

Counting Midrash— What the Numbers Reveal

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Introduction

The word *מדרש* is derived from the root *דרש*, which means “to seek,” “to inquire,” “to investigate” or “to explain.” The *Jewish Encyclopedia* (11:1507) defines midrash as “a particular genre of rabbinic literature constituting an anthology and compilation of homilies, consisting of both biblical exegesis and sermons delivered in public as well as *aggadot* or *halakhot* and forming a running aggadic commentary on specific books of the Bible.”

Both Talmud Yerushalmi and Talmud Bavli (hereinafter, the “Talmudim”) contain a vast amount of both *מדרשי הלכה*, which interpret the Torah with an aim toward determining and validating halakhah and *minhag*, as well as *מדרשי אגדה*¹ which expound upon Tanakh for non-halakhic purposes, such as, to convey ethical or religious lessons, and to fill gaps in the narrative of Tanakh.

To gain insight into the nature and function of midrash, we quantified the amount of midrash in the Talmudim and calculated the ratio of midrash to verse for each book of Tanakh. The sources and methods that we used to compile these sets of numbers are explained in the following section, *Counting Midrash*. The actual values are displayed at the end of this article in Tables 1 through 7.

After making some general observations regarding the numbers that we compiled, we proceed to the main thesis of this article (beginning on p. 7, *Statements about Various Books of Kethuvim*), that *Hazal* utilized a variety of midrashic techniques to strengthen and elevate certain books of *Kethuvim* that seemed to be “troublesome” and less holy than the other books of Tanakh.

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Counting Midrash

To compile the statistics that we use herein, we used five different works from three authors as follows:

*אוצר מדרשי המקרא שבירושלמי*² by Moshe Kosovsky, used for Table 1, lists every verse from Tanakh that appears in the Yerushalmi. After each verse, he cites a fragment of a quotation from the Yerushalmi relating to that verse, followed by the corresponding page and column number of where it is found in the Yerushalmi.³ For each book of Tanakh we counted both: 1. The ‘Number of Different Verses Quoted,’ and 2. ‘All References to Verses.’ Each of these sets of numbers has a shortcoming. The ‘Number of Different Verses Quoted’ undercounts the number of midrashim, since a single verse may have multiple midrashim. On the other hand, the column ‘All References to Verses’ overstates the number of midrashim, as the same midrash cited in two places in the Yerushalmi is counted twice. Nevertheless, we preferred this latter column, because when the same midrash is cited in two different places, that too says something about the importance of that midrash. We therefore used the ‘All References to Verses’ column to compute the ‘Ratio of Midrash to Verse.’

אוצר לשון תלמוד ירושלמי הלכה של התנאים בתלמוד ירושלמי by Ezra Zion Melamed, used for Table 2,⁴ lists every *tannaic* midrash found in Yerushalmi.

¹ Almost one-third of Bavli and about one-sixth of Yerushalmi consist of midrash aggada. See L. Ginzberg, *A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud*, New York: JTS, 1941, p. xxxiii.

² *אוצר לשון תלמוד ירושלמי* is one of the volumes of *אוצר מדרשי המקרא שבירושלמי* by Moshe Kosovsky, New York and Jerusalem: JTS, 2004.

³ These references are to the page and column within the *editio princeps* of the Yerushalmi. As each column is quite long, Kosovsky uses a notation to indicate where within the column the reference to the verse in Tanakh can be found. A single line indicates the first third of the page, a double line the middle of the page and a triple line the bottom third of the page.

⁴ *Halachic Midrashim of the Tannaim in the Palestinian Talmud*, Jerusalem and Ramat-Gan: Magnes and Bar-Ilan, 2000. Although the sources for this work were compiled by E. Melamed, it was published posthumously by his sons. Although the title of this work implies that the midrashim are all halakhic, it includes aggadic midrashim as well. This is stated explic-

Alongside each midrash it shows the verse of Tanakh upon which the midrash is based, and the order of the midrashim follows that of the corresponding verses in Tanakh. The numbers compiled from this source are much lower than the previously mentioned source because: 1. They include only sources from *tanna'im*, 2. A midrash that references more than one verse is counted only once, 3. Parallel versions of the same midrash are counted only once, and 4. Short references to a verse, which do not have the characteristic of a complete midrash, are not counted at all.⁵

מדרשי הלכה של האמוראים בתלמוד ירושלמי⁶ by Ezra Zion Melamed, used for Table 3, follows the same format as the previously cited source except that it includes only midrashim authored by *amora'im*.

מדרשי הלכה של התנאים והאמוראים בתלמוד ירושלמי, Table 4, is the combination of Tables 2 and 3, i.e., all midrashim—*tanna'ic* and *amora'ic*—that are mentioned in the Yerushalmi.

כל המקראות שבתלמוד בבלי⁷ by M. David Rubin, used for Table 5, lists the chapter and verse of each time Bavli quotes from Tanakh.

itly in the beginning of his introduction, p. 1, and implicitly in how he organizes the midrashim. The main body of his work includes the halakhic midrashim, i.e., for *Shemot*, *Va-Yikra*, *Be-Midbar*, and *Devarim*, whereas his supplement includes the aggadic midrashim, i.e., those for *Beresbit*, *Nevi'im* and *Kethuvim*. This also applies to his two other works, which are the source for Tables 3 and 6 herein.

⁵ E. Z. Melamed, in the beginning of the introduction to this work, tells us about the breakdown of the *tanna'ic* midrashim quoted in the Yerushalmi (our Table 2): Of the 270 midrashim that relate to verses in *Shemot*, approximately 80 appear in *Mikbilta* of R. *Yismael* and another 80 appear in *Mikbilta* of R. *Shimon b. Yohai*. Of the 450 midrashim that relate to verses in *Va-Yikra*, 290 appear in *Sifra* (*Torat Kohanim*). Of the 177 midrashim that relate to *Be-Midbar*, 70 appear in *Sifrei* and 30 appear in *Sifrei Zuta*. Of the 290 midrashim that relate to verses in *Devarim*, 120 appear in the *Sifrei*.

⁶ *Halachic Midrashim of the Amora'im in the Palestinian Talmud*, Jerusalem and Ramat-Gan: Magnes and Bar-Ilan, 2004. These sources were compiled by E. Melamed but were published posthumously by his sons.

⁷ The statistics in Table 5 were compiled using R. M. David Rubin's כל יד מרדכי הכללי בבלי, 1994, and specifically from his המקראות שבתלמוד בבלי that is printed toward the end of volume 3. The author of this article wishes to thank his daughters Malky Mendel and Aliza Zelcer for their help in going through this source to compile these statistics.

