

Fringe, Foreign and Folk

Genesis Rabbah 24,6: An example of midrash addressing a Rabbinic agenda

In the past, both Rabbi K. and I have made use of a genre of rabbinic literature in the context of Torah study called midrash. We usually bring these passages to add some complexity to our understanding of the Torah text and its uses by the Rabbis. Additionally, you have studied more complete passages of midrash itself – for the sake of understanding the passage itself – with Rabbi K. Today we are going to study a passage of Genesis Rabbah, a midrashic work usually dated to circa 400 CE, through which, in addition to exploring the contents of the passage, I hope to clarify aspects of midrash as a genre as well as explore our own and the Rabbis’ understanding of what constitutes Judaism and the Jewish cultural repertoire.

Commonly, when Jews learn about this genre, they refer to and define midrash as interpreting the text of the Hebrew bible. While this is not categorically false, it is an oversimplification and misunderstanding of the purpose of midrash. Similarly, I have often heard Rabbi K. refer to midrash as the Rabbis’ attempt to “fill in blank spaces of the Torah.” This too misses the mark. The implication of both these statements, that midrash is interpretation or fills in the holes, suggests that the primary purpose of the genre and the intent of the authoring Rabbis was to explain/fix/harmonize the text of the Hebrew bible. This is not an accurate characterization of the genre of midrash. This type of explanation and interpretation is more characteristic of the medieval commentators, who are much more focused on the different levels of the text itself and what it comes to teach us. The authors of the midrash, while they are in the business of “interpreting” the text, they often do so with a predetermined purpose or agenda in mind. In other words, midrash does not worry about the actual meaning of the text nor what it comes to teach us, rather the rabbinic authors make use of and manipulate the text in order to serve their own purposes. Thus, when we read midrashic passages, we should not ask what part of scripture is being explained, but what is the author manipulating and to what end. For our passage, Genesis Rabbah 24,6, while the end, the purpose of the passage or the issue the author is addressing, is not as explicit as other cases, we will see that there is little intent on the part of the authors/redactors to explain the verse, Genesis 5:1, that is the supposed focus of the midrash.

However, before we begin reading the Midrash itself, we need to familiarize ourselves with the verse in question, despite it not being the primary issue of the passage. In Genesis 5:1, we read “זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדֹת אָדָם בְּיוֹם בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם בְּדִמוּת אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֱתוֹ:” – This is the book of the offspring of אָדָם/Adam, when God created Adam/man, He created him in the image of God.” Our passage indicates that the first part of the verse, “THIS IS THE BOOK OF THE OFFSPRING OF אָדָם/Adam,” is the text which is being addressed, or “used”. Nevertheless, knowing a more complete context of this verse will be helpful in our understanding the midrashic use of this phrase. Genesis 5 continues, “male and female He created them. When they were created, He blessed them and called them אָדָם/Man. When אָדָם/Adam had lived 130 years, he begot a son in his likeness after his image, and he named him Seth” (5:2-3). The rest of the chapter then traces this lineage directly to Noah: Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Yared (Jared), Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah.

At this point, we must begin to think like the Rabbis, to look at the text from their perspective and make use of our knowledge of the Torah and Jewish tradition. First, we must determine how we choose to read the verse itself, what is ambiguous and how might we make use of this ambiguity. “זֶה סֵפֶר תּוֹלְדֹת אָדָם” may be translated and understood in several ways, especially if we disregard the context and “original”/intended meaning of the text. It is possible to read this phrase, “This is the book of the offspring of אָדָם,” with the meaning of “This is the Book (i.e. the Torah) which belongs to the children of אָדָם/Adam.” In other words, the Torah was intended to be given to all humankind. Indeed, other midrashim in this section take this meaning and make use of it to explain why exactly the Torah was not given to all humankind but to Moses and the Israelites in particular. (The midrash immediately previous to ours explains that Adam broke one of six commandments he was given, so how could he have been trusted with 613.) Our midrash, on the other hand, understands this phrase to mean the more literal/intended “this is the record of the lineage of אָדָם/Adam.” Thus, we are not concerned with the ambiguity of the word “סֵפֶר/book,” we are focused, as I have indicated in our translations up to this point, on the ambiguity of תּוֹלְדֹת אָדָם, i.e. what it means to be “the offspring of Adam/man” and whether and when is אָדָם to be understood as Adam, the character and first human, or man, as in humankind.

