

Conclusion

The present study has shown that *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* knows many traditions from the *Cave of Treasures* but few from *Jubilees*. This division is a product of the author's historical circumstances. The author lived within the 'Abbāsid Caliphate, where numerous versions of *Cav. Tr.* circulated in Syriac, Arabic, and other languages. *Jubilees*, whether in its full form or as a constellation of motifs, was known primarily in the Byzantine Empire. Consequently, Jews from the Byzantine Empire and surrounding Christian territories cite traditions from *Jubilees*, as evidenced by *Midash Tadshe* and *Midrash Aggadah*. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer*, however, was geographically and culturally remote from Byzantium. The author may never have heard of *Jubilees*. His work is the product of the environment in which he worked, where the dominant religious cultures were Syriac Christianity and Islam. Region, rather than religion, was the determinative factor.

The course of the study did reveal that PRE knows a few ancient traditions which date to the Second Temple period. The transmission of these traditions might even depend on ancient Jewish sources, although not *Jubilees*. The first of these is the idea that demons are the shades of the generation of the Flood (PRE 34). This tradition, found in *Jubilees*, is as old as the *Book of the Watchers* (1*Enoch* 15) from the third century BCE. It survived not only in PRE but in *Sefer Asaph*, a work whose gradual composition spans the seventh to the tenth centuries, overlapping with the redaction of PRE. It is possibly based on a work related to—but older than—*Jubilees*. The basic conception also survives in the Solomonic magic tradition, such as in the *Testament of Solomon* (T. Solomon 5:3 and 17:1). The Christian transmission of this work may have helped keep the idea alive.

The other example of an ancient tradition in PRE is the election and ascension of Levi. Although Byzantine writers report the election of Levi as it appears in *Jubilees*, PRE knows a very different story about the election, one closer to rabbinic sources. It adds the narrative of Levi's ascension, which appears in neither *Jubilees* nor the Byzantine chronicles. The ascension does appear in the *Testament of Levi* (well-known in Christian transmission) as well as the *Aramaic Levi Document*, one of the Second Temple works found in the Cairo Genizah. How such an ancient work survived while leaving few traces of its existence (apart from a few Greek and Syriac fragments) remains a mystery. We can only state that it happened. Therefore, while Muslim and Christian material account for a great deal of the non-rabbinic material in PRE, a small number of Second Temple traditions did find their way into the work. In both cases, Jewish documentary evidence survives apart from PRE.

These examples, however, are the exception rather than the rule. As Anna Urowitz-Freudenstein has indicated, most of the "Second Temple" traditions in PRE

come directly from earlier rabbinic literature or even the Hebrew Bible.¹ Some of these examples, although they may appear in Second Temple sources, are so widespread in Christian and Muslim literature that the hypothesis that PRE knew them specifically from Second Temple sources is superfluous. This is the case with the faint echo of the Diamerismos tradition that one finds in PRE. This tradition, first attested in the *Genesis Apocryphon* and *Jubilees*, was one of the most popular in Christian and Muslim historiography. The same can be said about the prophecy of Moses' birth implied in *Jubilees* and found in Josephus. In addition to the Talmud (*b. Sotah* 13a), it was known in Christian, Muslim, and even Samaritan sources.

Most of the non-rabbinic traditions in PRE, however, are neither Second Temple nor even Jewish at all. In fact, all the traditions shared between PRE and *Cav. Tr.* are of Christian origin. The *Cave of Treasures* did not invent most of these traditions. They are, therefore, still ancient, but they date to the third or fourth century CE rather than the second or third century BCE. The association between Satan and the serpent in the Garden of Eden, for example, does not have a clear attestation before the second century, and then only in Christian sources. The identification of the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" with the sons of Seth and the daughters of Cain is a Christian tradition originating in the chronicle of Julius Africanus (d. 240). The division of the Ark into beasts, birds, and humans appears in Christian literature from Ephrem (d. 373) onwards.