Here too, for each book of Tanakh we counted both: 1. The 'Number of Different Verses Quoted,' and 2. 'All References to Verses.' These counts have the same shortcomings that we mentioned for Table 1 and here too, we used 'All References to Verses' to compute the 'Ratio of Midrash to Verse.'

⁸ *מדרישי הלכה של התנאים בתלמוד בבלי* by Ezra Zion Melamed, used for Table 6, lists every *tannaic* midrash found in Bavli. Everything mentioned above concerning the other two works by Ezra Zion Melamed applies to this work as well.

Yerushalmi and Bavli Combined, Table 7, is the combination of Tables 1 and 5.

Within our analysis we give preference to Table 1 (M. Kosovsky) when we discuss the Yerushalmi and to Table 5 (R. Rubin) when we discuss Bavli, because both these sources include all references to verses in Tanakh in the respective Talmudim. The balance of the Tables, i.e., those based on Melamed's works, are used primarily when we wish to analyze differences between *tannaic* and *amoraic* midrash, and as a reality check for Tables 1 and 5.

It is the author's hope that others will make use of these tables for their own research and analysis into the role and function of midrash halakhah and midrash aggada.

Halakhic vs. Aggadic Midrashim

We tend to classify the main midrashic works as either halakhic or aggadic. For example, *Midrash Rabbah*⁹ is classified as midrash aggada

⁸ *Halachic Midrashim of the Tannaim in the Babylonian Talmud*, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988. E. Z. Melamed also compiled a list of all *amoraic* midrashim in the Babylonian Talmud, but this has not yet been published and therefore, unfortunately, could not be used for this article.

⁹ *Midrash Rabbah* is composed of *Bereshit Rabbah*, *Shemot Rabbah*, *Va-Yikra' Rabbah*, *Be-Midbar Rabbah*, and *Devarim Rabbah*, as well as the midrashic works on the *Five Scrolls*. Although these works are all midrash aggada and lumped together and printed as a single unit, they vary in their style, authorship and time of compilation. For additional information see the introduction by the Maharaz Chajes (R. Zevi Hirsh Chajes) printed in the classic edition of the *Midrash Rabbah*. For a more detailed discussion see Melamed's *פרשיות מאגדות התנאים, ירושלים, קריית* ספר, תשכ"ב pp. 58–71.

while *Mekhilta (Shemot)*, *Sifra (Va-Yikra)* and *Sifre (Be-Midbar and Devarim)* are classified as midrash halakhah.¹⁰ This broad classification does not apply to all the midrash found in these books, but it does hold true for the vast majority.

Therefore, assuming that the majority of midrash on *Beresbit*, *Nevi'im* and *Kethuvim* are aggadic, and that the majority of midrash on *Shemot*, *Va-Yikra*, *Be-Midbar* and *Devarim* are halakhic, we can conclude that the majority of midrash in the Talmudim are halakhic.¹¹

Looking at Tables 2 and 3, however, we see that in the Yerushalmi the proportion of halakhic to aggadic midrashim shifts dramatically from the *tannaim* to the *amoraim*.¹² While the focus of the *tannaim* in the Land of Israel was overwhelmingly on midrash halakhah, the focus of the *amoraim* in the Land of Israel was only marginally in favor of midrash halakhah.¹³

Totals for Tanakh and the individual Books of Torah

Ratio of midrash to verse for Torah, *Nevi'im* and *Kethuvim*. Because the Torah is our source for Biblical commandments, we would expect that the amount of midrash on Torah would be significantly greater than the amount of midrash on *Nevi'im* or *Kethuvim*. Our

¹⁰ See, for example, Melamed, *ibid.* p. 88.

¹¹ Based on Table 1 we note that in the Yerushalmi we have a ratio of about 7 to 4 in favor of halakhic midrashim, and in Talmud Bavli, using Table 5, we have a ratio of about 8 to 7 in favor of halakhic midrashim.

¹² While the function of the *tannaim* was to codify the oral law, the function of the *amoraim* was to explain the words of the *tannaim* as recorded in the mishnah and, to a lesser extent, in the *baraitot*.

¹³ E. Z. Melamed shows that the shift from halakhah to aggada was even more drastic than is suggested by Tables 2 and 3. In *Halachic Midrashim of the Amoraim in the Palestinian Talmud*, p.15, he writes that the number of aggadic midrashim in the Yerushalmi that are attributed to the *amoraim* are approximately: *Beresbit* 80, *Shemot* 40, *Va-Yikra* 10, *Be-Midbar* 20, *Devarim* 40 and *Nevi'im* and *Kethuvim* 440, for a total of 630 aggadic midrashim out of 1,100.

count, based on Tables 1 and 5, and as shown in the table below, supports this assumption.¹⁴

	Verses ¹⁵	Ratio of Midrash to Verse in . . .		
		Yerushalmi	Bavli	
Torah	5,845	1.22	1.54	תורה
Prophets	9,294	0.19	0.33	נביאים
Writings	8,064	0.20	0.37	כתובים
Tanakh	23,203	0.46	0.65	תנ"ך

Correlation between Commandments and Midrash. We would expect that books of Torah that have more commandments would have more midrash than those with fewer commandments. Is this assumption correct? Let us examine the following data, which are based on Tables 1 and 5:¹⁶

	Commandments	Ratio of Midrash to Verse in...		
		Yerushalmi	Bavli	
	מצות			
Genesis	3	0.27	0.63	בראשית
Exodus	111	1.21	1.30	שמות
Leviticus	147	2.33	3.58	ויקרא
Numbers	153	0.95	1.01	במדבר
Deuteronomy	199	2.15	2.18	דברים
Torah	613	1.22	1.54	תורה

¹⁴ In Bavli, verses of Torah are more than four times more likely to be quoted than verses of *Nevi'im* or *Kethuvim*. In Yerushalmi they are six times more likely.

¹⁵ Throughout this article the number of verses in various books of Tanakh follow those published in the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*, 1999, except that the total they show for *Nevi'im* is 9,285 (as opposed to our 9,294) and that a footnote on the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh* p. 2023 reads (סכום הפסוקים 23194 (אף על פי שכתוב בכתב היד שלנו) 23203) which matches our total count of 23,203.

¹⁶ The number of commandments listed in our table is based on the breakdown in *Sefer ha-Hinukh*. Note, however, that some commandments appear in more than one book of the Torah and therefore no count of commandment per book can be said to be absolute.