With this in mind, we must make explicit our traditional understanding of the offspring of Adam. We know from religious school that Adam and Eve's first children were Cain and Able. Able was killed by Cain and produced no offspring. However, Cain did produce offspring, his lineage (not Adam's) being detailed in the previous chapter, Genesis 4. Ergo, the lineage of Adam, which our original verse, or lemma, introduces, ought to read, "Adam begot Cain and Able, Cain begot When Adam was 130 years old, he begot Seth, Seth begot" We do find this second part in Genesis 5, but the first clause about Cain and Able is absent. This inconsistency along with the semi-ambiguous term אדם are the two aspects with which the Rabbis are playing and manipulating in order to serve their purpose.

Thus, our midrash begins "These were the offspring, [while] the first ones were not offspring. What were they?" If we take Genesis 5 to be the complete lineage of Adam, or more accurately, mankind, then, based on Cain and Abel's absence, we must conclude that they were not human. As a result, we read this opening statement as, "These are the offspring that were human, but the preceding offspring were not human. If they were not human, then what were they?" This is the essential question that the authors are using this opportunity to address: What beings existed/came into existence in the primordial, or perhaps antediluvian, world? Our midrash provides three points on this query.

First, our midrash answers, "What were they? אלוהות – Divinities, of course!" This, in and of itself, ought to be shocking. Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, and Cain's offspring were not truly human but divine beings. Where did this come from? I certainly did not learn this in religious school. Divine beings? This term denotes at the least a divine status such as that of angels, yet אלוהות can also be understood to mean gods. Is rabbinic, supposedly monotheistic Judaism calling Adam, Eve and their primordial offspring deities, or perhaps semi-deities/demigods? Some uncertainty in this statement does exist and we might try to rationalize it by making it fit into our understanding of Judaism; however, אלוהות/divinities does not claim they were made in the image of God or were holy, rather that they were divine beings themselves. Nevertheless, this type of rationalization seems to be exactly what the rabbis do.

Following this radical proclamation, the author provides a statement attributed to Abba Cohen Bardela. "A contemplation was raised before Abba Cohen Bardela: Adam, Seth, Enosh, and, then, silence?" (This question does not seem to make sense in our context, as this lineage

does not end after Enosh, but we will address this issue further on.) Abba Cohen Bardela continues “until this moment [they were created] according to the likeness and image [of God]. From this moment and onwards, קינטורין, [centaurs], [were created].” This is the author’s explanation of אלוהות. Despite the literal meaning of אלוהות, we are still supposed to understand this to mean their “likeness and image” are divine, and that there was some fundamental change from this point onwards, “centaurs were created.” Again, where does this come from? Centaurs? Jastrow clearly defines קינטור as centaur, the Greek Κένταυρος,¹ but Freedman suggests that we might understand this allusion to centaurs, half-man, half-beasts, metaphorically, meaning “spiritually inferior, though an actual change of appearance, too, is meant.”² I find the literal translation of centaur to be more fitting in this case, despite the rabbinic use; thus, included among Adam’s, but not man’s, descendants were centaurs.

Either understanding, literal or metaphorical, indicates that there was some sort of degradation of beings following Enosh. Based on this strange term alone, however, the characteristic of that degradation is unclear. Did the people become the half-horse, half-human centaurs or only “like” these sub-humans of Greek myth? Were these the offspring of Enosh that became (like) centaurs or was this a new progeny of Adam, i.e. a sibling to the offspring of man? Our midrash continues in order to temper these questions and provide a rabbinic explanation for this statement. It suggests, “Four things were changed in the days of Enosh,” and specifies, “(1) the mountains became rugged (i.e. inarable), (2) the dead began to decompose, (3) their faces became like apes, and (4) they became penetrable to demons.” Simply put, people ceased to be divine. (1) The land no longer was easy to till and naturally produced food for man. (2) There bodies no longer had a special, permanent characteristic but decayed after death. (3) Their faces lost the physical form of the divine and became ape-like, i.e. the animal with which we share the most features. (4) They no longer had divine protection nor psyche, and their inclination opened to be susceptible to corruption, in this case specifically by demons. Here too we have some uncertainty. While we know that these changes caused them to be less than divine, there is a possibility that (3) and (4) imply that they were less than human. Therefore, we might understand this to mean that, after Enosh, the offspring of man either became human as we know

¹ Jastrow, Marcus. *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*. G P Putnam’s Sons, 1903. pg 1363.