The Christian influence on PRE encourages us to rethink traditional assumptions about the relationship between Judaism on the one hand and Christianity and Islam on the other. For example, Syriac literature is believed to be particularly indebted to ancient Jewish tradition. Among Syriac works, the *Cave of Treasures* has been singled out as "the richest source for Jewish traditions."² Frequently, however, PRE is the earliest Jewish source recording these Syriac traditions. Rather than asserting that PRE contains otherwise undocumented "ancient Jewish traditions," one should consider that Syriac Christianity influenced Judaism. This conclusion was already anticipated at the end of Tryggve Kronholm's monograph *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian: With Particular Reference to the Influence of Jewish Exegetical Tradition*. The subtitle indicates the orientation of the study, yet Kronholm concluded that the Jewish sources closest to

1 Anna Urowitz-Freudenstein, "Pseudepigraphic Support of Pseudepigraphical Sources: The Case of *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer*," in *Tracing the Threads: Studies in the Vitality of Jewish Pseudepigrapha*, ed. John C. Reeves (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 35–53.

2 Sebastian P. Brock, "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30 (1979): 212–32 (227).

Ephrem were *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* and *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*.³ It is impossible that Ephrem could have been influenced by these later Jewish writings. Ephrem, however, could have influenced PRE and the Targum through the medium of the *Cave of Treasures*, which was pseudepigraphically attributed to him.

The influence of the Syriac *tradition*, however, does not mean the influence of the Syriac *language*. Indeed, one can suspect that the Arabic language is the primary channel by which PRE obtained non-rabbinic material. The author of PRE probably knew Arabic, and *Cav. Tr.* had a wide currency in Arabic literature. Furthermore, transmission through Arabic channels is sometimes necessary to explain the otherwise inexplicable. The penitence of Adam in PRE 20, for example, is an adaptation of a well-known episode from the *Life of Adam and Eve*, a work that was never translated into Arabic. The *Cave of Treasures* skips the episode, but it reappears in the *Conflict of Adam and Eve with Satan*, an Arabic work, and episodes from the *Life of Adam and Eve* (though not the penitence) were known to Muslim authors. The penitence episode could have become known to the author of PRE from oral or literary channels, most likely in Arabic. It would be much harder to explain how PRE could have known the episode from, say, Greek (especially when most Greek manuscripts omit the episode).

Arabic language and literature can account for the circulation of other non-rabbinic traditions in PRE that were only discussed briefly in the main body of this study. *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* 21, for example, narrates how a raven assisted Adam and Eve with the burial of Abel. The earliest securely datable work to report this tradition is the Qur'ān (5:27–32). It is repeated in Arabic sources *ad nauseam*.⁴ It is so common that it even has its own entry in Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (A 2223.7: "Ravens show Adam how to bury the dead").⁵ In other words, it is hardly surprising that PRE has a variant of a story that first appears in the Qur'ān. Given the popularity of such a tradition, it might have been harder to explain its absence.

3 Trygve Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1–11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian: With Particular Reference to the Influence of Jewish Exegetical Tradition* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1978), 224: "It becomes immediately apparent that the closest connexion between the exegesis of the genuine hymns of Ephrem and that of the various Targumim is discernible in T. PsJon [*Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*]. This fits well with the previously expressed conviction of a considerable affinity between the Haggadic traditions collected in PRE and those unveiling themselves in the hymns of Ephrem."

4 Christfried Böttrich, "Die Vögel des Himmels haben ihn begraben": *Überlieferungen zu Abels Bestattung und zur Ätiologie des Grabes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1995), 65–78.

5 Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature: New Enlarged and Revised Edition*, 6 vols. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1955), 1:270. I owe this reference to Haim Schwarzbau, *Biblical and Extra-biblical Legends in Islamic Folk-Literature* (Walldorf-Hessen: Verlag für Orientkunde Dr. H. Vorndran, 1982), 48.

Pirke de-Rabbi 21 (again) states that Cain is the son of a malevolent divine being, an idea which is well-attested in the Nag Hammadi codices.⁶ However, the tradition is also reported by Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385AH/995 CE) in his *Kitāb al-Fihrist*. He attributes this belief to the Manichaeans, who were still active in the early centuries of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliphate.⁷ Before Ibn al-Nadīm, the East Syrian theologian Theodore bar Koni (d. ca. 792) cited the books of a heretical group called the Audians on this same theme (*Liber scholiorum* XI.63).⁸ Even later ecclesiastics, such as Agapius of Manbij (d. 942) and Gregory Bar Hebraeus (d. 1286), complain about the Audians.⁹ The belief knew no geographical limits. It was also one of the doctrines of the Bogomils, the dualist heretics who preceded the Cathars in medieval Europe.¹⁰

The idea that one was influenced by their surrounding culture is not a radical conclusion. To cite one of many possible examples, Rina Drory has dedicated an entire monograph to “models and contacts” between Arabic and Hebrew literature, most after the time of PRE.¹¹ More recently, Jack Tannous has written a long and detailed study of Christian and Muslim “simple believers” in the Middle East before and after the Arab conquests.¹² Both studies can help us understand how a work like PRE came into being.