Bereshit, which has only 3 commandments, does indeed have the lowest ratio of midrash to verse. *Devarim*, however, which has the highest number of commandments, has only the second highest ratio. *Va-Yikra*, with only 147 commandments, has the highest ratio.¹⁷ What accounts for this anomaly? The answer is that it is not merely the number of commandments that necessitate the need for מדרש הלכה but also their complexity.¹⁸

Statements about Various Books of *Kethuvim*¹⁹

We now explore two types of statements from *Hazal* concerning books of *Kethuvim*: 1. That a certain book does not defile the hands, אינו מטמא את הידים, and 2. That they wanted to ‘hide’ a certain book, ופרשו, or the less common ופקשו, they put it aside. These statements are found concerning the following books of *Kethuvim*:

¹⁷ At an early stage of this article I asked my father his opinion as to which book of Torah has the most midrash and which the least. He answered, “ויקרא has the most and בראשית the least.” When I asked him what made him say that he answered simply, “The תורה תמימה volume on ויקרא is the thickest, while the one on בראשית is the thinnest!”

¹⁸ This relative ranking of *Va-Yikra*, *Devarim*, *Shemot*, *Be-Midbar* and *Bereshit* holds true across all tables listed at the end of this article.

¹⁹ The Bavli text quoted herein is from Bar Ilan’s *Judaic Library* CD, Version 8.0. Other Hebrew text, when available on the CD, is from the same source. The English translation of Bavli is usually from the *Hebrew-English Edition of the Babylon Talmud*, London: Soncino Press, 1977. The English translation of verses from Tanakh is usually from the *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*, Philadelphia: JPS, 1999.

²⁰ *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* 1:4, version A reads אבא שאול אומר לא שהמתינו אלא שפירשו. This reading, which implies that Hezekiah’s people explained *Mishlei*, is difficult because it continues, בראשונה היו אומרים...גנוזים, which indicates that it was the People of the Great Assembly who explained it. In הוספה א, however, we find ב, לנוסה א שפירשו. This spelling is consistent with version B which states ד"א אשר העתיקו אין העתיקו אלא שפרשו שנאמר ויעתק משם ההרה (בראשית י"ב ח') אין צריך לומר המעתק הרים ולא ידעו (איוב ט' ה') clearly means “they put it aside.” See also Sid Z. Leiman, *ibid.* footnote 323.

Esther. In *Megillah* 7a we have a statement of R. Yehudah in which he quotes Shmuel as saying that the book of Esther does not defile the hands.²¹

Shir ha-Shirim. In *Yadayim* 3:5 R. Yose says there was some discussion that *Shir ha-Shirim* should not defile the hands²² and in *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* 1:4 we have a statement that they wanted to hide *Shir ha-Shirim*.²³

Kohelet. In *Yadayim* 3:5 we have a statement from R. Yose that *Kohelet* does not defile the hands and statements from R. Yehudah and R. Akiva that there were discussions that *Kohelet* should not defile the hands. In *Tosefta Yadayim* 2:6 R. Shimon b. Menasya is quoted as saying that *Kohelet* does not defile the hands.²⁴ Similarly in *Megillah* 7a we have statements from R. Meir and R. Shimon b. Menasya that *Kohelet* does not defile the hands. We also have a statement there from R. Yose that there were discussions that *Kohelet* should not defile the hands. In *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan (ibid.)* we have a statement

²¹ אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל: אסתר אינה מטמאה את הידים ... מיתבי: רבי מאיר אומר: קהלת אינו מטמא את הידים, ומחלוקת בשיר השירים. רבי יוסי אומר: שיר השירים מטמא את הידים, ומחלוקת בקהלת. רבי שמעון אומר: קהלת מקולי בית שמאי ומחומרי בית הלל, אבל רות ושיר השירים ואסתר—מטמאין את הידים! הוא דאמר כרבי יהושע. תניא, רבי שמעון בן מנסיא אומר: קהלת אינו מטמא את הידים, מפני שחכמתו של שלמה היא. (מגילה ז עמוד א)

²² כל כתבי הקדש מטמאין את הידים שיר השירים וקהלת מטמאין את הידים ר' יהודה אומר שיר השירים מטמא את הידים וקהלת מחלוקת ר' יוסי אומר קהלת אינו מטמא את הידים ושיר השירים מחלוקת ... אר"ש בן עזאי מקובל אני מפי ע"ב זקן ביום שהושיבו את ר"א ב"ע ביישיבה ששיר השירים וקהלת מטמאים את הידים אמר ר"ע חס ושלום לא נחלק אדם מישראל על שיר השירים שלא תטמא את הידים שאין כל העולם כלו כדאי כיום שניתן בו ש"ה לישראל שכל כתובים קדש ושיר השירים קודש קדשים ואם נחלקו לא נחלקו אלא על קהלת (ידים ג:ה)

²³ הוּו מתונים בדין כיצד מלמד שיהא אדם ממתין בדין שכל הממתין בדין מיושב בדין שנאמר גם אלה משלי שלמה אשר העתיקו אנשי חזקיה מלך יהודה (משלי כ"ה א') ולא שהעתיקו אלא שהמתינו אבא שאול אומר לא שהמתינו אלא שפירשו בראשונה היו אומרים משלי ושיר השירים וקהלת גנוזים היו שהם היו אומרים משלות ואינן מן הכתובים ועמדו וגנוזו אותם עד שבאו אנשי כנסת הגדולה ופירשו אותם. (אבות דרבי נתן א:ד ד"ה הוּו מתונים בדין)

²⁴ ר' שמעון בן מנסיא אומר שיר השירים מטמא את הידים מפני שנאמרה ברוח הקדש קהלת אינה מטמא את הידים מפני שהיא מחכמתו של שלמה אמרו לו וכי לא כתב אלא זו בלבד הרי הוא אומר וידבר שלשת אלפים משל ויהי שירו חמשה ואלף ואומר אל תוסף על דבריו ואו' פן יוכיח בך ונכזבת: (תוספתא ידים ב:ו)

that *Kobelet* was put aside. In *Shabbat* 30b²⁵ we have a statement quoted in the name of Rav that the Sages wanted to hide the book of *Kobelet*.

Mishlei. In *Shabbat* 30b we find that they wanted to hide the book of *Mishlei*.²⁶ In *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* 1:4 this same sentiment is expressed both by Aba Shaul and anonymously.

What these Statements Imply

What is meant by the term בקשו לגנוז? Let us examine a few cases.

בראשונה היו אומרים משלי ושיר השירים וקהלת גנוזים היו שהם היו אומרים משלות ואינן מן הכתובים. (אבות דרבי נתן א:ד)

Initially they said to hide *Mishlei*, *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet*, for they are metaphors and not of the [inspired] Writings.

בקשו חכמים לגנוז ספר קהלת מפני שדבריו סותרין זה את זה. (שבת ל עמוד ב)

The Sages wanted to hide the book of *Kobelet* because its statements contradict each other.

