RAFAEL RACHEL NEIS

When a Human Gives Birth to a Raven

Rabbis and the Reproduction of Species

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When a Human Gives Birth to a Raven

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Rabbis and the Reproduction of Species

Rafael Rachel Neis

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

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For my parents, Sally and Robi.
For my pack, Daphna and Elul.
And for all the other creatures.

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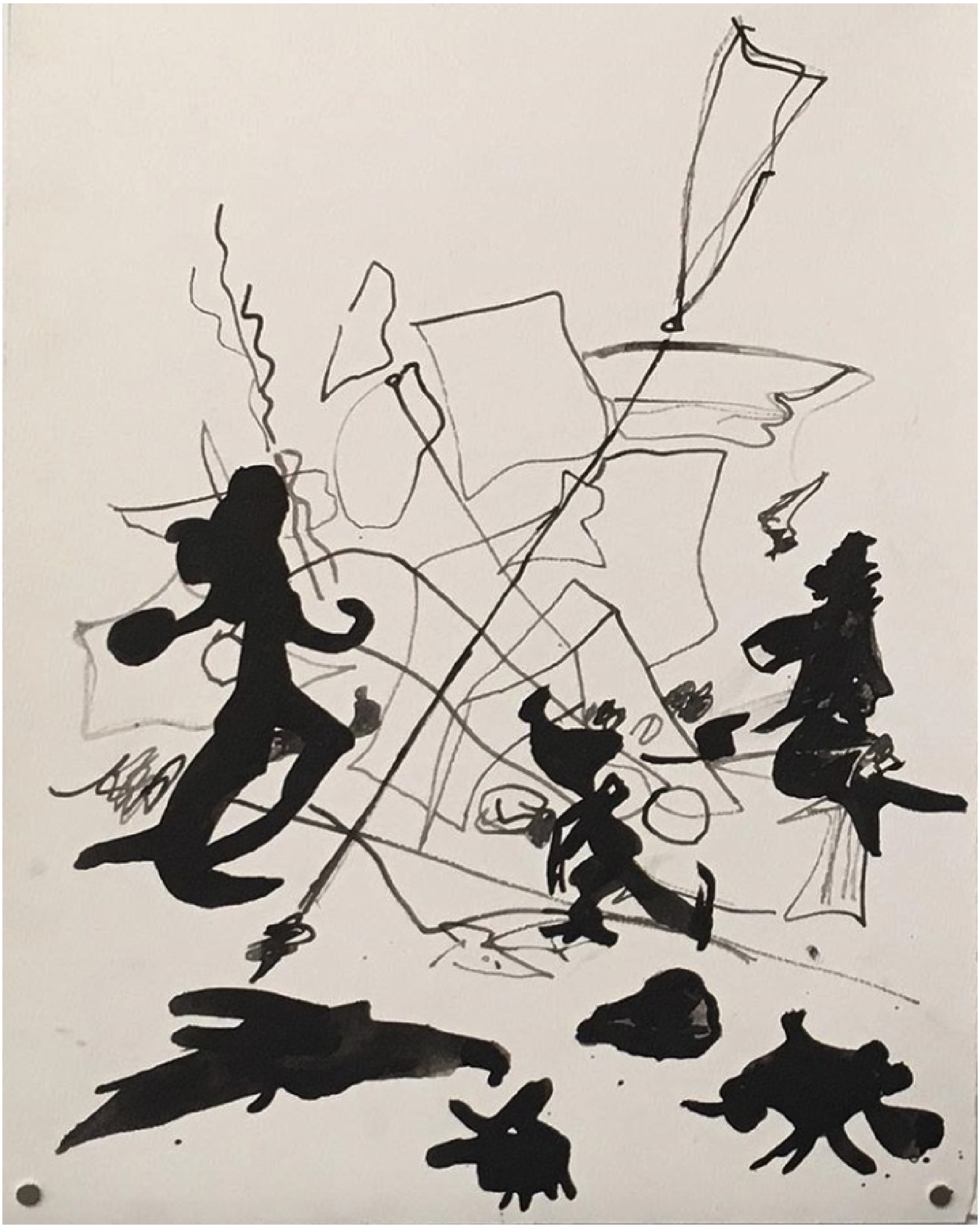

FIGURE 1. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Seven Scholars.* Pen and ink on paper, 12 in. × 16 in., 2004.

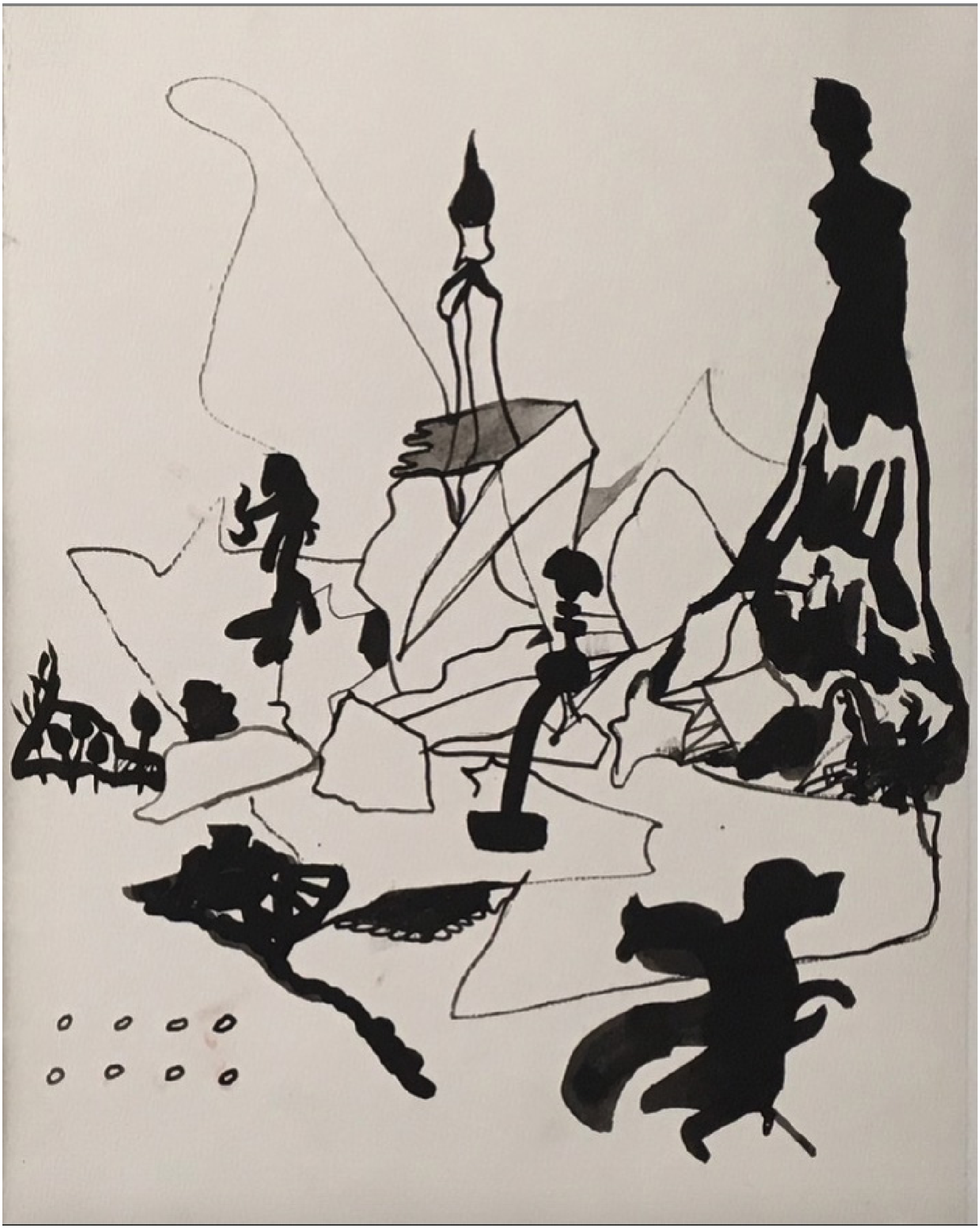

FIGURE 2. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Wherewithal.* Pen, brush, and ink on paper, 12 in. × 16 in., 2004.

NOTE ON TRANSLATION, ANCIENT TEXTS, AND IMAGES

When translating ancient texts, I move between using binary gender pronouns (she, he) when the text seems to be using them differentially. However, for the recurrent usage of the feminine verbal forms for those emitting or birthing from their uterus, I alternately use "she," or the gender neutral "one," or "they." If I surmise that the text is using male pronouns for a generic purpose, I use "they." In speaking of animals, whether in translating ancient sources or otherwise, I tend to use the pronouns "they," "he," "she," and "who" rather than "it" or "which." To make this book accessible to multiple readerships, I render Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin in Romanized script. Within English translations of ancient sources, I use parentheses to gloss the text or offer transliterations or translations. When necessary, I insert words in square brackets to aid comprehension of an otherwise difficult text. I will often refer to particular rabbis who are referred to or quoted within rabbinic sources as Rabbi X. "Rabbi" on its own refers to Rabbi Judah the Patriarch (mid-second century to 220s CE), following rabbinic convention.

For Greek and Roman sources I cite according to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. For rabbinic sources, I cite the name of the tractate in full with a letter "b" for Babylonian Talmud (or Bavli), "y" for the Palestinian Talmud (or Yerushalmi), "m" for the Mishnah, and "t" for the Tosefta. I cite according to tractate, chapter, and paragraph (or mishnah), or folio and column where appropriate. For example, yBerakhot 1:2, 3b; bBerakhot 20a; mBerakhot 1:2; tBerakhot 3:4. All translations of biblical and rabbinic sources are my own, unless noted otherwise.

Pertinent Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek phrases in the text are transliterated for the benefit of the nonspecialist; however, for names, places, and words that have entered the English vernacular, I use the common English spelling. In all citations of rabbinic sources, I have tried to use the best available edition or manuscript or both: I generally follow the manuscript selections chosen by the Historical Dictionary of the Academy of Hebrew Language (available at https://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/). Where I depart from these, I have noted which manuscript or edition I follow and my reasons for doing so. For the Babylonian Talmud, I relied on the Saul Lieberman Institute for Talmudic Research for its transcription of major manuscripts of the Talmud and early printed editions (available at http://www.lieberman-institute.com for subscription) and *geniza* fragments at the Friedberg Geniza Project (https://bavli.genizah.org). I cite variants when apposite, checking most of them against digital images of the manuscripts accessible via the website of the National Library of Israel (available here: https://web.nli.org.il/sites/nli/Hebrew/collections/jewish-collection/Talmud/).

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ON THE IMAGES

Besides the piece on the book cover, some of my comics, paintings, drawings, and mixed media pieces have entered the book's pages. Image-making has been central to my thinking for as long as I've been reading and writing. In *Canine Metathesis* there are hints of the marginalia gracing the fourteenth-century Duke of Sussex's German Pentateuch (Add MS 15282, f. 296v), and the Coburg Pentateuch (Add MS 19776, f. 54v). *Transformations* repurposes the design and iconography of the sixth-century Bet Alpha synagogue mosaic to conjure yShabbat 1:3, 3b. The comic, *Hyenas*, appropriates and subverts one manuscript tradition of the *Physiologus* about the gender transformation of the hyena and the dual nature of Jews. *Those Rabbis* draws (on) yNiddah 3:2, 50c, while *She Unnames Them* channels Ursula Le Guin's story of the same name.

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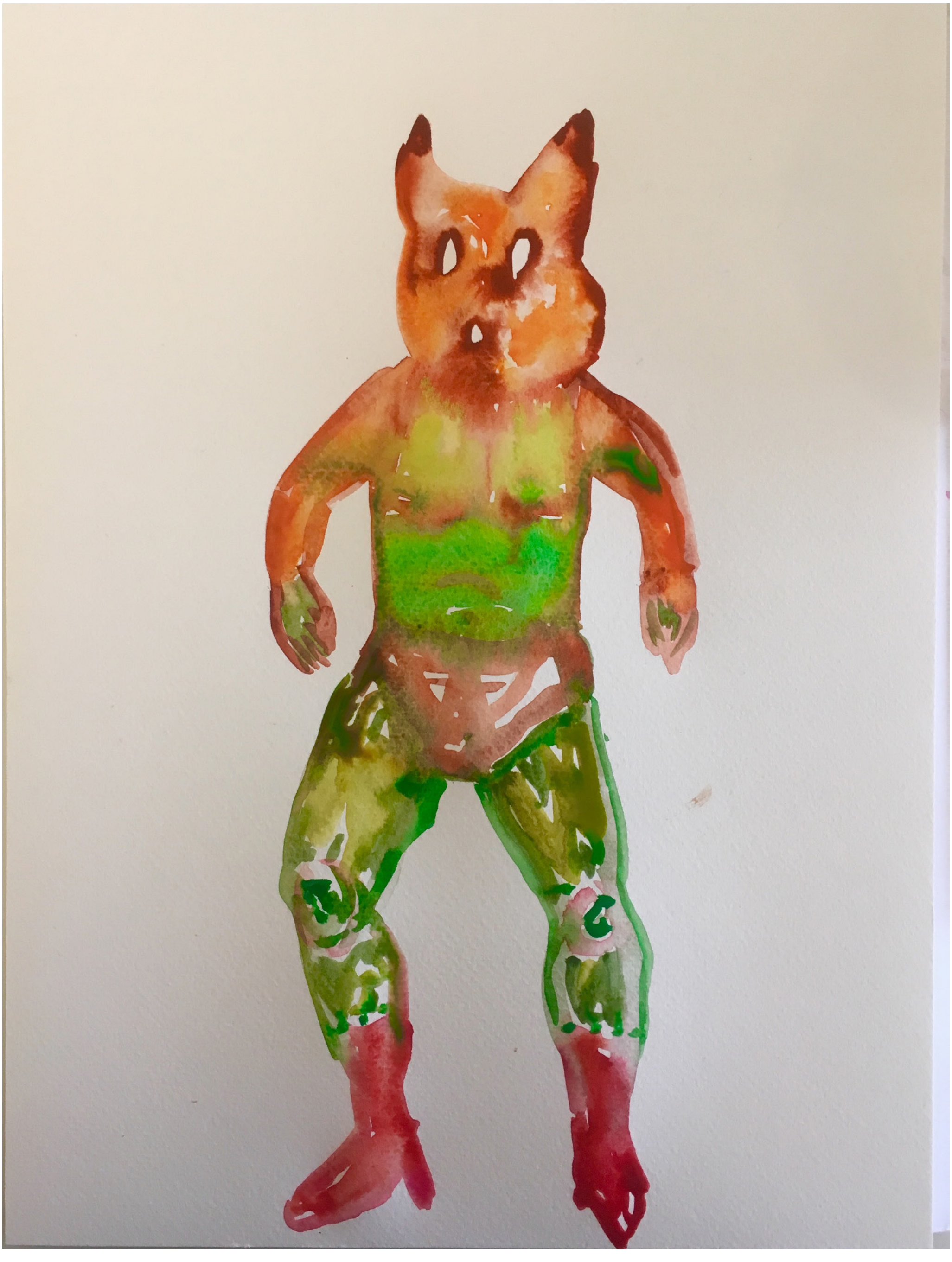


FIGURE 3. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Personage.* Watercolor on paper, 8.5 in. × 12.6 in., 2019.

Introduction

A cow gives birth to a camel. In the bog, the farmer observes a mouse that is part flesh, part earth. A traveler encounters a wild man along the forest floor, more animal than human. At the local amphitheater, audiences gasp as a four-footed creature bearing spots, with the longest neck they've ever seen, ambles onto the stage. In ancient texts, phenomena like these emerge not infrequently. These sources are philosophical, ethnographic, medical, and religious, from Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* to Pliny's *Natural History*, and from Soranus's *Gynecology* to Mishnah Bekhorot. They attest to a world of reproductive uncertainty, in which one species might deliver a hybrid creature, or even a different species, and in which the lines and overlaps between species were not always clear. This book follows the attempts of one group of learned people—the rabbis—as they tried to make sense of this world.

These creatures, and the ways they emerge, have captivated me for quite some time. Wherein lies this attraction? At first, I wondered whether I was falling prey to a fetish of the fabulous. The tradition of objectifying and operationalizing the "monstrous" or the "wondrous" to entertain, titillate, and instruct, ranges from late ancient Mediterranean "paradoxographies" and traveling menageries, through to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Euro-American cabinets of curiosity and freakshows. However, as my study deepened, I came to realize that these creatures and processes of proliferation resonated precisely for their non-normativity and unexpectedness. Rather than wishing to objectify such beings and events, I was attracted to them in their textured embodiments, even as their textual lineaments are spare. I was drawn to take these creatures and their begettings seriously, because of but also in spite of their "authors"—the rabbis and other ancient thinkers—and the stylized, sedimented textual forms in which their thoughts now reach us.

The very idea that certain creatures seem to defy categories, or that certain reproductive modes challenge expectations, speaks to the ways that "nature" is *supposed*—by us—to be "natural." As a variety of scholars, thinker-activists, and artists have shown, the very idea of "nature" as a distinct realm, one that is subject to rules (or "laws of nature") whose pattern can be uncovered via very specific knowledge practices (e.g., modern "science"), is itself a product of human ideation.[1] This idea (even) when articulated explicitly, has existed alongside alternate conceptions, and, as such, is susceptible to historical contextualization. Foregoing the assumption that modern concepts of nature and its study as science inhered in antiquity allows a multitude of themes to emerge.

Several key motifs surface in this book. The first concerns the ways that people in late antiquity made sense of their world in terms of patterns of likeness, difference, and multiplicity. The second pertains to how they sought to divide the variety and plenitude of life into units that we might call "species." Third, we consider how people accounted for life coming into being: what is today often called "reproduction" and what was once known as "generation." These three inquiries all pertain to the ways that humans (and other beings) craft what they know, or what scholars like to call "the production of knowledge." This latter phrasing is not only technical academicspeak; it is also a way of conveying how *what* we know is always shaped by *how* we come to know—that is, our context and constraints as we seek to navigate the world with which we are already entangled. What we know is not just "out there" waiting to be discovered but it is in fact, at least partly, "made" by us knowers ourselves. It is also "made" in the sense that what we know is then collected, shaped, arranged, (re)presented or transmitted, often with material consequences, including for the objects of knowledge. For instance, I, as a writer, am presenting my ideas (including my understandings of others' ideas) to you, my reader. These ideas are partly shaped by the various dimensions of my social location, which are in turn embedded in structures of class, race, religion, dis/ability, sexuality, sexgender, immigration, and so forth. I articulate these ideas as consciously as I can to communicate clearly; I shape them to convince you according to assorted rhetorical conventions; I deploy various devices to authorize my ideas (for instance, by using the word "deploy") and design them to appear a plausible product of "scholarship." Scholarship is just one form of "knowledge making."

Related to the foregoing, this book attempts to use rabbinic sources as a nonexclusive key to treat the previous trinity of questions. As such, it seeks to join these sources to the field of knowledge called ancient science, or to put it less anachronistically, the history of knowledge. In doing so, we consider not just the contents of rabbinic knowledge amid other sources of knowledge circulating in the late ancient world. We also ask about the social and political conditions that shaped the rabbis' labors as well as how this affects our approaches to their writings.

This introduction will consider "likeness," "difference," "multiplicity," and "knowledge." First, we will introduce the ways that "likeness" as a homogenizing and mimetic mechanism is laid at the foot of an invented Judeo-Christian tradition.

LIKENESS

> *God is definitely not queer . . . A little overfocused on keeping kinds distinct, God then got to making man (male and female) in his own image and giving them all too much dominion, as well as the command to multiply out of all bounds of sharing the earth. I think the sixth day is where the problem of joint mundane creaturely kinship versus human exceptionalism is sharply posed right in the first chapter of Jewish and Christian monotheism.*
>
> —DONNA HARAWAY, *WHEN SPECIES MEET*, 245

> *There was a case of a woman from Sidon who three times expelled a likeness of a raven.*
>
> —tNIDDAH 4:6

Much has been laid at the feet of the recently invented "Judeo-Christian tradition," but perhaps the notion of the human as image of God attracts the most praise and blame. The idea of humans made in God's image has often been understood to sponsor a theory of ongoing human reproduction as a form of mimesis. This is what Donna Haraway, an influential feminist science studies scholar, styles "the sacred image of the same"—after science fiction writer Octavia Butler.[2] In this way, not only is image-making itself a reproductive mechanism, but humans, as images, resemble one another both in their *likeness* to God and also in their *difference* from nonhumans—who, unlike humans, are created according to their "kinds" (*minim* or species). This difference is marked explicitly in Genesis: humans are created differently from other kinds, and God tells them that they are to rule over other creatures (Genesis 1:26–28). For many, enthusiasts and critics alike, the vaunted image of God inaugurates several world-ordering binaries, including human/animal, man/woman, and likeness/difference. These in turn fan out to still other binaries, such as mind/matter and nature/culture, and even the tendency to erect paired oppositions itself.[3]

Binaries rarely fail to entail hierarchy: the privileging of one side of the binary over the other. They also flatten variation and multiplicity on both sides (and in between). Thus, to posit the human over and against *the* animal is potentially to level the heterogenous plenitude of nonhuman creatures into an undifferentiated category: "the animal." This homogenization might efface differences between, for instance, those we dub cats and horses or between individual creatures, like Yomtov and Moishy (the beings to whom I refer as "my" cats). Conversely, the human/animal duality conceals (even as it often subtly or not so subtly enforces) human differences in all their variety, whether these be along the lines of additional categories like race, gender, and disability, or simply again, in the face of the irreducible singularity of particular human beings (commonly referred to as "persons" or by proper names).[4] At the same time, the human/animal binary can and has been used to animalize people who do not fall within a particular society's normative definitions of what constitutes a human (in terms of race, gender, disability, or class), while encouraging the anthropocentric treatment of a few specific animals that we value for their human*like* qualities.[5]

Writers, thinkers, scholars, and artists have shown how claims to human distinctiveness, explicitly or implicitly drawing on Genesis 1:26–27 as biblical license, have served to uphold these hierarchies from antiquity to the present. In Haraway's account, it is God's straightness that promotes, or "creates," a world in which human dominion justifies the exploitation of, violence toward, and instrumentalization of nonhumans. She draws a straight line from theological anthropomorphism to the Anthropocene, from Eden to ecological catastrophe, and from human supremacy to multispecies suffering. For Haraway it is the "Judeo-Christian" tradition, with its denigration of all that it deems *not* in its image, which morphs into a form of scientific secularism that seeks to separate nature from culture, and the animal from the human, among other evils.

The potential for human supremacy in its granting of both divine image and dominion over other creatures in Genesis 1 is staged differently in the second creation narrative of Genesis 2. This version makes Adam a man (versus the generic human being of Genesis 1) who names all the other creatures, including Eve after she is extracted and constructed from him. Genesis 2 thus has the potential to germinate narratives in which a human/man sets himself up, through naming, as knower of all the other creatures. The question immediately arises: can the knower stand outside their own knowledge about themselves? Is it only nonhumans who are categorized into "kinds" (*minim*)? Is the *adam* creature not also a species? As Haraway notes, Carolus Linnaeus, the "father" of modern taxonomy, claimed that he was a "second Adam" who restored the names of all creatures to their rightful place in a tightly organized, hierarchical taxonomy that sought to account for all life-forms.[6] At the same time, it was Linnaeus who first subsumed humans to this taxonomy as animals, inventing and joining homo sapiens with monkeys and apes in the primate order. He did not stop there, however, but divided the human into four subspecies: *Homo sapiens americanus* (native American); *Homo sapiens europaeus* (European); *Homo sapiens asiaticus* (Asian); and *Homo sapiens afer* (African). Linnaeus's system was based in "observed" (that is to say, constructed) morphological patterns of resemblance and difference: in the human case his racist descriptions of appearance combine with remarks on disposition and politics.[7] His taxonomy there rendered the binary (human/nonhuman) into categorical, ordinal groups, with Europeans most human and Africans least. For Haraway, it is this "Christian" taxonomy that spawns the early twentieth century field of primatology: in her words, a "Judaeo-Christian mythological inheritance."[8]

I believe that this characterization, articulated by Haraway, and held more widely by a variety of thinkers in contexts related to nonhumans, is deeply problematic.[9] It takes for granted the notion of a fused Judeo-Christianity, at once synonymous with a relatively unmediated Hebrew Bible (a rather Protestant hermeneutic), as well as with the "secularisms" and sciences of modernity (also a Protestant move, arguably), with their avowed humanisms and patriarchal, omniscient "god trick." This idea, supposedly critical, serves in its own way to flatten and erase.[10]

Jewishness is not merely subsumed to Christianity; it is thereby superseded by the latter—an old move in Christian theology. Jewishness becomes an ahistorical hypostasized entity, simultaneously coterminous with an undifferentiated ancient past (that is problematically whitewashed as "Western") while animating ongoing secular, Euro-American, modern humanisms, in an overtly teleological story. Yet, even as she holds "Judaism" and "Judeo-Christianity" accountable, Haraway hails her Catholic background and its teaching of the "word made flesh" as the basis for her nonbinary understanding of the relationship between language and reality, culture and nature—what she dubs "natureculture" or the "material-semiotic." Thus, she redeems the Christian component of the indicted "Judeo-Christianity." I point to this problematic dimension of Haraway's rhetoric and argument because I am indebted to many of her insights about science, gender, race, and knowledge making in my own thinking. It is important to see that the invented "Judeo-Christianity" is not only a tic of right-wing, conservative Christian, and white supremacist discourse on reproduction, race, and demography—all of which are themes related to this book's inquiry.

It should come as no surprise that, in contrast to this somewhat caricaturized depiction of Judaism, my book presents a rather different picture. Nonetheless, I do not intend this book as a rebuttal to or as apologetics for the image of God or for the late ancient rabbis. Instead, I will expose alternative ways of thinking the human and nonhuman in the writings of the rabbis despite, and also *with*, the deficiencies of *imago dei* theology and anthropology.[11] Moreover, while the idea of the image of God is a helpful device with which to begin my account, and although it makes cameo appearances in this volume, I invoke it here less as rhetorical foil than for its intertwining of the book's themes: likeness and difference, multiplicity and reproduction.

In this book, I will show how the rabbis linked human and animal processes of reproduction and the classification of various forms of life ("life-forms") and how this linkage tended to both deflate and promote human exceptionalism. Definitely the perception that the human is elevated in Jewish traditions is not without reason. The priestly authored strata of the Hebrew Bible—particularly Genesis 1:1–2:4, describing the creation, and Leviticus 11, outlining the im/purity of animal life—embedded species (*minim*) and their distinctions hierarchically in a divinely created world. And the rabbis of late antiquity certainly claimed these ancient traditions as their heritage. Yet, in contrast with this oft-invoked and idealized scriptural order, I illustrate how rabbinic writings plunge us into a far messier world. For the rabbis, biblical schema, while activated, are always partial; indeed, the creation narrative and the Levitical taxa strain to fully account for the plenitude of life. The rabbis scrutinized the various entities produced by human and animal bodies and enumerated creaturely kinds well beyond the stenographic lists in Leviticus 11, with the latter's clear distinction between pure and impure. Even while they parsed and elaborated such distinctions, these rabbis grappled with the *unpredictability* of reproduction, with the *multiplicity* of reproductive modes, and with the curious *resemblances* between supposedly *different* species, including nonhuman and human kinds.

In the course of their writings—scriptural exegeses, narratives, and ritual orderings—the rabbis were intent on classifying creatureliness and exploring the contours of the human. While they may have been implicitly devoted to the notion that the human (and a particular ethnoracialized, gendered, normate human) had a special place in the order of things, they simultaneously blurred the edges of the human.[12] This they did in the context of discussions about reproductive materials and processes, unexpectedly variant offspring, the classification of species, and sorting through the varieties of entities emitted and nested by animal and human bodies. Via these varied disquisitions, the impermeability and intelligibility of the human was, again and again, upset. The human, it turns out, was not only subject to the same kind of reproductive variability as other animals, but it, like other animals, seemingly produced species-variant offspring. Furthermore, again, like other creatures, it was caught up in a web of resemblance that threatened its unique classification. In the face of such phenomena, the rabbis weighed in on how the stuff of life and the making of life could confound expectations about basic questions like who is kin, who is food, and what we owe to those we designate as different.

DIFFERENCE

> *I look at the term "species" as one arbitrarily given, for the sake of convenience, to a set of individuals closely resembling each other.*
>
> —CHARLES DARWIN, *ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES*, 52

One way to decenter the human is to regard it as one species among many, as Linnaeus did. But the very unit that is the species, that basic and irreducible measure on which taxonomy rests, is itself a matter of convention.[13] "Species," as a basic biological concept, enjoys multiple definitions, its criteria being a matter of debate among biologists and philosophers. Key to species definitions, as to any basic classificatory unit, is the grouping together of particulars along the lines of some shared feature—what Darwin describes as "close resemblance." That there can be *multiple* ways to construe or mark such resemblance, some shared and some opposing, will be a recurring refrain in this book. Such multiplicity within difference, or differentiated differences, often undoes attempts to securely distinguish among creatures. How so? Let me illustrate this with a recent example.

In 2008, a team of ornithologists "discovered" a bird in the eastern Andes of northern Peru. They proposed it as a new species, the Sirá Barbet (*Capito fitzpatricki*). To do so, the team had to show a morphology of *likeness*: "assignable to the genus *Capito* on the basis of strong similarity to the plumage and morphology of *C. wallacei*, as well as to all other *Capito* taxa."[14] But they also had to show that the Sirá Barbet was *distinctive* from the scarlet-banded barbet (*Capito wallacei*), despite certain similarities (both being members of the *Capito* genus). The International Union for the Conservation of Nature accepted the new species in 2012. But its similarity to the scarlet-banded barbet caused others to dispute that it was indeed a "new form." The American Ornithological Society, and the Clements Checklist of Birds of the World instead considered it to be a *subspecies* of the scarlet-banded barbet (*Capito wallacei*). The team scrupulously documented the bird's plumage and morphology, its location and distribution, its behavior and vocalizations, and its phylogenetics, particularly in relation to *C. wallacei*.[15] The Sirá Barbet's larger overall size, color, and pattern differences on its breast, thighs, flanks, and lower backs distinguished it from the scarlet-banded barbet, despite its similarities. The team argued that there were significant differences of mitochondrial DNA between the Sira Barbet and other members of the *Capito* genus. The debate was in part about *which* differences matter.[16] This is to say that the *difference* that differences make is construed rather than objective or given.

As various biologists and taxonomists have noted, species concepts are not only multiple, or even conflicting; they also often fail.[17] While certain approaches might apply perfectly well to birds, others can only work with plants. Few operate successfully with micro-organisms and fungi. A "gene-flow community" might cluster organisms that may not share "traits," and even find greater difference between individual organisms of the same "species" than between individual members of one species and another.[18] Irresolvable contradictions arise between a Linnaean taxonomy, in which morphological traits are viewed as essential to a species and a post-Darwinian evolutionary taxonomy, in which shared genetic material is used to cluster organisms. The idea of "species" is, as Darwin himself acknowledged, a term of convenience. Most recognize that taxonomy's hierarchical and fixed approaches are conventions, though this is disputed by species "essentialists." This is an especially good case through which to understand what science studies scholars since the early work of Bruno Latour, Donna Haraway, and Sandra Harding have shown: claims of neutrality or objectivity by scientists and experts do not vitiate our need to follow their epistemic, political, and social processes, which are inevitably enmeshed.[19] In fact, as these scholars show, claims of neutrality are themselves ideological.

There are several implications that flow from this brief foray into modern/contemporary species concepts for studying the past. First, contemporary creaturely taxa are at best pragmatic conventions rather than stable essences over and against which premodern ideas can be judged (or ancient animals identified in a naïve way). Second, the signal insight of science studies, that knowledge is created in a complex of contexts—social, political, religious, gendered, racialized, and so on—is as vital in the study of ancient knowledge as it is to that of modernity and the present. Third—and while this is not exactly derived from the foregoing, it is related and important for understanding ancient science—the hierarchical arrangements of species, genus, families, and orders, which are constitutive of traditional taxonomy, would not have made sense in the ancient sources that we will be visiting in this book.

The concept of "species" in particular, as *the* irreducible taxon, did not obtain in antiquity. While it is true that there is roughly equivalent terminology, such as *min* in Hebrew or *eidos* in Greek, these terms, as we will see, are *logical* rather than *taxonomical* or necessarily biological. Not limited to describing "natural" beings, they simply express the relationship of a group (genus or *genos*) composed of certain individual entities (species or *eidos*) with some feature(s) in common. Thus, cutlery is a genus under which spoon falls, where spoon is a species. On the other hand, cutlery could also be a species that is a member of the genus tableware. The first-century CE philosopher Seneca explains that Aristotle put the human alongside other "species" under the genus of "animal."[20] However, as he goes on to illustrate, the human also is a "genus, in so far as it includes many kinds." For him, these kinds can be comprised along *multiple* lines—for example, of ethnicity, skin color, or even particular individuals such as Sappho, Babatha, or Tzipporah (Seneca lists Cato, Cicero, Lucretius). Thus, "human" is a genus in some respects, and a species in others. That ancient ideas of species ranged far wider and were used in a far more mobile fashion than modern (that is to say, Linnean) concepts does not mean that people in the ancient world did not struggle to identify, understand, and group sets of creatures along the lines of likeness and difference. Given this, we are tasked with thinking of creaturely life "before species" as we might have thought we knew it.[21] For these reasons, I will alternate between using "species" and "kind," the latter being a fine translation of its equivalents (*min, eidos, species*) in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, respectively. As I will explain, I view the project of equating ancient creaturely terminology with modern species concepts to be a fraught enterprise.