² Freedman, H., and Maurice Simon. *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis 1*. Soncino Press, 1961. pg 196.

them today or evil monkey-faced beasts. I tend towards the former, less fantastic reading in this case.

This paragraph of our Midrash concludes with a clarification and subsequent proof-text. “R. Isaac said, surely they are the cause themselves, to have been made penetrable (הוּלִין) to demons, [for they decided] what is the difference between obscene worship of an image and obscene worship of the sons of Enosh (i.e. man), ‘at that time people began (הוּחַל) to call upon the name of God’ (Gen. 4:26).” While the previous statement of the “four things” seems to indicate that this change was determined by God, R. Isaac clarifies that this is the fault of man themselves, citing Genesis 4:26 as proof. This statement and R. Isaac’s use of proof-text exemplifies the metasemantic nature of the Torah, which I introduced in a previous session. While Genesis 4:26 literally states, “at that time people began (הוּחַל) to call upon the name of God,” R. Isaac manipulates the text, ignoring the actual meaning, and plays upon the similar spellings of הוּחַל and הוּלִין, which share the root ה.ח.ל., despite the different meanings of “penetrate,” “desecrate,” or “be begun.” In R. Isaac’s view, and for the sake of the midrash, we should read this verse as, “at that time people desecrated (not began) YHVH by calling the name,” i.e. calling other things and people gods. Thus, the people were penetrable to demons and susceptible to desecration because they themselves desecrated God.

These statements by Abba Cohen Bardela and R. Isaac, at first glance, appear to address the opening claim that the “first ones,” the early offspring of Adam, were characteristically different from those mentioned in Genesis 5 and not included because they were divine beings. However, throughout our reading, there ought to have been a nagging feeling that these statements don’t actually belong to our opening claim, at least not originally. First, we are supposed to be talking about prior to and not including Seth, but both Abba Cohen Bardela and R. Isaac are including both Seth and even Enosh in the “first ones” category, i.e. “not offspring”, even though they are mentioned in the Genesis 5 lineage. Second, they are not talking about a change in the actual quality of divinity rather image and likeness. Finally, R. Isaac’s statement may actually nullify the original claim. He suggests that the change from the “first ones” who were divine to this lineage of man was caused by man calling that which was not divine, e.g. living beings, man, the “first ones,” divine and godly. This would imply that, in opposition to our initial claim, the “first ones” were not divinities/אלוהות.

Therefore, based on these inconsistencies and the final proof-text, we realize that this passage was originally intended and used in a different location. In fact, it is taken word for word from one chapter earlier, Genesis Rabbah 23,6, which is commenting on Genesis 4:26, and, when we look at this lemma, we see the clear belonging to this verse. “And to Seth, in turn, a son was born, and he named him Enosh. It was then that men began to invoke the LORD by name” (Gen. 4:26). Now, we understand the question initially raised to Abba Cohen Bardela, “Adam, Seth, Enosh, and, then, silence?,” for here, in Genesis chapter 24, we have a lineage that ends with Enosh. Nevertheless, we must still ask ourselves why the author/redactor included this passage with the claim that the “first ones” were divinities, but we will hold off on that speculation until we finish this midrash.

