thieves have no profit from their theft, as their secrets are revealed before God (seventh commandment), or that murder victims, standing with God, get to see their murderers sent to the fires of Gehenna (sixth commandment). In the fifth commandment, a certain Gentile in Ashkelon is rewarded by God for having honored his father by not disturbing his sleep, though he could have made a great profit by doing so, and in the third commandment, everything is restored to the son who will not take an oath.

The belief in the ultimate triumph of the righteous is made absolutely clear in the second commandment. The eternal promise of God to keep faith with His people is emphasized two times. The text seems to be telling us, and more importantly its contemporary "readers," that times are difficult, but the oneness of God needs to be underscored through belief and observance. Martyrs are exemplified. God will reward the faithful, but they may need to wait until the world to come, where their reward will last for eternity. The message might be a little harsh, especially by contemporary standards, but it speaks to the reality of its times. In the face of all the suffering, at least there is hope.

All three thematic threads place the Midrash Aseret haDibrot into the realm of the practical world. We are not dealing with abstract theories as to the meaning and message of the Ten Commandments. They become, in our text, a guide for real people who suffer for their beliefs and their identity. In that, there is a compelling quality to these tales, one which makes them eternally relevant.

II. Judah Fishman, Tales of the Ten Commandments

In 1924, Judah Lev haCohen Fishman published in Jerusalem an annotated text of the Midrash Aseret haDibrot under the title, "Tales of the Ten Commandments or the Haggadah of Shavuot" (אגדת עשרת הדברות או הכתרה של שבועות). In his introduction he tells us that his edition is based upon various manuscripts, identifying one of them as a previously unknown and ancient text from Yemen.[27]

Although this is by his own admission a composite work, drawing from three different fragmentary manuscripts in comparison with a number of different printed editions, Fishman claims not to have altered or changed the tales in any way other than to correct obvious errors in transmission.[28] In effect, he has sewn different texts together so that they may appear, once again, as a whole cloth. In doing so, he has maintained the general structural framework and design of the other collections, and has brought to light some heretofore unknown tales.

with those commandments that broke with the pattern, six and ten, it would be helpful to see just how they do conform to the Aseret haDibrot pattern in this recension.

The sixth commandment begins with a warning to stay away from adulterers, murderers, and their friends, followed by a midrashic understanding of God's role in creating a human being and the incumbent seriousness of taking another life. This is combined with further warnings of the punishment awaiting a murderer and his descendants.[30]

True to the form, the introduction is followed by a tale of two highwaymen who kill people and steal their money. In the end, they are found out, tricked into confessing, and then they, themselves, die an unnatural death. This section closes with an interesting vignette in which the parents of murderers are chastized by God for not having taught their children Torah and mitzvot. In the end, the murderer is punished with his parents approval. While not really a tale per se, this vignette does serve to focus the material as a nehemta would do in a homily.[31]

The tenth commandment, which was totally absent in the Jellinek edition, begins with the statement that the one who covets will not get anything he desires and in the end will lose everything, even that which is his. As an example, it points to the snake in the Garden of Eden, accusing it of coveting Eve. This is followed by a tale in which a person

who covets his neighbor's wife winds up violating all Ten Commandments.[32] While the story is a bit forced, it does serve as a proper conclusion to this commandment as well as the entire collection in that it both illustrates the warning stated in the introduction and it brings together all of the Ten Commandments.

But the editor takes us a bit further. This last tale is followed by an exposition of the phrase זכור את, which leads us to the importance and value of Torah study. This message, in turn, is highlighted by a tale with which the collection ends. Thematically, as well as structurally, this is a perfect nehemta-like ending as we are led full circle back to where we began -- to the giving of the Ten Commandments as symbol for the Torah itself.

As far as the first commandment is concerned, once again we have an introduction to the giving of the Torah without any tales as illustrations. The material, sounding very much like Midrash, is much briefer here, with the people Israel seeing that there is no other God than the God of Israel who reveals Himself to the people in speaking the first commandment. This section serves exactly the same function as does the first commandment in the Jellinek recension, and so I must conclude that its design is purposeful as well.[33]

Thus we see that as far as the structural breakdowns that we first noticed with the Jellinek recension, breakdowns which we assumed to be either accidental (commandments six and ten) and purposeful/necessary (commandment one), there is really no problem at all when we examine the same sections in another, larger recension. That is to say, commandments six and ten fit perfectly well into the structural format of the Midrash Aseret haDibrot when we have a fuller, completed text. And the first commandment acts as an introduction, the same type of introduction albeit with varying lengths, in both texts. It is therefore safe to conclude that the format is consistent in both editions.