To return to the question of which differences make a difference: the lenses we use to lump and split entities into individual units or groups (or collections of kinds) matter. One measure that is often taken for granted as *the* unstated basic unit of a member of a species is the body. Take the human: its body as a unit or scale of focus is contingent. Within each and every human body live much smaller, and vastly more numerous, "microcosmic" entities: bacteria with histories and lineages and interactions that far predate, outlive, and traffic in and out of, the entity that is the particular human with a proper name. In Donna Haraway's formula: "To be one is always to become with many."[22] Rather than really being a *de minimus* unit, the human—as both a particular embodied instance (a "person") and as an abstraction—is always enmeshed with others. It is thus that even the seemingly irreducible, single unit, is plural, breaking down the binaries of likeness/difference that make for divisions between humankind and other kinds. Particularly salutary in the context of this book's focus is the way such insights not only decenter the human but also reveal the limits of an anthropocentric gaze, allowing us to perceive the nonhuman that resides in the very center of the human. The rabbinic case of a human gestating a raven is another avenue to an embodied core of such *multiplicity*.

MULTIPLICITY

The divine blessing of *peru u-revu*, which is given to various creatures in Genesis 1—including but not limited to humans—is often translated as "reproduce and multiply" or "be fruitful and multiply; in nominal terms as "procreation." I will rarely use the latter term, but in this book I will often use the term "generation" to signal what we might think of today as "reproduction." I do so to introduce a certain discontinuity between modern and ancient or premodern narratives about how life comes into being. At least since the mid-eighteenth century, Euro-Americans have sought to narrow and name accounts of life's conception and emergence through the concept of "reproduction."[23] Reproduction is often narrated as a particularly human process involving entities known as men and women engaging in very specific kinds of activity described as sexual, which are then seen as resulting in pregnancy, culminating in birth and delivery of offspring.[24] It is important for us to distinguish between these modern legacies of reproductive thinking and ancient ideas of *generation*. As historians have shown, "generation" signified a different semantic and conceptual range than did "reproduction." Nick Hopwood, Rebecca Flemming, and Lauren Kassell describe how generation referenced "a larger, looser framework for discussing procreation and descent."[25] They remind us that generation was not humancentric, and included "gods, humans, animals, plants, and some minerals."[26]

Generation was understood by people in antiquity, including the rabbis, to largely fall along the lines of "like begets like." This notion, which could be rephrased as "like affects like," was the basic principle of "cosmic sympathy" thought to govern all things.[27] Despite this general principle and its role in understandings of generation, the late ancient world, as we will see in this book, was one in which life could come into existence in a variety of ways and could include *unlike* generative outcomes. People in late antiquity, including the rabbis of Roman Palestine, lived in a world of reproductive unpredictability that not only made for species variability but that also allowed for generative modes beyond dyadic, heterosexual, and same-species reproductive models.

Haraway, however, in her indictment above of "Jewish and Christian monotheism" for elevating "human exceptionalism" and human reproduction over "creaturely kinship," points to a God who is "definitely not queer." What can she mean? Haraway decries this divine straightness expressed by the split between "kinds" and especially the cleavage between human and nonhuman. Not only this. She also contrasts "creaturely kinship" and human propagation. Hers is an instructive example of allyship between queer theory and animal studies. Haraway couples queer theory's alternative models of kin and care and its critiques of normative, heteropatriarchal family together with animal studies' attention to the making of human/animal difference (a link also made in critical kinship studies). One of the key arguments in my book is that ancient rabbinic ideas of generation actually queer our modern model of same-species, two-parent, heterosexual reproduction—including in the making of human.[28] This book also shows how attempts to categorize animals, and contrast them with the human, founder. Further, these two arguments are merged in situations in which progeny seems to bear species features unlike those of their parents'. Despite the taxonomic legacy of Genesis and Leviticus, and their expansion by the rabbis', resemblances and dissemblances push back against neat species categories. In sorting out who is whose offspring, especially in a world in which sex and mimesis are not the only means and forms of proliferation, we even confront doubles to the supposedly singular human, along with humans bearing nonhuman animals, and also creatures that arise in queer circumstances. To reiterate, my understanding of the rabbis complicates Haraway's reductive and arguably Christianizing portrayal. As we plunge in the particulars of reproduction and speciation in rabbinic sources, we find that theirs is a far more complex and "queer" creation after all.

An assortment of approaches and disciplinary orientations populates animal studies. I'm aligned with those who, along with Haraway, Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, and Mel Chen, fold in insights from queer theory, critical race theory, and disability studies to elucidate who is considered to be "human" and how. Crucially, these scholars question, rather than reinforce, an animal/human binary.[29] Their plural or nonbinary approaches resist and open up alternative analytic and even ethical horizons. With this in mind, I find thinking about creatures as *species* – albeit critically rather than in its European originating scientized taxonomic sense – to be a crucial complement to an animal studies approach focused on more binary makings of animalization and animal/human boundaries. "Species" as a term – in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew – invokes likeness. It comprises the singular unit that is a member of multiples, yet these cuts of difference that slip into similarity. To think critically with and about species is to approach difference and likeness in a way that allows for heterogeneity, variety, and multiplicity beyond dualisms. Even as the precise makings of species boundaries may be as blurred as that between the human and animal, there is a constant sense of their plurality.[30]

With the rabbis, we find, at times, not only a certain fuzziness at the border of the human and the animal, but also, and more crucially, a realm of *species multiplicity*. *Species*, rather than animality, is a term that is both singular and plural. It connotes both the disciplinary and oppressive force of classification projects, while opening up the as yet unknown, the vague, and the multiple. To think through *species* allows a critical edge that decenters *anthropocentrism* by locating the human as a being that dwells within that multiplicity, while tackling the all-too-human attempts to know and distinguish (themselves!) among species.

Like many human inventions, early modern European "species" concepts did not merely uncover a set apart "nature" or reveal a reality that was prior. Rather, humans often made species cuts via material and violent means (e.g., in zoological collections, theft, specimens, captivity, torture, killing, display, "natural history," and, more recently, the eliding of indigenous and non-Euro-American human cultures as part of said history). As indigenous scholars have taught us, contemporaneous traditional ecological knowledges often eschewed such binary ways of knowing, instead embedding the human among—or even as—nonhuman beings.[31] One way of describing this integrated and nondualistic approach is through the neologism of "natureculture."[32]

Just as I draw from animal studies and queer theory, I also summon insights from transgender studies that help me elucidate rabbinic sources. Trans studies offer a generative analytic lens for the ways that they encourage us to suspend assumptions about how bodily configurations inevitably map onto particular classifications. In their treatments of variation in species and reproduction, the rabbis force a similar confrontation. The rabbis conceive of trans-species (i.e., cross-species) sexual interactions and even reproductive relations, some of which are stigmatized, others valorized. While queer theory critically engages sex, sexuality, and desire, and opens up the variability of gender and sexuality, it need not interrogate the binarity of sex (or what I prefer to term sexgender) itself nor the binary between gender and sex. Transgender studies attend to the denaturalizing of categories, most obviously gender, along with coconstituents such as race, class, disability, and animality (or species).[33] At the same time, transgender studies account for the material, bodily, and phenomenological grounds of gender, including the marginalization of nonnormative embodiments and subjectivities.[34] I turn to trans theory because it helps us "expose the arbitrary delineation between the normal and defective" and thereby to elaborate "the negative social ramifications of attempts to homogenize humanity."[35] To trace how gender articulations shore up particular models of the human (while marginalizing variation) is therefore also to pry apart the making of *species*. The conjoining of these moves in our sources is not always explicit, but they can be, as in the tractate of Bekhorot (firstborns), which details the "blemishes" (*mumim*) that disqualify both priests from Temple cult officiation and animals from sacrificial offerings, thereby construing "normate" bodies across species and gender lines.

Even if rabbinic sources do not seem to highlight gender and species per se, a transgender studies lens can enrich our approach to rabbinic texts, particularly by adopting its agnosticisms about the significance of embodiment and variation. Trans theory, explains Susan Stryker, "assembles gender into contingent structures of association with other attributes of bodily being."[36] According to Finn Enke, trans theory equips us to "[suspend] assumptions about how and what gender means, how and what bodies mean, and the significance of both."[37] Along with this awareness of contingency, and the suspension of assumptions, is the noninevitability of binarity. In this way *to trans* is also to allow for the possibility of multiplicity beyond seemingly fixed binary sex or gender categories such as male/female or man/woman. In other words, gender categories are historically and culturally provisional. So too, as this book suggests, are species.

Biologists and philosophers of science show us how different forms of life push against our attempts to constrain them in our provincial essentialisms of both species *and* gender.[38] If, as the wisdom goes, everybody has gender (not just those who are marginalized in some way), then, so too, does everyone (not just those who are nonhuman) have species. As with gender, so too with species assignments: a complex set of variables can, but need not, be read in a binary fashion. A trans-inflected species analysis helpfully illuminates the ways that the rabbis themselves both seek to categorize kinds while confronting the limits of their own attempts to "capture" all creatures as such.

That there were more ways of making life beyond narrow reproductive models was clear to most denizens of the ancient world, from Aristotle and his student Theophrastus in fourth-century BCE Greece to Pliny and the rabbis in the first centuries CE. Ancient people took spontaneous generation, the emergence of living creatures from nonliving matter, such as mud or liquid, seemingly without seed or parents, as "fact," and, as Daryn Lehoux argues, they did so not without careful observation, experimentation, and explanation. Creatures thus generated were not seen as inferior to those made through sexual reproduction.[39] The rabbis referred to the former as those that do not "reproduce and multiply," and, like many, observed how small flies are generated from wine or oil; and in later texts they recount how snakes emerge from human spines.[40] Philosophers, rabbis, poets, metalworkers, and others also knew of creatures that were generated in fire (like the salamander) and of parthenogenesis, a process by which female creatures reproduce without the aid of male seed.[41] Interspecies coupling, within certain constraints, might also generate offspring. In the realm of animal "husbandry," humans not only observed but often instigated such couplings. Last but not least was the possibility of divine or demonic coupling with humans in Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian narratives. For instance, Genesis 6:1–4 relates how the "sons of God . . . came into the human daughters," resulting in offspring of "mighty ones." This spawned various late ancient accounts of angelic/demonic-human mating and conception.[42] Members of the Jesus movement and early Christians argued about the reproductive mechanics by which Jesus was both God and Mary's son.[43] The early rabbis, in turn, understood that God was one of "three partners" alongside a woman and a man in the creation of human offspring. Later rabbis elaborated on human generation, pointing to specific attributes that each member of this threesome contributed to their progeny.[44] Other accounts of both human and nonhuman generation also sought to parse the progenitors and materials involved, presenting a variety of ideas from the role of "seed" (usually understood as active, often male, sometimes female), "matter" (often gendered female, often passive), and "spirit" (sometimes but not always related to divinities). Of all these multiple, sometimes overlapping, sometimes contested modes of generation, it is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate a singular, unified, and monolithic "Judeo-Christian tradition" grounded in "nature."

It is also clear that narrower models of reproduction fail to capture the ways in which even contemporary humans propagate. The increasing visibility of pregnancies among those who are not cisgender women, as well as the growth of assistive reproductive technologies (ART), including IVF, gamete donations and surrogacy, and uterine transplantation, allow for many more players. The cisgender, heterosexual couple is not the only game in town. There are many forms of material and nonmaterial family and kin making, including but not limited to nonmonogamous families, blended families, and adoption. These new and not new realities and technologies configure life making, reproductive material, and kin in complex – sometimes contested – ways. In other types of lab-based generation, meat cultured and tissue from cells are grown into human and animal organs. Such techniques extrapolate from properties observed over centuries: the capacity of skin, organs, and tissue—human and otherwise—to heal and bind. As Myra Hird puts it, "much of the brave new world of reproductive technologies is human mimicry of well-worn bacterial practices that are millions of years old."[45] In other words, and along with what medical anthropologists and historians have long shown, heterogenous accounts of reproduction are not unique to our own era. These examples of contemporary biotechnologies demonstrate just a slice of the variety of reproductive processes, materials, actors, and networks of kin and care.[46]

When I juxtapose ancient varieties of generation with contemporary reproductive processes, I do not mean to suggest identity or analogy between the two; nor do I mean to suggest that one set of ideas led to the other. Rather, I mean to highlight the ways in which the weirdness of the past—as Mike Chin puts it—cannot be offset or measured by an appeal to the ordinariness of the present.[47] While it may seem obvious that we ought to resist explaining the past through the present, even by way of contrast, it can be especially tempting, with matters related to what we think of (today) as nature, science, and religion, to succumb to narratives of progress, teleology, and triumph. Clearly the people of late ancient Roman Palestine were not struggling with the dilemmas and difficulties of today, nor with the material, economic, and cultural conditions that constrain our own thinking and actions. But perhaps by being attuned to how we domesticate the strangeness of our lives, we can cultivate humility as we venture into worlds long gone but secreted into a variety of material and textual residues.

Cultivating awareness about the weirdness of the present is not to exceptionalize our own moment, either. On the contrary, by provincializing prevalent concepts of the moment and by showing up the contingency and nonnecessity of that which we take for granted, we can refrain from rationalizing the past on our terms and better embrace its singularities. Concomitantly—and this is a harder and different project—by defamiliarizing the present and simultaneously studying other once-presents, now-pasts, we might even become more attuned to the multiplicity of congruities, intricacies, and potentialities nestled within our own present.

KNOWLEDGE

> *Upon arriving at his home, he sorted the wheat on its own, the barley on its own, the lentils on their own, and the beans on their own. So Rabbi Akiva did as he made the entire Torah into rings upon rings.*[48]
>
> —AVOT DE RABBI NATAN A18, 34A

In this book, we'll be mostly but not exclusively concentrating on the Hebrew language materials produced by the Palestinian Tannaim, the early rabbis who flourished between the first and late second/early third centuries. The origins of the rabbis are mysterious. It is only after the disastrous first Jewish revolt against Rome, which effectively ended with the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE and what was likely the decimation or enslavement of a large proportion of Jews, that the Tannaim emerged. The plural term Tannaim (sing. Tanna) means "teachers," "reciters," or "repeaters" (Aramaic). It refers to these first few generations of rabbinic teachers and their disciples. Composed of sage-disciple circles located in villages in Judea, the Tannaim coalesced into a more visible movement after the second Jewish revolt (132–35 CE). In the aftermath, they moved northward to the more cosmopolitan cities, towns, and villages of the Galilee. With the sponsorship of the wealthy and influential Rabbi Judah (the "patriarch"), the rabbis enjoyed more communal visibility and status. His patronage culminated in the publication of the Mishnah, which in turn became a centerpiece of the rabbinic curriculum. This thematically organized compendium of Tannaitic teachings, organized into six "orders," each composed of multiple "tractates," was edited in the early third century CE.[49] The Mishnah's contents range across ritual, cultic, liturgical, agricultural, domestic, business, dispute, and punishment-related procedures. Other works edited close in time to or after the Mishnah's redaction include the Tosefta, a collection of teachings organized in parallel order to the Mishnah. Besides these, works of exegesis and commentary on the Bible survive or have been reconstructed, including the Mekhilta on Exodus, the Sifra on Leviticus, and the Sifre on Numbers and Deuteronomy. Central to the early rabbinic project was the working out of ritual: of the sacred (prayer, festivals, sabbath, im/purity, and a significant focus on Temple and sacrificial matters) and the ostensibly everyday (what we might take to be guides for conduct, custom, domestic and economic relations, and "criminal" "law").[50] Just as crucial was the sacralization of the rabbinic enterprise itself: study and teaching were lionized.

What we know about these people is chiefly from their own writings. Judging by the number of named individuals (itself not easy to ascertain), and even taking into account the underrepresentation of rabbis in their texts, the Tannaim seem to have comprised a small movement, with 120 or more named rabbis.[51] The number of Palestinian Amoraim has been estimated at 367 by Chanoch Albeck.[52] These are conservative numbers. But quantifying this further and situating the movement—across generations and settlement patterns—especially in relationship to the broader population of Roman Palestine, is no small task. It is extremely difficult to estimate population numbers in antiquity as demonstrated by the range of arguments regarding the populations of Rome and Italy. Even the questions of how to count the "Jewish" population before, during, and after the two revolts and their deadly consequences and how to qualitatively apply the nomenclature "Jewish" (or is it "Judean") are entirely fraught.[53] What we can surmise is that Palestinian Jews (or *ioudaioi*) were, by the second or third century, largely settled in the Galilee, with particularly major concentrations in the eastern Galilee.

Debates about the rabbis range: Were they continuators of Second Temple institutions, concepts, and rituals? Did they preserve "Judaism" or invent it? What about Jews who were not rabbis? Were they largely indistinguishable from their fellow non-Jewish denizens of Roman Palestine, except for certain linguistic and other faint gestures by which we can sometimes discern their Jewishness? Or were they faithful followers of the rabbis? What were the relationships between rabbis and Jewish or non-Jewish members of the Jesus movement? Ought we think of the rabbis as resisting Roman imperial rule? Or, as a provincial Roman subelite, were they not all that different from others in Asia Minor, Egypt, and the like?

The number of rabbis in relative terms has received particular attention recently, as revisionist accounts try to correct for earlier positivist histories that inflated their influence and roles as leaders of "the" Jewish people. Scholars such as Seth Schwartz, hold that the rabbis were a fragmented, insular group with little authority, who competed for recognition in the early third and fourth centuries in the larger, "paganized," or "romanized" urban communities in which most Jews lived.[54] The rabbis' status rose as a consequence of Christianization, which triggered a concomitant resurgence of Jewish identification among Jews. By contrast, other approaches to the rabbis might accord them more status even during the earlier Tannaitic generations as "holy men" and, beginning in the mid-second/third centuries, as arbitrators, or, going even more maximalist, as community leaders with significant roles in Galilean synagogues.

From the early third century onward, the rabbis do seem to have been consolidated as a movement, at least to some degree. Between the early third and late fourth/early fifth centuries, the Palestinian Amoraim flourished, leaving us the Palestinian Talmud, a commentary on the Mishnah, and homiletical commentaries (*midrashim*) on scripture. In the wake of Rome's gradual embrace of Christianity in the early fourth century, the landscape of Palestine also changed as it became an object of religious, political, and imperial scrutiny and investment as the "Holy Land." The Babylonian Amoraim, several generations of whom overlapped with the Palestinian Amoraim, also thrived, albeit for a century or so longer. Their teachings would culminate in the extended editing process of the Babylonian Talmud (by the anonymous editors who followed the Babylonian Amoraim). Transimperial travel and connectivity allowed for the movement of students and teachings across the rabbinic communities in Roman Palestine and Persian-Sasanian-ruled Mesopotamia (or Babylonia) respectively.

Regardless of how representative rabbinic texts are, either of broader Jewish communities or even of the rabbis themselves, these sources provide us with an invaluable and extensive perspective of a provincial group living in the Roman Empire. It is in this sense that the significance of the rabbis is not determined by their statistical minority or cultural marginality vis-à-vis fellow inhabitants of Palestine, identified as Jewish or otherwise. Rabbinic literature constitutes a remarkable archive to counterpose to imperial-, Roman-, or Christian-centric approaches to the history of late antiquity. In this respect, this study joins those that "center the margins" by investigating provincial cultures and histories from Syria to Egypt, and from Armenia to Mesopotamia. However, relative rabbinic peripherality does not merely provide partial perspectives with which to fill in missing bits of the larger picture of the Roman Empire. While such an approach might ameliorate exceptionalist or myopic approaches to Jewish or rabbinic history, its additive orientation arguably reinscribes a Rome-centric, imperial gaze.

Instead, our reading the rabbis in conversation with other antecedent or contemporary ancient voices allows alternative and different insights to emerge. The rabbis may not have been players in provincial urban councils, had regular audiences with the nearest provincial governor, gone to study Roman law in Beirut, taught undercover Roman agents Torah, or spent extensive time in the synagogues of Asia Minor. If and when they recount such events, owing to the nature of the sources (mostly retrospective tales about earlier protagonists), we cannot use them to reconstruct biographies and events in the same ways that scholars might do for someone like Origen of Caesarea, for instance. Nonetheless, even if it seems obvious to the point of being pedestrian, it is important to recognize that the rabbis existed. This seeming piece of prosaica (or marvel) can be hard to remember, or assimilate, given the highly stylized, multiauthored, and mediated character of their written remains. Tuning into them allows us to revisit and shift what we have hitherto centered.[55] The hope is that this might even make for a reorientation, introducing a useful cacophony amid the medley of ancient voices we are accustomed to hearing, and thus allowing us to hear otherwise. To paraphrase Mike Chin: reading with the rabbis might grant us new avenues into the past's weirdness.

Our Sources

The rabbis did not write long-form disquisitions that elaborate a question in a sustained and flowing fashion. Neither did they produce single-authored tracts designed to work out a set of ideas or to engage a central problem. Rather, they generated enigmatic and laconic statements or narratives; or, at the very least, later editors stitched these together to various genre effects—for instance, as commentaries on biblical texts or on the Mishnah, or as thematically organized texts like the Mishnah itself. Regardless of one's theory about how to understand these processes and their final textual products, the contents and traditions within them remain condensed and terse. A lot of our labor in reading rabbinic sources involves unpacking, unwinding, and unthreading worlds from their words. The textual forms and genres in which these sources reach us necessitate this kind of close, ostensibly petty, reading. Indeed, as mentioned above, the very characteristics that set rabbinic sources apart figure into our analysis. For instance, in chapter 3 I argue that the arrangement and juxtaposition of creatures far and near, prosaic and exoticized, into a "menagerie" is a device found across literary, visual, and embodied forms. Such devices are embedded in the Mishnah and Tosefta tractates of Kilayim (hybrids) and elsewhere and do a particular kind of work when considered in light of the movement, trade, and display of animals in late Roman Palestine.

Before laying out the paths that this book takes, here I will outline the sources I use in this study and why. I focus the Sifra, a Tannaitic midrash on Leviticus (I center on its commentary on Leviticus's regulation of creaturely purity and impurity). In addition, I analyze texts in the tractates of Niddah (menstrual purity), Bekhorot (firstborn cattle, priests, and human firstborns), Kilayim (forbidden mixing of species) and Hullin (noncultic slaughter of animals) in the Mishnah and its parallel Tosefta. Following these sources through successive topics and historical strata, I trace the zoological and reproductive ideas of earlier and later sources (such as the Palestinian Talmud and Genesis Rabbah). In studying sources like Tractate Niddah on women's ritual "gynecological" purity, together with sources in Tractate Bekhorot on firstborn animals, I attend to the ways that human and animal reproductive "sciences" were in many ways inextricable from each other for the rabbis, as they were for other ancient writers.

In presenting the rabbis as part of broader conversations on "natural philosophy or history"—before these topics were subsumed under modern "science"—I turn to a variety of other ancient sources, including authors roughly contemporary with the Tannaim and Amoraim, as well as influential texts like Aristotle's writings, which circulated in late antiquity. I look to sources such as Pliny's first-century CE *Natural History* (itself familiar with Aristotle's *De generatione animalium.*), the medical writings of the second-century/early third-century CE Galen, the second-/third-century Aelian's *On the Nature of Animals*, and the second-/fourth-century Christian *Physiologos*. Some of these writers (e.g., Galen and Pliny) were tightly linked with the imperial center while being well-traveled across the empire, including in the Roman east. Others, like the Egyptian *Physiologos*, represent a view from the provinces.

Aristotle, Pliny, and Galen have been analyzed in their respective imperial contexts, allowing for an assessment of the extractive and imperialist dimensions of their knowledge production in galvanizing human and animal (re)productivity.[56]

Conversely, my analysis of rabbinic knowledge making considers how the rabbis, as inhabitants of the Roman east, produced knowledge in idiosyncratic languages, forms, and contexts. This last commitment is central to feminist science studies with its combination of attention to the sociopolitical and gendered situatedness of knowledge making as well as to the agency and materiality of the "objects" of knowledge themselves (including but not limited to the rabbis, both as subjugated provincials and also as objects of my investigation). Such insights about the situatedness of knowers, the embeddedness of humans within "nature," and the power of nonhumans, sometimes referred to or grouped under the umbrella of "new materialisms," have long been crucial to a plurality of indigenous and Black epistemologies and practices.[57]

These insights promote constructive orientations to the rabbis and their texts. They help us avoid the influence/resistance binary that is so tempting in thinking about the rabbis alongside other human communities. Relatedly, they move beyond the implicit culture/nature binary that such interhuman analyses often entail by embedding the rabbis and other humans among all life-forms and entities (not just human or so-called "cultural" ones to the exclusion of so-called "nature"). At the same time, to recognize the agency of human and nonhuman organisms and entities is not to mandate a biological essentialism or materialist determinism. Rather, it is to acknowledge that all beings, with unequal and shifting distributions of and access to power, lived with each other: rabbis, other humans, nonhuman beings. The rabbis were shaped by their various cohabitants and in turn shaped them in multitude manners.

Ancient "Science" or Knowledge

Jack Halberstam writes that "dominant history teems with the remnants of alternative possibilities."[58] There is a curious mirroring between the academic construal of what kinds of sources make up the history of certain knowledges, and the patterns of power and hierarchy in the late ancient world. Rabbinic sources offer us a nonobvious path to rendering visible nondominant forms of knowledge making in the Roman—and Christian—Empire. Similarly, we get a glimpse of the alternate histories and knowledges of women and other beings through the writings of the rabbis—writings that are admittedly partial in the sense of not being "representative," as well as in the sense of being marginal and nonhegemonic themselves.

Avot De Rabbi Natan analogizes knowledge-making to sorting different species of grains: wheat, barley, beans, and lentils. A source in the Sifre similarly compares the Torah student who works with a teachers' rulings to a sieve sifting flour, bran, and coarse meal into different piles.[59] These accounts of knowledge as material effects of agricultural labor point to the ways that human-made knowledge for the rabbis was bound up with classification and division: here we vividly see how knowledge was shaped and organized with physical impacts. And, vice versa, we see something like "natural knowledge" as a way of organizing Torah or "sacred knowledge." This analogy or relationship between knowing and sorting through "nature" is a curious way to cast a bid for rabbinic expertise. But interestingly—though it must seem like a truism to say that the rabbis valued Torah study as supreme—they also debated its relationship to other ways of doing and being. We see similar claims and debates about knowing within and beyond academic scholarship, not to mention about the relationships between the academy and beyond it. The rabbis also made certain distinctions about what was worth knowing and who had best access to it. I do not wish to flatten or essentialize the peculiarity of rabbinic texts and ideas. To some extent, my juxtapositions of contemporaneous ancient sources and contemporary provocations in the realm of species and reproduction is designed to deflate exceptionalist readings of the rabbis, while paying attention to where rabbinic differences make a difference. At the same time, I will occasionally stretch the ancient "remnants" just a little more than is warranted, in an effort to sketch alternative "subjugated knowledges," whose very partiality points to the proliferation of multiplicity that was thwarted.[60]

The Path of This Book

In the first chapter, "Difference," I consider species variation in reproductive contexts. In other words, I treat cases like the one in this book's title, of one species delivering a creature that looks like a different species. Two pressures exercise the rabbis in such cases. First, as Daryn Lehoux argues, there was a ubiquitous axiom in antiquity that "like affects like," and concomitantly, that "like begets like." Second, the biblical legacy of *adam* created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) loomed. What happened, then, if a woman delivered a creature that was a "raven likeness" (tNiddah 4:6)? In answering this question, I compare ideas about humans and animals in the priestly stratum of the Hebrew Bible—including the creation account in Genesis 1 and the animal regulations in Leviticus 11—with those in the early rabbinic compendia of the Mishnah and Tosefta. We follow a set of sources in which the rabbis introduce species instability and reproductive unpredictability into the mix. Considering these together with other ancient understandings of reproductive variation in philosophical and legal texts, we can understand the Tannaim partaking in a broader conversation about reproduction, species, and likeness/difference. Finally, I expose dissension among rabbinic views and demonstrate that the Tosefta softens the Mishnah's insistence on a minimal degree of human distinctiveness for a variant offspring to count as human.

From likeness and difference we move to "Multiplicity" in chapter 2, which follows the Sifra—the early rabbinic exegetical commentary on Leviticus 11—as it unfurls and expands the biblical bestiary by generating species, criteria, and classes. The Tannaim often patently read *into* the scriptural text by various means. Occasionally, they use morphological criteria of resemblance (*dimyon*) to extrapolate to creatures that look like those named in scripture. They more often deploy exegetical techniques, such as reading a particle or word restrictively (*mi'ut*), and most often by reading expansively to multiply (*ribuy*) potential referents. I close with an exegesis (*midrash*) by Rabbi Akiva (whose exegetical disposition is famously proliferative and emblematic of the Sifra) toward the end of an extended passage strewn with expansive (*ribuy*) exegeses. The midrash is a paean to multiplication (*ribuy*) in all senses of the term: as an exegetical strategy; and as a mechanism by which a great many (*r-b-h*) kinds are generated (*periyah u-reviyah*, fructification and multiplication). This sums up the chapter's argument that it is the rabbinic-exegetical encounter with scripture that generates species in all their multiplicity and variation. This dimension of multiplication is especially pronounced, its tracks laid throughout and culminating in Rabbi Akiva's tribute—"how they are multiple (*rabu*), your creatures!" As such, the rabbinic exegete not only extolls God in enumerating creation but in some ways also joins God.

In chapter 3, "Menagerie," I pursue further paths along which the rabbis sought to cluster and distinguish creatures via the production of likeness and the rendering of difference. These approaches involve a device that I call the menagerie, as well as a territorial theory of animal life that makes likeness a possible ground of difference. The menagerie, as a device for securing the capture, classification, exploitation, and display of animals, flourished in the context of Roman zoological imperialism. The Tannaitic variation of the menagerie offers us a view onto a particular "provincial zoology." The menagerie itself gathers creatures near and far, including parahuman or "exotic" humankinds. I argue that the human plays a blurry role in this mix of creaturely collection and classification and territoriality. This is exemplary of the ways that the marking of difference fails to undo the contagion effect of resemblance. The theory of territorial doubles—which distinguishes between life-forms in settled and wild areas and between dry land and sea—simultaneously explains how different creatures seem to look alike, guarantees species distinctions, and also troubles the singularity of kinds, including the human who confronts its own doubles. Here again, the contagion effect of likeness makes for an "untamed" multiplicity that exceeds classificatory attempts to capture. The animals (including the human among them) always, eventually, escape the menagerie.

The fourth chapter, "Hybrid," treats a creature whose treatment is one of the most overtly moralized in modern and contemporary scholarship: the rabbinic hybrid (*kilayim*). In contrast, I center the specific mechanics of the Tannaitic hybrid, showing that the Tannaim found ways to exploit them while also endowing them with multiple meanings. Rather than castigating *kilayim* as transgressing the order of creation—-which is what scholars assume—the Tannaim repudiated the project of seeking a reasoned explanation, embracing hybrids as a peculiar marker of Jewishness, while also extrapolating from their unusual etiology to alternate modes of reproduction (beyond heterosexual dyadic mating). I show that contemporary scholarly readings of *kilayim*—linking them to same-sex sexuality, adultery, bestiality, or even "intermarriage"—are unwarranted. Later, post-Tannaitic texts do moralize *kilayim* in terms of transgression but still don't do so in ethnoracialized terms to think about the offspring of Jewish and non-Jewish couples. Instead, as I show the Palestinian Talmud juxtaposes the mule as a hybrid to the human as a trihybrid (composed of three kinds). This account of human conception queerly bypasses expected circuits of reproduction, both affirming human exceptionalism, and disrupting expected heterosex generation. Thus, Tannaitic and post-Tannaitic sources show *kilayim* to attract multiple and simultaneous sets of meanings.

Chapter 5, "Generation," pulls on the thread of generative multiplicity running through the book. It experiments with readings of two later Mesopotamian sources: a passage in the Babylonian Talmud (bBava Metsia 84a-b) and the Aramaic incantation bowls. In each case, I argue that a presumptively cisgender, human-centered, heterosexual, monogamous marriage-based perspective tends to govern our analysis. Instead, I offer nonbinary, species-queer interpretations, arguing that these speak to different generative and erotic possibilities at play in ancient Jewish life-making and kin formations. I do so in part by reading the sources "literally" and in part by highlighting how presumptive nonbinarity and queerness are no less tendentious and are even more appropriate than our usual uninterrogated frames of cisness and binary gender.