דבר אחר, we begin a new but not completely separate explanation, “These were the offspring, [while] the first ones were not offspring. What were they? Spirits.” Again, what? Here the claim is that Adam and Eve’s offspring prior to Seth were not divinities/gods nor centaurs but spirits/רוחות. To be clear, these are not mutually exclusive. Divinities, centaurs and spirits all can exist in the antediluvian world, but none of these would seem to fit nicely into the canonical understanding of rabbinic Judaism. Even so, our midrash continues, “For R. Simon said, all 130 years that Adam withdrew from Eve, there were male spirits that conceived with her and she gave birth, [as well as] female spirits that conceived from Adam and they gave birth.” From this, we realize that, according to our midrash, not only were these “first ones” spirits, but that they were the offspring of Adam and other spirits or Eve and other spirits, not of Adam and Eve together. This notion of the separation of Adam and Eve comes from a couple verses after our lemma. Genesis 5:3 states, “When Adam had lived 130 years, he begot a son in his likeness after his image, and he named him Seth.” Based on the wording of this verse, we have both the 130 years of separation and the possibility of previous offspring, other than Cain and Able.

The inclusion of the phrase “in his likeness after his image” might suggest that Adam did produce offspring before Seth that were not in his likeness nor after his image, which opens the possibility for spirits. Resultantly, R. Simon cites a proof-text for the existence of such spirit offspring of Adam. II Samuel 7:14 states, “When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with the rod of people and the afflictions (נגעים) of the children of אדם.” As Freedman indicates, R. Simon is reading נגעים, “afflictions” or “plagues,” to be some external entity, i.e. a demon or a

spirit.³ Then, these נגעים, plague spirits, in the verse are described as בני אדם, from which the intended meaning is that these plagues affect mankind; however, R. Simon reads בני אדם in the most literal sense, “the children of Adam,” which would imply that these plague spirits are, in fact, the offspring of Adam, the primordial man. Moreover, this verse implies or perhaps confirms that these spirit offspring of Adam and Eve are still around today.

This assumption leads us to the final third of the paragraph on spirits. Although it is not evident in the English, following the proof-text, the passage switches into a new language, from Hebrew to Aramaic. A possible explanation for this switch will be provided later, but for now we should just note it. This Aramaic sub-passage begins by making the above understanding of the II Samuel 7:14 explicit, בני אדם – “meaning the primeval man/first Adam.” From here this sub-passage switches into a discourse that seems to have nothing to do with the original claim that Adam and Eve’s first offspring were spirits. The midrash explains, “Some say that house spirits are good that they reside with him, while others say they are evil that they are wise to his inclinations. Some say that field spirits are good that they do not reside with him, while others say they are evil that they do not know his inclinations.” First, from this statement we understand that there are several types of spirits (house vs. field) that many Jews believe exist, some good and some evil or both good and evil at different times. Moreover, it indicates that people have differing opinions of these spirits and their usefulness. They are useful when they are with us, but possibly dangerous because, then, they are familiar and have access to our evil inclination, יצר הרע. They can also be useful when they are not with us, but harmful because they are not familiar with our good inclination, יצר טוב. Still, what this adds to our discourse is unclear, though I will make a suggestion later on.

Unlike the previous paragraph of the midrash, which clearly was not originally intended for this lemma, this current paragraph better fits the topic. Even so, it also appears word for word earlier in Genesis Rabbah 20,11. In that location, the lemma is Genesis 3:20, “The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all the living,” and this passage comes to explain that “all the living” means and includes these spirits. This parallel text is exactly the

³ Freedman 170.

same; however, another parallel of this text, not word for word but similar in topic and structure, is found in the Talmud, Bavli Eruvin 18b. This passage reads:

Rabbi Yirmeya ben Elazar said: All those years during which Adam was ostracized, he bore spirits (רוחות), demons (שידין), and female demons, as it is stated: “And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Gen. 5:3). By inference, until now, he did not bear after his image, but rather bore other creatures. An objection was raised: Rabbi Meir would say: Adam the first man was very pious. When he saw that death was imposed as a punishment because of him, he observed a fast for a hundred thirty years, and he separated (פירש – same as in our midrash) from his wife for a hundred thirty years, and wore belts [zarzei] of fig leaves on his body as his only garment for a hundred thirty years. If so, how did he father demons into the world? When Rabbi Yirmeya made his statement, he meant that those spirit offspring were formed from the semen that Adam accidentally emitted.⁴