From the above examples it is clear that the reason *Ḥazal* wanted to hide away these books of *Kethuvim*, בקשו לגנוז, is because they found some problem with them. In general, *Ḥazal* felt a need to hide a certain book because of one or more of the following problems: 1. It contains statements that contradict a law of the Torah (e.g., the reference in *Sabbath* 13b to Ezekiel),²⁷ 2. It contains a statement that contradicts our ideals (e.g., the verses of *Mishlei*, *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet* that are quoted in *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* 1:4), 3. The

²⁵ אמר רב יהודה בריה דרב שמואל בר שילת משמיה דרב: בקשו חכמים לגנוז ספר קהלת מפני שדבריו סותרין זה את זה, ומפני מה לא גנוזהו? מפני שתחילתו דברי תורה וסופו דברי תורה (שבת ל עמוד ב)

²⁶ ואף ספר משלי בקשו לגנוז, שהיו דבריו סותרין זה את זה. ומפני מה לא גנוזהו? אמרי: ספר קהלת לאו עיינינן ואשכחינן טעמא? הכא נמי ליעיינן. (שבת ל עמוד ב)

²⁷ אמר רב יהודה אמר רב: ברם זכור אותו האיש לטוב, וחנניה בן חזקיה שמו, שאלמלא הוא גנוז ספר יחזקאל, שהיו דבריו סותרין דברי תורה. מה עשה? העלו לו שלש מאות גרבי שמן, וישב בעלייה, ודרשן. (שבת יג עמוד ב)

extreme holiness of some topics in the book can cause one to die (e.g., the reference in *Hagigab* 13a to Ezekiel),²⁸ 4. It contains passages that contradict each other (e.g., the reference in *Sabbath* 30b to *Kobelet* and *Mishlei*), and 5. It contains mundane statements that appear to have no religious significance (e.g., the reference in *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* 1:4 to *Mishlei*, *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet*).

It is thus clear that when *Hazal* say they wanted to hide certain books it is because they viewed those books as being problematic. Prof. Sid Z. Leiman (*The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture*, 1976, p. 79) writes as follows:

In the light of the aforementioned Talmudic passages [i.e., *Shabbat* 13b, *Hagigab* 13a and *Shabbat* 30b, [בקשו לגנוז] can only mean that the rabbis were about to ordain the complete withdrawal of the books of Ezekiel, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs from circulation. This in no way casts aspersions on the sanctity or canonicity of the books. Indeed, it verifies their sanctity and canonicity. It indicates that the books contained much problematic material; some contained material that could foster heretical ideas and, as such, would best serve the interest of rabbinic Judaism by remaining inaccessible.

When *Hazal* say a certain book of *Kethuvim* does not defile the hands, אינו מטמא את הידים, the implication is that there is some problem with that book. In the *Mishnah* we find the following:

כל כתבי הקודש מטמאין את הידים. (ידים ג:ה)

The reason why holy writings defile the hands is explained by the *Gemara*:

וספר מאי טעמא גזרו ביה רבנן טומאה? אמר רב משרשיא: שבתחלה היו מצניעין את אוכלין דתרומה אצל ספר תורה, ואמרו: האי קדש והאי קדש. כיון דקחזו דקאתו לידי פסידא, גזרו ביה רבנן טומאה.

²⁸ תנו רבנן: מעשה בתינוק אחד שהיה קורא בבית רבו בספר יחזקאל, והיה מבין בחשמל, ויצאה אש מחשמל ושרפתו. וביקשו לגנוז ספר יחזקאל. אמר להם חנניה בן חזקיה: אם זה חכם, הכל חכמים הן? (חגיגה יג עמוד א)

והידיים? מפני שהידיים עסקניות הן. תנא: אף ידיים הבאות מחמת ספר פוסלות את התרומה. (שבת יד עמוד ב)

Rambam codifies the above and explains that the injunction applies not only to a ספר תורה but to all כתבי קודש, Holy Writings.²⁹

בראשונה היו מניחין ככרות של תרומה בצד הספרים ואומרים זה קודש וזה קודש ובאין העכברים וקורעין את הספרים לפיכך גזרו שכל תרומה שתגע באחד מכתבי הקדש נטמאת ... ונמצאו כל כתבי הקדש פוסלין את התרומה כשני, ולא עוד אלא מי שהיו ידיו טהורות ונגע באחד מכתבי הקדש נעשו ידיו שניות ומטמאין את התרומה ואת המשקין. (רמב"ם הלכות שאר אבות הטומאה ט:ה)

Initially, they would place rolls of *terumah* near the scrolls, saying this is holy and this is holy. Mice would come and tear the scrolls. They therefore decreed that *terumah* that touches any holy writings becomes defiled ... The result is that all holy writings invalidate *terumah* as a level two of impurity. Furthermore, one whose hands were pure and who touched one of the holy writings, his hands would attain impurity of the second level and they cause impurity to *terumah* and liquids.

People would designate a certain area in their home to store sacred food to prevent it from becoming impure. In this area they would also store holy scrolls. The effect upon the holy scrolls, however, was disastrous. When rodents would get at the sacred food they would invariably also chew on the holy scrolls alongside them and destroy them. To keep holy scrolls from being stored alongside sacred foods, the Sages declared that holy scrolls (and by extension hands that touched holy scrolls) render sacred food impure.

Based on the above (see also *Yadayim* 4:6³⁰ and *Tosefta Yadayim* 2:19³¹) it now becomes clear that when the Sages say that certain writ-

²⁹ ולא דברי תורה בלבד אלא כל כתבי הקדש אפילו שיר השירים וקהלת שהן דברי חכמה מטמאין את הידיים (רמב"ם הלכות שאר אבות הטומאה ט:ו).

³⁰ אומרים צדוקים קובלין אנו עליכ' פרושים שאתם אומרים כתבי הקודש מטמאין את הידיים וספרי הומרים אינו מטמא את הידיים א"ר יוחנן בן זכאי וכי אין לנו על הפרושים אלא זו בלבד הרי הם אומרים עצמות חמור טהורים ועצמות יוחנן כהן גדול טמאים אמרו לו לפי חבתן היא טומאתן שלא יעשה אדם עצמות אביו ואמו תרודות אמר להם אף כתבי הקדש לפי חבתן היא טומאתן וספרי הומרים שאינן חביבין אינן מטמאין את הידיים (ידים ד:ו).

ings do not defile the hands it is because they did not view such writings as holy. (It can also be argued that it was not necessarily that *Hazal* felt that the writings were not holy, but that *Hazal* realized that the people did not consider them holy and thus they did not need to be concerned that people would store these writings together with sacred food.)

A Strange Coincidence

When we examine the verses from the *Kethuvim* that are quoted in Bavli (Table 5), we find that the books of *Kethuvim* with the highest ratio of midrash in Bavli are, as shown in the table below: Esther (.97), *Shir ha-Shirim* (.85), *Kobelet* (.67) and *Mishlei* (.63). When we examine the verses from the *Kethuvim* that are quoted in Yerushalmi (Table 1), the same four books have the highest ratios: Esther (.60), *Kobelet* (.52), *Shir ha-Shirim* (.36), and *Mishlei* (.25).