As far as thematic development is concerned, once again the same themes are woven into the fabric of the longer recension. Again, each mitzvah is seen as a separate unit, emphasizing the observance of that mitzvah as all important, or as equal to all the other commandments combined. Again, obedience and steadfastness, especially in times of adversity are underscored, with the assurance that God will reward the faithful underlying most of the commandments. Inasmuch as these are the same thematic threads as we found in the shorter recension, with no other new ones to report, there is really no need to simply "pile on" more examples. Suffice it to say that they are manifest in the collection.

b. Fiction vs. Midrash

While it has been stated that Midrash Aseret haDibrot contains tales which demonstrate concern for various literary elements, such as details, dialogue and suspense, as well as universal folkloristic elements, no where is this more apparent than in the Fishman edition which contains a number of tales not previously found in a printed edition.[34] While it would be attractive to jump to the conclusion that the printed editions censored out the more "troubling" tales because they were problematic in some way, I do not believe that the "manuscript only" tales present a singular pattern of belief or thought or practice which is inconsistent with mainstream Jewish living. Further, these tales are not necessarily more radical than some of the other tales which do appear frequently in the printed editions. Until we know more about the manuscript transmission of this collection, I am afraid we will have to suspend judgment as to just why they were never printed. However, since the Midrash Aseret haDibrot has been identified as a type of bridge literature between pure midrash on the one side and pure fiction on the other,[35] it would be interesting to take a look at the literary quality of at least some of these tales, as well as some of the more antinomian ones which appear for the first time in a printed text, in the Fishman edition.

Of this latter group, one of the more interesting tales is found in the section on the fourth commandment, honoring

the Sabbath. There, we are told of two angels who accompany a person back from synogogue to his house on Friday night, the eve of the Sabbath. If a candle is burning and the house is prepared for the Sabbath, the good angel says, "May it be the will of the God of Israel that this one live for yet another week," to which the wicked angel replies, "Amen, may he be strong and successful in all that he does this week." On the other hand, if the house is not prepared for the Sabbath, the wicked angel takes over.

While this tale fits into the overall thematic schema of the Aseret haDibrot, in which observance of the commandments (here, ritual observance) is rewarded, the vehicle of two angels, one good and the other wicked working together as God's inspectors, is rather unique. Although the idea of angels, even angels serving as God's messengers is not new to Jewish thought, here, the specificity of their actions, their role in reward and punishment, and even their dialogue with one another pushes the borders of Jewish acceptance insofar as angelology is concerned. The folkloristic quality of this tale can hardly be in doubt.

Another example of a folkloristic tale, which is also not found in any other printed edition, but one which takes elements from a variety of midrashic sources,[36] is found in the fifth commandment, the first tale illustrating the commandment to honor one's father and mother. There, a

father commands his son to "cast his bread upon the waters" every day. The son's obedience leads him eventually to a Leviathan who gives him the power to communicate with animals. This then turns into an adventure story in the true sense of the word, with the son tracking down the treasure of King Solomon. It is replete with talking animals, magical healing grass, mental telepathy, mind reading, a host of miraculous deeds, and, of course, a happy ending.

While once again this tale is connected to the overall theme of obedience to the commandments is rewarded, the tale itself overshadows the commandment as well as the theme. Clearly, the tale is the real interest of the editor. Its universal appeal is also apparent. The treasure of Solomon could be the treasure of Pharoah or any other king and the motif of communication with animals who reveal secrets is well known to the world of universal folklore.[37]

An example of the increased story-telling quality of these tales occurs in the seventh commandment, with the tale of Rabbi Meir who is "tricked into" committing adultery with the second wife of his master. This tale, whose source is found in the Talmud is also found in the Jellinek recension as well as elsewhere.[38] In this recension, however, the story moves beyond simple narration. Rabbi Meir, his master, as well as his master's wife all become true fictional characters, in that they talk to one another. At one point,

Rabbi Meir's master says to him, concerning his new wife, "She will attend to yourneeds even more than my first wife!" The irony of that statement could not have been lost to its readers/listeners who must have all known what was about to happen.

Further, we see attention paid to details not known in the other, perhaps earlier, recensions. For example, the editor wants to draw a parallel between Rabbi Meir and his master's wife, and the Biblical Joseph and Potiphar's wife. He adds the phrase, "וּבְבִגְדוֹ אָחֲזָה בּוֹ", she caught hold of him by his clothes, which immediately calls to mind the Biblical story. These details, combined with the dialogue and characterization, add to the literary quality of this tale, bringing us closer to modern fiction than we ever realized in the Midrash. While this is not yet true fiction, we are certainly on the way.[39]

C. The Later Recensions and the Pesiqta Rabbati Collection

The only remaining question in terms of these later Midrash Aseret haDibrot recensions is whether or not they are in any way connected to the Aseret haDibrot we found in the Pesiqta Rabbati. Scholarly opinion is divided among those who see the two as totally separate,[40] and those who see these later recensions

as actually predating the Pesiqta Rabbati.[41] As we are about to discover, I believe that both are incorrect.

Whereas there is some overlap in material between the Rabbati and the later compilations, since they both draw upon the same sources, and share numerous legends and examples, there are many more differences than similarities. Further, while the same story might appear in both (the Aleph's complaint, for example[42]), there are many more aggadot which appear in one and not the other.