Sadly, the ravenlike creature delivered by the "woman from Sidon" has a longer and richer, if tragic, afterlife, than their unnamed mother. The Palestinian Talmud asks whether this creature can be slaughtered and consumed or whether he is obligated to perform levirate marriage (marrying his dead brother's childless widow). This fraught attempt to cut between the human and nonhuman highlights the contingency of rabbinic/human knowledge making and its potentially grave impacts on life, consumption, kin, and gendered generation.

We ourselves are in what promises to be a long moment that challenges the limits of the conceit (in all senses) of dualistic divides between human and nonhumans—whether understood as animals, the "environment," or "climate"—and between male and female. As the fixity of gender and species is being called into question, reactive movements seek to double down on already entrenched human, (cis)heterosexual, and white supremacies. The quest for human generative agency or reproductive justice is, as Black and indigenous feminist thinkers have long argued, necessarily bound up with struggles for racial and economic justice. Likewise, these struggles are inescapably intertwined with the recognition of how human and nonhuman beings are inseparable in their mutual flourishing.

To reiterate, I do not suggest an analogy between these contemporary stakes and ancient concerns. Nor do I advocate ancient Jewish answers to present and pressing questions. In many ways my project is designed to interrupt the apparent ease with which such creative teleologies—the idea of the Judeo-Christian tradition is just one of these—are engineered. My hope is that confronting the otherwise thinking and being of the past can sometimes stimulate alternate ways of seeing and being in the present and for the future.

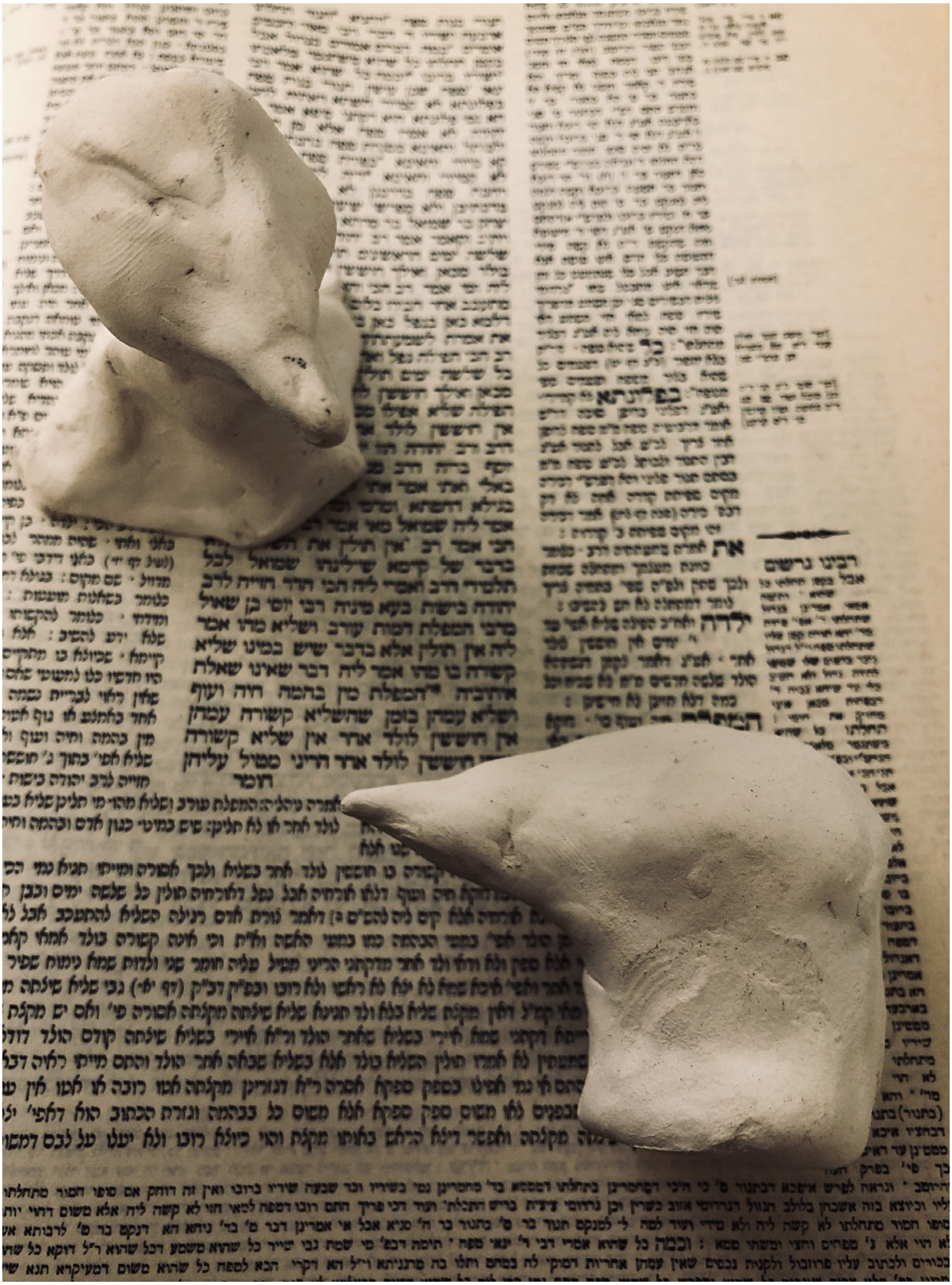


FIGURE 4. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Birds Born of Humans.* Mixed media, photograph, 7.5 in. × 10 in., 2020.

1

Difference

For the fate of the human and the fate of the animal is the same.
They share one fate.
As the one dies, so does the other:
and all share one breath.
The human is not superior to the animal,
for all are vapor.
—ECCLESIASTES 3:19

A SURPRISING SET OF BEDFELLOWS invokes the image of God as grounds for their ideologies. From Augustine to Hitler, from Barack Obama to Mike Pence, the image of God has marshalled people under many banners: for eugenics and for universal healthcare; against abortion and for reproductive justice; for Nazism and against white supremacy. As we saw in the introduction, there are voices that castigate the so-called "Judeo-Christian" idea of the human as image of God. They view it as the root cause of our invidious assumption of human supremacy and the enduring negative consequences therein. Reckoning with the pervasive effects of this definition of humanness might press us to imagine alternate way of seeing ourselves (among other beings).

The human as "image of God" first emerges in the layers of the Hebrew Bible generated by the group we call the Priestly authors, likely writing sometime in the sixth century BCE. After taking us through a brief history of the image of God in the Priestly strata of the Bible, this chapter will introduce a different way of thinking about the human: that found in the writings of the Tannaitic rabbis. This later conceptual strain takes up the Priestly invitation—to think through human distinctiveness in terms of reproductive mimesis—but turns it to different ends by introducing instability even to the point of resembling nonhuman species.

Does the presence of this way of thinking mean that the Tannaim repudiated the notion of the human as superior to other beings or as the ultimate purpose of creation? Certainly not. I don't deny that the rabbis prioritized a humancentric and, more deliberately, a rabbinocentric, perspective. Besides, given the multilayered and multiauthored nature of rabbinic writings, it is difficult to systematize their ideas into perfectly consistent and unequivocal principles. But even if one cannot reconstruct pure theories of rabbinic content, one can follow *ways* of thinking. It is in this way that I will trace the emergence of a fascinating and far messier view of the human and the animal, particularly when it comes to how we reproduce.

Let's immerse ourselves in this messy world. First, we must examine the place from which our assumptions derive. As such, we will trace the emergence of this human-dominant view, and its ramifications for human reproduction and nonhuman taxonomy, in the strata of the Hebrew Bible authored by the Priestly writers. We will then encounter a somewhat different way of thinking about species and reproduction in early rabbinic texts, written centuries after the Priestly stratum of the Hebrew Bible. As we unpack these sources, written by the group of people we call rabbis, we will visit other ancient "scientific" texts about species and reproduction, arguing that the rabbinic texts ought to be understood as participants in a broader scientific conversation about reproduction, species, and likeness/difference. We will do this not only to better contextualize the rabbis but also in order to elucidate both what is common and what is distinctive among these ancient writers. Finally, we will delve into the significant differences that emerge between the Mishnah and the Tosefta. (These two Tannaitic collections were edited at roughly the same time, but only one—the Mishnah—became the centerpiece of the rabbinic curriculum.) We will trace what seems like an insistence on human distinctiveness in the Mishnah, in light of its undermining or softening in the Tosefta, and speculate on the ramifications that emerge from this intriguing divide.

THE PRIESTLY ORDER OF LIFE

The Priestly authors (or "P") were interested in a variety of ritual matters, fanning out from those more closely related to the priesthood: the tabernacle, sacrifices, purity, festival ritual, and genealogies. To be a member of the priesthood (a *kohen*), one had to be a man descended from a particular lineage of Levites, which viewed itself as exclusively mandated to oversee both the cultic rituals (especially sacrifice) and the administration (including tithes) of the Temple.

The Hebrew Bible, as we know it, is composed of multiple layers generated over time. The Priestly authors, who we think lived around the sixth century BCE, were responsible for those biblical strata that order creaturely taxonomies and that install the human as a unique creature.[1] They supplied biblical narratives about creation, the sabbath, and circumcision.[2] They were heirs to the works of the authors—the Yahwist, Elohist, and Deuteronomist—who composed the earlier portions of what we now call the Pentateuch sometime between the tenth and seventh centuries BCE. According to some scholars, later members of the Priestly circle were also among the redactors of the Pentateuch.[3]

The idea that humans have a peculiar place in the divine schema of the world, and that they are to be distinguished from other creatures, finds potent expression in the Priestly creation account (Gen 1:1–2:4). This passage emphasizes the differentiation of various beings "according to their kinds" and the distinction of the human from the nonhuman. Such an insistence on differentiation echoes through several other Priestly writings, including the birth of Seth (Gen 5:1–3) and the "second creation" with Noah after the flood (Gen 9:1–7). And this claim culminates in the dietary and purity rules of Leviticus 11.[4]

Genesis 1 differentiates the beings of the world alongside the divisions of light and water (Gen 1:4 and 7), into distinct sequential events across six days, and through the naming of broader categories of creatures by their origins (water or earth), habitats (water, skies, earth), which are marked "according to their kinds" (*le-mineihem*). In the Priestly account of creation, the making of humans is entirely different from that of other entities (cf. Gen 2: while humans are made first, thereby indicating their primacy in creation, they, along with all the other creatures, are made out of earth). In the creation of all the other beings, God issues a declaration about the created entity X either in the jussive form, such as "let X swarm," or as an indirect object that emerges from a material or source, as in "let element Y bring forth X" (earth and water bring forth land, air, and sea creatures). None of these characteristics are present in the case of the human created on the sixth day. Instead, God speaks in the first person plural: "Let us make *adam* in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth" (Gen 1:26).[5] This is a fulsome plan, one that seemingly links human resemblance to God to human dominion over all other creatures. The text narrates God's creation of the *adam* being in God's image, with the further specification of the *adam* creature's plural sexgender ("male and female"—Gen 1:27), matching God's own plurality. I use the term "sexgender" to avoid the idea that there is a transhistorical, biologically universal "sex" that exists prior to culture's imposition of "gender."[6] Indeed, later rabbinic teachings would posit that the *adam* species was originally an *androgynus*, what we might anachronistically dub "intersex." In the Bible, God blesses the *adam* with proliferation, dominion over other creatures, and ample food from the earth.[7] God had previously also extended the blessing of proliferation (fructify and multiply) to air and sea creatures (Gen 1:22); the blessing to subdue the earth and dominate other species, however, is unprecedented.[8]

Some have argued that the Priestly narrative was actually radical, as it democratizes to all of humanity what was hitherto the exclusive province of Middle Eastern monarchs, who justified their sovereignty and domination over other humans with the claim that they were images of the divine.[9] Viewed this way, the human as image of God, dominating nonhuman creatures rather than fellow humans, offers a rebuke against kings claiming divinity. However, recent scholarship has seen an important corrective to this celebratory interpretation, and a greater attention to the human/nonhuman hierarchy effected by divine resemblance.[10]

The Priestly-authored layer in Genesis resumes its thread with the "generations of Adam" recounted in Genesis 5. There it reiterates the link between the *adam* species' divine image and reproduction. However, it adds an important detail: the perpetuation of the human through reproduction is itself a reproduction of an image. In this way, the reader can retrospectively understand the relationship between Adam (the proper noun) or *adam* (the species) and God to be one of kinship. Genesis 5 begins by reminding us of Adam's creation in God's image (Gen 5:1), with Adam then begetting his child Seth "in his likeness and in his image" (Gen 5:3).[11] Given the transmission of image and likeness from God to Adam and from Adam to Seth, we might be forgiven for understanding "image and likeness" not just as an incidental or even "common sense" note about the son resembling the male parent, but rather as a fundamental feature of human reproduction itself. Although Genesis 5:2 repeats the claim in Genesis 1:27 by referring to Adam with the plural sexgender ("male and female [God] created them"), there is definitely a patrilineal emphasis to the chapter's statement regarding the "book of the generations of Adam" (Gen 5:1). We see this initiated in Adam begetting Seth, which is then repeated through ensuing generations: the chapter consistently describes only fathers "begetting" (the causative of *y.l.d.*) named firstborn sons, following with the more generic "and he bore sons and daughters" (e.g., Gen 5:4, 7, 10).

The third time we find the image of God surfacing is in the deity's injunctions to Noah after the flood (Gen 9). There, God also affirms the blessing of reproduction and human domination of animals and offers something new: unlike the vegetable-only diet in the Garden of Eden, humans are now permitted to kill and eat animals. God then prescribes capital punishment for the killing of humans, again citing the image of God, and repeats the injunction to reproduce.

As E. B. Firmage argues, these Priestly episodes in Genesis "establish the philosophical underpinning of the dietary law" in Leviticus 11.[12] Within the meandering narrative of the later books of the Pentateuch, Leviticus 11 is part of the (Priestly) instruction given to the Israelites in the wilderness. It conveys rules designed to determine whether or not an animal is permissible for consumption and, relatedly, whether or not its dead body can transmit impurity. Certain animals are marked as ritually impure, meaning that they cause humans to contract impurity either through ingestion or physical contact with their dead bodies.[13] While the particulars of classification in Genesis 1 are not echoed in Leviticus 11, the basic classes of living creatures (of the earth, of the water, and flying creatures) are reanimated, albeit with the latter being divided into what we might think of as birds and winged insects.[14] In line with their interest in determining which animals are permitted for consumption and which are not, the Priestly authors enumerate particular "species" (in contemporary terms) such as hare and pig, some of which are tagged with "of its kind" (e.g., "the raven according to its kind," Leviticus 11:15).

Much ink has been spilled in efforts to discern the logic of the pure/impure divisions among species. Mary Douglas's early argument is perhaps the most famous: the classification of certain animals as pure upheld normative categories, while also doing the symbolic work of social boundary maintenance.[15] (Mammals that did not both chew the cud and have split hooves were considered anomalous; birds of prey were considered not typical, as were fish that did not have fins and scales.)[16] Naphtali Meshel notes that the labeling of animals as pure and impure as such (in addition to having pragmatic implications about consumption and contact) points to the Priestly desire to classify beyond ritual repercussions.[17] There is no elaborate explanation in Leviticus 11 itself about the specific logics of its classifications. However, in the closing of the chapter (Lev 11:43–47), the phrases "because I am the Lord your God" and "you shall be holy because I am holy" each appear twice, bookending "and you shall not impurify yourselves with any creeping creature that swarms (*romes*) upon the earth" (Lev 11:44).[18] Thus, while the particulars are not justified, the overall impression is that the injunction against impure creatures and the classifications that preceded this are bound up with holiness and being Godlike.

The chapter closes, summarizing itself as "the instruction (*torat*) about the animal (*behemah*), and the flying creature (*'of*), and the animate life-form (*nefesh hayah*) that swarms (*romeset*) in the water, and the animate being (*nefesh*) that creeps (*shoretset*) upon the earth, to distinguish (*lehavdil*) between the impure and the pure, and between the life-form that may be eaten and the life-form that may not be eaten" (11:46–47).[19] The Priestly idea of distinguishing or separating (*b.d.l.*) nonhuman life along binary lines of im/pure and don't/eat echoes the establishing acts of creation (*b.d.l.* in Gen 1:4, 6, 7, 14, and 18). The Priestly arc from Genesis 1, Genesis 5, and Genesis 9 to Leviticus 11 gradually narrows the entailment of human dominance over other beings. On the one hand, the *adam* species is an image of God. By virtue of Adam's transmission of image and likeness to Seth, we could infer that *all* Seth's descendants—that is, all *adam creatures* are also in God's image. On the other hand, we begin to see a certain narrowing with the chapter's focus on patrilineal reproduction and its ensuing elision of wives, mothers, and daughters (as well as of other non-firstborn sons). There is a corresponding narrowing in human-animal relations: in Genesis 1 humans are to rule over animals but to only eat fruit and greens. After the flood, Noah and the other remaining human beings are now permitted to kill and eat animals but not to consume their blood. Leviticus 11 contracts yet more: a subdivision of humans—Israelites—may eat only a particular selection of (pure) animals.[20]

This Priestly vision thus successively circumscribes both sides of the human/nonhuman dyad.[21] These ever-narrowing concentric circles rest on a series of hierarchical binaries between human and nonhuman, pure and impure, Israelites and non-Israelites (and, among Israelites, between the priests and nonpriests). The Priestly view—that humans are made in the image of God—thus functions to underpin a peculiarly human type of reproduction as well as related hierarchical divisions among beings. Or to put it in reverse, fine-grained distinctions among kinds, upheld by priests in the context of human and animal sacred commerce, are dispersed by Israelites in their dietary and purity practices, and, more generally, by the entire human species in its domination, killing, and consumption of nonhuman animals. The rabbis inherit these narratives, distinctions, and their hierarchical foundation in divine-human resemblance and human-animal difference, but, as we will see, they rework them in some unexpected ways.

FROM ORDER TO CONTINUA

Just about half a millennium later, after the destruction of the Temple, the first generations of rabbis—the Tannaim—emerged in Palestine.[22] The texts in which their teachings are conserved make clear that the Tannaim were no less interested than the Priestly authors in mapping their world. Yet, while the rabbis draw their creaturely nomenclature from Genesis and Leviticus, they do not faithfully mimic Priestly classificatory logics. In Genesis 1, for example, life-forms are named according to the tripartite division of creatures of the earth, the water, and the skies. The term *behemah* (animal, lit. "mute" from the root *b.h.m.*)[23] and *hayah* (lit. living being) fluidly and somewhat inconsistently refers to cattle or other creatures of the land and sea. The terms *behemah* and *hayah* are hardly used in Leviticus, but when they are, they seem to function interchangeably to describe a slew of pure/impure species. The Tannaim, however, construe *hayah* and *behemah* as paired and opposed technical terms, referring respectively to wild animals versus domesticated animals. They further create a tripartite cluster of *hayah*, *behemah*, and *ʿof* (fowl).[24]

Similarly, the Tannaim deploy the pairing, "forbidden creatures and swarming creatures" (*sheqatsim u-remasim*). Genesis 1 uses the noun *remes* thrice to designate the swarmer (or crawler) and the verbal form swarms, crawls, or slithers four times—for example, "the living being that slithers" (*nefesh hahayah haromeset*—Gen 1:21).[25] Leviticus uses the verbal form only, twice: on the first occasion it is applied to a forbidden creature; on the second it occurs in an unmarked case.[26] The form *sheqets* as a zoological marker appears neither in Genesis nor Leviticus. It does, however, surface in Leviticus in descriptive nominal (or verbless) clauses ("it is prohibited") or in the form of a verb ("distance yourself").[27] Jacob Milgrom argues that the term has two valences.[28] In the Priestly authored Leviticus 11:1–41 it has the functional meaning of prohibition with the requirement to distance oneself, much like the term "it is impure." But in verses 11:43–45 ("be holy for I am holy"), originating in a different authorship according to Milgrom (the Holiness Code), it takes on a different meaning, which is more commonly translated as "abomination."

The rabbis thus take the unmarked and somewhat broader designation of "swarmer" (*remes*) from Genesis, a designation that barely figures as a descriptor for locomotion in Leviticus, together with their pointedly negatively interpreted "*sheqets*," and join them into a novel term, which they then deploy as a generic phrase for smaller impure creatures whose ingestion is forbidden.[29] A related pair that is similarly invented by the rabbis is "fish and locusts" (*dagim ve-hagavim*).[30] The word for fish (*daga*) surfaces in Genesis 1:26 and 28 ("fish of the sea") as one of the kinds of creatures that humans are to dominate. But no such term is used earlier in the creation of water creatures (Genesis 1:20–22). And it appears not at all in Leviticus 11:9–12's delineation of permitted and forbidden of "all that is in the water." The term *hagavim* (locusts) is one of four species of quadruped winged swarming creatures (*sherets ha-of haholekh al arba*) that Leviticus 11 permitted (the remainder are forbidden or *sheqets*) rather than an umbrella term. But for the rabbis a biblical word for particular kinds of permitted locust combined with a generic term for water creatures becomes a generic pair for small, pure, and permitted creatures: *dagim ve-hagavim* (fish and locusts) as opposed to *remasim u-sheqatsim* (creeping creatures and forbidden creatures.)[31]

In these examples the rabbis redeploy biblical language to create new creaturely classes. In other instances, they invent terminology wholesale. For example, the rabbis create new terms for large, domesticated animals (*behemah gasah*) and small (*behemah daqah*), which they use to distinguish cows from sheep and goats, respectively. This nomenclature appears across Tannaitic sources. It surfaces particularly in the tractates of the Mishnah and Tosefta on animal sacrifice, and also on Temple donations and tithes (e.g., Temurah, Bekhorot), slaughter for nonsacred consumption (e.g., Hullin), tractates detailing various aspects of impurity (e.g., m. Parah 9:2–3), and the like.

In addition to the classificatory nomenclature discussed, we also find the rabbis engaging in the iterated use of a term that is itself about classification. This is the word *min* (pl. *minim*), often translated as "kind" or "species." In their organization of animal life—like both Genesis 1 and Leviticus 11—the rabbis associate *min* with different registers of creaturely nomenclature.[32] Genesis refers to *minim* of herbs and fruit trees (Gen 1:11–12) and of swarming sea creatures and fowl (Gen 1:21). But Genesis also describes kinds within kinds: Genesis 1:24 refers to the living being brought forth from the land "according to its kind," and goes on (in Gen 1:24–25) to enumerate three subsets: the animal, the swarmer, and the living land creature (*hayat ha'arets*)—each "according to its kind." We find even more particularity in Leviticus 11, which describes the falcon, raven, hawk, heron, locust, and more "according to their kinds" (e.g., Lev 11:14–16, 19, 22, 29).

Importantly, for our purposes, even if their classes do not map onto those of the Priestly authors (as we saw above with creaturely nomenclature), the rabbis follow this flexible usage of *min*. They regularly designate creatures within a broader class, such as those discussed above (e.g., as a domesticated animal kind or a wild animal kind; *min behemah, min hayah*).[33] They also append the term *min* to both the pure or impure creatures describing "pure species" or "impure species" (*min tehorah* or *min teme'ah*; e.g., mBekhorot 1:2). The term is also appended to creaturely nomenclature on the level of what we might, again, anachronistically, call species—for example, the "donkey species" (*min hamor*; mBekhorot 1:2a)—and even varieties (e.g., *minim* of wheat; cf. mPe'ah 2:5).[34] It is thus that *min*, while serving as a classificatory tag, operates at various registers. As noted in the introduction, in being used flexibly, *min* does not correspond to modern taxonomical definitions of species (nor, obviously, to evolutionary ideas of descent). As with Aristotle's use of *genos* ("genus") and *eidos* ("species"), the rabbis' use of *min* is logical rather than taxonomical in the modern sense.[35]

The Tannaim were thus not only continuators but also expanders of the Priestly project of classification (we will see this again and again in the next chapter). Their project was still, of course, humancentric. Nonetheless, there exists in Tannaitic writings a significantly different view of human and animal reproduction, distinctiveness, and mimesis. This difference is both a matter of degree and, to some extent, also a matter of kind. The overall effect is that the Tannaim upset a straightforward division between human and nonhuman and the idea that the human is exclusively in the image of God. Their writings do not directly contradict or oppose Priestly ideas. Indeed, not only do they absorb the Priestly classificatory impulse, but they also derive many technical terms—as we have seen, species (*min*), life-form (*hayah*), cattle (*behemah*), and swarming creature (*sherets*)—from terminology coined by the Priestly authors. However, at least with respect to the themes of human reproduction, species distinctions, and what it means to be in the "likeness" or "image," the rabbis expand and redirect Priestly concepts to rather distinctive effects.

Some of this rabbinic distinctiveness is captured in the following example:

> There was a case of a woman from Sidon who three times expelled[36] a likeness of a raven (*demut 'orev*). And the case came before the sages, and they said, "anything that does not have something of human form (*mitsurat ha-adam*) is not offspring (*valad*)." (tNiddah 4:6)[37]

If we put this stenographic narrative next to the account of Adam's generation of Seth, we see both stark contrasts with Genesis's story of human distinctiveness and generation, as well as points of contact:

> This is the book of the generations of Adam. On the day that God created *adam*, in the likeness of God (*demut elohim*) he made him; male and female he created them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, on the day when they were created. And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begot a son in his likeness (*bidemuto*), as his image (*ketsalmo*); and called his name Seth. (Gen 5:1–3)

From the distinctively human genesis as divine image (and a patrilineal reproductive mechanism that transmits said image), we arrive, several hundred years later, at the upending of both distinctiveness and of reproduction as mimesis. Instead of *adam*/Adam's "generations" (*toledot*) and begetting (*y.l.d.*) of Seth "in his image and likeness" (*bidmuto ketsalmo*) (Gen 5:3), here is a Sidonian woman who repeatedly "expelled" (*hipilah*) a "raven's likeness" (*demut orev*).[38] The sages consulted about this thrice-occurring issue declare that because they lack "human form" (*tsurat ha-adam*), they are not offspring (*valad*). This has purity implications: if the raven likeness is offspring, their dead body transmits the impurity of a human corpse (the most severe kind), and, concomitantly, the Sidonian woman is in a state of childbirth-related impurity. Additionally, if the ravenlike creature were a firstborn assigned as male, there are inheritance and priestly redemption repercussions. On its own terms, it is hard to know whether the sages made their decision in this case specifically because of the lack of "human form" in the *particular* being, or as a general rule concerning *ravens* per se, or for birds, or even for all nonhumans. Leaving these uncertainties aside for now, the scenario as a whole queries the inevitability of human generation as mimetic replication.

From the clarity and distinctiveness of the Bible's Priestly account of divinely derived human procreation, we are plunged into the unpredictable, messier, reproductive world of the late ancient rabbis. In this realm, we find creatures, both human *and* animal, which beget offspring very much unlike themselves. It is perhaps tempting to write off such accounts as absurd and bizarre—just the imaginings of rabbinic intellectuals with a propensity for the fantastic. After all, we *know* (or at least take as obvious) that cases of women expelling ravens and the like are impossible (at least according to many contemporary, scientistic ways of seeing the world). Similarly relying on contemporary knowledge, as some scholars have done, one might be induced to rationalize such cases either as medical misdiagnoses or as intentionally and self-consciously constructed hypotheticals that are only meant to test the extreme limits of classification.[39] Certainly, interpreters who have ventured to discuss this and related accounts have made such moves.[40] Instead, and in accordance with the introduction to this book, I recommend that we restrain this impulse to naturalize contemporary perspectives and to rationalize ancient sources by retrojecting our own perspectives onto them.

Insights from both disability studies and animal studies enhance our capacity to challenge and further historicize the seeming naturalness of contemporary ways of construing difference and variation, both among humans and between humans and nonhumans. In these areas of study, scholars attend to the varied—culturally and historically specific—ways in which beings are distinguished as divergent versus "normate" and to how this difference is rendered in terms of species analogies and distinctions.[41] Sunaura Taylor—artist and author—combines these approaches in various media. Many of her drawings and paintings explore the ways that nonhuman animals and people with disabilities are allied in shared otherness. Describing how people have compared her to animals, Taylor declares, “The thing is, they were right. I do resemble a monkey when I walk—or rather I resemble an ape, specifically a chimpanzee.”[42] Taylor points out that these observations only work as insults in a culture where “being treated like an animal” is a terrible thing. As she puts it, “I do not deny that I’m like an animal. Instead, I want to be aware of the mistreatment that those labeled ‘animal’ (human and nonhuman) experience. I am an animal.” Taylor’s paintings interlace her own body with those of other beings, particularly chickens. Through a playfully realist idiom, that is also deadly serious, she solicits iconographic resemblance between her and her fellow creatures, highlighting how “one large mass of greatly varying beings, are held together by one similarity—they aren’t us.”[43] It is thus that her visual argument juxtaposes heterogeneity and the multiplicity of difference versus the homogenizing and ableist gaze of the anthropo-exclusive view that homogenizes this variety.

What might the Tosefta’s raven “likeness” and Taylor’s chicken portraits say to each other? As Kathryn Kueny has shown, the search for resemblance is a “slippery business” and nearly always relies on rhetoric of one kind of another to uphold constructions of authority and filiation. In medieval Muslim sources, she concludes, it is the “tenuous nature of paternity” and “fragile masculinity” that prompts the authorization of specific criteria of resemblance/deviation.[44] Can we mount an analogous argument for the Tannaim—about the idiosyncratic nature of construing likeness and difference, the fragility of *humanness* (and concomitantly, the fragility of the normate human), and the tenuous nature of reproduction itself, all of which seem to undergird their rhetoric of animality and humanity in these varied cases of human-delivered creatures? It seems to me that such an approach is workable if we do not undermine the force of animal likeness as “mere” talk. There are good reasons to take the rabbis seriously here: and as with Taylor we might note that playfulness and dead seriousness need not contradict each other. The first is that, as mentioned, the rabbis observe species variation in nonhuman generation. Cows spawn camels, sheep deliver goats, donkey horses, and so on. Second, other ancient authors describe such phenomena, as we will see.

The rabbis acknowledge but do not necessarily embrace the fragility of humanness and the vulnerability of its vaunted generative mimesis. They signal their equivocation by describing these deliveries by humans as miscarriages—the parturient is one who “causes to fall,” “expels” or “aborts” (*hamapelet*).[45] Contrast this with the analogous scenario of the animal who “gave birth” (*yaldah*) to living entities. If the human-delivered entity is *not* considered to be offspring, its flesh, even though nonliving, potentially escapes the rabbinic impurity lens as it is not exactly a corpse.[46] Withholding offspring status on the basis of insufficient “human form” renders the ravenlike creature “mere” material without any of the usual childbirth-related ritual, purity, and kin entailments or corpse-related disposal. But, in being

FIGURE 5. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Becoming Flora, Becoming Fauna*. Mixed media on paper, 9 in. × 12 in., 2018.

nonhuman (and likely even not assimilable as any species) and nonkin, their body does not even register as a corpse.

Nonetheless, the rabbis' recognition of species variation across creatures pushes against a narrowly humancentric interpretation of the Tannaim. This is to say that a lens of *animality*—as opposed to *species*—is inadequate for a full analysis of the Sidonian human who delivers ravenlike creatures. Tannaitic generation subjects the human, along with a variety of animals, to nonmimetic reproductive outcomes. And, as we will see, how the rabbis parse nonmimetic outcomes is unexpectedly capacious. Even if, as we might expect, the biblical Priestly authors would exclude such entities from classification as human offspring, the Tannaim do not do so. Rather, they acknowledge species variation, resulting in generative queerness. To the extent that the very idea and term species—*specie, eidos*, and *min* themselves—derive from and depend on appearance and form, these *trans*gressive species forms disrupt expectations that mimetic generative progeny necessarily result from same-species, heterosexual coupling. Even if the rabbis had no desire for the annihilation of classification, their recognition of the susceptibility of reproduction to nonmimetic species blurring is crucial.[47] In the remainder of this section, we will enter into this dimension of Tannaitic reproduction and explore the ways it *linked* species, including those across the supposed human-animal divide.

Reproductive Variation in Tractate Niddah and Tractate Bekhorot

Before we deepen our acquaintance with reproductive variation across humans and animals, let me foreground the Tannaitic sources we will encounter. The two tractates—in both the Mishnah and the Tosefta—that are of particular importance to us in this chapter are Tractate Niddah (which deals with menstrual purity) and Tractate Bekhorot (on firstborn male humans and animals). Recall that the Mishnah and Tosefta consist of the same tractates. The brief account of the villager from Sidon who gave birth to a raven is in the Tosefta. We'll begin by focusing on human and animal reproductive variation in the Mishnah, with references to parallel and additional material in the Tosefta, as well as to other theories of reproduction in antiquity.[48] In the third section of this chapter, we'll focus further on those Tosefta parallels to the Mishnah and attend to the significance of their differences with the Mishnah.