It is precisely these same four books that *Hazal* at some point understood as being troublesome! Is this correlation merely a coincidence? Is it not counter-intuitive? Why would *Hazal* spend more time doing midrash on troublesome books and thereby cause people to focus their attention on them? To try to answer these questions we will first examine how *Hazal* dealt with problematic statements in *Tanakh*.

	Verses	Ratio of Midrash to Verse in ...		
		Yerushalmi	Bavli	
Psalms	2,527	0.24	0.44	תהלים
Proverbs	915	0.25	0.63	משלי
Job	1,070	0.16	0.31	איוב
Song of Songs	117	0.36	0.85	שיר השירים
Ruth	85	0.24	0.41	רות
Lamentations	154	0.14	0.51	איכה
Ecclesiastes	222	0.52	0.67	קהלת

³¹ אמר להן רבן יוחנן בן זכאי כתבי קודש חיבתן טומאתן שלא יעשה אותן שטיחין לבהמה (תוספתא ידים ב:ט).

	Verses	Ratio of Midrash to Verse in ...		
		Yerushalmi	Bavli	
Esther	167	0.60	0.97	אסתר
Daniel	357	0.19	0.31	דניאל
Ezra Nehemiah	685	0.13	0.19	עזרא נחמיה
Chronicles	1,765	0.09	0.13	דברי הימים
Writings	8,064	0.20	0.37	כתובים

Turning Troublesome Books into Holy Writings

We have shown that *Hazal*, at one point in history, viewed certain books of *Kethuvim* as being troublesome. Yet in all those cases, these books were subsequently included, on an equal footing, with all the other books of *Kethuvim*.

What tools did *Hazal* use to transform and recast these troublesome books—books with contradictory statements, books that express thoughts antithetical to our ideals, books replete with seemingly mundane parables—into holy works that are worthy to stand beside the other books of *Kethuvim*? We will show that although these books contain different types of problems, each of which requires its own unique solution, nevertheless a common thread runs through most of these solutions—a thread of midrash that transforms and elevates the troublesome works into holy books.

Books with contradictory statements. If a book has statements that appear contradictory, there are three solutions: 1. Find other verses in that book that have worthwhile religious messages, 2. Reconcile the contradictions, 3. When all else fails, have faith that one day an answer will be found.

An example of the first method is found in *Shabbat* 30b, which states that although *Kobelet* has contradictory statements, nevertheless, it begins and ends with statements that allude to the importance of Torah. Yet it is important to note that even those statements that allude to the importance of the Torah do so only after we apply the process of midrash to flush out its hidden meaning. For example, to explain the significance of *Kobelet* 1:3, which states, *What real value is there for a man in all the gains he makes beneath the sun?* the Gemara an-

swers that beneath the sun there is nothing of significance he can hope to gain, but he can attain something significant when he involves himself with that which preceded the sun, i.e., the Torah (see Rashi *ibid.*).

An example of the second method is found in *Shabbat* 30b, which reconciles two sets of contradictory statements. In *Kobelet* 7:3 it states: *Vexation is better than revelry*, yet in *Kobelet* 2:2 it states, *Of revelry I said, "It's mad!"*³² In *Kobelet* 8:15 it states, *I therefore praised enjoyment*, and yet in *Kobelet* 2:2 it states, *Of merriment, "What good is that."* Using the process of midrash, the first contradiction is reconciled by explaining that the anger Hashem shows to righteous people on this world is better than the "playing" He does with the evil in the next world. The second contradiction is reconciled by explaining that enjoyment is an ideal when it is the satisfaction one obtains from doing a righteous deed, as opposed to an ordinary type of joy.

The third approach is found in *Shabbat* 30b regarding the contradictions within *Mishlei*. Although the Sages found no answer for those contradictions, they were confident that one day someone else would. After all, solutions were found for *Kobelet*, so one day solutions will be found for *Mishlei* as well.

Books that appear to contradict the Torah or its ideals. If a book has statements that seem to contradict our laws or ideals, we must try to reconcile those statements. An example of this is the solution to the problems within Ezekiel that are addressed in *Hagigah* 13a. What about the statements in *Mishlei*, *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet* (as mentioned in *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* 1:4) that seem to contradict some of our ideals? As mentioned previously, sometimes we have to live with a problem.³³

³² The Gemara has the word מהלל and not as we have—מהולל—and the Gemara seems to interpret it as "praiseworthy" and not as now commonly translated, "insane" or "mad." This accounts for the Gemara's understanding the two verses as contradicting each other.

³³ The straightforward reading of *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, especially version B, is that it points out the difficult verses and offers no solutions. There are some commentators, though (בנין יהושע and כסא רהמים) who read an answer into it as well.

Books that contain mundane parables. What about books of *Ketuvim* that seem to have no religious significance? On a small scale, we can see how *Hazal* handled individual verses of the Torah that seem not to have any religious significance. *Sanhedrin* 99b states that Menashe mocked the Torah by citing two verses that appear to have no significance:

תנו רבנן: (במדבר ט"ו) והנפש אשר תעשה ביד רמה: זה מנשה בן חזקיה, שהיה יושב ודורש בהגדות של דופי. אמר: וכי לא היה לו למשה לכתוב אלא (בראשית ל"ו) ואחות לוטן תמנע, ותמנע היתה פילגש לאליפז (בראשית ל') וילך ראובן בימי קציר חטים וימצא דודאים בשדה? (סנהדרין צט עמ' ב)

Our Rabbis taught: *But the soul that doeth aught presumptuously*: this refers to Manasseh the Son of Hezekiah, who examined [Biblical] narratives to prove them worthless. Thus he jeered, had Moses nothing to write but *And Lotan's sister was Timna, And Timna was a concubine to Eliphaz, And Reuben went in the days of the wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field?*

How indeed do we deal with verses that seem to be void of any religious significance? The Gemara continues:

דאתן עלה, מיהת אחות לוטן תמנע מאי היא? תמנע בת מלכים הואי, דכתיב (בראשית ל"ו) אלוף לוטן אלוף תמנע. וכל אלוף, מלכותא בלא תאגא היא. בעיא לאיגורי, באתה אצל אברהם יצחק ויעקב ולא קבלוה, הלכה והיתה פילגש לאליפז בן עשו. אמרה: מוטב תהא שפחה לאומה זו, ולא תהא גבירה לאומה אחרת. נפק מינה עמלק, דצערניהו לישראל. מאי טעמא? דלא איבעי להו לרחקה. וילך ראובן בימי קציר חטים. אמר רבא ברבי יצחק אמר רב: מכאן לצדיקים שאין פושטין ידיהן בגזל. (סנהדרין צט עמ' ב)

À propos, what is the purpose of [writing], *And Lotan's sister was Timna*? Timna was a royal princess, as it is written, *alluf [duke] Lotan, alluf [duke] Timna*; and by 'alluf' an uncrowned ruler is meant. Desiring to become a proselyte, she went to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but they did not accept her. So she went and became a concubine to Eliphaz the son of Esau, saying, 'I had rather be a servant to this people than a mistress to another nation.' From her Amalek was de-

scended who afflicted Israel. Why so? Because they should not have repulsed her.