In the last chapter of her book, Drory observes that Jews did not adopt Arabic literary models (whether writing in Arabic or Hebrew) without reason.¹³ There was always some underlying purpose behind the adoption. In the case of PRE, the work filled a vacuum. Both Christians and Muslims had their versions of “History Bibles,”

6 See especially *the Secret Book of John* (NHC II 1:11), *the Nature of the Rulers* (II 4:87, 89, 94), and *On the Origin of the World* (II 5:103).

7 See the long passage quoted in John C. Reeves, *Prolegomena to a History of Islamicate Manichaeism* (Sheffield: Equinox Publishing, 2013), 194–97.

8 Theodore bar Koni, *Liber scholiorum*, ed. Addai Scher, 2 vols. (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1910–1912), 2:320. I have translated this passage in Gavin McDowell, “Rabbinization of Non-Rabbinic Material in *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*,” in *Diversity and Rabbinization: Jewish Texts and Societies between 400 and 1000 CE*, ed. Gavin McDowell, Ron Naiweld, and Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra (Cambridge: OpenBook Publishers, 2021), 381–412 (398).

9 Cited in Henri-Charles Puech, “Fragments retrouvés de l’Apocalypse d’Allogène,” in *En Quête de la Gnose*, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1978), 271–300 (275–76).

10 Janet Hamilton, Bernard Hamilton, and Yuri Stoyanov, *Christian Dualist Heresies in the Byzantine World, c. 650-c. 1450: Selected Sources* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), 185.

11 Rina Drory, *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and Its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). She cites PRE only once (150) as an example of a work in the “classicist” model, adhering to a literary paradigm established by earlier rabbinic literature. While true, this is not the whole story.

12 Jack Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).

13 Drory, *Models and Contacts*, 208–32.

which, I have argued, often had a catechetical intent. The *Cave of Treasures* could be found in every Christian language of the Middle East except Greek: not only Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic but also Coptic, Georgian, and (in a slightly adapted form) Armenian. Similarly, Muslims had their own “History Bibles” in the form of the *Stories of the Prophets*, often influenced by *Cav. Tr.* but recast in Islamic terms. Jews no longer had their own “sectarian” version of sacred history, adapting the biblical story to Jewish beliefs of the time. Ancient works like *Jubilees* were both out of date and “out of print” (so to speak): Jews living in Muslim Palestine would have been hard-pressed to obtain a copy of *Jubilees*, much less a work like Josephus’ *Antiquities* (practically non-existent in Syriac and Arabic) or the *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (which survives only in Latin). *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* provided a rabbinic counterpart to the History Bibles that already existed among Christians and Muslims.

Drory’s examples consist of dense philosophical works and *belles lettres*. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* sits on the other end of the literary spectrum. It is not a sophisticated intellectual endeavor or an imperishable work of great literature. This is where Tannous’ study steps in. He observes that most believers, whether Christian or Muslim, were agrarian, illiterate, and indifferent to the theological niceties of their professed confession’s *élites*, such as the Christological controversies animating the Council of Chalcedon (451) and its aftermath. In this realm of “simple belief,” confessional boundaries could be exceptionally porous. *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer* is not, in my estimation, a product of this simple belief, but it is targeting simple believers. I would like to underline, once again, the catechetical intentions of the “History Bible.” *Pirque de-Rabbi Eliezer*’s version of biblical history resembles *Cav. Tr.*, but its own confessional outlook is entirely rabbinic and focuses on such basic issues such as the essential prayers (the Shema, the Amidah), various local customs (*minhagim*), and foundational myths such as the origins of Passover or the Temple altar.