The term *niddah* appears in the context of childbirth (Lev 12:1–8) and genital emission of blood—menstruation—in Leviticus 15:19–25. For the Priestly authors it functions as "a technical term for menstrual discharge."[49] For the rabbis it entails ritual impurity related to menstruation. Tractate Niddah treats these topics and related matters. Bekhorot, meaning "firstborns," refers to the biblical demand that firstborn Israelite boys, as well as certain animals (cows, sheep, goats, and donkeys), are consecrated to God (Num 3:13).[50] While the latter were sacrificed, human (and donkey) firstborns were instead to be "redeemed" with a payment to the priesthood (Exod 13:13; Num 3:45–47). The tractate elaborates various dimensions of these matters. In addition, it treats the inheritance due to firstborn males, as well as the bodily variations ("blemishes," *mumim*) that exclude priests and animals from the Temple.

On their surfaces, the tractates of Niddah and Bekhorot do not, it seems to us, have much in common. But, as I will show, both dedicate attention to facets of human and nonhuman generation that share common concepts, language, and literary formulation, and that ought to be read together. Here are a two such commonalities in the Mishnah's tractates of Niddah and Bekhorot:

> she who expels (*hamapelet*) something like a kind (*ke-min*) of domesticated animal, wild animal or bird, whether pure or impure . . . (mNiddah 3:2)
>
> A cow that delivered (*sheyaldah*) something like a kind (*ke-min*) of donkey or a donkey that delivered something like a kind (*ke-min*) horse . . . (mBekhorot 1:2)

The first text comes amid an unsettling list of women expelling various nonhumanlike or partly human entities, and it is paralleled in various tractates in the Mishnah, the Tosefta, and other Tannaitic texts.[51] The second is one of the multiple cases of spontaneously occurring species variation that occurs both in Mishnah Bekhorot, and in Tosefta Bekhorot, as well as elsewhere in Tannaitic literature. Before delving into the larger contexts, contents, and consequences of these two particular cases, let us first note that they posit similar scenarios with similar language used to describe them. Both involve a species of one kind—a female subject—who expels an entity that is "like" another species (*ke-min*, "like the kind"). In the first scenario a human expels (*hamapelet*) a nonliving entity (as treated above). In the second, a cow gives birth (*sheyaldah*) to a living creature.

In further contextualizing these passages in both literary and historical terms, I will elaborate on a central point: as discussed earlier, these scenarios were not understood as fantastic hyperbole or as nonliteral approximations for contemporary medical diagnoses. Let us begin by looking at the broader passage of which our citation from mNiddah 3:2 is a part:

> 1. One who expels a piece, if there is blood with it, she is impure (as a menstruant), and if not, she is pure. Rabbi Judah says: either way she is impure.
>
> 2. One who expels something like a kind of (*ke-min*) peel, like a kind (*ke-min*) of barley,[52] like a kind (*ke-min*) of dust, like a kind (*ke-min*) of red flies,[53] let her put them into water. If they dissolve, she is impure, and if not, she is pure. One who expels something like a kind (*ke-min*) of fish and locusts (*dagim vehagavim*), forbidden creatures and creeping creatures (*sheqatsim uremasim*), if there is blood with them, she is impure and if not, she is pure. One who expels (*hamapelet*) something like a kind (*ke-min*) of domesticated animal, wild animal, or bird (*behemah, hayah, va-ʿof*), whether pure or impure (*ben tame'in ben tehorin*)—if it is male she should sit [out the days of impurity] for a male (*zahar*), and if female she should sit for a female (*neqevah*), and if it is unknown she should sit for both male and female: the words of R. Meir. And the sages say: Anything that does not have something of human form (*mitsurat ha-adam*) is not offspring (*valad*). (mNiddah 3:1–2)

This passage delineates, with no apparent surprise, the abundance that may emerge from a woman's uterus and parses it in terms of potential menstrual or fetal material. This profusion progresses from smaller organic materials and creatures (e.g., red flies) to larger creatures (e.g., fish), through to quadrupeds and birds. These descriptions of uterine materials use standard rabbinic nomenclature for different nonhuman species and tags them as "*min*" (species). We see the rabbinic trinary of wild animal, domesticated animal, bird (*hayah, behemah*), and *ʿof* (bird) applied to the delivery in question in mNiddah 3:2. We find two additional rabbinic technical terms for pairings of quintessentially permitted and typically forbidden small creatures. We see rabbinic classificatory and creaturely terms of art put to new effects here.

The usage of such classificatory nomenclature means we ought to take the expelled uterine entities that resemble various kinds—peel, barley, dust, red flies, fish and locusts, forbidden and crawling creatures, domesticated animals, wild animals, or birds—seriously. Alongside *min* as a terminology of classification, there are additional details that pertain both to the classification of species according to the broader rabbinic scheme of creatures and to a (perhaps surprisingly) graphic literalism. I pointed out that mNiddah 3:2 uses both the trinary of animal classification—wild animal, domesticated animal, or bird—as well as the classificatory terminology of pure/impure. This last element has no ultimate impact on the ruling but it conjures a vision of a person bent over the body in question, scanning for split hooves or other "signs" (*simanim*) of a particular "kind" (*min*).[54] Such details undo the metaphorical force of the modifier "like" attached to "kind" that is peppered through mNiddah 3:2. The *mishnah* describes these various entities as "*like* a kind of" creature (e.g., *ke-min behemah*, like a kind of domesticated animal). The implied inspection for particular species markings weights the meaning of "like" toward one of likeness and resemblance (rather than mere metaphor or figure of speech) in the same way that a cow delivered something "like a kind of donkey" (*ke-min hamor*). Every instance of the five species variations in mBekhorot 1:2 and the rest of the tractate uses the same locution. This formula reverberates across human and animal cases—and across the tractates of Niddah, Bekhorot, Kilayim, and elsewhere—to the extent that it suggests that the parallel language is citational.

The rabbis' scrutiny of the excreted contents of a person's uterus—and, along with it, the graphic literalism of these images of species-variant deliveries—is further sharpened in the dispute between Rabbi Meir (second century CE) and the sages in the last part of mNiddah 3:2. According to Rabbi Meir, for whom the delivery is offspring, the parturient calculates the days of postpartum impurity depending on the gender assigned to it. This detail of gender assignment and that of the precise species ("whether it is pure or impure") vividly emphasize materiality as they are ascertained through bodily examination.[55] They substantiate the argument that we must take the formula "*ke-min* + creature" as more than rhetorical convenience or casuistic hyperbole. Instead, they indicate earnest and formal criteria for assessing these materials.[56]

But what is the disagreement between the sages and Rabbi Meir about? As we will see, the difference is about the degree of species difference itself. On both a minority or a majority view we are far away indeed from the biblical idea of the human as an image of God. There is a morphological gaze at work: the rabbis scan the features of these deliveries. In opposition to Rabbi Meir, who allows that the nonhumanlike fetus is offspring and who rules, therefore, that the woman is subject to childbirth impurity, the sages opine thus:

> Anything that does not have something of human form (*mi-tsurat ha-adam*) is not offspring (*valad*). (mNiddah 3:2)

The sages do not totally disagree with Rabbi Meir. They do not require, for instance, full human likeness. Instead, their position is more modest: a delivery that looks like an animal must bear *some* resemblance to the human species to be offspring, as well as for all the usual requirements entailed after childbirth to obtain. They do not quantify this "something of"; neither do they qualify "human form." There is a spectrum of possibilities: from totally human to totally nonhuman form, with permutations along the way. At what point do the sages exclude a being from the class of human offspring? For the Tosefta's case, at least, we have an answer in the case of the Sidonian woman: a birdlike creature does not qualify. The dispute between Rabbi Meir and the sages in the Mishnah is in part a disagreement about degrees of reproductive dissemblance/resemblance to kind. Rabbi Meir holds that even if there is *total* mimetic dissemblance between a woman and what she produces, the latter is still offspring. The sages do not go so far, but they also do not require total mimesis. Their minimal mimetic requirement is exclusionary, yet it allows part likeness and part unlikeness. On either ruling, we are worlds away from the classificatory clarity of the priests whose human image of God is cleft over and above the animal.

The quasi-humanlike, quasi-animal-like delivery that the sages would allow as offspring is *not* what the Tannaim would have dubbed a "hybrid." For the rabbis a hybrid was a technical term: *kilayim*—the subject of chapter 4 of this book. The Bible refers to *kilayim* as the prohibited combining of different kinds, whether in agriculture, animal reproduction, at the plough, or—in the case of fibers—in garments. For the Tannaim it also refers to the products of such combinations. In reproductive situations, *kilayim* designates the offspring of interspecies coupling. However, for both the human deliveries in Niddah and the animal deliveries in Bekhorot, this is *not* what the sages are contemplating.

If so, and if the wholly animal-like entity produced by a woman is not offspring, in accordance with the sages' view, then what is it? Furthermore, what can we say about the "human form" requirement on which so much depends? We will return to these intriguing questions once we have addressed the species-variant animal deliveries in mBekhorot 1:2.[57]

As with mNiddah 3:2, let's explore the literary setting in which our animal births are embedded:

> A cow that delivered something like the donkey kind (*ke-min hamor*]) or a donkey that delivered something like the horse kind (*ke-min sus*)—it is exempt from the laws of the firstborn. But what about eating? If a pure animal delivers something like an impure kind (*ke-min temeah*), it is permissible to eat [the offspring]. If an impure animal delivers something that is like a pure kind (*min tehorah*), it is forbidden to eat. For that which emerges from the impure is impure, and that which emerges from the pure is pure. (mBekhorot 1:2)[58]

The obligation to donate the firstborn pertains to (male) firstborns of pure kinds (as well as to the donkey, which itself is classified as impure, but which is to be "redeemed" with a pure animal instead). The classification of animals as pure or impure functions as a means of species designation in and of itself (following Leviticus 11), inasmuch as "kind" for the Tannaim is a logical grouping of members who share some characteristics rather than a taxonomical operation. Both divine altar and human table can only accept properly slaughtered pure animals, but the Temple has narrower standards, excluding those with "blemishes" (*mumim*). Tractate Bekhorot vastly expands the lists of biblical "blemishes" that disqualify animals and priests from Temple sacrifice or service.[59] These blemishes include all kinds of bodily variation among nonhuman animals and human priests, including the possession of features of different species.[60] Many of the sources about species variation in animals emanate from this tractate, including the one mentioned above.[61] The tractate also considers human firstborn primogeniture and priestly redemption. As part of this it cites mNiddah 3:2: the determination of whether a delivery that resembles a nonhuman species is offspring may, as we intimated earlier, affect firstborn considerations.[62]

In mBekhorot 1:2 a cow's firstborn is disqualified from the firstborn obligation if he is "like a donkey kind"; so is the donkey firstborn if he is "like a horse kind." "Fitness" for the Temple was based on an exclusionary aesthetics that othered "blemished" bodies while upholding idealized, normate bodies of humans and animals.[63] But this did not speak to ontology or classification of these creatures. For the latter, the Mishnah returns to the simple question, "but what about eating?" The ultimate test for this creature's species designation is not its eligibility for Temple donation, but rather its kind-based (im)purity and thus its admissibility for human ingestion. And kind is determined not by how the animal *looks* but by its parentage. This is then elaborated in what I style the Tannaitic "generation principle":

> If a pure animal delivers something like an impure kind (*ke-min teme'ah*), it is permissible to eat [the offspring]. If an impure animal delivers something that is like a pure kind (*ke-min tehorah*), it is forbidden to eat. (mBekhorot 1:2)

What does this mean for the particular species-variant deliveries in our passage? The donkey is an impure animal. But the creature in our *mishnah* who looks *like* the donkey kind (*ke-min hamor*) is permitted for slaughter and consumption by virtue of its bovine parentage: he is cow offspring. The generation principle also states that if a donkey births a cowlike creature, that creature is of the donkey kind (and hence not permitted despite its looks). The principle is summarized in the final succinct statement of the *mishnah:* "for that which emerges from the impure is impure, and that which emerges from the pure is pure." This is not just a rule to use for classification; it also constitutes a constraint on the possibilities for biological reproduction. It is also not, as we will see briefly below (and at greater length in chapter 4), a matrilineal principle of speciation.

How do these animal cases link to the dispute between Rabbi Meir and the sages in the human case of species variation in mNiddah3:2? There is no analogous dispute about whether or not the species variant animal is offspring in mBekhorot 1:2. In fact, the anonymous, unchallenged voice echoes Rabbi Meir's view in its substance.[64] Or, to put it conversely, Rabbi Meir's view on cases of species variation in human deliveries accords with the principle of generation according to which what comes out of a creature is necessarily of the birthing creature's kind. The sages' requirement for "something of human form" seems in fact to exclude the human from the broad principle of generation and suggests stricter species gatekeeping, in what surely amounts to a measure of human exceptionalism. Even so, as noted, these sources have moved us away from the adamic distinctiveness of the divine image and its mimetic necessity in reproductive processes. The very fact that humans, along with other animals, are subject to these same unpredictable vicissitudes of dissemblance chastens human exceptionalism to its generative core. Species seemingly slip into—or at least out of—the uteruses of other species; even the human is caught up in this web of reproductive and species queerness. As we have seen to some extent, and as we will elaborate more fully in subsequent chapters, the Tannaim expanded the staccato bestiary of Genesis, and the sparse animal purity scheme of Leviticus, into a reworked map of creaturely life. This rabbinic proliferation and reconfiguration of life-forms goes hand in hand with their realignment of the Priestly schema in the realm of reproduction and species. What I am trying to convince my reader of is that altogether what we have here is a variety of (perhaps surprising) ideas about creatureliness—including *even* human creatureliness—and reproduction that do not quite uphold, and even challenge, the rather more hierarchical Priestly binaries embedded in Genesis and Leviticus.

GENERATION AND VARIATION IN LATE ANTIQUITY

The issues we have examined so far were themselves a variant of a larger ancient conversation about reproduction, species, and resemblance. Let us spend a little time listening to some of those conversations. I do not claim that the Tannaim read these texts in which some of these conversations took place (although there is a constellation of moves in Tosefta Bekhorot that bears curious echoes to a similar set in Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*).[65] But, as we will see in the following tour of the ancient Middle East and Mediterranean, the rabbis were far from alone in attesting to a world of reproductive variation and unpredictability.[66]

Over a millennium earlier and several hundred miles east, Babylonian scribes compiled a long list of omens, known as the *Summa Izbu* ("anomalies"). Compiled around 1300 BCE as part of a much larger scribal collection, the *Summa izbu* collections consist of long lists of "anomalous" human and animal births and their predictive significance. The births are posed as protases, "if an anomalous (newborn human or animal) . . .," followed by apodoses in the form of what is portended. Francesca Rochberg urges us to forgo notions of empiricism that would lead us to judge such cases as "ontologically suspect or even impossible."[67] She declines to follow scholars who rationalize such birth scenarios via modern medical or scientific models, or who view them either as absurd fictions or as logically generated extensions of observed cases.[68] Rochberg points out that the *Summa izbu* collections themselves do not hierarchically distinguish "real" from "absurd" cases, and she warns us against retrojecting seemingly "commonsense" understandings of objectivity and empiricism onto Babylonian science.[69] I suggest we do the same with our other ancient sources too. Working within cultural contexts of Babylonian science and noting how these observations are patterned and framed, we can understand its "conceptual framework."[70] The Babylonian science of divination made for a world replete with signs through which the gods communicated. Just as the expert could interpret signs in the everyday for what was to come, so might they diagnose illnesses or know how to maintain the cosmic order when a person harmed another.[71]

While the apodoses in rabbinic lists of deliveries in mNiddah and mBekhorot are not portents, their content is similar to that of the *Summa izbu*: both lists include species variation, deliveries of dual-sex young, deliveries of body parts, and more. The rabbinic texts also echo the older and longer lists in form, juxtaposing a scenario with a kind of consequence, even if, in the case of the rabbis, it is ritually significant. Like the *Summa izbu*, the totality of the chapter (as well as its Tosefta parallel) comprises what in contemporary terms might qualify as "empirically observable" and "fantastic" deliveries, but without any distinction between the two.

There are significant differences between the much more extensive lists of the *Summa izbu* and the more limited roster in the Mishnah and the Tosefta in both the tractates of Niddah, and Bekhorot. Besides the quantitative discrepancy, the Mishnah assesses whether uterine emissions as menses (*niddah*) or offspring (*valad*), or as firstborn or pure, each of which entails specific consequences.[72] In those tractates the assignment of fetal, menstrual, or neither status to a uterine entity has consequences in the realm of inheritance, sacrificial ritual, and priestly redemption of firstborns, respectively. Thus, if we compare the anomalous delivery and the portent in the *Summa izbu* to the delivery, status, and ritual implication in the Tannaitic sources, we find a much more pragmatic and engaged role in the latter. Rather than the delivery being just one (of many) divinely generated signs in the phenomenal world to be interpreted, the rabbinic version thereof is subject to a forensic gaze that seeks to dictate consequent human action. Both texts, however, insist on, are shaped by, and take for granted a coterie of formal experts—people who claim authority to interpret uterine emissions of both humans and nonhumans.

Despite these important differences, Rochberg explains that the Babylonian omen lists do not consider variant births to be "monstrosities"; they are neither "unnatural" nor are they divine punishments. Some, in fact, contain normate features, and many of the "atypical" deliveries portend positive events.[73] The Tannaitic texts similarly lack a moralizing or stigmatizing tone; instead, no matter how seemingly divergent these creatures are, the rabbis engage with them pragmatically, in order to figure out the ramifications for classification, ritual, property, and so on. Rochberg contrasts the ways that the *Summa izbu* registers the anomalous with later Greco-Roman and Christian characterizations, in which such phenomena are nearly always seen as contrary to nature or as divine retribution for some misdeed.

Anomalous deliveries—and particularly species variation—in Greek and Roman writings are not in the "if . . . then" form, but exist rather as recorded events followed by their chronicled consequences, and so as retrospectively signifying portents or prodigies. In real time, then, such beings pointed to the future. Such writings originated in Hellenistic and Roman contexts across South West Asia, North Africa, and the Mediterranean from the fifth century BCE to the fifth century CE. In the first century, Josephus describes portents that preceded the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, including a cow that delivered a lamb.[74] Phlegon, author of *The Book of Marvels*, and an approximate contemporary of and neighbor to the Tannaim, describes a series of "wondrous" births by women.[75] These include a monkey, an infant with the head of Anubis (the dog-headed Egyptian god), and a pair of snakes; at least the first case is explicitly marked as an omen and all are related to political events.[76] Similar cross-species portents appear in the writings of Herodotus, Aelian (a sheep delivering a lion), Tacitus, Livy (a woman giving birth to an elephant-headed infant), Dio, and Pliny (women delivering snake and elephant).[77] In every instance, these births function as warnings. Given this consistency, it becomes all the more noteworthy that the Tannaim writing in the Roman province of Palestine do not consider species variation as portents: this arguably relates to a broader disdain of omens and their interpretation as the "ways of the Amorites."[78] What we do see in common across all this evidence is that species variation is understood to take place among all creatures, including but not limited to humans.

Not all ancient people considered species-variant deliveries for the ways in which they pointed to *future* consequences. Some investigated them as consequences in themselves and sought to understand their causes. Both Pseudo-Aristotle and Aristotle are useful examples here, as they speculate about both the causes and subsequent classifications of variant deliveries. In Tannaitic texts, there is little explicit illumination of reproductive mechanics that matches these other ancient writings. As we will see, Tosefta Bekhorot expresses biological principles that underpin variant deliveries; while far more succinct than those Aristotle gives, these nonetheless dovetail with his ideas.

Problems, pseudepigraphically attributed to Aristotle, asks: why is it that a variety of entities emerge from our body, yet only some of these entities merit the label "offspring" (*ekgonon*)?[79] Pseudo-Aristotle distinguishes between genuine offspring, which come from seed (semen), and things that "come from something foreign." However, sometimes even seed can become corrupted, producing "monsters" (*terata*). Like entities generated from "foreign" sources or like worms generated by "excrement": they are not offspring.[80]

Although Pseudo-Aristotle provides a kind of (circular) explanation for his determinations, his purpose is similar to that of Mishnah Niddah and Bekhorot:

he wants to classify of variation. His criteria—the mark or sign (*sēmeion*) by which we can distinguish offspring versus entities derived from "corruption"—is likeness: offspring "comes to be naturally *like* that from which the seed came—if from a horse, a horse, if from a human, a human."[81] Resemblance is the key to species classification. In this regard he is perhaps closer to the Priestly authors than the rabbis. Even as Pseudo-Aristotle accepts the apparent randomness and unpredictability of generation, variation is excluded.[82] In this respect, he seems to go further than the sages in mNiddah 3:2. They, after all, accept variation, requiring just "something of" human resemblance. Perhaps, though, the sages would affirm that the entity they designate as *not* offspring (*valad*) is ultimately a "foreign" body, akin to "excrement."[83] This we can extrapolate because there seem to be no purity consequences if the uterine entity is found to be neither menstrual nor fetal: thus, unusually, this fleshy product is invisible—just as excretions like urine and excrement are—in the scheme of rabbinic purity.[84] The parallel to mNiddah 3:2 in the Tosefta affirms our surmise. It recounts two narratives of women who expel variant entities (tNiddah 4:3–4). The sages consult physicians who in each case parse the entities as a uterine growth and a wound. This is as close as the Tannaim come to discussing etiology.

Not all ancient thinkers took such a hard line as Pseudo-Aristotle. Aristotle himself showed more flexibility. While he flourished in fourth century BCE Athens, his ideas continued to circulate throughout late antiquity. They surfaced, whether acknowledged or disputed, in a variety of "scientific," "medical," "natural history" writings from Galen to Pliny.[85] Aristotle provides a useful contrast to Pseudo-Aristotle. While he hews narrowly to resemblance as an ideal, he is more inclusive of variation as it occurs.[86] For Aristotle, offspring ought, all things being equal, to resemble the male parent. For him this relates to the very mechanics of reproduction: resemblance is tied to male seed, which acted on female matter (blood), imparting form to it. Failure of the seed to control the material caused deviation from this ideal.[87] The form in question was both specific—features and gender of the male parent—and generic—including species. Note that "form" (*eidos* in Greek, or *tsurah* in Hebrew) is how the sages express human resemblance: *mi-tsurat ha-adam*.[88] However, Aristotle, like Pseudo-Aristotle and the Tannaim, acknowledges that divergences do occur. Ranging from minor to major, Aristotle ranks these anomalies as follows: offspring resemble the female parent; some ancestor (e.g., a grandparent); a generic human (i.e., not an ancestor); and even, something that "no longer has the appearance of a human being at all, but that of an animal" (*zōon*, or living being).[89] He then follows with examples moving from human-born but animal-like variation to animal-born variation.

But here is where Aristotle differs from the author of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Problems* and the majority view in mNiddah 3:2. While Aristotle dubs these variations as "monstrous" and "contrary to nature,"[90] he is at pains to argue that they *are* still offspring.[91] This "inclusiveness" of partial to radical variation as genuine progeny, coupled with the tagging of certain sorts of dissemblance as monstrosity, is key to the seemingly unpredictable outcomes in reproduction. Aristotle's insistence that whatever emerges from a particular animal is a member of that animal's species is famously expressed with the principle, "if from a human, a human." While Pseudo-Aristotle infused the same principle with the caveat of resemblance, effectively rendering it into "*only* if it resembles a human is it a human, and if not, it is not a human," for Aristotle, the principle serves to admit variation. We ought to think of Aristotle's principle as the equivalent of the generation principle that we saw in mBekhorot 1:2, "that which emerges from the impure is impure, that which emerges from the pure is pure." As we will see there is even closer adherence to this Aristotelian principle in Tosefta Bekhorot's version of the generation principle. As I have noted elsewhere, there are several curious convergences between Aristotelian and Tannaitic reproductive thought and biology.[92]

In the same section of the *Generation of Animals*, which is where Aristotle explains why offspring resemble or differ from their parents in one way or another, he is keen to clarify one thing. While he acknowledges that offspring that radically or partly differ from their parents are indeed born, he flatly denies that these can be the product of two different species' coupling (beyond a small range of species). He explains that variation in reproductive modes and "widely different" gestation periods across species—listing those of humans, sheep, dogs, and oxen—preclude the gestation of hybrids.[93] This fits with his emphasis that even widely divergent deliveries are still offspring. Their likeness to other species, he stresses, are "resemblances only."[94] This means, for example, that the centaur is *not* a hybrid, but merely appears as such.[95] We will see that the rabbis' extended version of the generation principle in tBekhorot 1:9 (and tKilayim 5:8) mandates a similar conclusion.[96]

Like Aristotle, the Tannaim tolerate a range of species variation, including certain kinds of animality in humanly delivered entities.[97] Aristotle maintains a distinction between ontology (or classification) and aesthetics as it conforms to or departs from an ideal body; we see a similar gap between cultic law on blemishes versus classification for the Tannaim.[98] The terminology of "monstrosity" has no precise analog in Tannaitic writing. At the same time, we may ask whether the "blemishes" (*mumim*) of humans and animals that uphold idealized, normate bodies, are the functional equivalents of "monstrosity." As stated, the Tannaim broadened the biblical category of *mum* for priests and animals to include many additional forms of variation. They explicitly declared about the additional animal blemishes the following: "these [same] blemishes, whether permanent or temporary, disqualify the human (*poslin ba-ʾadam*)."[99] They extend this analogical thinking to map priestly blemishes onto the bodies and capacities of potential women as marriage partners: "all the blemishes (*mumin*) that disqualify priests disqualify women."[100] The tone and consequences are ostensibly technical, pragmatic, and material rather than explicitly moralistic. Variation from the normate body does not call into question the priest's species classification as human or the camel-like creature's classification as a cow. Nonetheless, the inverse of the "blemished" body is an idealized able-bodied or normate creature, whether human or nonhuman. Moreover, given that obligation is a mark of status for the rabbis, it is hard to see the exclusion of a divergent priest or cow from the Temple in anything other than stigmatized terms.[101] Finally, given that the "blemishes" pertaining to animals are the basis for those pertaining to human priests, and since the latter form the ground of those pertaining to potential wives, we see that the seemingly narrow purview of cultic exclusion has far broader implications. Perhaps the distinction between the expansive species "ontology" and the exclusionary and ableist "aesthetics" of "blemishes" are less meaningful given the ways that the latter constricts possibilities for some beings.

Unlike Aristotle and Pseudo-Aristotle, the Tannaim exhibit a curious lack of interest in the causes of variation. This changes for the later rabbis who consider how various forms of progeny come to resemble one parent or another, as well as how entities and perceptions within and without the parent dyad impact fetal appearance. Such deliberations find company with contemporaries of the Tannaim such as Soranus, Pliny, Oppian, and Heliodorus.[102] As in these Greco-Roman sources, the later rabbis consider such mechanisms not only as retroactive explanations for parental (most often paternal) mimetic resemblance or dissemblance, but also as prospective eugenic tools.[103] Furthermore, unlike the Tannaim, but in company with some Greco-Roman and Christian sources, some later rabbinic texts frame dissemblance, whether related to human devolution (humans becoming animal-like) or to sexual transgression, in moralizing terms.

We just noted how "blemishes" function as exclusionary devices even for the Tannaim and how they articulate them as part of pragmatic ritual orderings and classificatory programs. We observed that this quite different from the ways in which variation is tagged as "monstrous," "portending," or as the opportunity for moralizing in Greek, Roman, and Christian sources. The writings of Roman jurists preserved in Justinian's *Digest* echo the pragmatic tone, substantive concerns, and even the *ratio decidendi* of Tannaitic sources on variation.[104] Even from the terms that they were considering, we can see that the Roman discussion is more loaded: Paul and Ulpian respond to questions about monsters (Paul and Ulpian), portents (Paul), or prodigies (Ulpian). Were these to be considered offspring—*partus* or *valad* in rabbinic terms—or children (*liberi*)? Paul distinguishes between those who "abnormally procreated in a shape totally different from human form" (*formam humani*) versus those that have multiple limbs.[105] He does not consider the former "monster or prodigy" to be in the class of children (*liberi*); the latter are offspring (*partus*) and benefit the parents under the *ius liberorum* (law designed to reward parents). Eerily echoing the sages in the case of childbirth impurity (Tractate Niddah), inheritance (Tractate Bekhorot), and postchildbirth sacrifices (Tractate Keritot), he disqualifies such entities on the basis of lack of "human form" (*formam humani*—the equivalent of *tsruat ha-adam*).

Ulpian, on the other hand, determines that a delivery that is "not of human form (*non humanae figurae*), that is some other offspring, more of animal rather than a human (*animalis quam hominis, partum*)" does entitle the mother to alimentary payment.[106] There is no reason, he states, to blame parents or penalize them. Elsewhere, Ulpian further allows that the delivery of an "incomplete being (*non integrum animal*)" impacts the beneficiaries to a will (i.e., can break a will).[107] The disagreement between the two jurists about whether deliveries of creatures without "human form" (*formam humani* or *humanae figurae*) are offspring (*partus* or *liberi*) is strikingly similar to the dispute between Rabbi Meir and the sages about whether such a delivery is offspring (*valad*) requiring "human form" (*tsurat ha-adam*). The criteria for human form and monstrosity are similarly unstated by the jurists. Whereas Paul may imply a judgmental stance toward such deliveries, he shares with Ulpian an overwhelmingly pragmatic focus on questions of classification, status, and consequence, related in this case to legal or social ordering. The rabbis also concern themselves with such matters but extend beyond to questions of ritual and purity.

Like Begets Like, Except When It Doesn't

As Daryn Lehoux puts it, there was a general expectation in antiquity that "life affects like" (in the realm of reproduction this translated into "like begets like")[108] Yet the material we have briefly toured from fourteenth-century BCE Mesopotamia to third-century CE Palestine points to a widespread and long-lived recognition that this governing principle of life itself did not always obtain. My aim in this review was less to posit some line of knowledge transfer across these diverse cultural moments than it was to dispel any suggestion that the rabbis were peculiar in describing bodily variation, including cross-species resemblance, in a matter-of-fact fashion. The knowledge about these sorts of diversity that was generated by the rabbis may have been inflected toward different ends than those of the scribes of Babylonia, the efforts of Aristotle, or the decisions of Ulpian. But that does not mean it was any less determined to understand and know the world and its denizens, their coming into being, and their passing away.

Most of these authors—whether natural historians, scribes, divination specialists, historians, jurists, or rabbis—claim a kind of expertise about how to understand variation. These people variously predict, diagnose, experiment, study, scrutinize, and try (at least) to determine the meaning of the contents of animal and human uteruses. Theirs is obviously a very partial view that occludes the knowledge, experiences, and affective lives of the human and nonhumans (also) very much involved: pregnant people, midwives, mothers, caregivers, kin, shepherds, cows, sheep, goats, and so on. That is, to the extent that we are talking about science or ways of knowing the world, we are largely reliant on the writing of people gendered as men writing about the bodies and experiences of beings that they construe and construct as women and as animals.[109] Even as I urge us to incorporate the rabbis into this "history of science and medicine" we must similarly account for the

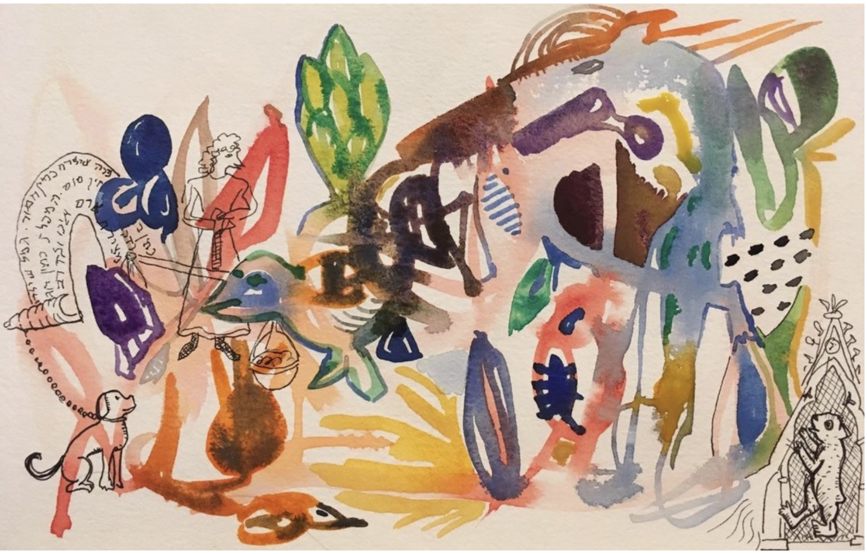


FIGURE 6. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Canine Metathesis* (Scribal Errors series). Mixed media on paper, 5.5 in. × 5.5 in., 2018.

gendered and political ways in which knowers and known were entangled. Faced with the tenuous character of reproduction and even humanness, Babylonian scribes subsumed this knowledge within a generalized legibility and susceptibility of all phenomena to point to meaning beyond themselves, with the scribes as expert interpreters. For the rabbis, species variation is just one of the many things that falls under the assumed aegis of their expertise, along with all the other stuff that comes out of bodies: flesh, bone, semen, blood, and other liquids.