This parallel text from Eruvin provides two possible connections between this second paragraph, about spirits and the preceding one about divinities. The first is the relatively clear connection of spirits (רוחות) and demons (מזיקין – that which causes injury). What is a demon other than an evil spirit? The second connection is much more tenuous and possibly coincidental. One of the origin stories of centaurs in Greek mythology is that they are the result of the accidental spilling of Zeus’ semen on the island of Cyprus.⁵ To me, this sounds strikingly similar to “the semen that Adam accidentally emitted” during his 130 years separated from Eve in Eruvin 18b. While we cannot prove a connection between these stories, we can be sure that the supposed origin of spirits as the offspring of Adam and Eve separately was in the Jewish cultural repertoire, even if it remains unclear why it was included in this or any midrash.

The final, shorter paragraph of our midrash alters the essential question slightly. Instead of asking “what” beings existed/came into existence in the primordial, or perhaps antediluvian, world, this passage asks, simply, “why?” “These were the offspring of אדם, [while] the first ones were not offspring. Why?” Either, why are the “first ones” not considered offspring, or why are the “first ones” not listed in the genealogy of Genesis 5. The answer given is “that they were

⁴ Adapted from the William Davidson Talmud on Sefaria.com <https://www.sefaria.org/Eruvin.18b?lang=bi>. Eruvin 18b. 12/19/2017 (I could not figure out how to cite this.)

⁵ “KENTAUROI KYPRIOI.” *CYPRIAN CENTAURS (Kentauroi Kyprioi) - Half-Horse Men of Greek Mythology*, www.theoi.com/Georgikos/KentauroiKyprioi.html. 12/19/2017

destroyed in the waters (i.e. the flood).” The logic is, if the entire lineage of the “first ones” were destroyed, then there is no reason to list them in the offspring of Adam, for they do not impact the line of man (Seth through Noah). The attempted explanation of this comes from R. Joshua ben Levi, “all these names that were derided signify rebellion: Irad (עירד) – I shall drive (עורדן) them from the world, Mehujael (מחויאל) – I shall erase (מוחן) from the world, Methusael (מתושאל) – I shall wear them out (מתישן) from the world, but what shall I do to Lamech and to his offspring?” This is the lineage of Cain (see Gen. 4:17-22), and, once again, through the metasemantic significance of the biblical text, R. Joshua ben Levi is manipulating their names to prove that they and their lineages were, indeed, destroyed. Therefore, they were not included in the offspring of man/Adam.

Similar to the first passage, with this explanation we get the sense that this statement of R. Joshua ben Levi was not originally intended for this lemma. With a little bit of backtracking, we find that this passage previously appears in Genesis Rabbah 23,2 on the lemma of Genesis 4:18, “To Enoch was born Irad, and Irad begot Mehujael, and Mehujael begot Methusael, and Methusael begot Lamech.” So, the question remains, why include it here? What does it add?

Our Midrash, Genesis Rabbah 24,6, not only contains some strange statements that do not seem to fit/belong within the traditional understanding of Judaism, it would appear to be a clear case of an amalgam of three completely separate, otherwise unrelated passages. Moreover, based on the contents of the first two paragraphs, there seems to be little connection to the lemma itself. While the lemma is the opening to their discourse, the actual issue of Genesis chapter 5 for our midrash, as mentioned early on, is that Cain and Able are not included in this supposed lineage of Adam. The first and second paragraphs pervert this issue and attempt to explain what the early beings might have been. Only the third paragraph attempts to answer why they, Cain and Able, are excluded. Thus, we can be quite sure that this midrash, and most midrash, is not for the purpose of explaining the bible text, but what purpose do these three disparate, semi-alien passages have here?

In order to better understand the agenda of the author/redactor, we can look at the overall structure and how all the pieces fit together.