And Reuben went in the days of the wheat harvest [and found mandrakes in the field]. Raba b. R. Isaac said in Rab's name: This shows that righteous men do not take what is not theirs.

By applying midrashic techniques, the Gemara takes the verses that were mocked by Menashe³⁴ and makes them rich with religious significance. These verses that appear mundane actually teach us some very important lessons: 1. Forsake royalty to pursue truth, 2. Accept a true convert, and 3. Righteous people do not steal.

In *Hullin* 60b we find a startling remark made by R. Shimon b. Lakish:

אמר ר"ש בן לקיש: הרבה מקראות שראויין לשרוף והן הן גופי תורה. (חולין ס עמ' ב)

R. Shimon b. Lakish said that many passages of the Torah appear worthy of being burnt. Rashi explains that there are verses that appear to have no significance and it is embarrassing to include them with the other verses, which are holy. And yet, R. Shimon b. Lakish continues that these same passages are actually pillars of the Torah. How are seemingly worthless verses made to be pillars of the Torah? *Gen. Rabbah* explains:³⁵

א"ל (דברים לב) כי לא דבר רק הוא מכם, ואם רק הוא, מכם, למה? שאין אתם יודעים לדרוש.

³⁴ An interesting progression can be read into the explanations of *Ḥazal*. When Hezekiah encountered difficulties with *Mishlei*, *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet*, he sensibly put those books aside. (See *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan* above.) On the other hand, his son Menashe, who similarly found difficulties with the Torah, ended up mocking it. Perhaps *Ḥazal* are trying to tell us that sometimes a brilliant father who is troubled by certain theological difficulties can integrate them and learn to live with them. The son, however, who learns about the inconsistencies from his father, may not necessarily have the intellectual capacity and the maturity to deal with them.

³⁵ See *Gen. Rabbah*, in the Vilna edition, פרשה כב, פרשה א ד"ה יד רבי ישמעאל, פרשה כב, פרשה א ד"ה יד רבי ישמעאל, ואם רק הוא, מכם, למה? פרשה נג ד"ה טו ויהי אלהים, ד"ה ב והאדם ידע.

This midrash teaches us that if we have a verse that appears to be meaningless, it is up to us to study it—i.e., to create midrash—until we extract its hidden religious significance. If verses appear to have no religious significance, the fault is ours because we failed to use the tools of midrash to make them holy. The fault is not in the verse.

These solutions were also used to elevate the three books mentioned above, as seen in *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, where we find that *Misblei*, *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet* were considered mere parables עד שבאו אנשי כנסת הגדולה ופירשו אותם, until the People of the Great Assembly came and created midrash to elevate these books.

To summarize, if a book of Tanakh appears problematic then, based on the type of problem, we use the appropriate midrashic solution to resolve it.

What the Numbers Reveal

We have only one reference to the book of Esther being on a lower level of holiness. The *Gemara*, however, (*Megillah 7a ibid.*) is a bit puzzled as to why the book of Esther should fall into a category of not defiling the hands. In fact, the *Gemara* offers various arguments making the opposite case—that the book of Esther was written with Heavenly inspiration (רוח הקודש). All the *Gemara* offers to explain why Esther does not defile the hands is to say there was no command to write it, only to read it. What then explains why Esther is by far the book within *Kethuvim* with the highest ratio of midrash to verse? The answer is that tractate *Megillah* is devoted to the holiday of Purim, which, in turn, derives the laws and customs of Purim from the book of Esther. Esther therefore has a need for מדרש הלכה that is no less than that of the Torah itself.

As for the books of *Misblei*, *Kobelet* and *Shir ha-Shirim*, we have shown above that these three books were once viewed by *Hazal* as being problematic and thus of a lesser status than the other books of Tanakh. With the understanding that these books were and would remain part of the canon, however, it became imperative that *Hazal* redouble their efforts to reconcile any problems contained in these books and extract religiously significant lessons from them. If they are as holy as the others books then, like the others, they should have hidden religious lessons for us. If anything, then, by increasing the

amount of midrash on these books, *Hazal* are stressing to the Jewish people that indeed these books are just as important and holy as the others.

As mentioned above, in both Yerushalmi (Table 1) and Bavli (Table 5), the books of *Kethuvim* with the highest ratio of midrash to verse are: Esther, *Shir ha-Shirim*, *Kobelet* and *Mishlei*. In Yerushalmi (Table 1), however, the ratio of midrash to verse in *Mishlei* is only slightly higher than with either *Tebillim* or Ruth. Also, *Mishlei* does not make it into the top 4 in the Yerushalmi Tables 2 and 3. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that *Mishlei* is not one of the books mentioned in the Mishnah in *Yadayim*.³⁶ The only sources we have for *Mishlei* being on a lower level are in Bavli *Shabbat* and *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*—both of which are Babylonian sources, and may therefore not have been an issue for either the *tannaim* or the *amoraim* of the Land of Israel.³⁷

³⁶ Indeed, the two books from *Kethuvim* that at one time epitomized ‘troublesome works’ are *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet*. This is obvious from the words of Rambam when in הלכות שאר אבות הטומאה ט:ו he writes, אפילו שיר השירים וקהלת שהן דברי חכמה מטמאין את הידים. A halakhic vestige of this status, as it applies to *Kobelet*, can be found in the מגן אברהם, who writes in *Shulhan Arukh, Oraḥ Hayyim* 490:9, concerning the requirement to recite a blessing before public reading of the *Five Scrolls*, אבל הלבוש וב"ה ומנהגים ומט"מ כתבו לברך על כלם חוץ מקהלת וכן עיקר כמנהג קדמונינו. The Gra (*ibid.*), however, dismisses the statement of the מגן אברהם by saying, חוץ מקהלת ליהא and he supports his position by pointing out that both the anonymous Tanna of *Yadayim* 3:5 and Rambam (*ibid.*) equate *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet* in that they both defile the hands. (I would like to thank my dear and long-time friend Aaron Sonnenschein for bringing this source to my attention.)