A perfect illustration is the B.T. Kiddushin 30b-32b material regarding the honoring of one's parents. Presumably, this was equally available to the editor of the Rabbati as well as the editors of the later recensions of Midrash Aseret haDibrot, yet many more examples appear in the Rabbati than in the later texts. Even if our dating is incorrect, what I have called the 'later texts' tend merely to choose one or two examples and create extended tales from them, or summarize them in their short introduction, or place them in the moral at the end. In any event, the material chosen as well as its treatment is different in every single text I examined.[43]

In terms of the formal elements of midrashic style, we have demonstrated the fairly consistent homiletic appearance of the Pesiqta Rabbati Dibrot as well as the hardly exegetical structure of the later collections.[44] That is to say, at

worst, the Aseret haDibrot of the Pesiqta Rabbati is a mixture of exegetical and homiletical elements, while at best, the later recensions of Midrash Aseret haDibrot contain some scattered exegetical elements. So in terms of formal midrashic style, there is almost no similarity.

Further, we have seen that the focus of Midrash Aseret haDibrot is the long ma'aseh, and that these tales are fairly sophisticated from a literary standpoint. There are no such tales in the Rabbati Aseret haDibrot, though there is a larger than usual number of meshalim and short ma'asim.

Insofar as theme is concerned, once again the connections between the two are minimal. The Rabbati Aseret haDibrot lack real thematic unity, though they focus on God, especially in relationship to Israel. While application of the commandments in the form of observance is noted, it is not the central message of the text. This is quite another story in the later Midrash Aseret haDibrot in which observance, especially in times of adversity, with its promise of reward from God, totally dominates each commandment. Thus thematically, as well, there is little in common.[45]

Thus far we have seen only the scantest connections between the Pesiqta Rabbati Aseret haDibrot and the later collections known as Midrash Aseret haDibrot. Are the two really connected? Do the later compilations rely at all on the Rabbati Aseret haDibrot in any way? Or are the few overlapping selections

merely haphazard and/or accidental, owing more to the fact of limited source material and similar theme focus rather than any conscious design?

We begin to get an answer only when we turn to what I have called the "structural pattern" of the Aseret haDibrot.[46] When we examine both texts from this vantage point, a remarkable similarity of form emerges. Both move from the general to the specific within each section; both begin with an introduction on the theme of matan Torah, discuss the commandments, and end with another link to the concept of Torah, in the collection as a whole. This similarity of structural pattern can be seen in the following chart:

Collection As A Whole

Rabbati	Midrash Aseret haDibrot
Introduction with cosmological implications (Pisqa 20 and first half of 21) theme of matan Torah	Introduction with cosmological implications (Dibbur Rishon) theme of matan Torah
the commandments	the commandments
Nehemta on Torah	ending discussion on Torah study (Fishman edition)

Each Section

overview	introduction with overview and/or understanding of the commandment
understanding of the commandment	
application of the commandment	application of the commandment
nehemta	moral

While the emphasis in each collection is clearly very different, both texts 'feel' similar in their sweep of the material. We may never know if the editors of the Midrash Aseret haDibrot collections in fact knew the Rabbati collection. From our study, however, I feel certain that not only did they know it very well, but in fact used it and built upon it.

CONCLUSION

The two great classical midrashim on the holiday cycle, the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana and the Pesiqta Rabbati, both contain sermons for the holiday of Shavuot, and both deal with themes of matan Torah and the Ten Commandments. In fact, it can be said that in these midrashim the giving of the Torah itself becomes equated with the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai.

Later, in the Middle Ages, beginning with the 10th-11th centuries, a collection of tales on the Ten Commandments known as Midrash Aseret haDibrot appears. Purporting to be a midrash, the manuscripts contain material culled from a number of sources, including Talmud and midrash, but primarily composed of folktales rewritten to conform to the context of the commandments themselves. Apparently the collections became very popular, for we find multiple recensions of the texts throughout the known Jewish world, from Yemen to London.

However, we must ask whether all the various texts on the Ten Commandments are connected. Do they represent a process of development and expansion beginning with one sermon in the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana, expanded in the Pesiqta Rabbati to cover the full range of the Ten Commandments, and then continued on the popular level in the collection known as the Midrash Aseret haDibrot (as well as the variations on that title)? While we need to know much more about the manuscript transmission of the later recensions, I have

offered a tentative "yes" to the above question. That is to say, beyond the content of the collections I believe there are clear structural patterns emerging in each text which link them, one to the other. The Pesiqta Rabbati utilizing the earlier parallels reshaped the material found in the Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael and the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana into a well focussed thematic unit. The Rabbati created a pattern moving from the general/theological to the particular/observational. This pattern was utilized in the later recensions with a shift in focus away from theology and towards examples or stories of observance of the commandments.