Lemma: “THIS IS THE BOOK OF THE OFFSPRING OF אָדָם” (Gen. 5:1)

1. Why are earlier being missing from the lineage of אֱלֹהִים? – Not human but divinities.
 - a. Centaurs
 - b. Four things different
 - i. relationship to earth = in arable
 - ii. status of body = decomposition
 - iii. physical form = apelike
 - iv. status of spirit = susceptible to demons
 - c. Humans at fault for susceptibility to demons because they misused the term God
2. Why are earlier being missing from the lineage of אֱלֹהִים? – Not human but spirits.
 - a. Adam and Eve separate – beget spirits
 - i. spirits today are still of the line from man (II Sam. 7:4)
 - b. House spirits vs. Field Spirits
3. Why are earlier being missing from the lineage of אֱלֹהִים? – They were destroyed
 - a. the line of Cain was destroyed in the flood
 - i. but Lamech's fate uncertain

We begin by looking for similarities and patterns throughout the passage. The clearest similarity, as already mentioned, is that between demons and spirits, in 1b(iv)/1c and 2a/2b respectively. If we expand this category of spirits/demons to a more generic non-human entities, we can also include centaurs from 1a, and possibly even “divinities”/gods from 1 itself. Of these four non-human entities – demons, spirits, centaurs and gods – two clearly come from non-rabbinic origin (centaurs and gods seem to be of Greek influence) and two are often considered of lower or folk religion (demons and spirits, for which plenty of rituals exist despite their absence from mainstream Judaism). From this, we might infer that the main topic being addressed by the author is the belief in the existence of these non-human entities.

Simply from their presence in this rabbinic text, we can conclude that these ideas and beliefs – that people came from gods, that centaurs came from early man, that people are susceptible to demons and that spirits are the offspring of primordial man (who might have been gods) – were in the Jewish cultural repertoire of the time, whether they were accepted by mainstream Judaism or not. In my opinion, 2b, the Aramaic passage about the controversy over house, field, good and evil spirits, best exemplifies this phenomenon. First, the fact that this passage is in Aramaic, the common language, fits with the notion that belief in spirits is a popular, public, folk belief that was not widely accepted by the educated, more canonical rabbis. Second, the mention of these spirits as both good and evil and minor dispute that follows, indicates that these beliefs in spirits served some purpose for the community at large. The inclusion of centaurs, from Greek culture, is slightly more shocking, for a creature of clear

foreign origin is included in a fundamentally Jewish text. This is equally true and even more shocking if we read אֱלֹהִים to mean gods, then a monotheistic Jewish text would be recognizing the existence of other deities. Nevertheless and either way, these non-sanctioned religious beliefs were included in such a Jewish text.

Still, why would the rabbis make mention of beliefs which they themselves, most likely, do not hold nor, possibly, condone? By doing so, the rabbis are able to control these beliefs and temper their impact on mainstream Judaism. 1a though c accomplishes this task. One belief the rabbis are addressing is that the “first ones,” Adam and Eve, Cain and Able, were actually gods, אֱלֹהִים, i.e. section 1. By bringing Abba Cohen Bardela’s statement (1a), the author attempts to weaken the claim that they were gods, rather this means like God, “according to the likeness and image.” This is further weakened by the explanation of the four changes, each of which accepts that there was a difference but that the differences are primarily superficial. Finally, R. Isaac is brought to explain that if you thought these “first ones” were gods, you are simply falling into the same trap they did. Even these primordial beings were never gods, even though were “according to the likeness and image of God.” Furthermore, the mention of centaurs likewise weakens the claim that the change was from gods to mortals, instead indicating the change was from human to subhuman, though in doing so the rabbis also recognize the existence of sub- or part-human entities.

This leads us to part 2, the existence of spirits. If it is possible for sub/part-human entities and demons to exist, then it is logical to assume that spirits of all kinds exist. While this is not as problematic to rabbinic Judaism as is calling Adam and Eve gods, it still opens some dangerous possibilities, e.g. one might claim that these spirits, good and evil, came directly from God. Thus, by bringing in R. Simon’s explanation that these spirits (especially the evil ones as indicated by the proof-text) are actually the illegitimate and accidental offspring of Adam and Eve, the author limits the scope and license Jews might attribute to these spirits.

The function of part 3 is more difficult to discern. My suggestion is that we understand it to be an explanation of what happened to these and other antediluvian beings. Just as the flood destroyed the offspring of Cain, who, according to our midrash, were themselves non-human entities, so too were these other non-human entities destroyed. However, based on part 2 and the belief that spirits exist even today, we ought to conclude not all non-human entities were

destroyed in the flood. This is given credence in the statement of R. Joshua ben Levi, which concludes with “but what shall I do to Lamech and to his offspring,” leaving the possibility that some of Lamech’s and Cain’s descendants survived the flood. Likewise, we ought to believe that some non-human entities, such as spirits and demons, survived as well.