It is worth noting that both *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet* are parts of the *Five Scrolls* and are read publicly; *Shir ha-Shirim* on *Pesach* because it refers to the deliverance from Egypt, and *Kobelet* on *Sukkot* because of its reference to joy. Perhaps including these two works into the *Five Scrolls*, and requiring them to be read in public, was another way our sages chose to bolster and emphasize the acceptability and holiness of these works.

³⁷ Table 4, which lists the total number of “classic” type midrashim found in the Yerushalmi, shows that within *Kethuvim* the *Five Scrolls* have the five highest ratios of midrash to verse.

Conclusion

After counting the midrashim in the Talmudim, and analyzing *tannaic* and *amoraic* sources, we made a number of observations and conjectures:

1. In both Yerushalmi and Bavli we find that the *tannaim* were prone to focus more on midrash halakhah than on midrash aggada.
2. We found no exact correlation between the number of commandments in a book of the Torah and the corresponding amount of midrash. Furthermore, we showed that the relative amount of midrash on the various books of the Torah are consistently, from highest to lowest, *Va-Yikra*, *Devarim*, *Shemot*, *Be-Midbar* and *Bereshit*.
3. Within the Talmudim we find a very high ratio of midrash to verse for the book of Esther, a ratio that rivals that of the books of the Torah. This is probably due to the fact that the entire Tractate of *Megillah* is dedicated to Purim which, in turn, derives many details for that holiday from the book of Esther.
4. *Mishlei*, *Shir ha-Shirim* and *Kobelet* were at one time considered troublesome. Yet precisely these books of *Kethuvim* have a high ratio of midrash in both Yerushalmi and Bavli. While at first glance this may appear counterintuitive, we suggested it is precisely because of this that *Hazal* created an overabundance of midrash. The midrashic interpretations created by *Hazal* elevated these books by reconciling their difficult passages and by turning their seemingly mundane verses into statements rich with religious and ethical significance.

Final Word

After counting the midrashim it is clear that *Hazal* stressed the books of Torah more than those of *Nevi'im* or *Kethuvim*. It is also clear, however, that *Hazal* were knowledgeable in all of Tanakh, that not a single book of Tanakh is lacking in midrash, and that they found all books of Tanakh worthy of serious study.

This contrasts sharply with the current state of our yeshiva education for boys in which *Nevi'im* and *Kethuvim* are almost totally

ignored. Should we take *Nevi'im* and *Ketuvim* any less seriously than did the *tannaim* and *amoraim*? How can we understand the midrash aggada of Talmud Bavli and Talmud Yerushalmi without a rudimentary knowledge of these books? And if our understanding of midrash aggada is lacking or corrupted, then we run the risk that our knowledge of God and our closeness to Him may also be in jeopardy.³⁸

דורשי הגדות אומרים רצונך להכיר את מי שאמר והיה העולם למוד
הגדה שמתוך כך אתה מכיר את מי שאמר והיה העולם ומדבק בדרכיו.
(ספרי דברים מט)

Expounders of aggadot say: If you wish to recognize the One Who spoke and brought the world into existence, study aggada, for through this you will recognize the One Who spoke and the world materialized, and cleave to His ways. ❧

³⁸ I would like to thank Sender Epstein for reading two drafts of this work and for offering many substantive comments and enhancements, most of which have been incorporated into this final version. I would also like to thank the other members of our *haburah*, Asher Benzion Buchman, David Guttmann, Chaim Lam, Sam Reiser and Yonah Wilamowsky for the privilege of studying with them on an ongoing basis, for giving me the opportunity to present an earlier version of this paper and for their invaluable insights and suggestions. In any event, any errors or inaccuracies in this work are solely mine.

Table 1

אוצר מדרשי המקרא שבירושלמי					
	Verses	Number of Different Verses Quoted	All References to Verses	Ratio of Midrash to Verse	Rank
בראשית	1,534	217	421	0.27	5
שמות	1,209	330	1,461	1.21	3
ויקרא	859	416	1,999	2.33	1
במדבר	1,288	295	1,220	0.95	4
דברים	955	402	2,051	2.15	2
תורה	5,845	1,660	7,152	1.22	
יהושע	656	67	130	0.20	
שופטים	618	40	63	0.10	
שמואל	1,506	160	322	0.21	
מלכים	1,536	169	295	0.19	
ישעיה	1,291	175	357	0.28	
ירמיה	1,364	87	182	0.13	
יחזקאל	1,273	82	157	0.12	
תרי עשר	1,050	139	289	0.28	
נביאים	9,294	919	1,795	0.19	
תהלים	2,527	322	613	0.24	
משלי	915	116	231	0.25	4
איוב	1,070	95	167	0.16	
שיר השירים	117	18	42	0.36	3
רות	85	13	20	0.24	
איכה	154	19	22	0.14	
קהלת	222	36	116	0.52	2
אסתר	167	39	101	0.60	1
דניאל	357	35	69	0.19	
עזרא נחמיה	685	58	86	0.13	
דברי הימים	1,765	135	166	0.09	
כתובים	8,064	886	1,633	0.20	
נביאים וכתובים	17,358	1,805	3,428	0.20	
תנ"ך	23,203	3,465	10,580	0.46	

Table 2

מדרשי הלכה של התנאים בתלמוד ירושלמי				
	Verses	Number of Midrashim	Ratio of Midrash to Verse	Rank
בראשית	1,534	29	0.02	5
שמות	1,209	270	0.22	3
ויקרא	859	450	0.52	1
במדבר	1,288	177	0.14	4
דברים	955	290	0.30	2
תורה	5,845	1,216	0.21	
יהושע	656	4	0.01	
שופטים	618	1	0.00	
שמואל	1,506	15	0.01	
מלכים	1,536	11	0.01	
ישעיה	1,291	8	0.01	
ירמיה	1,364	1	0.00	
יחזקאל	1,273	7	0.01	
תרי עשר	1,050	7	0.01	
נביאים	9,294	54	0.01	
תהלים	2,527	10	0.00	
משלי	915	6	0.01	
איוב	1,070	10	0.01	3
שיר השירים	117	0	0.00	
רות	85	5	0.06	1
איכה	154	3	0.02	2
קהלת	222	2	0.01	
אסתר	167	0	0.00	
דניאל	357	1	0.00	
עזרא נחמיה	685	2	0.00	
דברי הימים	1,765	16	0.01	4
כתובים	8,064	55	0.01	
נביאים וכתובים	17,358	109	0.01	
תנ"ך	23,203	1,325	0.06	