In ancient Babylonian scribal cultures the principle of mimesis was less about reproduction and more about experts who could read representations of what was to come across a variety of phenomena (including, but hardly limited to, reproductive events). However, in Roman sources, species variation and other kinds of difference were viewed as harbingers of unsettling news. Later natural historians and paradoxographers infused a fetishizing othering into such accounts. While Roman jurists used the fraught language of monstrosity to describe species variation—in human reproductive contexts—their rulings were without such affective or moralizing tones. Such a pragmatic posture also inflects the Mishnah, which considers human and animal species variation alike, albeit, as I noted, not without internal disagreement. The abundance and endurance of interest in species variation in generative contexts is striking. It seems to tell us something about the fragility of generation and of species boundaries. Yet the range in how people framed and grappled with these recurring themes ought to caution us against explanations that rely on essentializing and transhistorical accounts of "nature."

THE SAMENESS OF DIFFERENCE

We earlier noted a conflict and a contradiction among the Tannaim. There is conflict between Rabbi Meir and the sages about whether to admit or to exclude the radically species-variant creature as human offspring. There is a contradiction between the sages' requirement for "some human form" in mNiddah and the principle of generation in mBekhorot that unqualifiedly admits all deliveries as offspring. One way to resolve any apparent inconsistency is to assume that the principle of generation only pertains to nonhuman generation: we can then argue that the sages' qualified acceptance of variation operates only in the human case.[110] That, in turn, suggests that despite the similar language and conceptual apparatus in Niddah and Bekhorot, a majority adherence to human exceptionalism persists. This would not be a surprising outcome by any means. And yet an examination of the Tosefta texts that parallel the Mishnah's (again, Tractates Niddah and Bekhorot) yields yet another set of perspectives. Tosefta Bekhorot makes significant changes to the generation principle and Tosefta Niddah intervenes substantively in the dispute between Rabbi Meir and the sages.

We begin with the parallel to mBekhorot 1:2 in the Tosefta. Recall that in the Mishnah the scenario entailed a cow delivering something like the donkey species or a donkey delivering something like a horse species. After dispensing with the question of their eligibility for the firstborn donation, the Mishnah asked about their classification in terms of consumption and then issued the generation principle. The parallel in Tosefta Bekhorot is considerably expanded and more involved.[111] It raises various instances of species-variant deliveries from the "pure animal that gave birth to an impure kind" (tBekhorot 1:6) and vice versa, to cows that give birth to camels (tBekhorot 1:9), or to lambs (tBekhorot 1:13). Like mBekhorot 2:5, it envisions partial dissemblance/resemblance: oxen, sheep, and goat deliveries may have "some signs resembling its father" (tBekhorot 1:5); an impure kind delivered by a pure kind may have "some of the signs" (tBekhorot 1:6); and a camel born of a cow may have its "head and majority resemble its mother" (tBekhorot1:9).[112] There is a dispute in the Tosefta that is surprising: the lone Rabbi Simon opines that a camel born from a cow is—despite its bovine parentage—a camel. Immediately following and in opposition to this opinion is a lengthy version of the generation principle. Significantly, it is followed by a list of various animals' reproductive periods (length of gestation) and modes (e.g., eggs versus live birth: tBekhorot 1:10–12):

> 9. Rabbi Simon says: what does [Scripture] come to teach you by having *camel* (Lev 11:4) *camel* (Deut 14:7) twice? To include the camel that is born of a cow as if it were born of (*kenolad min*) a camel. And if its head and majority resemble its mother's, it is permitted for eating.[113]
>
> And the sages say: *that which emerges from* (*hayotse min*) *the impure is impure, and that which emerges from* (*hayotse min*) *the pure is pure*, for an impure animal is not born of (*yoledet min*) the pure, neither is a pure animal born of (*yoledet min*) the

> impure. And not a large, domesticated animal (*behemah gasah*) from a small domesticated animal (*behemah daqah*), nor a small one from a large one, and not a human (*adam*) from any of them, nor any of them from a human (*me-ʾadam*).[114]
>
> 10. A pure small domesticated animal gives birth at five months; a pure large domesticated animal at nine months,[115] an impure large domesticated animal at twelve months; a dog at fifty days; a cat at fifty-two days; a pig at sixty days; a fox and creeping creatures at six months; the wolf, lion, bear, panther, leopard, elephant, baboon and monkey at three years; the snake at seven years.
>
> 11. Dolphins give birth and grow (*molidin u-megadlin*) [offspring] like the human (*ke-adam*); impure fish spawns (*mashrits*); pure fish lay eggs. (tBekhorot 1:9–11)

Rabbi Simon is wrong according to the generation principle: the camel born of a cow is a cow because "that which emerges from the pure is pure." On its face, this principle is simply inserted to refute Rabbi Simon. But note how much longer this version of the principle is than the Mishnah's "for that which emerges from the impure is impure, and that which emerges from the pure is pure" (mBekhorot 1:2).[116] We see that the Tosefta has supplemented the Mishnah's version with an additional negative formulation, "for an impure animal is not born of the pure . . .," and that its remainder continues in this vein: "an × cannot be born of a y". It has also extended the principle beyond the pure/impure categories of the Mishnah's version. We learn that, aside from the impossibility of these various kinds emerging from each other, neither can this occur across other classifications—large and small cattle and even across all the aforementioned (*kulan*) and the human (*adam*). There follows a conspicuous display of animal reproduction and embryology. As I have argued elsewhere, these added elements serve an explanatory function: given the specific gestational modes and periods, it is impossible for species variation to be the result of cross-species coupling. I have also pointed to the echoes in this particular passage and the sequence of arguments in Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*.[117] Rather than making a claim about the rabbis consciously appropriating Aristotle, we may note how these ideas ripple and coalesce into a broader rabbinic biology (i.e., a science of how life-forms come into being) and a zoology (i.e., a science of species) that is far murkier than that of the Priestly authors of Genesis 1 and Leviticus 11.

The additional attention to the human (*adam*) here is crucial. Seemingly set apart from "any of them"—that is, other animals—the human is simultaneously folded into the rule about species variation and classification. The anonymous view here, with its unmitigated inclusion of all variation—explicitly including that related to the human—squarely contradicts the sages' demand for minimal human form in mNiddah 3:2; instead, it aligns with Rabbi Meir. This difference about difference—the ascription of humanness to the species-variant delivery born to a human—in the Tosefta echoes a consistent approach that we can also discern in the Tosefta's parallel to mNiddah 3:1–2. The Mishnah holds a space for some human distinctiveness. The Tosefta enfolds the human more definitively into the vast and unpredictable realm of reproductive variation.

Now let's explore the corresponding passage in Tosefta Niddah to mNiddah 3:2. Like Tosefta Bekhorot, this passage unsettles human distinctiveness. If the dispute between Rabbi Meir and the sages revolves around the question about whether or not some minimal mimesis is necessary for a delivery to a human to qualify as offspring (*valad*), the Tosefta flattens the dispute by redefining human form in a surprising way. Citing the Mishnah's debate, the Tosefta then follows the sages' requirement for "human form" with the following:

> 5. She who expels (*hamapelet*) something like a kind of domesticated animal, a wild animal, or bird—the words of R. Meir. And the sages say: as long as it has human form.
>
> R. Hanina son of Gamliel said: the words of Rabban Meir are fitting with respect to an animal because the eyeballs of an animal resemble human eyeballs, and the words of the sages with respect to a bird, because it does not have something of human form.
>
> 6. There was a case of a woman from Sidon who gave birth to a likeness of a raven (*demut ʿorev*) three times, and the case came before the sages, and they said: anything that does not have human form (*tsurat ʿadam*) is not offspring (*valad*).[118]
>
> 7. The facial form (*tsurat panim*)[119] of which they [120] can be one of any facial forms, except the ears . . .[121] (tNiddah 4:5–7)

Rabbi Hanina's harmonistic intervention shifts the terms of the debate between Rabbi Meir and the sages by softening the differences between them and—more crucially—between animals and humans. It finds common ground by declaring that domesticated and wild animals are already inherently of (sufficient) human form because their eyeballs resemble (*domin*) human eyeballs. The requirement for human form is thereby upheld via the logic of resemblance—but in such a fashion as to simultaneously undermine the human's species uniqueness.[122] The logics of distinction and resemblance are thus intertwined.

Rabbi Hanina's reading effectively narrows the dispute between the sages and Rabbi Meir to only birdlike cases. The case that follows about our habitual (three-time) Sidonian aborter affirms the compromise reading of the dispute, with a ruling in which the uterine entity is described as "a likeness of a raven" (*demut ʿorev*).[123] Instead of having a human form, this is "like a kind of bird" (*ke-min ʿof*) and is not deemed to have human form. As we will see in the conclusion to this book, the Palestinian Talmud expresses dissatisfaction with this distinction between birdlike and animal-like creatures.

If Rabbi Hanina highlighted the eyes in tNiddah 4:5, tNiddah 4:7 explicitly declares that the focus of human form (*tsurat ha-adam*) is the face and its features (*tsurat panim*). Like "something of human form" (*mi-tsurat ha-adam*) or "its head and majority" (*rosho ve-rubo*, tBekhorot 1:9), the Tosefta's stipulation of facial features for human form envisions partial resemblance—that is, a multiform creature with a humanlike face (or certain humanlike facial features) and an animal-like body.[124] Indeed, facial features are obviously a lesser requirement than the "head and its majority" (as in the minority view in the case of a camellike creature born to a cow), especially if eyes are already taken for granted as human/animal. We might well still consider the focus on the face to be a humancentric move in and of itself. Rabbinic laws requiring verification of a spouse's death before allowing his wife to remarry focus on the facial features (*partsuf panim*) over other identifying marks.[125] The face can signify humanness both generically (as a kind) and specifically (as an individual). In fact, these two are potentially related notions, blended in the idea that humans are the only creatures that possess a face or a countenance that is uniquely varied.[126] Pliny, a contemporary of the Tannaim, expresses this very idea as follows: "though our physiognomy (*facie vultuque*—lit. appearance and countenance/face) contains ten features or only a few more, to think that among all the thousands of human beings there exist no two countenances (*effigies*) that are not distinct—a thing no art could supply by counterfeit in so small a number of specimens."[127]

However, in Tosefta Niddah, Rabbi Hanina's effort at harmony renders even this focus on facial features meaningless. His claim is that animals and humans already effectively share facial features (eyes). It is thus that the distinction between humans and domesticated/undomesticated animals draws their construed commonality into relief. Paradoxically, the very effort to draw humans apart folds them in with other kinds. As we shuttle between the Tosefta's expanded generation principle in Bekhorot and the Tosefta's rereadings of human form in Niddah, we find an image of the human that is, at least partly, animal.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that the rabbis both manipulated and moved beyond the classificatory schema of Genesis 1 and Leviticus 11. In the process, they created a zoology and a biology that relied on an aleatory (spontaneous, unpredictable) instability of species, especially when it came to reproduction. I show that the Tannaim lived in a world in which the possibility of such generative richness, variation, or "failure" was shared by their predecessors and contemporaries (as tagged by terms like monstrosity, anomaly, *mum*, or simply "not offspring"). They, like other late ancient literary, medical, and philosophical writers, sought to make sense of such events. Their determinations of the species of uterine products would have tangible consequences about everything from how to kill animals to how to eat them, and from how to dispose of presumptive human remains to ritual impurity of the parturient. Finally, I have sought to pry apart the differing orientations of the Mishnah and the Tosefta; as we have seen, the latter presses more firmly on the overlaps than the boundaries, between the human and the animal in the realm of reproduction. In this respect, the Tosefta finds likeness to reside not only in the markings of human difference but in the very set of features that signified the "personhood" that humans were thought to uniquely possess: the face.

This stickiness of likeness here starts to expose the arbitrary nature of the project of discerning difference *versus* likeness in the first place. Historians who have come of age after "reproduction," understand it to have been wedded to modern industrial commitments to mass manufacturing and the distribution of identical products, as well as to the tracking and standardizing of populations through various state institutions. As such, it is perhaps more difficult for us to appreciate the more artisanal, smaller-scale sense of image making in antiquity (even in its relatively large scale forms), not to mention the insecure ways in which it was tied to generation. Here the fragility of humanness—and, indeed, of species distinctions themselves—generates criteria of likeness/unlikeness.

If standard models of kinship rested on the notion that "like begets like," at the very least both the Mishnah and the Tosefta express dissent about how likeness is established, exposing the arbitrariness of the very distinction between "like" and "unlike." The Tosefta—per Rabbi Hanina—goes even further: for him, even the sages' minimal requirement for human difference is intertwined with the very other that it seeks to distinguish. The result is a perspective that does not seek to find commonalities between humans and nonhumans (as do so-called "likeness" animal studies theorists); nor does it insist on the radical alterity of nonhumans (as do so-called "difference" theorists). Rather, this approach is what might be described as an "indistinction" theory, according to which we ought to attend to the ways that the human is always, already animal.[128]

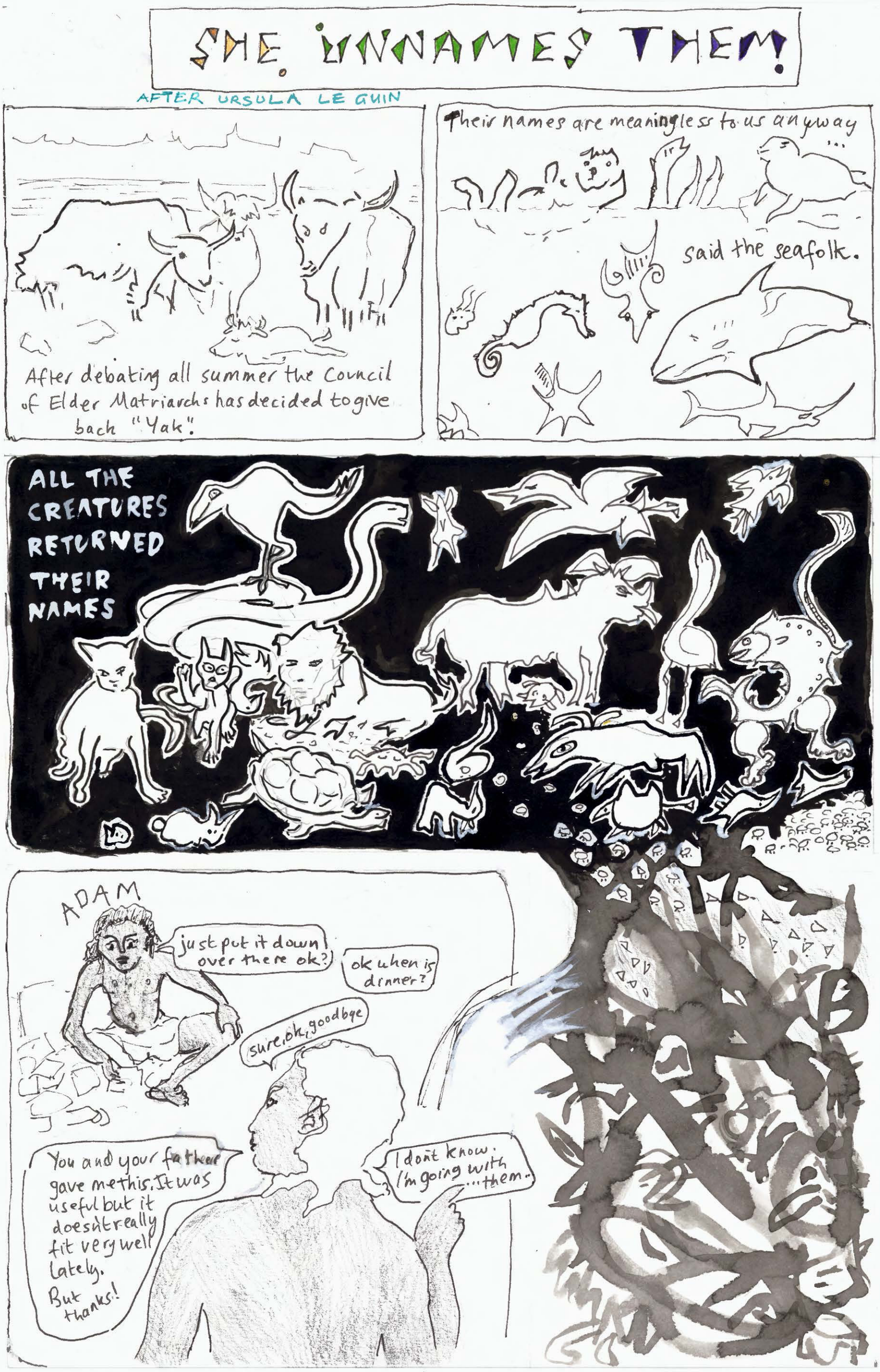

SHE UNNAMES THEM!
AFTER URSULA LE GUIN
After debating all summer the Council of Elder Matriarchs has decided to give back "Yak".
Their names are meaningless to us anyway...
said the seafolk.
ALL THE CREATURES RETURNED THEIR NAMES
ADAM
just put it down over there ok?
ok when is dinner?
sure, ok, goodbye
You and your father gave me this. It was useful but it doesnt really fit very well lately. But thanks!
I dont know. I'm going with ...them.

FIGURE 7. Rafael Rachel Neis, *She Unnames Them* (After Ursula K. LeGuin). Mixed media, 2022.

2

Multiplicity

A manatee in Sarasota, a crocodile basking along the Amazon River, a bacterium lining the gut of a feline who lives in a penthouse in Kyoto. The fiction of consciousness that stops some beings called human from seeing the threads that bind everyone and everything. Is this called knowing?

Otters, pigeons, ants, cows. We are struck by the plenitude of life-forms that surround us. Eagles, kittens, mice, crabs. We imagine that it falls to us to distinguish between life's multiplicity by naming and sorting the creatures. Monkeys, elephants, unicorns, sirens. This impulse seems to surface for the Priestly and Yahwist authors. In Genesis 1, the Priestly authors sort the creatures into classes, according to origin and habitat, in the form of a staggered creation narrative. Creatures of various stripes are formed in the waters, the land, and the air, "according to their kinds." This drama is staged over a succession of days—thereby slowing while accounting for the swell of life—climaxing with the emergence of the human. In Leviticus 11 these authors resume their project of sorting through the binary classifications of pure/impure and permitted/forbidden. But, as we saw in the previous chapter, they also divided the groups that populate the largely generic schema of Genesis 1 into more particular kinds and even subdivided some of those "according to their kinds." Elsewhere in Leviticus, the Priestly authors scrutinized various kinds of domesticated cattle for cultic and sacrificial purposes and prohibited the mating of *different* species. The Yahwist writers in Genesis 2 have God engineer animals because "it is not good for Adam to be alone" (Gen 2:17). In their telling, God then brings each creature to Adam who, without hesitation, promptly names "every animal and bird of the heavens and to every living creature of the field" (Gen 2:20). Whether they ascribe this activity to divinity or to humanity, both sets of authors narrate the sorting and classification of animals and their kinds.

Each iteration offers a bit more detail—the creaturely realm conceived in Leviticus 11 is more elaborate than the one given in Genesis 1—and yet this will to know and name is still elegantly compact. Our focus in this chapter is on how the tannaim unrolled the relatively brief beastly bevy of Leviticus 11 and created a more crowded creaturely coterie. I will pursue this by examining the Sifra, the tannaitic commentary on Leviticus. Focusing on its interpretations of Leviticus 11, I will make three interrelated arguments. First, I will argue that the Sifra's exegetical encounter with scripture is *itself* generative, licensing the multiplication of species and classificatory groupings. Second, I will show how the tannaitic commentators invoke the *language* of multiplication—*reviya*—as a key hermeneutic device for their propagation of classifications and species identifications. Third, I will show that the tannaim demonstrate awareness of the relationship of interpretative multiplication (*reviya*) to generative propagation (as in *peru u-revu*, reproduce and multiply), as demonstrated in the classificatory groups they create as well as in their accounts of spontaneous generation. It is difficult to find a precise analog to this layered enterprise of proliferation, exegetical, scriptural, and taxonomical. It is a very different effort than the relentlessly empirical gaze of Aristotle's natural history writings. Neither does it resemble Pliny's breathless collation and concatenation of peoples and animals and lands as a paeon to the Roman Empire and beyond.[1] Nor is it quite the moralizing scriptural bestiary of *Physiologus* (some time between the second and fourth centuries CE). Instead, the tannaim virtually join hands with God in filling out creation itself.

THE SIFRA

The Sifra is a running commentary on Leviticus, edited sometime in third-century Palestine, roughly around the same time as other tannaitic works.[2] tannaitic writings are comprised of two rather different genres: midrashim, or run-along commentary on the Bible (of which the Sifra is but one instance), on the one hand, and topically organized, freestanding compendia exemplified by the Mishnah, on the other. As we follow key movements of the Sifra as it combs through Leviticus 11, we will observe an adamant adherence to the particles, words, and phrases of scripture.[3] Yet I will argue that the Sifra is a compound product of its authors' interface with the Bible, those authors' ideas of scripture and reading, their larger frameworks of knowledge making, and the topics at hand—in this case, creaturely life-forms.

In keeping with the commentarial genre, the Sifra is at pains to render its workings transparent, whereas the Mishnah is organized in a relatively freestanding fashion.[4] The Sifra is ostensibly and ostentatiously transparent about its methods for the proliferation of species and animals out of the relatively compact bestiary of Leviticus. It is seemingly constrained by the order, words, and groupings of the verses and phrases it tracks and follows. Yet some of its logics do not necessarily match contemporary ideas of what constitutes interpretation and may seem to our eyes to be patently "eisegetical"—reading into the text—rather than exegetical.[5]

The kind of run-along commentary evinced in the Sifra is referred to as *midrash halakhah*—which some might translate as "halakhic (or legal) exegesis." By this usage, where *midrash* refers to the exegesis of scripture, scholars differentiate this kind of exegesis from post-tannaitic *midrash aggadah* or "homiletic or exegetical interpretation"—in other words, expositions on the Bible (e.g., Leviticus Rabbah versus Genesis Rabbah, respectively). There are significant stylistic and substantive differences between these types of biblical commentary: for instance, the Sifra tends to be more interested in the ritual implications and elaborations of scripture (sharing a fair amount of "halakhic" material found in the Mishnah and Tosefta). However, these characteristics of the Sifra fail to explain all of its substance. Specifically, the Sifra's positioning as scriptural commentary, coupled with its significant interest in ritual rubrics (or halakhah), surely makes its discussions of nonhuman creatures different from, say, Aristotle's motivations in discussing animals in the *Generation of Animals*, or Pliny's in his *Natural History*. Yet the desire to extract and support ritual schemes from scripture cannot on its own explain the Sifra's impulse to elaborate, specify, and identify animals in the ways that it does.

I often refer to the Sifra as if it were an agent—e.g., "the Sifra expounds"—particularly when the text of the Sifra states something *without* attributing it to a particular rabbinic sage. Such material represents the anonymous stratum of the Sifra. Occasionally, I will refer to particular tannaim (sages who lived between the first and early third centuries): this is when the Sifra attributes a particular homily or exegesis to a named rabbi.[6] When relevant, I will also touch on the Sifre—a tannaitic exegetical commentary on Deuteronomy—for its insights into the rather brief recitation of the animal purity rules in Deuteronomy 14, which happen to be correspondingly far more concise than those of the Sifra on Leviticus. In reading the evidence of the Sifra, I ask about what creaturely world is conjured when rabbinic exegesis of a proliferative bent meets Leviticus 11.

FRAMING KNOWLEDGE ITSELF

The Sifra's commentary on Leviticus 11 begins and ends in the same, revealing, way: by framing the enterprise of knowledge making itself. The biblical chapter begins with a pointed statement of its theme:

> And God spoke unto Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, "Speak to the children of Israel, saying: 'This (*zot*) is the living being that you may eat among all the animals that are on the earth.'" (Leviticus 11:1–2)

Focusing on parts of speech—such as the demonstrative pronoun "this"—the Sifra opens by conjuring the conditions in which the scriptural knowledge in question is transmitted. As is often the case in midrashic exegesis, "this" is understood literally as deixis involving fingers and hands. We thus learn that Moses declared that "*this* is the living creature that you may eat" (Lev 11:2), while "grasping" each and every permitted and prohibited creature in question and "displaying it" to the Israelites.[7] This is a flamboyant, hands-on display of animal knowledge. This rabbinic vision of Moses is akin to the way that Galen staged his vivisections of animals as performative, public spectacles.[8] It also subtly conveys the kind of expertise that the tannaim are claiming for their own expansion of the Levitical bestiary.

Contrast this picture with that presented in the Sifre, the tannaitic run-along commentary on Deuteronomy. A shorter version of the animal purity rubrics, as mentioned above, appears in Deuteronomy 14. In its commentary there the Sifre includes a teaching by Rabbi Akiva, who trades on the implausibility of Moses having this kind of knowledge. "Was Moses a hunter or an archer?" he asks rhetorically. He argues that the knowledge in Deuteronomy 14 must have been of divine origin.[9] The Sifra uses the impossibility of Moses having what is clearly a very particular kind of expertise, attributed (exclusively) to professionals, to assert the heavenly origins of the Bible.[10] We might wonder whether this is meant to also apply to the zoological expansions of the rabbis.

The Sifra's closing commentary on Leviticus 11, like its opening, takes its cue from the content of scripture, which itself approaches something of a summative and even explanatory framing. The Bible reminds Israelites of the departure from Egypt. It enjoins them to be holy the way that God is holy and to refrain from becoming impure through impure creatures (Leviticus 11:44–45) and then finishes as follows:

> and this is the teaching of (*torat*) the animal, the fowl, and every living creature that swarms in the water and that creeps on the earth: to separate between impure and pure, and between the living thing that can be eaten and the living thing that cannot be eaten. (Leviticus 11:46–47)

From scripture the Sifra deduces that God's very purpose in extracting the Israelites from Egypt was so that they would accept the "burden of commandments," such that to undertake or refuse this obligation is tantamount to affirming or denying the Exodus. It glosses the injunction to be holy the way God is holy in the following way: "just as I (God) am *parush*, so too, you should be *perushim*."[11] The term *parush* means abstemious, but it can also mean separate or distinct. The Sifra makes this doubled sense of separating or distinguishing oneself from others *by* distinguishing and separating among species (especially those that enter or come in contact with human bodies) explicit in an exegesis on a virtually identical phrase elsewhere in Leviticus.[12]

The closing words to the Sifra's commentary on Leviticus 11 are even more indicative of its understanding of knowledge making or *torah* (teaching, instruction) about animals:

> And what does "to separate [between the pure and the impure]" (Lev 11:47) come to indicate? It is not only to study but also to *know* which is impure and which is pure.[13]

Here the Sifra points to the added value of the words "separate" in verse 47 after the previous verse's "teaching of (*torat*) the animal, the fowl" (verse 46) and so on. It distinguishes knowing from mere study or repetition. Knowledge goes beyond: it allows for “separation” or the discerning capacity to create distinctions. In fact, it is this kind of “knowing” that arguably sponsors the very project of the Sifra and its proclivity for the enumeration and expansion that is classification itself.[14] By this reckoning, knowledge is not only a grasping; it is a kind of *making*. Taking in the way the Sifra bookends its commentary on Leviticus 11, we are oriented in a rabbinic-onto-epistemic (being-knowing) enterprise founded in the tactile grasp of the animals, “what is known” (*be-yadu’ah*)—in other words, the objects of knowledge themselves—and in closing, we are inducted into a kind of discerning knowledge that goes beyond mere theoretical repetition.

EXPANDING THE LEVITICAL BESTIARY

In between this framing at the beginning and the end, the Sifra uses established exegetical techniques to elaborate the biblical text in multiple ways: with expansion (*ribbuy*), exclusion (*mi‘ut*), and specifications. The dietary rules begin in Leviticus 11:2 with instructions to Israel about “the living being (*hayah*) that you may eat among all the animals (*behemah*) that are on the earth.” The verse that follows then details the criteria for such edible creatures: split hooves and chewing the cud. The Sifra explains that Leviticus 11:2 comes to narrow the import of Genesis 9:3: “Every swarming thing that lives (*hay*) is for you to eat; like the green vegetation, I have given you all.”[15] Indeed, in Genesis 29:30, God offered land creatures, animals, and humans “all green vegetation to eat.” For the Sifra, Leviticus 11:2 refines the earlier permission to eat animals that was given to Noah to “this”—the specifics of “the living being (*hahayah*) that you may eat.” After clarifying that there are parts even within permitted animals that are forbidden for consumption, the Sifra inquires whether those criteria for pure animals only apply to nonhybrids. It concludes that the elements “*hayah*” (wild animal, in rabbinic Hebrew) and “*mi*” (from) and “*behemah*” come to include hybrids include hybrids (*le-rabot ‘et ha-kilayim*).[16] But the hybrid that is the product of a land animal and a sea creature is excluded—even if it bears the signs of purity—because of the verse’s words “that are on the earth.” Likewise, those sea creatures that have the requisite characteristics (*simanim*, or signs, i.e., split hooves and that chew the cud) are not permitted, again because of the stipulation “on the earth.”[17] Even as it fortifies distinctions between land animals (and implicitly, quadrupeds) and sea creatures, the Sifra conjures a variety of sea/animal creature combinations that blur them, morphologically and reproductively.

The Sifra goes on to clarify that when pure animals birth offspring that look like impure kinds (spontaneously occurring rather than products of hybridization), despite lacking the requisite “signs,” these deliveries are nonetheless pure and edible. This it infers from “*hayah*” (living creature) in Leviticus 11:2, which also stands as a generic open signifier (to include such a case). Conversely, the Sifra rules that a delivery of a seeming “pure” animal that “chews the cud and has split hooves” is in fact not permitted if it is “born to the impure.” The Sifra gives the example of “the cow born of the camel.”[18] While we encountered this case in tBekhorot 1:9, it surfaces here as part of the Sifra’s teasing out of scenarios of species variation and it enters the expanding rabbinic coterie of creatures—one, as we’ll see, of many additions to what is explicit in Leviticus 11. Later, the Sifra refers back to these cases, given that it does permit the consumption of “pure [fish] that is inside the impure” but prohibits “the impure [fish] inside the pure.”[19] It asks: “why did you see fit to say that with animals—that which is in the innards (*she-be-me’ey*) of the impure is impure, that which is in the innards (*she-be-me’ey*) of the pure is pure—but with fish, that is not so?”[20] The explanation is “because it is not of its products (*giddulav*).” Whether this is because the host fish has ingested the fish within (tBekh 1:7) or because it is some other external entity the Sifra does not say.[21] But we do know that when one finds one kind of fish inside another it was not gestated.[22]

Key to all these extensions is the reliance on some scriptural element. One might add that most of these permutations that supplement the biblical text are not echoed in the parallel Mishnah and Tosefta sources. This is not to say that the Mishnah and Tosefta do not also expand the Levitical bestiary in their own ways—indeed, we see some parallels to these cases in chapters 1 and 5. But the Sifra’s efforts in this regard surpass them. The Sifra’s interpretive tactics toward the opening verses of Leviticus 11 showcase a robust set of preexisting *rabbinic* categories of animals (wild versus domesticated quadrupeds, pure versus impure, land animals versus sea animals, and combinations thereof) and generative possibilities (hybridization and spontaneously occurring species variation). Through its commentary, the Sifra introduces, deploys, and extends classificatory nomenclature, some of which is partially licensed by Leviticus. For instance, while there is no sense that Leviticus distinguishes vertebrates from invertebrates or creatures that reproduce sexually from those that do not, the Sifra does so, and it describes these categories using the classificatory nomenclature of *min* (kind) that originates in scripture.[23] It also formalizes the classificatory enterprise by which creatures are banded together according to morphological criteria, using the term *simanim* (signs) to designate the traits, characteristics, marks—like fins and scales, or chewing the cud and split hooves—by which one can identify creatures. The term itself, a calque of the Greek (*semeion, semeia*), is another example of a latter-day rabbinic imposition on the scriptural text.

The Sifra is occasionally ingeniously—if misleadingly—explicit about the contradictions between its classifications and the conspicuous absence thereof in the Bible. For instance, noting that the Bible’s usages of *hayah* (literally, living being) and *behemah* (animal or cattle) are incongruent with the ways the rabbis treat these as terms of art for the binary categories of wild animal and domesticated animal, respectively, the Sifra inventively (or incredibly) reads Leviticus’s inconsistent usage to infer that the domesticated animal is in the broader category of the wild animal and vice versa.[24] But it doesn't supply us with a biblical justification for the wild/domesticated animal binary in the first place, thereby naturalizing the latter.

What follows are several additional instances in which the Sifra imports various preexisting categories into the biblical text. The exegetical hooks for these are sometimes explicitly justified; at other times, particular classes of creatures are more tenuously posed (e.g., as part of the Sifra's hypotheticals designed to fine-tune inclusions or exclusions intended by words or particles of scripture). The kinds and classes innovated by the rabbis include grouping creatures by their modes of generation, the presence or absence of bones, the number of feet involved in their locomotion, and the elemental substances from which they are generated. As we investigate these rabbinic kinds, we will also continue to reflect on the exegetical methodology itself (deduction, multiplication, analogy, similarity, a fortiori, and so on), capping our analysis with an exegesis by Rabbi Akiva that, I'll argue, reflects on the exegetical project of expanding the Levitical bestiary.