Although we began with the question on the interconnectedness of the texts, which in fact was the motivating question for this thesis, it soon became apparent that a great deal of work would need to be done on issues of intertextuality. For example, how do the pisqaot on the Ten Commandments, pisqaot 20-24, fit into the larger body of the Rabbati collection? Are they themselves homilies? Clearly they are distinct from the main body of homilies found in the Rabbati known as the Yelamdenu-Tanhuma. How did the Aseret haDibrot, then, manage to be placed among material so different from itself? Simply put, did it belong in this collection?

Upon close scrutiny of the pisqaot within the Aseret haDibrot collection itself we noticed differences of both form and structure, as well as theme and content. Did this indicate separate editors or redactors? Was there anything keeping

these chapters together other than their title? And then, which chapters really belonged to the collection? Was pisqa 20 really to be considered a part of the Aseret haDibrot? Pisqa 24? After all, these seem to bear no resemblance to the other pisqaot; pisqa 20 even had a separate title.

In order to determine if the collection represented a unified piece we had had to look at its structure and theme(s). Did the individual pisqaot follow a similar pattern? In other words, beyond the dissimilarities, was there a repetitive pattern which would indicate the conscious design of a single editor/redactor? If so, what was that pattern?

And was there thematic unity as well? What motivated the editor? What were his concerns? What message did he preach? What did he have to say about the Ten Commandments that was different, that could identify him as the editor of this collection? How did he use his source material? Was there consistency here as well?

Answers to these question had to await a second reading of the Aseret haDibrot text in light of the later recensions. While it is clear that there are four basic styles within the Rabbati collection, that is to say pisqa 20 is different than pisqa 21 which is different than pisqaot 22-23/24 which are different than pisqa 24, there is also evidence of a single editor/redactor who, at some point in its redactional process, reworked this text. In other words, while the original

editor(s) might have been different for each of the four styles mentioned above, someone came along in the end to reshape the collection in order to impress upon it structural and thematic unity.

We have no idea how this person worked or what he originally found. Whether he found pisqa 21 already in the Rabbati, knew of pisqa 20 from another source, personally edited pisqaot 22-23/24, and then hastily put together pisqa 24 because he ran out of time, perhaps we will never know. What we can say, however, and conclusively I believe, is that there is a structural pattern which can be found in each of the pisqaot, a pattern which moves us from a general theological discussion of the commandment to a practical application or observance of that commandment. Moreover, this pattern gives shape to the collection as a whole, as it, too, moves from the abstract in pisqa 20 to the specific in all the later pisqaot.

This same editor/redactor added a homiletic overlay to each of the pisqaot (except 21) in order to make them appear as part of the Pesiqta Rabbati collection of homilies. That is to say, he added proemial texts to the beginning of the pisqaot and/or nehemta texts at the end in order to give them the appearance of homilies. In this, too, our editor was far from haphazard in that the homiletical devices which he employed fit in with and added to the thematic flow of the

chapters themselves. In short, he created a collection of sermons for the holiday of Shavuot which could fit in to the Pesiqta Rabbati collection of sermons for the holiday cycle. That he was not perfect is obvious. That he was masterful in the attempt is equally obvious.

What analysis remains to be done lies in the category of linkage of these texts to the holiday of Shavuot. For example, when and how did the theme of matan Torah become connected to the holiday of Shavuot? When did that become equated with the Ten Commandments? How were the Aseret haDibrot homilies used? Were they a part of the synogogue practice of the time or were they meant for the academy? Further, did the later recensions known as Midrash Aseret haDibrot fill the same function as the earlier Aseret haDibrot collection in the Rabbati? Or were they merely popular tales dealing with one or another of the Ten Commandments told throughout the year, not linked to any one specific time or holiday?

Finally, we want to know who preserved these tales and how that was accomplished? Is there a history of oral transmission like other folktales or was this part of a conscious rabbinic design; part of the body of midrashic literature? And in keeping with this last question, how does this collection fit into the larger body of literature known as the minor midrashim?

There has been little scholarly attention paid to these texts. As a result, we know precious little about their history and utilization. As serious a shortcoming as that is, it does allow us to come "fresh" to the text, without preconceptions and their inherent limitations. In doing so, we find very rich and rewarding insights into the meaning of the commandments as well as our struggle to observe them.

In the course of this thesis work I have been uplifted not only by the material itself, but by the realization that I was sharing in a text read or listened to by centuries of Jews throughout the known Jewish world. In addition, by working with two distinct genres of midrashim, I gained a profound respect for the depth of perception and the masterful literary skills of the editors and redactors of rabbinic texts. If anything is medieval, it is our inability to appreciate the level of literary sophistication and knowledge of the sources that these rabbis so apparently mastered.

While the classical midrash Pesiqta Rabbati presented a far greater challenge in terms of the complexity in the editing of its multiple layers, its subtlety of message and method, as well as its mastery of the homiletic form, it is the minor midrash, Midrash Aseret haDibrot in particular which provided the greatest excitement. If ever the expression an "untapped gold mine" was appropriate, these minor

midrashic texts are its true embodiment. Collectors such as Jellinek and Eisenstein have done the Jewish world as well as the world of literature an invaluable service by preserving these tales. The word 'minor' refers only to their size and certainly not their importance. Older scholars, such as Moses Gaster, and younger ones, such as Dov Noy and Yosi Dan, have pointed the way to serious study of these texts. But the real work is yet to be done.