Similar examples can be found elsewhere in medieval Jewish literature. The tenth-century *Sefer Yosippon*, for example, is a Hebrew adaptation of Josephus’ *Jewish War*, but its primary source is not the lost Aramaic original of the *Jewish War* or even the Greek version preserved by Christians but a Latin Christian adaptation of the Middle Ages, *De excidio Hierosolymitano*.¹⁴ *Sefer Yosippon*, however, has completely changed the orientation of this anti-Jewish work. Instead of presenting the

¹⁴ See Saskia Dönitz, “Historiography among Byzantine Jews: The Case of *Sefer Yosippon*,” in *Jews in Byzantium: Dialectics of Minority and Majority Cultures*, ed. Robert Bonfil et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 951–68, as well as her monograph: Saskia Dönitz, *Überlieferung und Rezeption des “Sefer Yosippon”*: Eine Studie zur Historiographie und zum Geschichtsbewusstsein des Judentums im Mittelalter (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013). The work has recently been translated into English: Steven

destruction of the Temple as a punishment for the crucifixion of Jesus, *Sefer Yosippon* celebrates Jewish heroism in the face of adversity. In this way, an originally anti-Jewish polemic became the “Jewish Josephus.”

The example of *Sefer Yosippon* is instructive for understanding PRE. While *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* does not revive Second Temple sources, it does introduce the traditions of the Adam books into rabbinic literature. The Adam books, which include the *Cave of Treasures*, had an enormous impact on both Christianity and Islam. The Qurʾān even enshrines traditions from the Adam books as canonical elements of the story of Adam and Eve. It is a small wonder that a Jewish work would eventually adopt (and adapt) the Adam literature, much the way that *Sefer Yosippon* adapts Josephus. In sum, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* is not the attestation of an ancient, lost Hebrew Adam book. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* itself is the Hebrew Adam book.

A final word might be said about the relationship of this study to what might be called the “Boyarin School” or, more generally, the “Ways that Never Parted” school. Daniel Boyarin, in his pioneering studies *Dying for God*¹⁵ and *Border Lines*,¹⁶ not to mention many subsequent studies,¹⁷ argued that early Judaism and Christianity existed on a spectrum, with Marcionites on one end (who exceeded proto-Orthodox Christians in their rejection of the Jewish Law) and, on the other, Jews for whom the person of Jesus meant nothing. The metaphor he uses is the gradual geographical transition from one dialect of a language to another, as a traveler from medieval Paris to Rome might encounter multiple Romance languages that are neither French nor Italian but something in between. Similarly, between the two poles of a purely Gentile Christianity and rabbinic Judaism existed a multitude of positions well into Late Antiquity. Adam Becker and Annette Reed, the editors of the collection of essays *The Ways that Never Parted* (which includes a contribution by Boyarin) chose the deliberately provocative title to suggest that “Judaism” and “Christianity” never became completely separate but always impinged on each other even

B. Bowman, trans., *Sefer Yosippon: A Tenth-Century History of Ancient Israel*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2023).

¹⁵ Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1999).

¹⁶ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

¹⁷ This is not the place to give an extensive bibliography of Boyarin’s work, but the following come immediately to mind: “Justin Martyr Invents Judaism,” *Church History* 70 (2001): 427–61; “The Christian Invention of Judaism: The Theodosian Empire and the Rabbinic Refusal of Religion,” *Representations* 85 (2004): 21–57; “Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 99 (2009): 7–36; *Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019).

beyond Late Antiquity.¹⁸ When the question of identity is stated this way, then certainly the ways of Judaism and Christianity never parted. *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer* is no exception in this regard.

Aaron Hughes has recently attempted to apply Boyarin's approach to Judaism and Islam in the early Islamic period in his monographs *Shared Identities*¹⁹ and *Muslim and Jew*.²⁰ I have read both studies, though not before reading Michael Pregill's trenchant criticism of them.²¹ Hughes views early Islam and late antique Judaism as religions in flux, without clearly articulated identities. This is the same argument Boyarin made for early Judaism and Christianity. However, the world of early Islam was significantly different from the world of the nascent Roman Empire. What had once been a dialogue between Jews and Christians (and sometimes "pagans") was now a trialogue among Jews, Christians, and Muslims. This is myself speaking rather than Pregill, but it seems like a mistake from the outset to exclude one of the interlocutors.