Generative Modes and In/Vertebrate Creatures

On four occasions in its commentary on Leviticus 11, the Sifra introduces a distinction among animals by virtue of their reproductive modes, specifically between those that reproduce sexually and those that do not.[25] These occur in the Sifra's commentary on Leviticus 11:10–11 (fish), Leviticus 11:29–31 (creeping creatures, *sheratsim*), Leviticus 11:29 (mice), and Leviticus 11:41–43 (crawling creatures, *remasim*). In two of these cases (fish and creepers), the further distinction—and permutation—in/vertebrate is also introduced. The two remaining cases (mice and crawlers) consider sexual reproduction alone.

In each of these examples, the Sifra uses the terminology of *periyah u-reviyah* (reproduction and multiplication) and describes creatures as either *pareh ve-raveh* (reproduces and multiplies), or not, language clearly drawing from the blessings to "reproduce and multiply" (*peru u-revu*) directed at human and nonhuman creatures in Genesis 1:22 and 26. In one such instance, the Sifra wonders whether a repeated word ("in the waters," Lev 11:10 and 12) means that "the same kind that I permitted is the kind that I forbade."[26] It then specifies that this permitted kind refers to sea creatures who are "vertebrate (*ba'al 'atsamot*) and that reproduce and multiply (*pareh ve-raveh*)."[27] Of course, it goes on to negate this proposition, denying that the prohibition against sea creatures without fins and scales are limited *only* of those who are "vertebrate (*ba'al 'atsamot*) and that reproduce and multiply (*pareh ve-raveh*)." The Sifra claims that the phrase, "and all that do not have fins and scales in the waters" (Lev 11:10), references additional forbidden kinds—namely, "vertebrates that do not reproduce and multiply; invertebrates that do reproduce and multiply; and even *galim* and *tsfarde'im* that grow in the sea and that grow on the land."[28] How exactly the scriptural phrase in question supports these particular criteria—both reproductively and anatomically-morphologically informed—and concomitant classes is not explicated.[29] Rather than being a binary classification consisting in a single criterion (reproduces sexually versus doesn't), the Sifra presents two criteria based on reproduction and the presence/absence of vertebrae. This makes for three permutations or groups. Those groups are layered onto the pre-existing biblical criteria of fish with/out fins and scales which had already divided them into pure and impure kinds.

Aristotle similarly divides creatures into two major groupings: blooded and bloodless. Those with blood have spines and are vertebrates—analogous to the Sifra's *ba'alei atsamot* (those with bones).[30] Aristotle further distinguishes between those that generate through copulation (by male and female creatures) and those that generate spontaneously (and through copulation, "but out of putrescent soil and out of residues"). He observes that blooded animals mostly but not exclusively make up those who reproduce sexually, though some do not, and among bloodless animals there are those that reproduce sexually and those that are generated spontaneously.[31] The Sifra's three classes—made up of permutations of the two criteria for reproduction and morphology—therefore echo Aristotle's primary divisions of animals, albeit, as noted, superimposed onto biblical distinctions via scriptural hooks that link Leviticus 11 to Genesis 1.

As for its nonsexual reproducers, the Sifra considers several specific examples of animals that proliferate without sexual reproduction. For example, the words, "these you may eat of *all* that are *in* the waters" (Lev 11:9), permit the incidental consumption of tiny creatures (insects) living in water from "cisterns, ditches, or caverns."[32] In tTerumot 7:11 Rabbi Judah declares that it is heretical to filter out such creatures from wine and vinegar. Compare this with Matthew's Jesus who rebukes those who strain a gnat while swallowing a camel (Matt. 23:24). While it permits eating small creatures while they are mixed with liquid, the Sifra later explicitly prohibits eating *yavhushim* once they've been filtered apart from water.[33] These are the creatures we encountered in chapter 1—namely, those in whose form certain uterine emissions were shaped (though recall that the latter were parsed as either menstrual material, or the products of same-species sexual reproduction, or neither, rather than as spontaneously generated entities). Such creatures were generally seen as generated by the liquid itself rather than of like progenitors.[34] Similarly, the Sifra refers to the "*yitushin* (mosquitoes or gnats) that are in figs and the flies (*zizin*) that are in lentils and the worms (*tolaim*) that are in dates and dried figs," excluding them from the prohibition against consuming creatures that swarm "on the earth" (Lev 11:41).[35]

The Sifra applies a restrictive hermeneutic to Leviticus 11:31, which describes the impurity caused by contact with dead creeping creatures—"all that swarms (*ha-sharets*)." Leviticus names several creatures (Lev 11:29–30), including "the *huldah* (weasel) and the mouse, and the *tsav* (lizard) according to its kinds (*lemineihu*)."[36] The Sifra reads the verb "swarm" in the term above in its generative sense of "proliferate." An example of a biblical deployment of this meaning can be seen in the postdiluvian instruction to Noah and company to "reproduce and multiply (*peru urevu*), swarm (*shirtsu*) in the earth, and multiply therein" (Gen 9:7). The Sifra here raises the possibility that "swarms" (*sharets*) in Leviticus 11:31 is meant to exclude creatures that do not sexually reproduce. It thus asks whether spontaneously generated creatures such as "the mouse that is half flesh and half earth, that does not swarm (*she-eino shorets*), do not convey impurity." Building on this suggestion, the Sifra offers the following reasoning:

> And it is logical (*ve-din hu*): it (scripture) made the *huldah* (weasel) impure and it made the mouse impure. Just as "*huldah*" is as it sounds (*kishmuʿa)*, so "mouse" is as it sounds (*kishmuʿo*). Or perhaps just as the *huldah* is that which reproduces and multiplies (*pareh ve-raveh*), so [must] the mouse be that which reproduces and multiplies. This excludes (*lehotsi*) [from impurity] the mouse that is half flesh and half earth, which does not reproduce and multiply.[37]

Ultimately, however, the Sifra argues against this hypothetical, based on different logic, one that purports to partially *include* the half flesh and half earth mouse among those creatures that impurify:

> [Rather] it (scripture) comes to teach you, "within the *sherets* (*ba-sherets*)" (Leviticus 11:29), to include (*lehavi*) the mouse that is half flesh and half earth. One who touches its flesh [part] will become impure; the earth [part]—will remain pure.[38]

What we have is a creature that does not reproduce sexually, but that is a composite—part earth, part flesh. The Sifra reads such a creature into Leviticus 11:29: "these are those which shall be impure for you among the swarming creatures (*ba-sherets*) that swarm upon the earth, the *huldah*, the mouse." On its face, *ba-sherets* consists of the preposition *be* (here translated as "among") attached to *ha-sherets*, a collective noun meaning "the swarmer." The Sifra focuses on the preposition *be* and the substantive noun *sherets*, to read something like this: "these are those which shall be impure for you *within* the swarming creature (*ba-sherets*)."[39] Thus, in the case of a composite mouse that is part flesh and part earth, if a human touches the fleshly part *within* the mouse's body causes them to contract impurity (but not if they touch the earthy part). We encounter this earthy-fleshy spontaneously generated mouse in the Mishnah.[40] These mice also surface in the writings of both Pliny and the first-century BCE Greek historian Diodorus Siculus. Curiously, Pliny describes how, after the Nile floods, water and earth collaborate to generate these creatures, but incompletely, so that, "they are already alive in a part of their body, but the most recently formed part of their structure is still of earth."[41] The signature characteristic of spontaneously generated creatures is that they are not the products of same-species, dual, heterosexual, sexual coupling. In this sense, they are among the breakers of the rule that like begets like. Earth, silt, water, oil, and wine variously beget mice, flies, mosquitoes and so on. Similarly, rotting flesh or produce generate flies, maggots, and worms.[42]

Quadrupeds versus Bipeds and Lactation

A striking species that the Sifra introduces to Leviticus's bestiary is that of the human; it is introduced through the frame of bipedalism. Additionally, it considers lactation as something that, while failing to bind *all* humans—presumably, though it is not explicit, as a gendered distinction—is something humans have in common with quadrupeds. Leviticus 11:4 discusses those animals that do not conform to the criteria of chewing the cud and having split hooves (Leviticus 11:3). The verse lists the camel as its first instance (chews the cud but doesn't have split hooves). Observing the repetition of "camel" in both Leviticus 11:4 and Deuteronomy 14:7, the Sifra reads this construed redundancy to be supplying additional information: the milk of an impure animal is forbidden in addition to its forbidden flesh. This discussion triggers the consideration of bipeds—those who walk on two (*mehalkhei shtayim*)—as part of the Sifra's commentary on Leviticus 11:3–4's pure and impure animals. Yet why the human is interpolated and marked as bipedal is unclear: perhaps the prior discussion of forbidden/impure flesh and milk brings to mind permitted milk, of which the human is an example.[43] It is important to recall that the zoological category of the mammal—creatures that nurse animals with milk secreted from their mammary glands—did not obtain in antiquity. The human is of course also significant as, in this case, it is not just subject to dietary rules but is potentially an object of them.

Here is how the human enters the conversation:[44]

> I might think that even the consumption of the flesh of bipeds and the milk of bipeds would be encompassed in the negative commandment [of "do not eat"]. This would be a matter of logic (*ve-din hu*): if with an [impure] animal (*behemah*)it was lenient with respect to touch (i.e., it is permitted to touch its body) but was stringent about its milk (which is forbidden for eating), surely with bipeds, where it was stringent with touch [when impure], it would be stringent regarding milk! Scripture comes to teach you, "*this* [you shall not eat," (Leviticus 11:4), excluding bipedal milk, which *is* permitted].
>
> [Do] I exclude [from the prohibition] milk, which does not apply to all (since not all bipeds produce milk), but do I not exclude flesh that does apply to all? Scripture comes to teach you, "this [you shall not eat] . . . it is impure" (11:4): "this" (only the quadruped) is subject to a negative commandment against consumption, but the flesh of bipeds and the milk of bipeds are *not* subject to a negative commandment against their consumption.[45]

The human/biped is linked, contrasted, and then joined again with the animal in this sequence. First it is juxtaposed via an a fortiori argument with the animal (*behemah*) as part of an argument for why human milk should also be forbidden. The claim is that surely human milk ought to be forbidden in the same way that milk of an impure animal is forbidden because the rules regarding contact with impure humans are stricter than those pertaining to animals. To be consistent, the rules regarding consumption of human milk should be at least as strict. No, rejoins the Sifra, milk is in fact excluded from prohibition by reading the "this" in Leviticus 11:4 restrictively. But then, questions the Sifra, how is it that milk—which is not even something that all bipeds produce—is permitted, whereas flesh, which is something that all bipeds have, is prohibited? In its conclusion, the Sifra cites the verse's "this" restrictively, to mean that the prohibition is limited to the consumption of animal meat and milk but not human flesh or milk.

The outcome of this seeming digression may seem surprising. It yokes the argument for the permissibility of consuming human milk to that of eating human flesh. This is a consequence of a highly formalist logic, one that seeks a kind of consistency and that is retrospectively hung on a slight biblical hook: the hard-working "this." It is also worth emphasizing that the combination of permitting the consumption of human milk and flesh (or meat) while referring to the human as "those who walk on two" (alongside those who walk on four) has an animalizing effect. It becomes a way of highlighting the human species as part of a classificatory grouping—multilegged walkers—alongside certain other milk-producing nonhuman animals. This is one of the three occasions in tannaitic literature in which humans are called bipeds and in each of these they are compared to other animals. The other cases consider the im/purity of a different bodily substance: blood. In one, the Sifra asks whether the blood of "those who walk on two," together with that of creeping creatures, eggs, fish, and locusts are included in the prohibition against consuming blood alongside the verse's named "bird and animal (*behemah*)" (Lev 7:26).[46] In the third instance, mBikkurim 2:7 compares the blood of "those who walk on two" as "like" (*shaveh*), in different ways, that of the domesticated animal and that of the creeping creature.[47]

Plato, Aristotle, and Galen also considered humans in terms of their bipedalism.[48] It is suggested in Plato's *Statesman* that the human is a featherless bipedal land dweller.[49] The third-century CE Diogenes Laertius narrates how Diogenes of Sinope challenged this characterization by plucking a chicken and presenting it to the academy.[50] In response, "broad nails" was added to the definition. Aristotle grouped humans together with birds as "two-legged animals."[51] This attention to locomotion and leg number as a way of classifying animals appears in a variety of Greek and Roman philosophical and natural history texts.[52] The Sifra speaks of "those who *walk* on two" rather than the "two-legged." Perhaps it was inspired by the biblical chapter's references to creatures by both the number of legs and their manner of locomotion. Leviticus 11 references the creature "that walks on four" (*haholekh ʿal ʿarba*), the flying creeper (*sherets* in Lev 11:20, 21, 23), the animal (Lev 11:27), and earth swarmers (Lev 11:42). In the last case, Leviticus specifies not only "those who walk on four," but also "those who move on their belly" and "those that have multiple legs." These phrasings refer to morphology and motion.

Regardless of these potential inspirations, the Sifra offers no scriptural justification for introducing this terminology and, perhaps more significantly, Leviticus 11 makes no reference to humans as a species (and, more broadly, scripture as a whole does not do so through the lens of morphology or motion).[53] As with many hierarchical schemas, it is an unmarked "normate" that is presumed and, which goes without saying, that reveals the scales of value behind the schema.[54] At this point in the narrative that is the Priestly layer of scripture, the authors need not highlight what they rendered so explicitly in the denouement of Genesis 1.1–2:4—the human vis-à-vis the remainder of creatures.[55] For them nonhumans are according to "their kind" or "their kinds" (in Gen 1 and Lev 11); the human, in its mimetic replication of the divine is not. The seemingly innocuous rabbinic variation on a term, to describe humans functionally and morphologically, which was both a staple in Greek and Roman natural history texts and which was also derived from descriptions of nonhuman beings in Leviticus 11, represents a significant intervention in and shift from the Priestly hierarchy of being. Here, as elsewhere, this name for humans appears in an ostensibly zoological context (in the sense of knowledge making about nonhuman animals), and allows for the comparison of human (pedalism and locomotion) to that of other animals. Not only this: here, as well as in the other instances, the human qua biped surfaces as food (meat) and drink (the latter as milk or blood). By querying whether the human can effectively consume itself, the tannaim close the circle—by rendering the human both subject and object of the Levitical classes.

Parahumans and Other Exotica

One effect of flattening the human to a term of art that focuses on anatomy and locomotion, and that considers it as a potential source of provisioning along with other animals, is to undo human distinctiveness. The Sifra on Leviticus makes this move—dulling human uniqueness—several times. In some of these cases it accomplishes this while simultaneously introducing exoticized parahuman, or human-adjacent, beings to the Levitical bestiary.[56] The Sifra does this with the following case of the siren, in an expansive reading ("to bring, *lehavi*") of the word "*nefesh*" (being, also translatable as animate being, throat, breath, or soul) in Leviticus 11:10.[57]

When discussing sea creatures, Leviticus 11:10 dubs "all that do not have fins and scales in the seas and in the rivers . . . of all the living creatures (*nefesh ha-hayah*) that are in the waters . . ." as "prohibited."[58] Leviticus further stipulates that not only may one not eat the flesh of such creatures, but also that their corpses (*nivlatam*) are forbidden (Lev 11:11). The Sifra glosses the word *hayah* (lit., "living being") in the verse as the rabbinic term for wild animals (as opposed to domesticated animals, or the biblical *behemah*), and hence it discerns that *hayah* (in the phrase "living creatures, *nefesh hayah*") refers to a "sea animal" (*hayat hayam*). What ensues is a construed redundancy of the word *nefesh*, which it reads—pointing to the inclusion of the siren (*sirene*) among prohibited sea creatures—as follows:

> [“And all that do not have fins and scales in the seas and in the rivers, of every creeping creature of the waters, and of every living being (*nefesh hahayah*) of the waters that is in the waters—they (plural) are *sheqets* to you.”]
>
> “*hayah*”—this is the wild animal of the sea (*hayat hayam*).
>
> “*nefesh*”—to include (*lehavi*) the siren (*sirene*). I might think that she causes tent impurity per Rabbi Hahinai. It therefore comes to teach you “this [is the instruction (*torah*): when a human (*adam*) dies in a tent, whoever enters the tent and whoever is in the tent shall be impure for seven days. Numbers 19:4].”[59]

The potential inclusion of a siren is accomplished by an expansive exegesis.[60] As we see, the Sifra goes on to raise the possibility that the siren is, for all intents and purposes, a human when filtered through the frame of ritual purity.[61] We learn that Rabbi Hahinai considers a siren’s corpse to convey impurity in a manner uniquely associated with human bodies (“tent” impurity). The anonymous editorial voice of the Sifra promptly rejects this notion, reading the verse that governs human corpse impurity as excluding such humanlike sea creatures, “this [is the instruction: when a human dies in a tent]” (Num 19:14), restrictively (*mi‘ut*).

What we have is a being who is recognizably human (*adam*) yet also a wild sea animal (*hayah, hayat hayam*) appended to Leviticus’s list of sea beings that are impure for Israelite consumption.[62] Classification comes into relief over her dead body: is it a “carcass” (*nevelah*) or is it a corpse (*met*) subject to that most severe impurity of the dead human body? It is therefore through a combination of questions regarding contact, consumption, and death that the Sifra classifies the siren; as it does for many other creatures in the chapter. We may contrast the apparent prohibition of Jewish contact with and consumption of the siren (and the particularities of its impurity) by the anonymous voice of the Sifra and the Sifra’s allowance of the consumption of the milk and even, implicitly, the flesh, of humans. The introduction of the human and its look-alikes—those residing in the sea, and, as we’ll see in the next chapter in more detail, also those on land—subjects the very species that is to uphold the classificatory enterprise of Leviticus to the same rubrics. Rather than enacting a sharp cleavage between the human and the animal, the tannaim splice and dice animals into an abundance of groupings—entertaining several additional means of doing so beyond those already present in Leviticus’s polythetic im/pure classes. But unlike Leviticus, it even does something similar with the class of the human. To be sure, the Sifra is no *Systema naturae*—the comprehensive taxonomy of creatures penned by Linnaeus—but, as we will see in chapter 3, a similar debate testing the limits of the parahuman through its corpse impurity governs a wild humanlike creature, the field human. In the Sifra, the latter also surfaces as a member of a bevy of impure creatures whose dead bodies both convey impurity and are read into Leviticus 11:27.[63] In that little menagerie, we find, alongside the field human, exoticized animals, such as the monkey, the sea dog, and the elephant, as well as more prosaic (but, as we'll see, multivalent) kinds like the marten (*huldat hasna'im*) and the hedgehog (*kipod*).[64] In chapter 3, we will revisit some of these tannaitic insertions into the Levitical bestiary, and consider how they find their way into the Mishnah and Tosefta in the company of other animals—that is, in the form of menageries.

While creatures like the parahuman, the monkey, and the elephant, were doubtless exoticized by the tannaim, spontaneously generated flies, mosquitoes, midges, and even earth mice—considered Egyptian phenomena by Aristotle and Pliny—were ubiquitous and rather more prosaic. The Sifra reads additional exotica into Leviticus, notably the Leviathan and the salamander, casting the former as a pure sea creature based on Job 41:7 and 22.[65] Leviathan is a creature who surfaces several times in the Bible (e.g., Job 40–41. A fearsome being, fire and smoke breathing (Job 41:11–13) from its mouth, Leviathan has multiple heads (Ps. 74:14), or just one (Job 40:31), and is in the company of another "mythical" creature—Behemoth (Job 40:29). God alternately crushes Leviathan and dispenses him as food (Ps. 74:14), punishes him (Isaiah 27:1), or plays with him (Ps. 104:26). In later rabbinic sources, Leviathan's placement among pure kinds means that its body will be consumed and its skin made into a tabernacle for the righteous.[66] While we cannot attribute these later ideas about the fate of Leviathan to the tannaim, it is not unreasonable to assume that the creature assumed larger-than-life proportions for them, being colored by biblical descriptions.

The salamander is inserted among the three kinds that the Sifra derives from Leviticus 11:29 ("the *holed*, the mouse, and the *tsav*, according to its kinds"). The Sifra takes "according to its kind (*le-minehu*)" to moderate the *tsav* and "to include kinds (*min*) of *tsav*," including the *havarvar*, the *ben hanefilim*, and the salamander (*salamandra*).[67] We will revisit the salamander in particular at the end of this chapter, but for now I ask us to consider both parahumans and other exotica as additional and salient examples of the Sifra's additive tendency—saturating the sparse Levitical lists with supplementary members. I will add that my reference to certain creatures as "exotica" is not to imply our contemporary evaluations, but to convey that the sense of uniqueness or attached wonder that the rabbis actively attached to certain beings. At the same time, however, the rabbis' and others' exoticization of certain creatures does not necessarily mean that they made any distinction between creatures that were "mythical" and "fantastical" and those that were "real."

IDENTITY AND RESEMBLANCE

So far, we have encountered several instances of the Sifra reading classes and kinds into Leviticus 11, organizing them according to their modes of reproduction (sexual and spontaneous generation) or their anatomical and functional morphologies (in/vertebrate; poly/quadru/bipedalism) and introducing hybrids and spontaneously variant offspring, as well as exoticized creatures, including aquatic and terrestrial parahumans. In addition to teasing out such kinds by way of restrictive or expansive readings of phrases, prepositions, and the like, the Sifra employs other techniques—such as construed redundancies—whether in the same verse and passage, or even with reference to verses elsewhere in scripture. This is done to *enumerate* species that are added to those named in Leviticus and to *identify* particular kinds in contemporary (tannaitic) terms. Now we will examine how the tannaim enumerated some of the groupings and classes in Leviticus 11 by means of identification and resemblance.

One example of such expansiveness comes in the guise of restriction (to exclude, *lehotsi*). In reading 11:29's list of forbidden (versus permitted) creeping creatures (*sheratsim*), the Sifra wonders if the sea mouse is included, making various arguments as to why it might be.[68] These arguments are refuted by pointing to the term "on the earth," which is taken to exclude (*lehotsi*) the sea mouse. Even as it ultimately rejects the sea mouse as under discussion by the biblical verse, the Sifra has nonetheless expanded our bestiary. It is by such hermeneutic tricks, such as raising hypothetical inclusions or exclusions, that the Sifra draws more creatures into our purview.

The Sifra occasionally glosses particular terms for animals by identifying them as kinds known to contemporaries or by providing specific examples. Thus, it glosses the creeping creature the *tsav* as the *tsav:* in other words, it affirms that the biblical Hebrew term stands for the same creature as the term known by *tsav* in tannaitic Hebrew, demonstrating that there could be uncertainty about such terminological consistency.[69] Contrast this affirmation with the Sifra's identification of various permitted flying insects with different terms: the biblical *arbeh* is the *govay*; the biblical *sulam* is the *rashum*; the *hargol* is the *nafol*; and the *hagav* is the *nudayan*.[70] The Sifra defines the creature that "goes on its belly" (Lev 11:42) as the snake (*nahash*),[71] bringing the *kifonit* as an example (*kegon*) of a fish with multiple fins and scales (in a literalized reading of Leviticus 11:9's plurals).[72] The naming of the *kifonit* as an example serves to inspire and legitimate the reader in their own efforts to supply additional examples.

We observe a multitude of such moves at play as the Sifra tackles the list of prohibited birds in Leviticus 11:14–19. It begins with a teaching of Rabbi Akiva that rests on repetition (*heqesh*), albeit with slight variation, in Leviticus 11:14 and Deuteronomy 14:13, concluding that the *ra'ah* bird is in fact the same species (*min*) as the *ayah* kind.[73] It then parses the phrase, "every ʿ*orev* according to its kinds" (Lev 11:15), extracting more kinds as it goes. First, it glosses the word ʿ*orev* (commonly translated as raven) as the ʿ*orev:* this seemingly innocuous interpretation affirms that the biblical language designates the same referent as tannaitic terminology and makes explicit the exegetical methodology licensing further extrapolations. Delving deeper, the Sifra reads "every ʿ*orev*" to include (*lehavi*) the "ʾ*orev* of the valley" and the "ʾ*orev* that flies at the head of the doves (*yonim*)." These approximate what we might call "varieties"—that is, subdivisions of "species" in the Linnaean classificatory scheme. The Sifra reads the additional term, "according to its kind (*lemino*)," as including (*lehavi*) *zarzirim* (starlings) and the *snunit* (swallow). Continuing to the *nets* in 11:16, the Sifra informs us, "this is the offspring of the *nets* (hawk)." It then reads "according to its kinds (*lemineihu*)," which follows *nets* in 11:16 to include (*lehavi*) another kind (the falcon). Finally, the Sifra stands back and, surveying the bird list in 11:14–19, asks why the Bible deploys the expression, "according to its kind (*min*)," four times. Its response is instructive:

> For I might think that these [kinds alone] are forbidden and these (everything else) is permitted. Therefore, scripture comes to teach you "according to its kind," "according to its kind"—it expanded (*ribah*). How so? Learn from what is explicit. Just as the *nesher* which is explicitly mentioned, has no additional claw, does not have crop, does not have a craw that peels easily, and grasps [its prey] and eats: so, all like it (*kesheyotseh bo*) are forbidden.[74] Just as turtledoves and pigeons are particular in having an additional claw, a crop, a craw that peels easily and do not grasp and eat, so, all like it (*kesheyotseh bo*) are permitted.[75]

The Sifra claims that without the authorization of the repeated "according to its kind(s)," the Bible's list of forbidden fowl would have been exhaustive. With it—and here the Sifra ostensibly lays its own reading method bare—scripture invites the proliferation (*ribbuy*) of additional species. The Sifra isolates particular features of those named "explicitly" to deduce four common traits—mostly morphological—and to extrapolate to others like it (*kesheyotseh bo*). And "according to its kind(s)" further authorizes the Sifra to deduce the converse: those fowl that do *not* possess these four traits are then understood as permitted and pure birds (it gives turtledoves and pigeons as examples).[76] What the Sifra has essentially done here is to find significant traits or, in keeping with tannaitic language, signs (*simanim*), to parse the differences between the listed forbidden birds and the unnamed permitted ones. In a sense this relates to what the zoologists mentioned in this book's introduction sought to argue about the inclusion of yet another species of Barbet. The gaze that selects such features of distinction or similarity is the one that creates the grounds for inclusion and exclusion, as we showed in that (once) disputed case.

Arguably, all this exegetical labor is necessary with birds because, as the Mishnah admits, "the signs (*simanim*) of [pure] domesticated animals and of [pure] wild animals are stated in the Torah (i.e., split hooves and chews cud). The characteristics of [pure] birds are not stated."[77] In other words, unlike quadrupeds and fish, for instance, no particular criteria or characteristics for inclusion or exclusion are given. Leviticus simply lists twenty kinds that are forbidden without further comment on the list's logic and with no indication of what is permitted (though we may infer that birds that can be sacrificed are among them). This likely] accounts for why the tannaim recommend that one consult those in possession of the transmitted tradition (*masoret*) about the identification of bird species and rely on hunters' expertise about pure kinds (tBekhorot 1:12). Such comments testify that the usual rabbinic exegetical tools or traditions used to supplement or "uncover" scripture's lacunae are insufficient and that this requires extrarabbinic sources of knowledge. Given the absence of specific "signs," the Sifra asks whether we can infer that any and all birds unmentioned in the list of prohibited birds are permitted: "I might think that these [kinds alone] are forbidden and these (everything else) is permitted." In working out its negative response to this question, the Sifra then generates its criteria for forbidden and permitted birds.

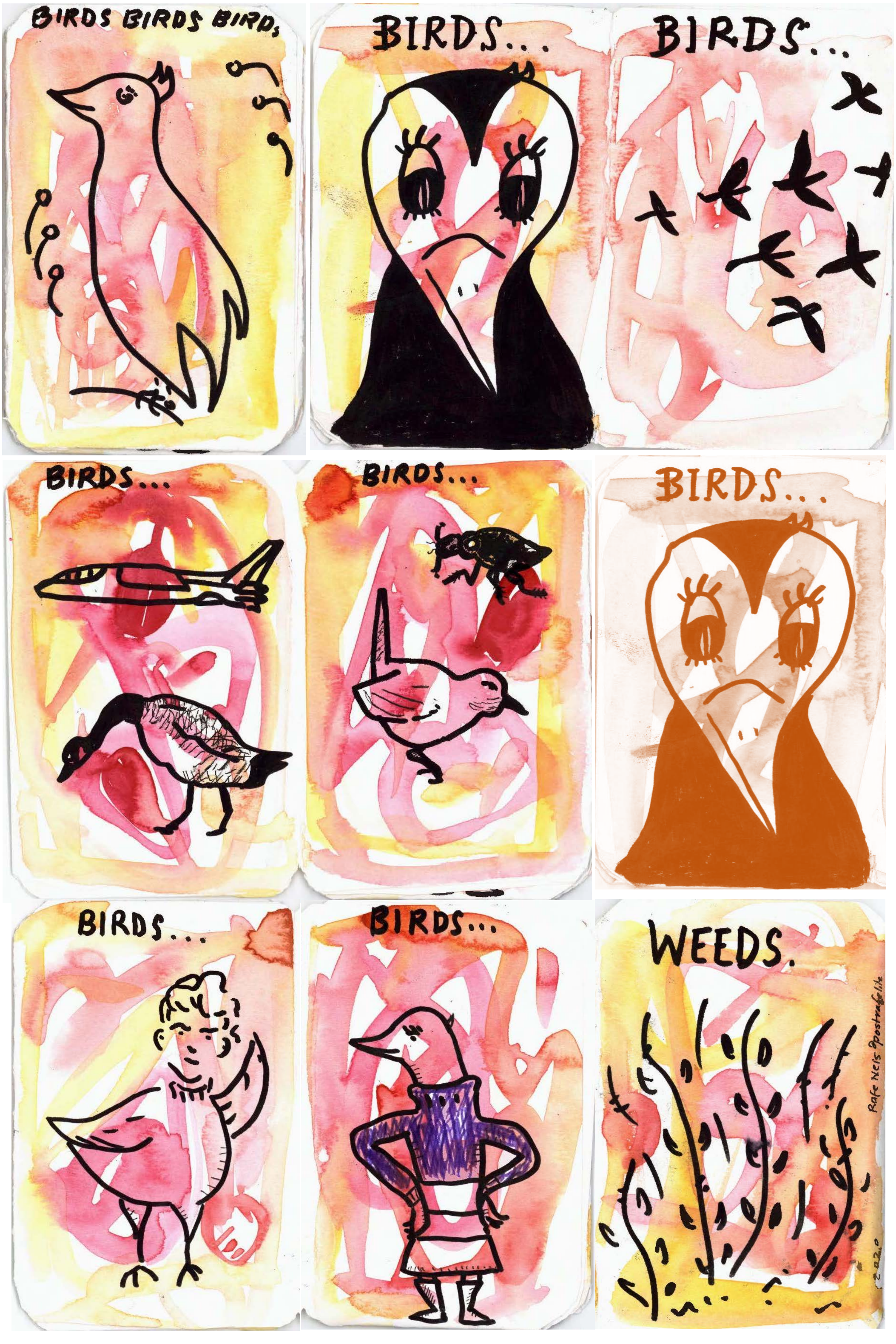
The Sifra stages similar sequences—identification, enumeration, and elaboration—in the subsequent exegetical unit on flying creepers (Lev 11:20–25) at some length.[78] This time, the Sifra relies on another four-time repetition of "according to its kind (*lemineihu*)" in these verses to sponsor two separate expansions and inclusions. The first looks for morphological traits, much as in the bird case, to generation inclusion beyond the creepers listed in the biblical verse and to thereby "expand (*lerabot*) to other species (*minim*)" by deducing from what is explicitly mentioned (*meforash*). The second expands to include (*lehavi*) specific, named creatures.

The third time the Sifra performs this kind of inductive and expansive enumeration of the Levitical bestiary pertains to earth crawlers (*sheratsim*, 11:29–31) and it follows a slightly different pattern. It is even more explicit about method, pointing to the search for likeness or resemblance (*dimyon*), as it searches for shared traits among the named creatures. The verse in question reads: "all that go on their belly, and all that go upon four, including all that have many feet; all swarming things that swarm upon the earth, you shall not eat them, for they are forbidden (*sheqets*)" (Leviticus 11:42). The Sifra reads the biblical text for characteristics rather than as an exhaustive list of prohibited species. It proceeds to break up the phrases "all that go upon the belly," "all that go upon four," and "all that have many feet" where the mode of locomotion or feature is taken to refer to a particular species (the snake, the scorpion, and the centipede, respectively), whereas the words for "all" or "including" refer to a particular similar creature (e.g., the snail and the beetle) and to "those that resemble the like (*hadomeh ladomeh*)."