The literary-analytic approach, in which the texts are treated as whole works and not dissected for their component parts, in which both theme and structure are analyzed in an effort to determine how these works are edited and shaped, is an absolute necessity. We have concentrated on individual content messages for far too long. Rather, we must see how the texts work, not just what they say. In this concentration on the process of the texts, we will discover, as we have done with the Midrash Aseret haDibrot, a thematic message as well.

I believe the viability of such an approach has been demonstrated in this thesis. Applying it to this study has borne marvellous fruit. It needs to be done again and again. Until that time we will be seeing only separate trees in isolation. At the conclusion of this project, I am grateful for a clear view of the entire forest.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Paragraph	Structure	Content
Pisqa 23		
1	proem (Ps. 139:16)	ends with pericope on 4th commandment
1a-7	exegesis of	4th commandment
8	thematic derash	miscellaneous comments/ stories on the special nature of Shabbat
9	thematic derash	more comments on Shabbat observance ends with R. Joshua of Siknin -- "Shabbat observers are rewarded by God"
Pisqa 23/24*		
1	proem (Ps.138:4)	ends with pericope on 5th commandment
2	proem (Prov. 5:6)	
3**	exegesis of first phrase of 5th commandment	compares and contrasts awe and fear of parents
4	exegetical comment on pericope	compares honor due parents to that of God's
5	exegetical comment on pericope	discusses non-Jews who honor their parents -- emphasis on universalistic nature of this commandment
6	nehemta	Esau will be rewarded for honoring Jacob, and then so will we all

* In the Breslau edition there is no pisqa 23/24. Sections one and two are considered to be part of pisqa 23, numbered 23:9 and 10.

** Paragraphs 3-6 represent my own numbering. Braude accepts Friedmann's separation of this material into a separate pisqa, but then follows Breslau by counting only 2 paragraphs (i.e., 23:9 and 10 become 23/24:1 and 2). As can be seen from the above, different thematic threads require separate numbering; hence, paragraphs 3-6.

APPENDIX B

I. Overall View of Parallel Material

Pesiqta de Rav Kahana Pisqa 12	Pesiqta Rabbati
paragraphs 1-21 -- giving of the Torah	Pisqa 20 and 21:1-11 -- giving of the Torah
paragraphs 22-25 (except 23) discussion of the 1st commandment	Pisqa 21:12-22 (except 16-20) discussion of the 1st commandment
	Pisqaot 22, 23, 23/24, and 24 commandments 3-10

II. Specific Parallel Sections

Pesiqta de Rav Kahana Pisqa 12	Pesiqta Rabbati Pisqa 21
Paragraph 22 Proem-Psalm 68:18 22,000 angels for Levites like Ezekiel's vision of chariots --	Paragraph 7 Proem-Psalm 68:18 same same and 2 crowning scenes Temple-God is diminished by destruction of the Temple
endless number of angels	Paragraph 8 (plus discussion)
angels wanted to destroy Israel	Paragraph 8
beauty of angels vs. beauty of the Lord	--
land extends to fit everyone	Paragraph 8
God is source of angels' vitality (angel name includes God, "Gabriel")	Paragraph 10
God is Lord over angels and Israel	Paragraph 10 and expansion

Paragraph 23 Proem-Psalm 50:7 acceptance of Torah leads to change in status for Israel God (as Elohim) is God for Israel alone	--
Paragraph 24 -- anochi one exposition as acrostic	Paragraph 12 same plus 3 others
aleph complains	Paragraph 21 (shorter here)
anochi as Egyptian word (fuller here)	Paragraph 12 (fragmentary)
various appearances of God (fuller here)	Paragraph 6
Paragraph 25 faces of God	Paragraph 6
statue	Paragraph 6
manna/individual	--
voices	Paragraph 6
nehemta on redemption	--

NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

1. Meir Friedmann, Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati (Vienna, 1880), pp.94a - 125b.
2. Moses Gaster, The Exampla of the Rabbis (New York:KTAV, 1924, 1968), p.4.
3. However, to date, no full critical edition of the Pesiqta Rabbati has been undertaken and completed.
4. Norman Cohen, "Structure and Editing in the Homiletic Midrashim," A.J.S. Review 6(1981) pp.6-8.
   Joseph Heinemann, "Omanut haKomposiziah b'Midrash Vayikra Rabbah," ha-Sifrut 2 (1971), pp.808-834.
   "Ha-Petihtot b'Midrashei ha-Aggadah-Mekoran v'Tafkidah," Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies vol.2, Jerusalem, (1969), 43-47.
   Shemuel Mirsky, "HaDerashah b'Tekufat haMishnah v'hatalmud," Horev 7 (1943), pp.75-91.
5. Dov Noy, "Tippusim Beinle'imiyim veYehudiyim beMidrash Aseret haDibrot" Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies 2(1968):353-355.
6. M. Gaster, Exempla, pp. 3-7.

NOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1. Norman Cohen, "The Manuscripts and Editions of the Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati" (unpublished PhD Dissertation, H.U.C.-J.I.R., Cincinnati 1977), p.XIV.
2. Ibid, p.XVI.
3. William Braude, trans. Pesikta Rabbati: Discourses For Feasts, Fasts, and Special Sabbaths (New Haven and LONDON: Yale University Press: 1968) vol. 1, pp.2, 6, and 20-26; Daniel Sperber, "Pesikta Rabbati," Encyclopedia Judaica, 13:335; and Norman Cohen, "Manuscripts and Editions" pp.XVI-XVII.
4. N. Cohen, "Manuscripts and Editions", Excursis III, pp.283-293; and W. Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, pp.20-26. Both contain a complete discussion on dating and place of origin.
5. Hanokh Albeck, HaDerashot B'Yisrael (Jerusalem, 1940) pp.117-121.
6. R. Tanhuma was a famous 4th century Palestinian Amora.
7. I am indebted to my Professor, Norman Cohen, for this definition.
8. N. Cohen, "Structure and Editing in the Homiletic Midrashim," A.J.S. review 6(1981):3 and 5

9. A complete discussion of these differences will follow in the chapters on structure and theme.

10. N. Cohen, "Manuscripts and Editions," pp.279-280.

11. For example, Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, pp.3-5 numbers five distinct literary units which vary slightly from the five stated here.

12. M. Friedmann, Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati (Vienna, 1880), p.94b Footnote #2. Friedmann identifies the collection as a separate section for the holiday of Shavuot. While its linkage to Shavuot has been called into question, no one disputes the fact that this is a separate section.

13. This possibility was put forth by Norman Cohen in his course on the "Pesiqta Rabbati" (HUC-JIR, New York, Spring, 1983).

14. D. Sperber, "Pesikta Rabbati" E.J., 13:335
W. Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, p.10. He relies on Mordecai Margulies for this statement.

15. W. Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, p.13. Braude would add pisqa 25 to the Shavuot collection because it deals with the theme of tithing crops. This raises a number of questions which go well beyond the scope of this study. Most significantly, we would like to know when the theme of matan Torah becomes associated with Shavuot and supercedes the agricultural connections from the Biblical context. In any event, pisqa 25 is not seen as a part of the Aseret haDibrot material.

NOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1. Breslau (1831); Shklov (1806).
2. William Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, p.492, n.1. to pisqa 23/24.
3. See below, pp. for the full discussion of this pisqa.
4. Meir Friedmann, Pesiqta Rabbati, p.125b, n.23 to pisqa 24.
5. See pp. 25-26 of this thesis.
6. William Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, p.13. Not all scholars agree that pisqa 25 is a sermon for Shavuot. See Norman Cohen, "Pesikta Rabbati" p.296 n.9.
7. See p.21 of this thesis.
8. So titled in the Vatican manuscript. This title is also used by J. L. Fishman whose text will be discussed in the Fifth Chapter.
9. Venice (1599-1605), Verona (1647), British Museum Manuscript and others all under the title Midrash Aseret haDibrot.
10. A nehemta may be defined as a messianic peroration which is intended to comfort.
11. See, in this regard, J. Heinemann. "The Proem in the Aggadic Midrashim" Scripta Hierosolymitana 22; L. Zunz, Ha-Derashot be Yisrael, trans. Hanokh Albeck (Jerusalem, 1940); and H. L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (Atheneum; New York, 1969) Part II, pp.201-219.

12. See Appendix A for a structural breakdown of these two pisqaot.
13. Ibid.
14. This pisqa also follows the structural pattern laid out in the Aseret haDibrot material: a general comment is followed by an attempt to understand the commandment itself, and the pisqa concludes with examples of the application of the commandment.
15. An analysis of this section as well as the entire pisqa will follow in our chapter, "Earlier Parallels."
16. Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Bahodesh, chap. 8.
17. There are some structural problems and/or confusion in paragraph 6, but they do not hurt the overall flow of the text, and, in fact, show a further attempt at the homiletical process.
18. Pisqa 20 begins with a proem followed by a thematic derash which is then followed by an attempt at exegesis of the proem text and then abruptly ends with a new proem connecting to the pericope text (the 1st commandment). The only solid connections between the sections are thematic, not structural.
19. See chapter, "Earlier Parallels," pp. 48-50 for a comparison between this section and the Mekhilta de R. Ishmael.
20. Bereshit Rabbah 6:1.
21. See pisqa 21:1, 4, and 5 in this regard.

NOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1. Hermann Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (New York: Atheneum, 1974), pp.201-205. The form of the homiletic Midrash is outlined as follows: proem(s), exegesis of pericope text, and nehemta. The form of the exegetical Midrash is outlined in this way: verse, word by word or phrase by phrase exegesis in the same order of appearance as the Biblical text.
2. Norman Cohen, "Structure and Editing in the Homiletic Midrashim", A.J.S. review 6 (1981):6-7.
3. Terry Bookman, "Zakhor: A Comparison of Pisqa 3 of the Pesiqta deRav Kahana and Pisqa 12 of the Pesiqta Rabbati" (unpublished Term Paper, H.U.C.-J.I.R., New York, 1983).
4. Professor Louis Barth, in his introductory lectures on the Midrash, defined mashal as "an example from life experience." This definition is operative whenever this term is used in this thesis.
5. See n.1 above.
6. See above, pp. 17 and 20.
7. B. T. Berachot 57b. The Shabbat is called a foretaste of heaven, 1/60 of the world to come. In this and other passages, Shabbat becomes a symbol of messianic or future time, not just earthly rest.

8. Whether or not this indicates different redactors/ editors, we are unable to say. But it should be noted that the finished product is very different from pisqa 21 and other more unified pisqaot.

9. Joel Rosenberg, "Midrash on the Ten Commandments", Fiction 7 (1983): 41-3.

10. For example, in pisqa 21:1 Israel is elevated for accepting the Torah and the nations are brought down for rejecting it. Later, in the same pisqa (21:16) we are told that Israel was tricked into accepting Torah and that God enticed Israel by withholding information about the incumbent responsibilities involved in accepting the Torah.
In yet another place (21:13) we read that only Moses accepted the Torah, while Israel did not.

11. In fact, this might be seen as characteristic of the midrashic form itself, in which contrasting viewpoints are added by the phrase, d'var acher.

12. See pp. 57-62 above, comparing pisqa 21 to pisqa 12 of the Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana.

13. This equation of the tenth commandment to all the other commandments combined is found in pisqa 21:17 and not where one would expect it in pisqa 24, which discusses the last five commandments. I believe this is due to the fragmentary nature of the last five commandments, in which the thems of those commandments are never fully developed.

14. See above pp. 22-26.

15. See, in this regard p. of this thesis.

16. W. Gunther Plaut, The Torah: A Modern Commentary (New York: U.A.H.C., 1981), pp.531-8.

17. Sivan (Gemini) is selected as the month in which to give the Torah. It is appropriate since Gemini is represented by the two human beings, indicating that only human beings have the proper consciousness to receive the Torah, thus emphasizing God's reliance upon as well as elevation of human beings.

18. Pisqa 21:9, 11, and 12 and pisqa 23/24:4 with God as parent and Israel as child.

19. The section numbering is mine. Braude numbers this entire section 23/24:2. See, in this regard, W. Braude, Pesikta Rabbati, pp.494-503.

NOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Norman Cohen, "The Pesikta Rabbati," pp. XVI-XVII.
2. In the notes to his edition of the Pesiqta Rabbati, Meir Friedmann provides us with a most comprehensive analysis of parallel texts.
3. Moshe David Herr, "Mekhilta of R. Ishmael," Encyclopedia Judaica vol. 11:1267-1269.
4. Jacob Lauterbach ed., The Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael, vol.II (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1949) Tractate Bahodesh, pp.229-266.
5. Ibid., pp.260-266.
6. See above, pp. 19-20.
7. The idea that coveting leads to the transgression of all the commandments is well known to us and becomes a favorite theme in the later recensions. See, in this regard, p. 38 of this thesis.
8. See also Mekhilta, Tractate Bahodesh, chapters 4 and 5.
9. Braude errs by numbering this entire section 22:6. In actuality, it consists of four separate sections (6, 6a, 6b, and 6c). Both 6a and 6b begin with a proemial text (Exodus 22:10 and Zach. 5:4) and lead us in a new thematic direction.
10. Strack, Talmud and Midrash, p.207.

11. This will be discussed in greater depth in the following chapter. See pp. 84-88.
12. W. Braude and I. Kapstein, Pesikta de Rab Kahana, p.IX-X.
13. Ibid., p.XLIX.
14. See Appendix BI, above.
15. See Appendix BII, above.
16. This is according to the generally accepted numbering system of William Braude in his edition of the Pesikta de Rab Kahana.
17. In fact, the intimate and special quality of God's relationship with Israel is found in several places in the Dibrot collection, including paragraph 13. Interestingly, the theme of the acceptance of Torah is not included in this paragraph, supporting the theory that all of that material was seen as belonging to the introduction alone.
18. One would think that paragraphs 9 and 11, which do not appear in the Kahana, might give us a clue to the thematic concerns and/or differences between the two texts. But even here, the messages of the two paragraphs are not consistent, nor do they jive with the remainder of the text. Rather, they fit only into the particular thematic unit of which they are a part.
19. See, for example, Meir Friedmann, in the commentary Magen David to his edition of Pesiqta Rabbati. Friedmann,

however, thinks that the Rabbati is a third or fourth century text and, as a result, sees much of the earlier material as later parallels.