Table 3

מדרשי הלכה של האמוראים בתלמוד ירושלמי

	Verses	Number of Midrashim	Ratio of Midrash to Verse	Rank
בראשית	1,534	79	0.05	5
שמות	1,209	119	0.10	3
ויקרא	859	179	0.21	1
במדבר	1,288	123	0.10	4
דברים	955	169	0.18	2
תורה	5,845	669	0.11	
יהושע	656	15	0.02	
שופטים	618	14	0.02	
שמואל	1,506	43	0.03	
מלכים	1,536	48	0.03	
ישעיה	1,291	36	0.03	
ירמיה	1,364	15	0.01	
יחזקאל	1,273	13	0.01	
תרי עשר	1,050	34	`	
נביאים	9,294	218	0.02	
תהלים	2,527	62	0.02	
משלי	915	19	0.02	
איוב	1,070	26	0.02	
שיר השירים	117	7	0.06	4
רות	85	4	0.05	5
איכה	154	17	0.11	1
קהלת	222	14	0.06	3
אסתר	167	16	0.10	2
דניאל	357	1	0.00	
עזרא נחמיה	685	15	0.02	
דברי הימים	1,765	37	0.02	
כתובים	8,064	218	0.03	
נביאים וכתובים	17,358	436	0.03	
תנ"ך	23,203	1105	0.05	

Table 4

מדרשי הלכה של התנאים והאמוראים בתלמוד ירושלמי

	Verses	Number of Midrashim	Ratio of Midrash to Verse	Rank
בראשית	1,534	108	0.07	5
שמות	1,209	389	0.32	3
ויקרא	859	629	0.73	1
במדבר	1,288	300	0.23	4
דברים	955	459	0.48	2
תורה	5,845	1,885	0.32	
יהושע	656	19	0.03	
שופטים	618	15	0.02	
שמואל	1,506	58	0.04	
מלכים	1,536	59	0.04	
ישעיה	1,291	44	0.03	
ירמיה	1,364	16	0.01	
יחזקאל	1,273	20	0.02	
תרי עשר	1,050	41	0.04	
נביאים	9,294	272	0.03	
תהלים	2,527	72	0.03	
משלי	915	25	0.03	
איוב	1,070	36	0.03	
שיר השירים	117	7	0.06	5
רות	85	9	0.11	2
איכה	154	20	0.13	1
קהלת	222	16	0.07	4
אסתר	167	16	0.10	3
דניאל	357	2	0.01	
עזרא נחמיה	685	17	0.02	
דברי הימים	1,765	53	0.03	
כתובים	8,064	273	0.03	
נביאים וכתובים	17,358	545	0.03	
תנ"ך	23,203	2,430	0.10	

Table 5

כל המקראות שבתלמוד בבלי

	Verses	Number of Different Verses Quoted	All References to Verses	Ratio of Midrash to Verse	Rank
בראשית	1,534	534	961	0.63	5
שמות	1,209	524	1,569	1.30	3
ויקרא	859	644	3,072	3.58	1
במדבר	1,288	461	1,302	1.01	4
דברים	955	570	2,084	2.18	2
תורה	5845	2,733	8,988	1.54	
יהושע	656	104	157	0.24	
שופטים	618	97	145	0.23	
שמואל	1,506	319	465	0.31	
מלכים	1,536	302	438	0.29	
ישעיה	1,291	440	740	0.57	
ירמיה	1,364	216	333	0.24	
יחזקאל	1,273	197	319	0.25	
תרי עשר	1,050	325	504	0.48	
נביאים	9,294	2,000	3,101	0.33	
תהלים	2,527	697	1,106	0.44	
משלי	915	330	580	0.63	4
איוב	1,070	243	331	0.31	
שיר השירים	117	59	99	0.85	2
רות	85	28	35	0.41	
איכה	154	54	79	0.51	
קהלת	222	96	149	0.67	3
אסתר	167	99	162	0.97	1
דניאל	357	78	109	0.31	
עזרא נחמיה	685	83	127	0.19	
דברי הימים	1,765	156	223	0.13	
כתובים	8,064	1,923	3,000	0.37	
נביאים וכתובים	17,358	3,923	6,101	0.35	
תנ"ך	23,203	6,656	15,089	0.65	

Table 6

מדרשי הלכה של התנאים בתלמוד בבלי				
	Verses	Number of Midrashim	Ratio of Midrash to Verse	Rank
בראשית	1,534	81	0.05	5
שמות	1,209	438	0.36	3
ויקרא	859	1,173	1.37	1
במדבר	1,288	353	0.27	4
דברים	955	483	0.51	2
תורה	5845	2,528	0.43	
יהושע	656	12	0.02	
שופטים	618	8	0.01	
שמואל	1,506	26	0.02	
מלכים	1,536	32	0.02	
ישעיה	1,291	24	0.02	
ירמיה	1,364	14	0.01	
יהזקאל	1,273	23	0.02	
תרי עשר	1,050	23	0.02	
נביאים	9,294	162	0.02	
תהלים	2,527	46	0.02	
משלי	915	20	0.02	
איוב	1,070	15	0.01	
שיר השירים	117	4	0.03	
רות	85	5	0.06	3
איכה	154	5	0.03	
קהלת	222	15	0.07	2
אסתר	167	24	0.14	1
דניאל	357	15	0.04	4
עזרא נחמיה	685	9	0.01	
דברי הימים	1,765	9	0.01	
כתובים	8,064	167	0.02	
נביאים וכתובים	17,358	329	0.02	
תנ"ך	23,203	2,857	0.12	

Table 7

Yerushalmi and Bavli Combined					
	Verses	Number of Different Verses Quoted	All References to Verses	Ration of Midrash to Verse	Rank
בראשית	1,534	751	1,382	0.90	5
שמות	1,209	854	3,030	2.51	3
ויקרא	859	1,060	5,071	5.90	1
במדבר	1,288	756	2,522	1.96	4
דברים	955	972	4,135	4.33	2
תורה	5845	4,393	16,140	2.76	
יהושע	656	171	287	0.44	
שופטים	618	137	208	0.34	
שמואל	1,506	479	787	0.52	
מלכים	1,536	471	733	0.48	
ישעיה	1,291	615	1,097	0.85	
ירמיה	1,364	303	515	0.38	
יחזקאל	1,273	279	476	0.37	
תרי עשר	1,050	464	793	0.76	
נביאים	9,294	2,919	4,896	0.53	
תהלים	2,527	1,019	1,719	0.68	
משלי	915	446	811	0.89	4
איוב	1,070	338	498	0.47	
שיר השירים	117	77	141	1.21	2
רות	85	41	55	0.65	
איכה	154	73	101	0.66	
קהלת	222	132	265	1.19	3
אסתר	167	138	263	1.57	1
דניאל	357	113	178	0.50	
עזרא נחמיה	685	141	213	0.31	
דברי הימים	1,765	291	389	0.22	
כתובים	8,064	2,809	4,633	0.57	
נביאים וכתובים	17,358	5,728	9,529	0.55	
תנ"ך	23,203	10,121	25,669	1.11	