Here is the Sifra at work:

> "go on its belly," this is the snake; "*all* that go [on their belly]," comes to include (*lehavi*) the worms (*shalshulin*)[79] and those that resemble the like (*hadomeh ladomeh*).
>
> "[all that] go upon four," this is the scorpion (*akrav*); "*all* that go," comes to include (*lehavi*) the beetle (*hipushit*)[80] and those that resemble the like (*hadomeh ladomeh*).
>
> "[all that have] many feet," this is the centipede (*nidal*);[81] "and *all*," comes to include those that look alike (*hadomeh*) and those that resemble the like (*hadomeh ladomeh*).[82]

These three sequences are structured as a simple identification (snake, scorpion, centipede), followed by an inclusive enumeration based on the word "all" (snails, beetle, the like), and capped by a method for attenuated expansion (those that resemble the like). The third sequence differs somewhat from the preceding two in not offering a specific content to the inclusive enumeration; instead, it simply declares that "all" includes that which is like (*ha-domeh*), leaving it for the auditor to figure out what creatures these might be. Rather than outlining specific traits (aside from those already in the biblical verse), this exegesis provides


BIRDS BIRDS BIRDS
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WEEDS.
Rafe Neis @postrafaelite
2020

FIGURE 8. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Birds, Birds, Birds*. Mixed media, 2020.

a method: a morphological gaze that scans for resemblance, and that is attenuated to the prior enumeration—whether snail or beetle or a *nidal*-like creature. The third sequence's ostensibly vague enumeration of "that which is like (the *nidal*)" is actually instructive. We infer that the relationship between resemblance-based expansion and identification—that is, between "that which is like" the *nidal* and the *nidal*, between the *shilshulin* and the snake, and between the *hipushit* and the scorpion—is founded on likeness. Then, the expansion (derived from "all") is built on something of a second remove of similitude. These first and second degrees of resemblance—or what we might think of as resemblance proliferating resemblances—testify to some of the difficulties we have already alluded to in clustering kinds. In particular, the phrasing of examples followed by a second-degree resemblance, is a way to promise that others—besides the authors of the Sifra—will continue to supply additional creatures to this ever-growing bestiary. As readers, we know that it is illustrative rather than exhaustive.

GENERATIVE READING, PROLIFERATING SPECIES

Our tour through the Sifra on Leviticus 11 highlights its creative and generative reading practices in identifying and elaborating the Bible's bestiary. The Sifra will neutrally present nonscriptural technical terms for species and classifications, but it also often strains to derive creatures from scripture. For obvious reasons, the exegetical technique of *ribbuy* (multiplication, expansion) is heavily enlisted. In this final portion of our chapter, I focus on the Sifra's closing exegesis of scripture's land crawlers (*sheratsim*), and on a telling intervention by Rabbi Akiva that comes on the tails of the exoticized salamander.

Let us first briefly outline the literary context in which Rabbi Akiva's homily is incorporated. The verse under scrutiny is 11:29: "and these will be impure for you among the land crawler (*sherets*) that swarms on the earth: the *holed*, the mouse, and the *tsav* according to its kinds." The mouse—as we saw—generates a consideration of the spontaneously generated earth-flesh mouse. This directly follows it:

> "The *tsav*"—this is the *tsav*.
>
> "According to its kinds (*le-mineihu*)" to multiply (*lerabot*) the kinds of (*minav*) *tsav:* the *havarvar*, the *ben hanefilim*, and the *salamandra*.[83]

This identification and then expansive multiplication (*le-rabot, ribbuy*) of kinds precedes the following:

> When Rabbi Akiva would encounter this verse he would declare, "'how multiple are your works, O God (Ps. 104:24).' You have creatures (*beriyot*) that grow (*gedelot*) in the sea and those that grow on the dry land. Those that grow in the sea, if they

> transferred to the dry land, they would die. Those that grow on the land, if they spread to the sea, they would die. [You have] those that grow in fire and those that grow in air. Those that grow in fire, if they relocate to the air, they would die. Those that grow in air, if they relocate to the fire, they would die. The place of life for this one is death for that one; the place of life for that one is death for this one." And he would say, "'how multiple are your works, O God!' (Ps. 104:24)."[84]

A compound of concepts suffuses this homily, some of which derive from the text of Leviticus 11 and the cited verse from Psalms. Rabbi Akiva also subtly references Genesis. The latter, specifically, seeds the notion of creatures originating in specific material elements:

> And God said, "Let the waters swarm with the swarm of living creatures (*sherets nefesh hayah*) and let fowl fly over the earth in the open firmament of heaven" (Gen 1:20).
>
> And God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after its kind." And it was so. (Gen 1:24)

Genesis 2 is even more explicit about God creating both Adam "from the dust of earth" (2:7) and "all the living creatures of the field (*hayat ha-sadeh*) and all the birds of the heavens from the earth" (Gen 2:19). But this scriptural legacy is not explicitly signaled in Rabbi Akiva's midrash. His explication seems to draw on the notion that distinct creatures derive from the four elements: air, water, earth, and fire.[85] Variations of this idea reverberate across the writings of Plato and Aristotle in the fourth century BCE through to Philo and Aelian in late antiquity. Aristotle describes how "certain creatures, slightly larger than flies, and winged" are "generated (*gignetai*) in fire"—specifically, the fire of Cypriot smiths. In fact, he puts it thus:

> these jump and crawl through the fire. And they die when kept away from fire, just as the larvae previously mentioned die when kept away from snow. The fact that certain animal structures exist which really cannot be burnt is evident from the salamander, which, so they say, puts the fire out by crawling through it.[86]

Here we find not only a version of Rabbi Akiva's observation that creatures that move from their originating substance will die, but also the association of this idea with the salamander being at home in the fire.[87] It is clear that Rabbi Akiva's homily is deliberately placed not only as his response to the verse in Leviticus (as narrated by the Sifra) but, more specifically, also as a response to the—just mentioned—wondrous *salamandra*, which is thereby naturalized into the very fabric of the verse. In other words, Rabbi Akiva's acclamation only *makes sense* if we have read or already know the previous exegesis regarding the salamander. This hides in plain view the ways that the Sifra folds its *own* expansive readings into an "encounter" with "this verse."

The association of the fire-born with one of the four elements is evident in Philo's incorporation of the "fire-born (*purigona*)" into a four-part schema:

> For the universe must be filled through and through with life (*epsuchōsthai*), and each of its primary elementary divisions contains the forms of life which are akin and suited to it. The earth has the creatures of the land, the sea and the rivers those that live in water, fire the fire-born, which are said to be found especially in Macedonia, and heaven has the stars.[88]

As with Aristotle, and various other versions of this idea, Philo grounds the general principle of four elements generating and sustaining particular creatures in a geographically specific example of the fire-born—Macedonia rather than Cyprus—even though he does not mention the salamander by name. Philo's observations here ground a preceding assertion that invisible angels (commonly known as demons) populate the air and are generated by it. For Philo this principle of the universe's totally generative properties means that all elements are animated (*epsuchōsthai*).

The second- and third-century CE Roman naturalist Aelian more closely echoes Aristotle. He cites the four-element principle not just in its affirmative (creatures are sustained in their respective elements) but also in its negative (they cannot survive if relocated):

> That living creatures should be born upon the mountains, in the air, and in the sea, is no great marvel (*thauma*), since matter, food, and nature are the cause. But that there should spring from fire winged creatures which men call "Fire-born," and that these should live and flourish in it, flying to and fro about it, is a startling (*ekplēktikon*) fact. And what is more extraordinary (*thauma*), when these creatures stray outside the range of the heat to which they are accustomed and take in cold air, they at once perish. And why they should be born in the fire and die in the air others must explain.[89]

Aelian's explicit inability to give an explanation buttresses the expressions of wonder—*thauma* (twice) and *ekplēktikon*—that punctuate his description of the fire-born creature:. This juxtaposition of marvel with the fire-born finds its counterpart in Rabbi Akiva's liturgical acclamation "how multiple (or great) are your works!" (Ps. 104:24), which opens and closes his homily.

Let us further scrutinize Psalm 104:24, which sandwiches Rabbi Akiva's citation of the elements generating and sustaining specific creatures:

> How multiple (*rabu*) are your makings, O God,
> (or: How your works have multiplied, O God)
> all of them you wrought in wisdom;
> the earth has filled (*mal'ah ha'arets*) with your creations (*kinyanekha*).

This verse is nestled in Psalm 104, a chapter studded with an evocative praise of God's earthly creation and its sustenance. God channels the waters into springs, which flow into valleys and onward to nourish the beasts of the field and wild donkeys, while birds erupt in song. Immediately following our verse (104:24), we

TABLE 1

Psalm 104:24	Genesis 1:28
How they are multiple (*rabu*)* your makings, O God, (or how your works have multiplied, O God,) all of them you made in wisdom; the earth has filled (*mal'ah ha'arets*) with your creations (*kinyanekha*).	And God blessed them; and God said unto them: "Be fruitful, and multiply (*u-revu*), and fill the earth (*u-mil'u et ha'arets*) and subdue it; and dominate over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the earth."

*Or "how they have multiplied."

hear of the "countless swarming creatures (*remes ve-ein mispar*)" as well as the "great and small living beings (*hayot*)" that populate the "vast sea" (104:25), and we encounter God frolicking with the Leviathan (104:26). The chapter as a whole speaks to the plenitude, magnitude, and variety of creation. Robert Alter notes how the word *remes* (swarming creature) invokes the "vocabulary of the Priestly creation story," describing the Psalm as "a poetic free improvisation on themes from the creation story at the beginning of Genesis."[90]

Just as verse 24 is not the only verse of praise in Psalm 104, so is the entire chapter not the only one in the book of Psalms that celebrates God's creation. I believe that the homilist in the Sifra selected Psalm 104:24 for its pointed allusion to Genesis 1:28. Setting the verses side by side helps us see this.

The repeated deployment of "making" (your makings—*ma'asekha*, you made—'*asita*) in Psalms 104:24 tugs at Genesis 1's repeated description of God's acts of creation in these terms (and [they] made, *va-ya'as:* Gen 1:7, 16, 25, 31). More specifically and strikingly, the Psalm alludes to Genesis 1:28: "reproduce and multiply and fill the earth (*peru u-revu u-mil'u et ha'arets*)," as the former describes "how multiple (*rabu*)" and "the earth has filled (*mal'ah ha'arets*)." Rabbi Akiva brings these dimensions of the Psalm—*reviyah* as multiplicity in both its quantitative and reproductive sense, coupled with the proliferative filling (*miluy*) the earth (*ha'arets*)—into conversation with Leviticus 11:29, while threading in Genesis 1. So, too, in describing the wondrous fashioning of "creatures (*beriyot*)," the homily alludes to the iterated verb to describe divine action in Genesis 1: create. Most notably, it summons the words, "in the beginning God created (*bara*) . . ." (Gen 1:1).[91]

It is my contention that Rabbi Akiva's midrash is a paean to multiplication itself, on several (even multiple) registers. It obviously praises the wondrous plenitude of divine creation. Crucially, the homily applauds exegetical multiplicity, particularly the proliferative mechanism of *ribbuy*. Additionally, it celebrates the many and multiple ways that different life-forms come to be. Indeed, this midrash trails two exegeses that themselves emphasize different dimensions of multiplication (*ribbuy*): first, reproductive multiplicity, in the discussion of creatures that do or do not sexually reproduce or multiply (*pareh ve-raveh*);[92] and second, hermeneutic multiplication through the expansive method of *ribbuy* (lit., plurality or expansion), in which the term *lemineihu* (according to its kinds) alludes to additional species like the salamander. These senses of multiplication are extended to the creatures that are generated (multiplied) in each of the four elements and locations. Taken together, the phrase "how multiple (*rabu*)!" (Ps. 104:24) and the later part of the same verse "your creations fill the earth (*malah ha'arets*),"[93] cite Genesis 1:27—"reproduce and multiply and fill the earth (*peru u-revu u-milu et haarets*). By highlighting these key terms of multiplication, filling, and earth, Rabbi Akiva's midrash recalls Philo on how the world is suffused "through and through with life." Leviticus, when literarily and associatively crossed in this way with both the psalm and Genesis 1, argues not for an originary and finite creation (or "genesis") but rather for iterative and ongoing *generation*.

Just as the psalm expresses wonder at the "countless" creatures "great and small" that populate the "vast sea" (Ps. 104:25), so does Rabbi Akiva marvel at this surplus. His quadruple elemental theory of generation means that no parts of the earth—even fire!—are devoid of life, and it supplies a sense of delight in response to the catalogs of Leviticus.[94] Fascinatingly, both the verse in Psalms and Rabbi Akiva's exegesis redirect the objects of the blessing in Genesis 1:28. While Genesis 1:28 in context is ostensibly aimed at humanity and accompanies their domination of other kinds, here it becomes an ode to nonhuman creatures (*beriyot*).[95]

Besides the above resonances of *ribbuy* as content (multiplication and growing) and mode (reproduction), there is a third meaning that the Sifra engenders. Rabbi Akiva's homily is a paeon to *ribbuy* as a hermeneutic method: the ways that *midrash* itself proliferates and expands.[96] This dimension of *ribbuy* is a pronounced one; its tracks are laid across this passage of the Sifra, and indeed through the entire commentary on this chapter of Leviticus. Rabbi Akiva's salutation of hermeneutic generativity and proliferation fits well not only with the various registers and contents of the Sifra's passage at hand, but also with his characteristic exegetical disposition. This style of exegesis, which finds meaning and which posits surplus and redundancy at every point in order to so, was associated with him and his "school."

CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on the Sifra's commentary on Leviticus 11. We began by noting its framings of knowledge as hands-on ("this") and actively discerning (knowing rather than merely learning). The physicalized grasping of "this" is echoed by the ways that many people in late antiquity were quite literally in touch with a variety of nonhuman animals, in ways that many in the contemporary Global North, are not. If we compare this approach to that of the Sifre's commentary on Deuteronomy 14 which sees zoological knowledge as the province of the hunter or God, we get a sense of how the Sifra seeks to embolden rather than chasten its prospective readers. Indeed, I aver that the very techniques the Sifra deploys to expand the Levitical bestiary are designed to be taken up and further embellished.

I have sought to show that the Sifra imports multiple categories and kinds (some with analogs in ancient or contemporary Greek and Roman sources) into the biblical text, sometimes explicitly justifying them, at other times simply deploying them as though they were obvious. I have made my case that this extrapolation, often unsubtly populates and extends the Levitical bestiary well beyond its stated contents. The Sifra similarly overtly expands the species of Leviticus through various hermeneutic tools, gleaning from repetition, construed redundancy, resemblance-based extrapolations, and, of course, expansion (*ribbuy*). We gain many more individual species and varieties, including bipeds/quadruped/multipeds, exoticized creatures like the quasi-human siren, the field human, or the salamander, as well as classes of kinds that distinguish among domesticated/wild, sexual/nonsexual reproducers, in/vertebrates, not to mention the material elements from which beings originate (fire, earth, water, air).

The human finds its place among these kinds and expansions. It enters on at least three notable occasions. First, as a bipedal walker: the Sifra summons "commonplace" characterizations of the human in antiquity. It also assimilates the biped conceptually among the quadruped and multiped walkers or belly crawlers of Leviticus. Fascinatingly, and similar to what occurs other ancient contexts, as a biped the human becomes animalized. In the Sifra it is treated as an object whose flesh is potentially edible and whose blood or milk can be imbibed. The human also figures via its seaworthy doppelgänger (the siren) and its "wild" terrestrial version (the *adne ha-sadeh*). In the latter case, it is listed among other "wild" exoticized creatures like the monkey and the elephant. We will investigate this juxtaposition of parahumans among other "exotica" in chapter 3. The Sifra considers the siren over its dead body, presenting a minority view in which it has humanlike corpse impurity. Last but not least, Rabbi Akiva's homily takes what is often seen as *the* signal obligation of humans—*periyah u-reviyah*—to underpin the divine proliferation of *all* life-forms. We thus observe the following: to the extent that the Sifra introduces the human into the Levitical bestiary, it presents the human as one creature among many other kinds: humans proliferate and die, and potentially have their bodies consumed, in the ways that various other animals can. And, as with other creatures enumerated into Leviticus, the human appears in groups and categories that are rather novel to the Bible and that have little to do with cherished ideas of sacred exceptionalism, including propagation as such.

Having argued that the Sifra expands the Levitical bestiary not only in terms of particular kinds but, more substantively, in terms of multiple classificatory frames and hermeneutic licenses—thereby enlisting the reader to take this method in their own hands—I also claimed that Rabbi Akiva's exegetical "encounter" with a particular verse serves as a model for this method. Just as augmentation begets augmentation, or—as we saw in the three sets of exegeses, in which "the like and those that resemble it"—resemblance begets resemblance, so too is there an infectious generative license in the encounter with Leviticus.[97] Instead of particles of earth or sparks of fire begetting life-forms, Akivan exegesis allows for creative generation in the smallest substance and elements of scripture itself.

Rabbi Akiva's expansive and procreative approach to midrash is emblematic of the general orientation of the Sifra and the Sifre on Deuteronomy. It is in contrast, in conflict even, with the approach characteristic of Rabbi Ishmael (or the Ishmaelian approach), which is more restrained (an example of the latter is the Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael on Exodus). Intriguingly, the Sifra itself narrates something of this interpretive conflict—strikingly, in terms drawing on nonhuman reproductive capacity. Instigated by the question "*u-minayin le-rabot?* (and from where do we expand?)," Rabbi Eliezer extracts four successive extensions from the particle "and" (*ve*) in a particular word ("*and* the garment," Leviticus 13:47). This elicits the following exchange:

> Rabbi Ishmael said to him, "Rabbi, behold you say to scripture, 'be silent while I interpret you.'" Rabbi Eliezer responded to him: "Ishmael, you are a mountain-palm."[98]

Ishmael accuses Eliezer—whose approach is patently Akivan—of an exegetical method that is tantamount to suppressing the voice of the scriptural text itself by overlaying it with unseemly impositions. Scripture here is personified, potentially vocal, but wrongly silenced. Eliezer's response is instructive, trading as it does on the same license to multiply and generate readings from tiny scriptural elements. Calling his student-colleague a mountain palm, he points to the latter's generative incapacity, since mountain palms were thought to produce few and low-quality fruits.[99] Despite including this powerful critique of the dangers of overly creative reading, the Sifra runs from the dangers of sterility. It pursues "procreative" reading to its fullest, inviting future readers to supplement scripture further.

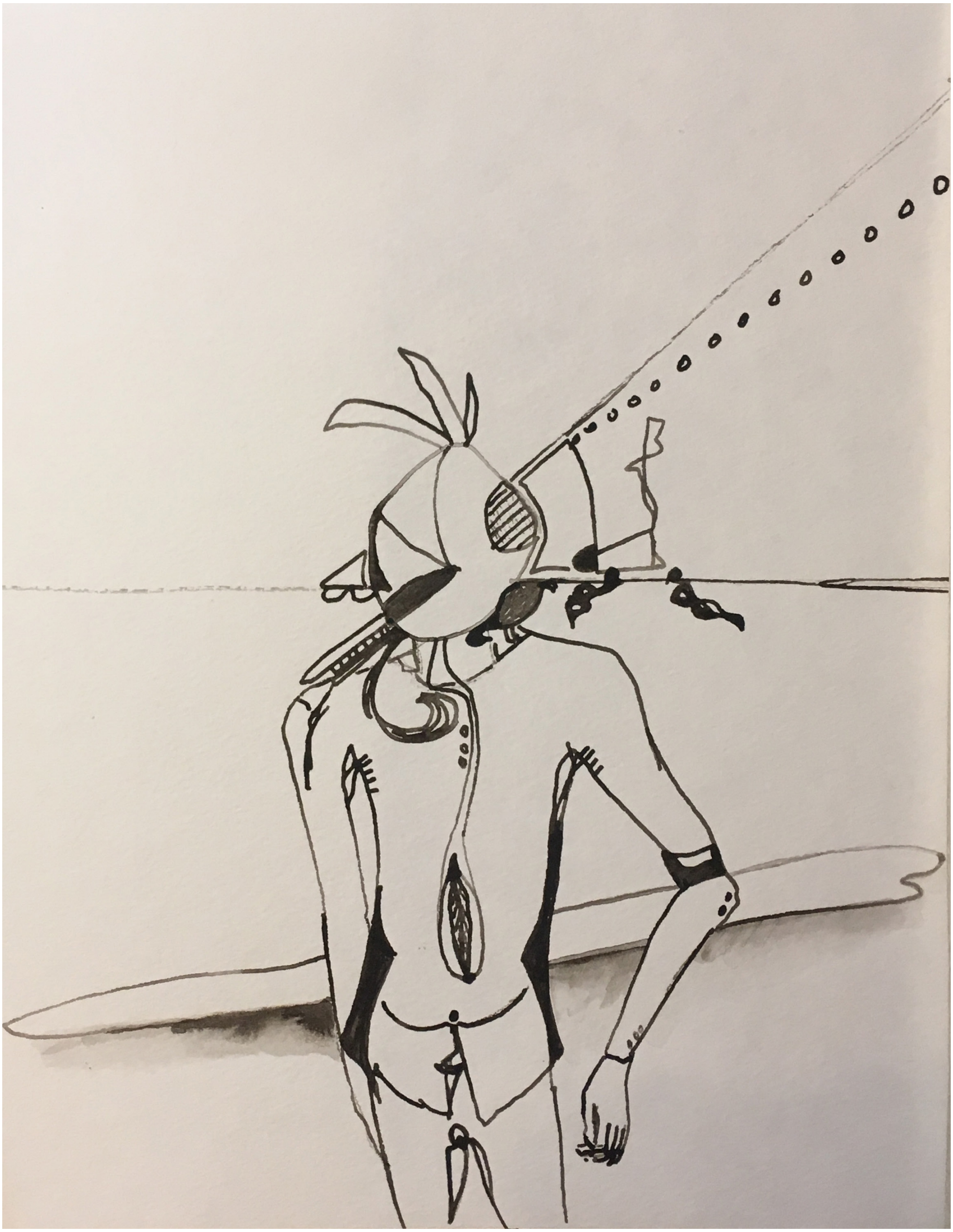


FIGURE 9. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Quackborg*. Pen and ink on paper, 15 in. × 11 in., 2015.

3

Menagerie

> *There was once a law concerning mermaids. My friend thinks it a wondrous thing—that the British Empire was so thorough it had invented a law for everything. And in this law it was decreed: were any to be found in their usual spots, showing off like dolphins, sunbathing on rocks—they would no longer belong to themselves. And maybe this is the problem with empires: how they have forced us to live in a world lacking in mermaids—mermaids who understood that they simply were, and did not need permission to exist or to be beautiful. The law concerning mermaids only caused mermaids to pass a law concerning man: that they would never again cross our boundaries of sand; never again lift their torsos up from the surf; never again wave at sailors, salt dripping from their curls; would never again enter our dry and stifling world.*
>
> —KEI MILLER, *THE LAW CONCERNING MERMAIDS*

HOW DID THE RABBIS organize the teeming plenitude of creaturely life? In the previous chapter we focused on the Sifra and the ways the exegetical encounter with scripture itself expanded the sparse Levitical bestiary. We treated the identificatory impulse of the tannaim and attended to cases in which likeness was used as both exegetical tool and as morphological multiplier, a proliferator of kinds. In this chapter we pursue other paths along which the rabbis sought to cluster and distinguish—again, via the mechanism of likeness and the rendering of difference. These approaches involve a device that I dub the "menagerie."[1]

The menagerie gained popularity in nineteenth-century Europe and North America and referred to collections of "wild" and "exotic" animals. Enclosed and exhibited, these exoticized creatures represented European imperial projects of capture, collection, and extraction. While the term "menagerie" itself was not deployed in earlier, or non-European contexts, it is—thanks to these resonances of imperial conquest, containment, and exoticization of animals—often used to describe a variety of imperial animal collections. Examples range from mid-third-millennium BCE Egyptian Saqqara to the twelfth-century BCE emperor of Henan province, to the sixth-century BCE Achaemenid Persian dynasty, all the way to Rome in the first centuries CE.[2] Literary and material evidence points to the assembly of flora and fauna in gardens and parks in Rome sponsored by emperors and high status people, as well as to the display of creatures from across the empire in a variety of contexts from triumphs to spectacular fights between animals and gladiators.[3] Depending on the context, menageries connect heterogenous creatures and join them into assemblages.

In this chapter I focus on two sets of menageries both found in Mishnah and Tosefta Kilayim. Tracing the explicit frames within which the rabbis grouped certain kinds, I will argue that the human plays a blurry role in this mix of creaturely classification and territoriality, one that is exemplary of how the marking of difference fails to undo the seductive pull of resemblance. It is partly through the ways the human is troubled—and indeed, doubled—that we will see how, despite classificatory efforts to control and capture, the unruly animals escape the menagerie.

In the following pages, I will place the menagerie in multiple frames: the first is the classificatory will to lump and to split creatures along the lines of likeness and difference. This impulse may also be examined in light of the rabbis' positionality, both with respect to the objects of classification and beyond.[4] Knowledge quests to organize animals in late antiquity were constrained by unequally distributed access (and bids) to power, control, and capture, and by the different ends for which such knowledge was extracted. It is no surprise that each motivation shapes knowledge a little differently—the demands of biblical exegesis may create a different outcome than the demands of ritual. The same goes for the form of commentary versus the constraints of topically arranged teachings. Rabbinic knowledge making and quests for classificatory control were shaped alongside other such enterprises in the late ancient Middle East and Mediterranean: these constitute the second avenue of our inquiry. These were expressed in multiple forms: philosophy and "natural history"; paradoxography; visual art and architecture; trade, consumption, display; and entertainment. Within such varied media and fora, animals, both local and distant, circulated through the empire.

We proceed as follows: after discussing ancient and modern classificatory lenses, I consider two sets of menageries in Mishnah Kilayim and Tosefta Kilayim. Focusing on the Tosefta, I probe the ways that its assemblage of prosaic and exoticized creatures aligns with the late Roman menagerie. Moving to the ways that Kilayim's menagerie works with different species that look alike, I analyze the tannaitic theory of territorial doubles, comparing it to both late Roman and early Christian variations. I conclude with an argument about how the contagious effects of likeness trouble the classificatory project of the rabbinic menagerie.

CLASSIFICATION

The menagerie offered an organizing frame through which the rabbis attempted to identify and differentiate among the multitudinous cohabitants of their world. Propelled by the search for likeness and difference, the menagerie captures creatures, conceptualizing them both together and apart in a concatenation of variegated groupings. Unlike the staggered, hierarchical cuts made by Linnaean taxonomy, in which creatures are pinned in fixed classificatory registers that still govern our thinking today, tannaitic creatures could be placed in multiple, noncontiguous sets.[5] While the rabbis strained to fit creatures inside or outside these sets, they also acknowledged and grappled with creatures that resisted placement or that partook in multiple sets. The previous chapter followed the Sifra as it focused on and unfurled the Levitical bestiary. As we might expect in a commentarial genre tracking biblical verses, what results is a rather sustained engagement with a variety of lifeforms. Here we home in on the various, more succinct, menageries that pop up in the thematically organized Mishnah and Tosefta tractates of Kilayim.

One way in which likeness was a bivalent device in service of classification was in its double purposing. In chapter 1 we saw how likeness and its legibility were viewed as keys to establishing reproductive relationships: *like begets like*. However, we also investigated how these expectations were dashed. But there was another mystery. If, in the anticipated course of things, looking like someone indicated that you were related in some way to them, whether in terms of kinship or species, what of the ways that likeness is discerned *across* different species?[6] What to make, for instance, of resemblances between the wolf and the dog, or between the monkey and the human? In the seventeenth century, the taxonomy of Linnaeus made sense of such likeness by organizing creatures along morphological lines into hierarchical ranks—species, genus, class, and so on. In the nineteenth century, Darwin's ideas of evolution and heredity solidified links between genealogy and likeness. But these ways of organizing the world's denizens were not yet thinkable in late antiquity.

It is no surprise that ancient writers and thinkers, the rabbis included, understood the variety of life-forms differently from us. And yet, it takes conscious effort to recognize and attempt to think beyond (or before) the creaturely classifications that we have, whether those we conventionally tag as bioscientific (e.g., following Linnaean taxa) or as religious (e.g., in accordance with contemporary classicizing understandings of rabbinic texts as grounding a "system" of "Jewish law," or more particularly through the lens of "kashrut," the kosher rules).[7] The rabbis' zoology had a wholly different purpose from that of Linnaeus: its aim was not to establish a hierarchical taxonomy—with "species" as its de minimus, base unit—but to parse animals in their ritual contexts, within certain creative constraints. Likewise, Aristotle's aim was not that of Linnaeus: he sought to understand and describe the parts of animals and their functions, rather than creating a holistic and consistent taxonomical system.[8] As we have discussed, the rabbinic idea of "kind" or "species" (*min*) and Aristotle's concepts of "species" (*eidos*) and "genus" (*genus*) were mobile—context-dependent rather than fixed. Aristotle's usages depended on the frame within which he was collecting particular units (each entity an *eidos*) into a group (or *genus*). For instance, while occasionally Aristotle includes humans as part of the set of viviparous quadrupeds, he usually does not.[9]His is a logical rather than essential or biological concept of species and genus. There are no graded chains of organization ranging from species to genus to family, and upward.[10] Roughly the same is true for the rabbis.[11] As we've seen, the same creature can be an impure kind, a large animal (*behemah gasah*), and a domestic animal (*behemah*): the term *min* is used for each one of these classificatory groupings or registers.

Kenneth D. Bailey begins his introduction to classification with a warning against classifying according to "trivial dimensions."[12] Warning that the classification of "four legs" might join a giraffe, a dining table, and a dancing couple, he asks, "is this what we really want?" The question is clearly intended rhetorically. Of course, it implies that we could never want such an unholy mess of juxtapositions. Bailey thereby reveals the ways in which a priori classes already govern his classificatory enterprise. But, we may argue, it is the very lack of fixity enabled by his suggested (and supposedly absurd) juxtapositions that exposes us to the unexpected, and that denaturalizes the world and its parts. Maybe this is *precisely* what we need (whether or not we want it). Such an apparently "trivial" approach allows us to undo fixed essentialisms around the categories and classifications that we naturalize and *think we already know or expect and wish to find*. It allows us to learn and to see the world with new eyes. This is partly what we gain when we look at the world of living beings through premodern eyes that see without our epistemic constraints.

Yet we cannot help the fact that we live in Linnaeus's shadow. Our very language and ability to name animals has inevitably incorporated these taxonomic ways of thinking. Think of how the "biological" or "Latin" names of creatures rely on his binomial nomenclature (giving the species and genus names together). This difficulty is compounded by the fact that we tend to assume—or strain to identify—ancient nomenclature in contemporary technical terms. Naturally, we want, even need, to translate ancient Hebrew, Latin, or Greek into our own languages: we want, need, to know what our ancient sources are referencing. Yet, as is evident from conflicting historical and scholarly translations of animal terms in Leviticus, and even frank admissions about the difficulty or impossibility of translating many creatures' names, there are real limits to what we can know; indeed, claiming otherwise is disingenuous. There are intertwined ethical, epistemological, and historical problems in identifying ancient creaturely nomenclature with contemporary classificatory terms. Here we can heed the wisdom of scholars of disability studies and crip theory when they caution us against adopting the medicalizing, pathologizing, and even stigmatizing gaze of "retrospective diagnosis."

Normate scientific definitions of categories underpinned both zoology and medicine in modern Europe—for instance, in questioning or downgrading the species membership of certain people, whether in racialized or ableist terms.[13] Adopting such criteria is to use one set of culturally instantiated classifications as benchmarks by which to identify another, particularly when undertaken within an uncritical scientific positivism. This is not to eschew research that uses such language, held lightly, in order to communicate to contemporary audiences—for example, in identifying paintings of sheep and cows, or in translating words (as I've tried to do with biblical and rabbinic texts). Or let us take another example of using terms like "reproduction" or "animal," which had little purchase before the close of the eighteenth and sixteenth centuries, respectively, and which are incommensurate with ancient concepts or categories.[14] Beyond these historical contexts of creaturely nomenclature, terminology is never neutral and inevitably smuggles in particular teleologies. Consider, further, that species concepts are contested by biologists themselves. Projects trying to map particular ancient terms onto modern taxa often engage in anachronistic evaluations of the correctness or fancifulness of the ancient "science" therein.[15] Instead of such an approach, I am trying to hazard my way into rabbinic world making, not to measure their efforts against our own. Late ancient Palestine, Southwest Asia, North Africa, and beyond—all teemed with life-forms, some of whom entered rabbinic texts. What did it mean to live in that world?