Therefore, our midrash, building off an opening in the Torah, manipulates the text in order to recognize certain foreign, fringe and folk beliefs that existed within their cultural repertoire, specifically those focused around non-human entities. While Neusner does not recognize this compilation as purposeful manipulation, instead seeing the sections as “pertinent materials, not particular to the question at hand,” I believe this is the authors predetermined agenda.⁶ By making use of this malleable genre of rabbinic literature, the author is able to address and mold these beliefs into more acceptable forms, thus, controlling and to some extent integrating this controversial subject into normative Judaism.

⁶ Neusner, Jacob. *Genesis Rabbah: The Judaic Commentary to the Book of Genesis a New American Translation*, vol. 1. Scholars Press, 1985. pg 269.

Genesis Rabbah 24,6 Translation⁷

“THIS IS THE BOOK OF THE OFFSPRING OF אדם⁸” (Gen. 5:1). These were the offspring, [while] the first ones were not offspring. What were they? Divinities, of course! A contemplation was raised before⁹ Abba Cohen Bardela: Adam, Seth, Enosh, and, then, silence? He explained, until this moment [they were created] according to the likeness and image [of God]. From this moment and onwards, קינטורין¹⁰, [were created]. Four things were changed in the days of Enosh: the mountains became rugged (i.e. inarable)¹¹, the dead began to decompose¹², their faces became like apes, and they became penetrable (חולין) to demons (i.e. capable of desecration). R. Isaac said, surely they are the cause themselves, to have been made penetrable to demons, [for they decided] what is the difference between obscene worship of an image and obscene worship of the sons of Enosh (i.e. man), “at that time people began (הוחל)¹³ to call upon the name of God” (Gen. 4:26).

Another interpretation: These were the offspring, [while] the first ones were not offspring. What were they? Spirits. For R. Simon said, all 130 years that Adam withdrew from Eve¹⁴, there were male spirits that conceived¹⁵ with her and she gave birth, [as well as] female spirits that conceived from Adam and they gave birth. As it is written, “When he commits iniquity, I will punish him with the rod of people and the afflictions of the children of אדם” (II Sam. 7:14), meaning of the primeval man (alt. first Adam)¹⁶. Some say that house spirits are good that they reside with him, while others say they are evil that they are wise to his inclinations. Some say that field spirits are good that they do not reside with him, while others say they are evil that they do not know his inclinations.

These were the offspring of אדם, [while] the first ones were not offspring. Why? That they were destroyed in the waters (i.e. the flood). R. Joshua ben Levi says, all these names that were derided signify rebellion: Irad (עירד) – I shall drive (עורדן) them from the world, Mehujael (מחויאל) – I shall erase (מוחק) from the world, Methusael (מתושאל) – I shall wear them out (מתישן) from the world, but what shall I do to Lamech and to his offspring?

⁷ Freedman 203-4.

⁸ אדם has been left in the original Hebrew to emphasize the ambiguity of the term. The verse is unclear whether אדם refers to the proper name Adam, i.e. the character who appears in the previous chapters and who is named in chapter 3, or whether this is generically mankind.

⁹ בעון קומי – I am uncertain of the meaning, but this is the closest I could get. I found this quite a bit in the Jerusalem Talmud but was unable to find a good translation.

¹⁰ Jastrow 1363, also suggested “savages”

¹¹ Jastrow 558

¹² lit. to swarm, i.e. bring forth worms

¹³ The authors are playing on the different uses of the root .ל.ל.ח, penetrate, desecrate, or be begun, thus instead of reading the verse as above, they read “at that time people desecrated YHVH by calling the name,” i.e. calling other things gods.

¹⁴ see Eruvin 18b

¹⁵ Jastrow 478, lit. made warm from, i.e. aroused by

¹⁶ This phrase begins a switch to Aramaic which continues to the end of the paragraph.