Furthermore—and Pregill does make this point—the Qur'an exhibits a strong sectarian consciousness not found in earlier Scriptures.²² When the Qur'an declares Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian but a *muslim* (Q 3:67), it is not necessarily portraying him as the adherent of a third, fully formed religion, but it is differentiating him from two other concrete identities. Scholars who might identify themselves as part of a "Boyarin School" are apt to proclaim Judaism and Christianity as fourth-century religions, meaning that normative orthodoxies were only established then. The end of Late Antiquity (itself an entity in flux, but usually ca. 750 CE) is a common cut-off date for the exploration (and criticism) of a "Parting of the Ways" between Judaism and Christianity.²³ This is not necessarily correct (as Pregill indicates, and Hughes apparently concurs, rabbinic normativity in Late Antiquity is exaggerated), but I think it requires some argumentation to explain why Judaism, after a millennium or more of existence, is still a blurry category. Muḥammad may have even been trying to dissolve identities that had already crys-

18 Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, eds., *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 22.

19 Aaron William Hughes, *Shared Identities: Medieval and Modern Imaginings of Judeo-Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

20 Aaron W. Hughes, *Muslim and Jew: Origins, Growth, Resentment* (London: Routledge, 2019).

21 Michael E. Pregill, "Blurred Boundaries and Novel Normativities: The Jews of Arabia, the Quranic Milieu, and the 'Islamic Judaism' of the Middle Ages," *Al-'Usur al-Wusta* 29 (2021): 256–302.

22 Pregill, "Blurred Boundaries and Novel Normativities," 273.

23 For a recent example: Karin Hedner Zetterholm et al., eds., *Negotiating Identities: Conflict, Conversion, and Consolidation in Early Judaism and Christianity (200 BCE–600 CE)* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2022).

tallized by creating a *via media* between Judaism and Christianity, finding common cause with all monotheistic believers.²⁴

The formation of orthodox Christianity and rabbinic Judaism did not dispense with religious diversity. If anything, the construction of orthodoxy created diversity by giving non-conformists a position to act against. This was notoriously the case for Judaism. The Karaite movement, consisting of not one but several groups or even individuals, coalesced some two centuries after the *floruit* of the putative founder, Anan b. David (d. ca. 795). Although Karaite identity is not merely defined by a rejection of the teachings of the Sages, it could not exist as a movement without having a rabbinic Judaism to reject.²⁵ The existence of diversity, however, does not negate the existence of concrete religious identity. This is the versatility of Boyarin's image of the religious spectrum. The ways parted because there are poles, but they did not part because different iterations (what the orthodox on both sides would call heresy) can exist concurrently along the same sliding scale.

What does this have to do with *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer*? I had initially drafted a brief section on the author's religious identity but eventually cut it because it seemed like the answer to a question no one was asking. The author was a rabbinic Jew. Nevertheless, what initially prompted this section was scholarship tying PRE to the ʿĪsāwīyya, a Jewish group of the Umayyad period that recognized the prophethood of both Jesus and Muḥammad (but maintained, to the displeasure of everyone else, that they were only sent to their own communities).²⁶ A related scholarly endeavor involved tying the early Karaites to Second Temple literature, especially literature from Qumran (with PRE as a separate witness to the phenomenon).²⁷ The

24 This is how I understand the argument of Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

25 One could say the same of Protestantism, to which the Karaites are often compared. One could also say the same of Catholicism. "Catholicism" and "Orthodoxy" did not really exist until they had split from each other.

26 The primary sources are few: Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *Livre des Religions et des Sectes*, trans. Daniel Gimaret, Jean Jolivet, and Guy Monnot (Leuven: Peeters UNESCO, 1986), 604–5, and Leon Nemoy, "Al-Qirḡisānī's Account of the Jewish Sects and Christianity," *Herew Union College Annual* 7 (1930): 317–97 (328, 370–372, 382–83, 391). Gordon D. Newby, "Text and Territory: Jewish-Muslim Relations 632–750 CE," in *Judaism and Islam: Boundaries, Communication, and Interaction: Essays in Honor of William M. Brinner*, ed. Benjamin H. Hary, John L. Hayes, and Fred Astren, (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 83–96 (93–95) connected PRE to this group. Rachel Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 264, mentioned the possibility of a relationship.