20. The tale is told in this regard about one Bartholomew, called in Leviticus Rabbah "Bar Telamion." In B. T. Nedarim 25a, the same tale is told in the name of Raba.

21. These examples are taken from Genesis Rabbah 12:6 as well as B. T. Shabbat 119a.

22. The illustrations here are drawn from P. T. Peah 3a and B. T. Kiddushin 30b-32a, with variations in the order. Actually, the Rabbati separates the examples into separate units, as opposed to the more haphazard placement in the two Talmuds.

NOTES

CHAPTER FIVE

1. Known manuscript editions include, British Museum (Ms. 189), Oxford (Ms. 1466, 160 and 268), DeRossi (Ms. 473), Vatican (Ms. 249), Paris (Ms. 716) and Persian (Ms. 66), Moscow (Ms. 111 and 1063), Warsaw (Ms. 374). The earliest printed editions come from Italy: Venice (1551 or 1559), Ferrara (1554) and Verona (1657). Later editions include Warsaw (1887), Lublin (1810), Vilna (1893) and Lemberg (1849).
2. D. Noy. "Tippusim Beinle'umiyim ve-Yehudiyim beMidrash Aseret haDibrot." Fourth World Congress of Jewish Studies 2 (1968):353.
3. Adolph Jellinek, "Midrash Aseret haDibrot," Bet haMidrash vol. I, pp.62-90. This recension contains only the first nine commandments.
4. M. Gaster, ed. The Exempla of the Rabbis (New York: KTAV, 1924/1968), pp.7-8.
5. D. Noy, "Tippusim," p.353.
6. M. Gaster, Exempla, pp.3-5.
7. J. L. Fishman, ed. Ma'asim al Aseret haDibrot o'Haggadah Shel Shavuot (Jerusalem: Zion Publishers, 1924), p.4.
8. Yosi Dan, "Midrash Aseret haDibrot," Encyclopedia Judaica vol. 8:1514-5.
9. N. Cohen, "Structure and Editing," pp.6-7.

10. J. L. Fishman, Ma'asim al Aseret haDibrot, p.4.
11. D. Noy, "Tippusim," p.355; Y. Dan, "Midrash Aseret haDibrot," E.J., 8:1514.
12. Rabbi Eleazar haGadol, Midrash Aseret haDibrot (Warsaw: Epstein and Co., 1888/1891).
13. B. T. Massekhet Soferim 17a.
14. Of course, there are exceptions, and sometimes the summaries themselves contain a bit of exegesis, but this is clearly not the focus of the text.
15. In point of fact, I believe it can be convincingly argued that these patterns are not only typical, but intrinsic to the texts themselves.
16. This same edition was later published in Lublin in 1810.
17. B. T. Gittin 57a; Eicha Rabbati 1:53.
18. J. L. Fishman, Ma'asim al Aseret haDibrot, pp.14-16. This same theme takes the form of a highly fictionalized tale in this edition.
19. Terry Bookman, "Tov and Ra, Emet and Sheker: A View From the Midrash" (unpublished Term Paper, H.U.C.-J.I.R., New York, 1983) Yetzer haRa most often refers to sexual offenses.
20. While I have discussed in depth only the 7th commandment, as well as pointed to the 2nd, I have used these two only as examples of the repetitive pattern in this collection. I am confident that the same close scrutiny could be applied to any of the other commandments with the same results.

21. J. D. Eisenstein, ed. "Midrash Aseret haDibrot," in Ozar Midrashim vol. II, p.450-453. These sections are numbered 2 (ב) and then 15 (טו). The Eisenstein text closely parallels the Jellinek edition.

22. Meir Friedmann, Midrash Pesiqta Rabbati, pisqaot 20 and 21;
J. Lauterbach, Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Tractate Bahodesh, chap. 5, pp.66-80.

23. J. Lauterbach, Mekhilta, Tractate Bahodesh, chap. 5 contains a similar passage.

24. Midrashic comments on the word anochi can be found in the Pisqta Rabbati (pisqa 21:12-15) Pesiqta d'Rav Kahana (pisqa 12:21) and the Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Tractate Bahodesh, chap. 5.

25. See above, p. 91.

26. B. T. Kiddushin 31a-32b.

27. J. L. Fishman, Ma'asim al Aseret haDibrot, p.4.

28. Ibid., p.8.

29. See above, pp. 75-88.

30 B. T. Sanhedrin 37a.

31. Thus, the "missing" tale alluded to in the Jellinek edition is supplied here in this recension of the text. I believe this indicates that the absence of such a tale was, in fact, accidental and not due to any conscious design on the part of the editor.

Mekhilta text, Tractate Bahodesh, end of chapter 6. The Mekhilta, too, is very concerned with the behavioral aspects of the Ten Commandments. In this respect, it is more like the later Midrash Aseret haDibrot than it is like the Aseret haDibrot homilies in the Pesiqta Rabbati.

46. See p. 22 of this thesis.

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