27 The classic work on this subject is Naphtali Wieder, *The Judean Scrolls and Karaism* (London: East and West Library, 1962). See also the more recent work of John C. Reeves, "Exploring the After-life of Jewish Pseudepigrapha in Medieval Near Eastern Religious Traditions: Some Initial Soundings," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 30 (1999): 148–77, and Yoram Erder, *The Karaite Mourners*

connections are very tenuous, and they boil down to the received notion that PRE had access to apocryphal literature. The hidden premise is that sectarian groups promulgate apocrypha.

In the case of the ʿĪsāwīyya, the assumption is completely gratuitous. We do not possess a single book produced by this movement. Its connection to PRE is via the *Secrets of Simeon bar Yohai*, which has been attributed to the ʿĪsāwīyya on the grounds that some versions of the work (but not others!) have a positive evaluation of Muḥammad and the early Muslim empire.²⁸ The case of the Karaites is slightly different. While Karaites have some halakhah in common with Qumran, this has never been a point of interest in the studies of PRE and Second Temple literature. The material of interest there is purely aggadic, dealing with the Adam and Enoch books. Eliezer Treitl did find some points of halakhah shared with the later Karaites (but not Qumran), although he is at pains to clarify this does not mean that PRE was a Karaite work.²⁹ Indeed, no Karaite work remotely resembles PRE. According to Leon Nemoy, who based his opinion on Anan's own writings, Anan b. David was no separatist but a rabbinic Jew in good standing who was only later grandfathered into the Karaite movement due to his halakhic disagreements with his contemporaries.³⁰ Correspondingly, the halakhic divergence in PRE means little.

If there is a general conclusion to be applied to the present study, rather than one that is specific to PRE, it is that “apocryphal” works are rarely apocryphal in the literal sense. The Pseudepigrapha, in particular, are not like the Dead Sea Scrolls or the Nag Hammadi codices, secreted away in jars in caves to be discovered generations later, if at all. The Pseudepigrapha, by and large, come down to us because they were continually copied by those who wanted to read them. They were, in fact, quite popular and influential, guiding popular perception of the biblical history. The portraits of *Jubilees* and the *Cave of Treasures* are not works that were obscure or forgotten. *Jubilees* did fall out of favor, and its Greek version was eventually lost. I would argue that this was not because it was “apocryphal” but because something else had replaced it, namely the *Palaea* literature which became the new standard bearer for the Christian reading of sacred history in the Byzantine and especially the Slavic world.

of Zion and the Qumran Scrolls: On the History of an Alternative to Rabbinic Judaism (Turnhout: Brepols, 2017).

²⁸ Steven M. Wasserstrom, “The ʿĪsāwīyya Revisited,” *Studia Islamica* (1992): 57–80. Pregill, “Blurred Boundaries and Novel Normativities,” 280–81, criticizes this position, repeated by Hughes.

²⁹ Eliezer Treitl, *Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer: Text, Redaction and a Sample Synopsis* (Jerusalem: Yad Izhak Ben Zvi, 2012), 238–55 [Hebrew].

³⁰ Leon Nemoy, trans., *Karaite Anthology: Excerpts from the Early Literature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 3–11. See also Moshe Gil, “The Origins of the Karaites,” in *Karaite Judaism: A Guide to Its History and Literary Sources*, ed. Meira Polliack (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 71–118.

In his criticism of Hughes, Pregill employs another linguistic metaphor which I think is very apt here. He refers to a “messianic-apocalyptic *koine*” which all the religious communities of the early Islamic period could draw from to write eschatological works like the *Secrets of Simeon bar Yohai*.³¹ The *Cave of Treasures*, PRE, and *Islamic Stories of the Prophets* all make similar (extrabiblical) assumptions about biblical history. They are also unapologetically chauvinistic in their portrayal of the early religious history of humanity. In every case, the Antediluvian patriarchs all happened to be practitioners of the exact same religion as the author of the work. That is, all three religious groups used a common sacred history to write blatantly sectarian works.

The linguistic metaphor of a shared *koine* also informs literal linguistic barriers. The Jews and Christians of Western Europe had a different biblical *koine* than the Jews and Christians of the Middle East. Some of PRE’s literary descendants provide an excellent illustration of this barrier, which I have repeatedly described as region trumping religion. The two works I have in mind are *Sefer ha-Yashar* and the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*. *Sefer ha-Yashar* was written in an Islamicate milieu. It is no longer attempting to imitate classical rabbinic models (like PRE’s pseudo-midrashic structure) but is a pure narrative in biblical Hebrew. Its scope is the Pentateuch, the only portion of the Hebrew Bible of especial interest to the Qur’ān (everyone between Moses and Jesus gets short shrift). As Shari Lowin has demonstrated, it draws upon the *Stories of the Prophets* for its portrait of Abraham.³² It does the same for its portrait of Joseph.³³ Not only this, but there are possible allusions to the rules of legendary Persian kings. Its portrait of Kenan, which I cited in chapter six, is reminiscent of the rule of Jamshid, made famous in works like the *Shahnameh*.³⁴ Similarly, *Yashar*’s eccentric story of Enoch is nearly identical to the *Shahnameh*’s account of the occultation of Kay Khosrow.³⁵ The rule of the Persian kings was

31 Pregill, “Blurred Boundaries and Novel Normativities,” 280. Similarly: John C. Reeves, “Jewish Apocalyptic Lore in Early Islam: Reconsidering Ka’b al-Aḥbār,” in *Revealed Wisdom: Studies in Apocalyptic in Honour of Christopher Rowland*, ed. John Ashton (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 200–216 (201), who, taking inspiration from Boyarin, speaks of an “Abrahamic lexicon.”

32 Shari L. Lowin, *The Making of a Forefather: Abraham in Islamic and Jewish Exegetical Narratives* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 55–59.

33 James Kugel, *In Potiphar’s House: The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 31–32.

34 Firdawsī, *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*, trans. Dick Davis (New York: Penguin Books, 2016), 5–8.

35 Firdawsī, *Shahnameh*, 454–76, and Moses Samuel, trans., *The Book of Jasher Referred to in Joshua and Second Samuel Faithfully Translated from the Original Hebrew into English* (New York: M. M. Noah and A. S. Gould, 1840), 6–8.

an integral part of Muslim chronicles, such as the work of Ṭabarī. Mythology and legends, as much as the biblical history, could be another type of *koine*.

This brings us to the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, written in twelfth-century Europe by Jerahmeel b. Solomon. It is nearly contemporaneous with *Sefer ha-Yashar* and employs many of the same Jewish sources, among them PRE. Its structure and scope are very different, however. Its account of sacred history goes beyond the Pentateuch and all the way down to the destruction of the Second Temple, as recounted in *Sefer Yosippon*. *Sefer ha-Yashar* also used *Yosippon*, but only where it concerns matters from the Torah. The *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*'s history is, then, coterminous with Christian sacred history. Not only that, but *Jerahmeel* uses Christian sources and sources conserved by Christians, chief among them Pseudo-Philo's *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (exclusively preserved in Latin)³⁶ and Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica*.³⁷ Like *Yashar*, it too has mythological references but—*mirabile dictu*—they are only from classical mythology. *Sefer ha-Yashar* and the *Chronicles of Jerahmeel*, though written in the same language and utilizing many of the same sources, are nevertheless quite distinct because of the regional *koine* they employ.

Therefore, when I speak of PRE as a Jewish work closely related to Christian and Muslim works, it is not an attempt to “silo off” religious texts and traditions from one another. *Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer* has a concrete religious identity as a work of rabbinic Judaism, but this did not impede the author from incorporating aspects of his cultural orbit into the work. The question is not whether such a thing could be possible for a work of rabbinic literature. The question should be why rabbinic works were ever treated as hermetically sealed from their cultural context in the first place.

36 Daniel J. Harrington, *The Hebrew Fragments of Pseudo-Philo's Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum Preserved in the Chronicles of Jerahmeel* (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1974).

37 David Satran, *Biblical Prophets in Byzantine Palestine: Reassessing the Lives of the Prophets* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 16, n. 34 : “The version of Yerahmeel is clearly a Hebrew translation of a Latin form of the text virtually identical with that found in the *Historia Scholastica* of Peter Comestor.”