KILAYIM'S MENAGERIES

Menageries pop up across tannaitic literature. We can find them in Tractate Bava Kamma and Tractate ʿAvodah Zarah, which consider the breeding, hunting, or trade of various species, and in locations like Tractates Kelim and Bekhorot, which treat purity-related matters and reproductive zoology.[16] Here, we will chiefly focus on the tractate of Kilayim ("mixed kinds") as a prime location for working out questions of species classification.[17] This tractate seeks to delineate the contours of the following biblical prohibitions:

> My statutes you shall observe. Your animals you shall not mate with different kinds (*kilayim*). Your fields you shall not sow with different kinds (*kilayim*). And a garment of different kinds (*kilayim*) of mixed fabric (*shaatnez*) shall not be worn by you. (Leviticus 19:19)
>
> You shall not sow your vineyard with two kinds (*kilayim*); lest you render forbidden the fullness of the seed that you sow and the yield of the vineyard. You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together. You shall not wear mixed fabric (*shaatnez*), wool and linen together. (Deuteronomy 22:9–11)

In their biblical settings, these strictures do not appear in the context of the purity classifications outlining various creaturely kinds (Lev 11 and Deut 14). However, the tannaitic tractate of Kilayim does bring in classificatory schema: it does so to parse species and thereby to determine what constitutes "mixing kinds" (*kilayim*).

TABLE 2

Mishnah Kilayim 1:5–6	Tosefta Kilayim 1:1, 7–8
5. Radishes and rapeseed,[a] mustard and wild mustard, Greek gourd and Egyptian gourd or bitter gourds,[b] even though they resemble (*domin*) one another, they are *kilayim* one with another.	1. All the pairs that the sages designated as a species with its own species are not *kilayim* with one another…
6. The wolf and the dog, the village dog and the fox,[c] goats and deer,[d] mountain goats and ewes, the horse and the mule, the mule and the donkey, the donkey and the wild donkey (*arod*), even they resemble (*domin*) one another, they are *kilayim* with one another.	7. The peacock and the pheasant, even though they resemble (*domin*) one another, they are *kilayim* with one another…
	8. The ox and the wild ox (*shor habar*), the donkey and the wild donkey,[e] the pig and the wild pig, even though they resemble (*domin*) one another, they are *kilayim* with one another.

[a] Following Feliks, *Mixed Seeds*, 74 and 79.

[b] The Hebrew is *remutsa*, which Feliks (*Tractate Kil'ayim* 44) identifies as a bitter-tasting Egyptian gourd.

[c] Feliks (*Tractate Kil'ayim*, 117) translates *shu'al* as jackal (*tan*).

[d] Feliks (*Masekhet Kil'ayim*, 117) translates gazelle.

[e] *Hamor habar*.

The rabbinic elaboration of kilayim necessitates and consolidates classification itself. The tannaim extrapolate kilayim from the spare biblical articulation to variously staggered combinations and permutations: "a domesticated animal with a domesticated animal and a wild animal with a wild animal, domesticated with wild and wild with domesticated, impure with impure and pure with pure, impure with pure and pure with impure, are forbidden to plow, pull, and lead" (mKilayim 8:2). The prohibition includes combining animals designated as distinct species together for human purposes—plowing, pulling, leading, and also mating them. Crucially, in this chapter's context, in its effort to sort animals, the tractate deals not only with the problems of likeness and difference but also with entities that straddle groupings or that are not easily placed into one grouping.

The first menagerie we encounter in Kilayim appears early in the tractate and directly confronts the problem of misleading similarities among creatures ostensibly of different kinds. It presents various pairings of animals (and plants) in order to differentiate them. What follows, placed side by side, are the relevant passages in the Mishnah and its companion volume, the Tosefta. These passages are parallel in that they connect, both substantively and structurally. Scholars have long read the Mishnah and Tosefta together, arguing that the latter is a slightly later collection and commentary on the former, or that the former in fact knows a version of the latter, or making case-by-case determinations based on individual comparisons.

Both sources seek to know which creatures, when combined, constitute "different kinds (*kilayim*) with one another." The tannaim observe that certain species "resemble one another" (*domin zeh lazeh*), but also that resemblance proves to be a false friend in terms of species designation, because it links what are in fact distinct kinds, which thus may not be planted, worked, or mated together. For instance, despite their resemblance and even their shared names, the pig (*hazir*) and the wild pig (*hazir ha-bar*) are distinct kinds. This detail poses a broader question: why were the rabbis even issuing such edicts about an animal with which they were unlikely to interact?[18] By contrast, creatures like the donkey and goat were far more widespread in Palestine, and therefore, were in greater contact with rabbis. The pig prescriptions are further evidence of the ways in which rabbinic knowledge making goes beyond the need-to-know, into the pursuit of knowledge for itself. That the rabbis are considering creatures, like pigs, so clearly outside their own zones of hands-on expertise (and perhaps not within the domain of potential adherents either) points to the ambition of their epistemic enterprise, something that we emphasized in the previous chapter.[19] If pragmatism were the sole driver for knowledge making, it cannot explain their interest in forbidden human interference in wild/domesticated pig mating.

It seems unlikely that the rabbis contemplated that other Palestinian Jews were breeders of these creatures (or combinations thereof), whether domesticated and wild pigs—or, for that matter, dogs and foxes.[20] But this does not make the pairings fanciful per se. Galen discusses several of these same combinations in his treatment of hybrids.[21] As we will see in the next chapter, hybridity was a generative source of both intellectual inquiry and material experimentation. There was a great deal of intervention in and investigation of animal breeding across the Southwest Asia and North Africa from earlier antiquity to late antiquity. People bred undomesticated creatures with domesticated varieties or grafted wild shoots onto domesticated scions. There was concomitant movement of animals along the various routes of trade and imperial expansions. Thus, in assessing the material and intellectual conditions of rabbinic knowledge making, it is not necessary to succumb to the false choice of seeing the rabbis as constructing highly theoretical flights of fancy versus presenting them as generating earnest considerations of a purely pragmatic nature or ritually (*halakhic*) driven realia. The problem in such binary thinking is that it proceeds from a priori decisions about what counts as fanciful versus empirical in the first place, as if such distinctions are transhistorical.

A closer look at the above pairings reveals no single or uniform organizing logic. There are animals that are linked by an ostensible shared name and hence an identification, like pig/wild pig and ox/wild ox. Then there are pairings that seem to join what to us seem to be distinct kinds—that is, wolf/dog, village dog/fox, goat/deer, mountain goat/ewe, and peacock/pheasant. (As always, this assumes that the Hebrew is correctly translated; there is some dispute about "village dog.")[22] Of these, some pairs might seem to us to be related or overlap in some way—that is, the wolf/dog and village dog/fox, and also goat/deer and mountain goat/ewes Finally, three of the pairs they name—horse/mule, mule/donkey, and donkey/wild donkey—are related (at least for us, given our understandings of classification and genetics). While what exactly the rabbis thought of the relationship between their present-day donkey and wild donkey—or other domesticated versus wild creatures—is unclear, it is certain that they understood the horse, mule, and donkey to be reproductively related. Regardless, the mule stands out among the collection of creatures in Kilayim precisely because it is itself a product of kilayim (i.e., the prohibition). The two pairings of mule/donkey and mule/horse are in effect efforts to figure out the relationship of the mule to its parents' species: the finding is that they are all distinct.[23] I have run through these three sets of groupings/logics to show their multiplicity and overlap (aside from their resemblance). They are: pairs sharing a name (unmarked creatures e.g., an ox and wild versions thereof e.g., a wild ox); similar looking but differently named creatures; and reproductively related creatures.[24]

Many of these pairings conform to what modern biological taxonomy would designate as relations between genus, species, families, and orders: but we should be wary of importing such ideas to our ancient authors. In modern zoology, the wolf (*canis lupus* in its binomial designation) and dog (*canis familiaris*) are understood as species that share membership in the *canis* genus, which includes coyotes and jackals. Similarly, but at a higher classificatory register, the mountain goat (*oreamnos*) is a genus that is a member of the subfamily *caprinae* (including goats and sheep), which is itself a member of the *bovidae* family (which would include "goats and deer"). However, the mule—again, the hybrid offspring of the horse and the donkey—is excluded in many (but not all) modern biological definitions of species, because it cannot reproduce. For those taxonomies that would exclude it, the mule is a taxonomical "anomaly," given its derivation from the horse (itself a species of the genus *equus*) and from the donkey (*equus africanus asinus*, considered a subspecies of the African wild ass, *equus africanus* of the *equus* genus). While this tells us something about the limits of modern taxonomy in and of itself, the point about not assuming such ideas for late ancient writers remains.

It is better to consider a more historically sensitive possibility for the choice of pairings in these Kilayim passages. Might they express the ancient (rabbinic) dichotomy of domesticated (*behemah*) versus wild animals (*ḥayah*): for example, the dog and the wolf, the village dog and the fox, the goat and the deer, the donkey and the wild donkey (*ʿarod*), the ox and the wild ox, and the pig and the wild pig? That explanation initially seems promising, and yet this logic of domesticated/wild ultimately fails to unify all these pairings. We will soon see that many of the animals in this first chapter of Kilayim (in both the Mishnah and the Tosefta) recur later in the tractate among a list of animals whose designations as wild/domesticated are unexpected or in dispute. In other words, several of the above creatures do not necessarily line up as the complementary domesticated or wild counterpart to their partners in this first chapter. Take the pairing of dog and wolf in mKilayim 1:6: our later passage determines that the dog is, like the wolf, wild.[25] As we will see, the parallel Tosefta (tKilayim 1:9) and the second menagerie (mKilayim 8:6)

TABLE 3

mKilayim 8:5–6	tKilayim 5:7–10
[5] the field human (*adne ha-sadeh*) is a wild animal. Rabbi Yose says: they convey tent impurity like a human. The hedgehog[a] and the marten:[b] wild animal. The marten: Rabbi Yose says: Bet Shammai says, an olive's worth [of carcass] renders a person carrying it unclean, and a lentil's worth renders a person touching it unclean.	[7] The dog is a wild animal kind. Rabbi Meir says: the domesticated animal kind . . .The village dog is a wild animal kind. [8] The *yerodin* and the *na'amit*, behold they are like birds in all respects.
[6] The wild ox is a domesticated animal kind. Rabbi Yose says: it is a wild animal kind. The dog is the wild animal kind. Rabbi Meir says: the domesticated animal kind. The pig is a domesticated animal kind. The wild donkey is a wild animal kind. The elephant and the monkey are wild animals. And the human is permitted to pull, plow, and lead *any of them*.	[9] For an impure animal does not give birth to a pure kind, and a pure one to an impure one, neither a large domesticated animal kind to a small domesticated animal kind, nor a small one to a large kind, and no human from *any of them*, nor to any of them a human.[c] [10] Everything that there is in the settlement, there is in the wilderness; but there are many in the desert that are not in the settlement. Everything that there is on dry land there is in the sea; many are in the sea that are not on dry land. There is no sea marten.

[a] Or "porcupine."

[b] Or "stone marten" in Dor, *Animals in the Era of the Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud*, 73.

[c] par. tBekhorot 5:9.

presents a dispute about whether the wild ox is in fact wild or domesticated. Regardless, this logic does not even uniformly organize the pairings; such consistency is, as we already noted, frustrated by other motivations for coupling. Thus, to enter this group, pairs of like creatures must satisfy polythetic (multiple, nonexhaustive, and overlapping rather than necessarily commonly held) criteria rather than monothetic (a set of singular, necessary and sufficient) criteria. In their lack of consistency, the selection logics for these pairings—aside from physical resemblance itself—make for a set of "family resemblances." These alternate conceptions of likeness make this curated coterie structurally inconsistent.

In sum, there are multiple logics that connect the pairings in the first chapter of Kilayim in both the Tosefta and the Mishnah, even as all pairs' members are linked by the common connection of morphological resemblance. We may also note that most pairs include at least one prosaic or ubiquitous "domesticated" creature. As collections, these lists fall short of systematic taxonomy (in the strict sense of hierarchical and fixed classification). This twinning of inconsistency (or difference) among these juxtapositions of difference with the commonality of morphological likeness will become important later in the chapter when we treat the slipperiness of likeness as an organizational principle of classification.

In mKilayim 8:5–6 and tKilayim 5:7–10, also parallel passages, we find a second menagerie that, taken together, amounts to sixteen creatures (ten in the Mishnah, six in the Tosefta). Here are the two passages presented side by side.

The seeming concern of these passages is to place a variety of kinds (at the level of what we might dub as "species") into groups or classes, many of which are binary—for example, domesticated versus wild animal, wild animal versus creeping animal (*sherets*), bird versus wild animal, and human versus wild animal. The Tosefta's invocation of the long-form generation principle adds more classificatory registers: pure/impure kind, small domesticated animal/large domesticated animal, and human/nonhuman. I will suggest that the tannaim gather and curate these particular creatures—nonhuman kinds that were thought of as prosaica and exotica—not just for ritual purposes alone but also as a display of knowledge in the form of the menagerie. I will further argue that in these parallel passages we find another case of likeness playing an uneasy, multivalent role, which in this instance blurs classifications by dint of its proliferative, sticky properties. This is the reason, we will see, that the Tosefta's commentary and complement to the Mishnah cites the expanded principle of generation (that we encountered in chapter 1), together with a theory of territorial doubles. These two—principle and theory—amount to an attempt to limit the fuzzy and fusing properties of likeness, one in which the human itself is caught.

Reading these two passages together, we discern substantive parallels (both treat the human, the dog, and the marten), formal echoes (both sort animals into classes), and complementarities (different species). It is apparent that the Tosefta supplies linked commentary, the clearest instance of which concerns the dog.[26] While Saul Lieberman points out that tKilayim 5:10 comments on mKilayim 8:5, we see that both tKilayim 5:9 and 5:10 comment on both mKilayim 8:5 and mKilayim 8:6 (especially the final phrase of mKilayim 8:6).[27] As a whole, the Tosefta responds to and comments on our Mishnah passage (or a version thereof). In other words, the animals that it supplies are additions to the Mishnah's already existent catalog. As we will see, the human occupies a place that is at once peculiar and unexceptional in both passages.

What is the organizing logic, if any, that brings all these creatures together? Again, we can discern multiple logics. The Mishnah gathers the curious case of the field human(s) (*adne ha-sade*), the hedgehog and the marten, the wild ox, the dog, the pig, the wild donkey, the elephant and the monkey, humans, and "all of them."[28] The Tosefta assembles the dog, the village dog, *yerodin* and *na'amit*, the expanded reproduction principle including humans and "all of them," a theory of territorial doubles, and the sea-marten. We can posit individual reasons for why each listed creature needs clarification: its seemingly potentially anomalous or multiple status, its surprising or unexpected classification, or its apparent unusualness. We can also discern two sorts of creatures: the "prosaic" and the "exotic."

Let's recall that—as in the previous chapter—while the rabbis themselves do not use terms like "prosaic" and "exotic," my usage of these terms is not to imply my contemporary evaluation of creatures as this or that. Rather, it is to get at the way that something of the aura of distance and/or rarity attached to certain creatures in the Roman Empire as opposed to others that were viewed as relatively ubiquitous or ordinary.

We might dub creatures like the hedgehog, the marten, the wild ox, the dog, and the pig as more locally ubiquitous or prosaic animals. As noted, the wild ox, the dog, and the wild donkey (mKilayim 8:6 and tKilayim 5:7) are also members of the earlier pairings in mKilayim 1:5–6 and tKilayim 1:7–8 that were deemed distinctive species despite their resemblances to their partners (the ox, the wolf, and the donkey). These animals all elicit the need for clarification. We might think that the *wild* ox is wild. Yet, as has been indicated previously, the Mishnah here, and the Tosefta earlier (tKilayim 1:9), present different views about the wild ox, despite its being called "wild." The anonymous view in the Mishnah declares the wild ox to be a domesticated animal (*behemah*), while Rabbi Yose pronounces it a wild animal (*ḥayah*). The Tosefta, not only elaborates the discrepant ritual implications of the different views that the Mishnah presents, but also describes the wild ox as being "*like*" a domesticated or wild animal "in all respects." Further, it adds that R. Yose identifies the wild ox as the biblical *te'o* (Deut 14:5).[29] Finally, the Tosefta closes with the sages disagreeing with R. Yose and distinguishing between the wild ox and the *te'o*: each is a "creature (*briyah*) unto themselves."[30]

Similarly, we might have thought of the dog, paired earlier with the wolf, as a classic instance of a domesticated creature. Indeed, it is nearly always classified as such in Greek and Roman sources. This explains why both the Mishnah and the Tosefta discuss it, as a subject of disagreement among the rabbis, but with the majority view tagging it as wild animal. The Mishnah follows the dog with the pig—a pairing whose logic is explicit in tBava Kamma 8:17, which prohibits or restrict the breeding of both by Jews—and indeed, adhering to this logic of joining, one might think that if the dog is wild, the quintessentially impure pig would be as well.[31] The Mishnah elucidates that im/purity classifications need not map onto wild/domestic classification; the pig is, in fact, domesticated. Conversely, the Mishnah clarifies the wild donkey as wild. We might have thought otherwise since the *wild* ox is classified as *domesticated*.

What of the hedgehog (*kipod*) and the marten (*ḥuldat hasenaim*)? Like the preceding creatures, these are animals that the rabbis considered to be nonhuman cohabitants of residential and adjacent spheres.[32] While they may not have been "domesticated" in the ways that oxen, donkeys, and dogs were, people in antiquity kept and even bred these creatures.[33] Like the aforementioned examples, the classification of the hedgehog and the marten is in need of clarification and is in dispute. Given their size and manner of locomotion, one might have thought that the marten and the hedgehog were creeping creatures (*sherets*). The anonymous Mishnah corrects for this, instead classifying the marten as a wild animal (*ḥayah*). Rabbi

Yose—who also offers contradictory views in two other classifications—disagrees. Instead, he ascribes to the *ḥuldat hasenaim* two forms of minimal ritual impurity stringencies: both that which pertains to the wild animal (*ḥayah*) and that which applies to the creeping creature (*sherets*).[34] The nature of the dispute allows us to see what is at stake: this is a creature whose species designation as a wild animal or creeping creature is unclear. That the minority view adheres to the requirements for both classifications points to its singularity yet multiplicity—with respect to basic creaturely groupings.

As intimated above, the term "exoticized creatures" (or "exotica") refers to the culturally freighted othering of certain beings by fetishizing and often exploiting them in imperial or colonial contexts.[35] This othering is very much related to the naming and supposed "discovery" of "strange" or "wondrous" peoples and animals—and quasi-human, quasi-animal peoples of "faraway" places—as objectified agents of often deadly conquest, knowledge, extraction, and display.[36] This interest—which often involves a fusing of ethnography and zoology—was a staple of Greek and Roman writing from Herodotus to Pliny. As scholars have shown, animality (or species) and nature (or natural history) are intertwined to produce racialized difference. This also works in reverse, with ethnoracialized difference being mapped onto species variation. Referring to the contemporary United States, Claire Kim argues that "the antiblack social order that props up the 'human' is also a zoological order, or what we might call a zoologo-racial order."[37]

While there are significant differences between ancient and modern ways of ordering race, species, and the "human," there is also considerable variation across the ancient Levant. As we will see, tannaitic textuality and genres do not express the kinds of explicit ethnographic intertwining of zoology and racialization in Greek and Latin writings about the so-called "monstrous races." In the latter variation expresses not only difference; it is also marked as other on a broader scale. The creatures discussed in Tosefta and Mishnah Kilayim—the elephant, monkey, *adan ha-sadeh, na'amit*, and *yerodin*—were likely perceived as either distant or at least as hailing from distant places, often in the context of historic (for the rabbis) and ongoing imperial routes of conquest, import, and trade.[38] They were clearly unusual and scarcely encountered in person, unlike the other more ubiquitous creatures in this menagerie. Significantly, as we'll see, the rabbis did not mark the former as uncommon, and merely juxtaposed them with more quotidian kinds.[39]

Let us delve further into some of these "exotica." The first pair, the elephant and the monkey, are simply declared to be wild animals (*ḥayah*). That declaration may seem unsurprising since "wildness," by now, may seem to be so obviously synonymous with "distance." While elephants and monkeys were known to the inhabitants of the ancient Mediterranean—through the (often coerced) movement of people and animals and through literary and visual media—they were understood to hail from Africa and Asia. These regions—often fused in earlier through late ancient Greek and Roman geographic and ethnographic imaginary—continued to be exoticized.[40] At the same time, recall that technical term *ḥayah* was also applied by the rabbis to creatures close by, as was the case with dogs. This may not negate potential spatial valences of the term "wild animal"—indeed, the labeling of ubiquitous local animals as wild in some cases conveys their stigmatized associations with "out of placeness." I elaborate these geographic resonances of animal classification below in my treatment of tKilayim's territorial theory of creaturely life.

The monkey can also be seen as near-human. Indeed, the Mishnah immediately follows the mention of the monkey with its closing statement about the human (*adam*). I would argue that this literary proximity is no accident: the rabbis, like others, understood the monkey to be close to human. As Catherine Connors puts it, monkeys "enter into the Greek and Roman world as exotic strangers whose resemblance to men seems more uncanny than natural."[41] Pliny describes "kinds (*species*) of apes also which are closest to the human shape."[42] It is thus that the monkey may follow the elephant and be paired with the latter in their exoticization as "foreign," while also being a "double" to the human and thus a companion to the field human (*adne ha-sadeh*) mentioned earlier in this coterie.

Besides *looking* like humans, monkeys were viewed as capable of imitating them. This behavioral resemblance, however, was often understood both as a mark of monkey intelligence (and thus as a *similarity* to humans) and also as difference (mere imitation or even dissimulation). Aelian talks of Indian monkeys with "human intelligence"; this is a quality that he also ascribes to elephants, among other Indian animals.[43] That the rabbis considered the monkey as near-human in this regard can be discerned in two cases in tannaitic literature in which they consider ritual acts (ablution and slaughter) performed by them.[44] In these cases, the humanlike acts of a monkey are juxtaposed with those of people with disabilities, various Jews, and Jew-adjacent people (e.g., Samaritans, uncircumcised Jewish men, heretics), and gentiles. Scholars debate the degree to which "racism" is an appropriate or anachronistic way to consider ancient Greek and Roman ethnographic designations for non-Greek or non-Roman peoples. While it is true that ancient ethnographers considered such animalized peoples in various ways, Clara Bosak-Schroeder warns us against anachronistically assuming a certain kind of post-Darwinian, scientific racism in the occasional linkages of nonhuman primates with "barbarian" peoples (such as the Gorillai, the focus of their study).[45] One can find denigration of peoples who are not Jewish in tannaitic sources, though their fullest animalization awaits amoraic sources.[46] But tannaitic literature does not present anything quite like the Latin and Greek traditions (ethnographic, paradoxographical, and natural historical) in which faraway people (non-Romans) are tagged as animal-like, as animal/human hybrids, or as "monstrous" or "wondrous" in other ways.[47]

The Tosefta's *yerod* and the *na'amit* should be understood as complements to the Mishnah's elephant and monkey. Like the words for the hedgehog (*kipod*) and the marten (*ḥuldat ha-senaim*)—and indeed so many animal names—the meaning of these terms is unstable and thus contested by readers and scholars.

One might add that this only contributes to the difficulties of shoring up fuzzy or unstable classifications.[48] The *yerod* (sometimes *yeror*) is thought by some to be an ostrich, whereas the *na'amit* is considered to be a jackal. But there are alternate theories according to which they are sirens, satyrs, or even "liliths."[49] Besides these exoticized overtones, the *yerod* and the *na'amit* confound classificatory norms. The Tosefta declares that they are "like birds in all respects." This implies simultaneous resemblance and difference. If the *na'amit* is understood to be what we think of as an ostrich, we have a creature that other ancient thinkers considered to be in between categories, one that looked like a bird but that did not adhere to bird locomotion (flying). Pliny describes the ostrich as "almost an animal" (*paene bestiarum generis*). In their exoticization, and even mythification, these birdlike creatures align with the monkey and the elephant. In their slippage between the categories of "bird" and "wild animal", they resemble the hedgehog and the marten who move between wild animal and reptile.[50] Their species multiplicity and polythetic classification, as we will see, is like that of the *adne ha-sadeh* or field human(s), who vacillates between the categories of wild animal and human.

The *adne ha-sadeh* are literally "humans of the field" (where *adan* is *adam*).[51] Let us consider the discussion about their classification in the Mishnah. The sages put these field humans in the category of wild animal, whereas Rabbi Yose rather startlingly suggested that their corpses convey a kind of impurity that is uniquely human. In the previous chapter we noted that the siren's dead body instigated something similar.[52] It is unclear whether we should read Rabbi Yose as directly disputing the sages and saying that the *adne ha-sadeh* is completely human (with corpse impurity being determinative) or whether Rabbi Yose's opinion is simply additive (i.e., for most purposes the category of *adne ha-sadeh* is *ḥayah* except in the case of death).[53] Regardless, for Rabbi Yose, the corpse is treated "like a human" *ke-adam*) and transmits that uniquely human and potent "tent" (*ohel*) impurity. This powerful source of impurity means that being in the same covered space as the corpse contaminates: no contact is even necessary, and its severity makes it more onerous to shake off ritually.[54]

The Palestinian Talmud reports a tradition that translates *adne ha-sadeh* as *barnash de-tur* ("human of the field") and describes it as one who "lives from the fields."[55] We may conclude that Palestinian tannaim and Amoraim understood that there were other creatures that resembled humans: this is perhaps surprising given all the fuss about the image of God. As we will soon see, this reading is reinforced by the Tosefta's theory of creaturely correspondences. Saul Lieberman compares the *adne ha-sadeh* to the siren (*sironit*), recalling that the Sifra discusses both creatures in its elaborations of the im/pure kinds of Leviticus.[56] As Galit Hasan Rokem has highlighted, the Sifra extracts the inclusion of the siren from the word *nefesh* out of the phrase *nefesh haḥayah* (Lev 11:10) among those sea creatures without fins and scales that are forbidden for eating (according to Lev 11:9, 11).[57] Poignantly, we may recall that, as with *adne ha-sadeh*, the Sifra goes on to ask whether the siren emits the human corpse type of tent impurity. The answer is in the negative, adducing Numbers 19:14: “this is the instruction (*torah*): when a human (*adam*) dies in a tent, all who come into the tent and all who are in the tent shall be impure for seven days.” This contrasts the siren with the *met* (human dead body, Numbers 19:13) and instead aligns her with impure fish kinds, making her corpse a *nevelah* (animal dead body, Leviticus 11:11).[58]

In Jamaican poet Kei Miller’s postcolonial ode to the mermaid, his friend considers how “the British Empire was so thorough it had invented a law for everything.” Under the empire’s aegis, mermaids “would no longer belong to themselves.” The latter also references the enslavement of Afro-Jamaicans. British colonialism was extractive of indigenous resources: human bodies, labor, and lives, nonhuman animals, and crops. It produced knowledge by arranging indigenous beings according to its classificatory regimes.[59] By fiat, it took ownership, exoticized, and consigned to mythical status. At stake is the mermaid’s very being: they “understood that they simply were, and did not need permission to exist.” Here the mermaids counter with *their* law concerning *humans:* they retreat entirely. Miller ties colonial rapacity to a form of species extinction: “a world lacking in mermaids.” It is not possible to compare Afro-Caribbean experiences of British enslavement and extraction with those of the territories that endured successive centuries of Roman imperialism. Yet scholars have noted that Greek and Roman catalogs of “marvelous” faraway peoples included humanlike sea creatures, images that European colonizers projected onto the seascapes of the Americas.[60] What Miller’s poem lays out so devastatingly are the limitations of an analysis that centers European projects, when Afro-Caribbean people had their own forms of ecological knowledge that included part human, part fish sea creatures.[61] The violence of European colonialism consisted also in this forced loss of local knowledge: as the mermaids absent themselves, they also leave their knowers.

Dan El Padilla Peralta urges us to take the twinned epistemic and ecological impacts of Roman brutality to heart. He admits of exceptions, including Jewish and Celtic communities that pursued strategies of “hybridity and creolization,” arguing that those “that did not pursue textualization as a strategy for the codification and transmission of their cultural identities almost invariably disappeared from the record.”[62] This is one way to think about the cultural productions of the rabbis. One of the challenging aspects of rabbinic menageries, aside from parsing the ways that nonhumans enter into human endeavors like classification, is the rabbis’ own sociopolitical location. How, in particular, do we situate the relationship between rabbis, Romans, the field humans, sirens, and the other creatures they collate in Kilayim?[63] The tannaim were Palestinian locals with strong affective, theological, and narrative ties to Judea and the Galilee and the demolished Jerusalem Temple. They lived in the wake of Roman devastation and upheaval following two (or three) Jewish revolts.[64] Even with the difficulties involved in divining the precise contours and shifts of this collective’s spirits and ideologies from multiauthored and cumulatively transmitted and redacted sources, we can acknowledge that these circumstances conditioned their ventures. Whether we characterize the tannaim as resistant, accommodating, mimicking, indifferent, or otherwise in the face of Roman rule, we can minimally acknowledge that their cultural creations were shaped in its shadow. How then, do we understand the tannaitic traffic in animals? I will suggest that in fact, nonhuman beings, including animals and plants, played significant parts not only in Roman imperial material and epistemic extraction (and introduction into Palestine) but also in tannaitic provincial "zoology." The latter, of course, was not solely a response to or appropriation of Roman zoological activities but a complex of local knowledges (including scriptural "textualizations") that were themselves products of longer and broader Eurasian human-animal histories.

KILAYIM AND THE IMPERIAL MENAGERIE

The rabbis were not alone in their efforts to collect, capture, classify, and display creatures. Menageries can be traced across Southwest Asia, North Africa and beyond—in physical form, in literary sources, and in artistic representations. Composed from the fifth century BCE to the third century CE and onward, literary menageries ranged across Herodotus's *Histories*, Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*, Pseudo-Aristotle's *On Marvelous Things Heard*, Diodorus Siculus's *Library of History*, Pliny's *Natural History*, Phlegon of Tralles's *On Wondrous Things*, and Aelian's *On the Nature of Animals*. Scholars have shown the value of reading these authors' works, at least in part, in their political contexts, drawing our attention to their varying rhetorical strategies and forms.[65] Whether couched as ethnography, paradoxography, philosophy (or natural history),[66] medicine, or otherwise, such writings were inevitably—in part or in combination—enabled by, criticisms of, or apologies for Persian, Hellenistic, Roman, or other imperial powers. Menageries emerged in such written works at a variety of scales and genres, as foci or as "digressions." Clara Bosak Schroeder has shown the various and complex ways by which zoological, ethnographic, and racial thinking came together in antiquity from Herodotus to Diodorus Siculus.[67] Certain non-Greek or non-Roman peoples were viewed as beastly, animal-like, or as straddling the nonhuman and the human. The species classification of other(ed) peoples could be questioned; they could be likened to nonhumans; or they could be thought of as overlapping with nonhumans—that is, possessing bodily or behavioral characteristics of nonhuman creatures (e.g., hairiness, wildness, cannibalism, etc.): for example, the dog-head peoples of Libya (*kunokephaloi*; cf. Herodotus, 4.198). Conversely, the ethnographic gazes that rendered "monstrous" peoples bestial and marvelous also othered (as we have outlined) faraway animals as wondrous, monstrous, multiform (i.e., as possessing features or characteristics of multiple species, including humans). It was through natural history—in the form of the confounding, overlapping, and mutually refracting lenses of zoology and ethnography—that features of difference and sameness were inscribed across the world of beings. In this scheme, the more distant, the more susceptible to the sorts of exoticization in which wildness, animality, and racialization converged.[68]

Besides historical and ethnographic texts in which human, nonhuman, and overlapping menageries were collected, and besides philosophical texts entirely aimed at understanding creaturely life-forms like Aristotle's *Generation of Animals* and *History of Animals*, certain works like pseudo-Aristotle's *On Marvelous Things Heard* (third century BCE) and Phlegon of Tralles's *Mirabilia* (second century CE Asia Minor) were entirely dedicated to wondrous beings (*thaumata*). These were designed to arouse the reader's affective response to the various human and nonhuman phenomena or the events described therein.[69] Other texts, like Pliny's *Natural History*, defy genre: this capacious, multivolume work ranges across contents that might be dubbed geographic, ethnographic, cosmological, zoological, paradoxographical, and medical. Pliny spends a good deal of effort in detailing animal kinds, physiologies, and reproductive modes across the world.[70] Pliny's writings range across humans and animals in ways similar to the rabbinic menagerie, though on a far larger scale. Aelian's early third century CE *On the Nature of Animals* and the second- through fourth-century *Physiologus*, on the other hand, collect and explicate animals for explicitly moralizing purposes.[71] The *Physiologus* assembles an array of entities, primarily animals (and some plants and minerals), and recounts their attributes, "natures," and moral (Christianizing) import. This tradition of moralized natural history enjoyed a prolific afterlife in medieval bestiary and natural history writings. By contrast, tannaitic zoological texts did not engage in this sort of allegorical or moralizing discourse.

While the Sifra's commentary was highly elaborative of the list of Levitical life-forms there, it did not use animals as an occasion for ethics. Others, like Philo of Alexandria, did interpret the Levitical scheme allegorically.[72] For Christian authors such moralizing interpretations also became occasions to berate Jews for wrongly insisting on literal, carnal practices vis-à-vis Levitical creatures. Let us take, for instance, the hyena, whom they exploited as a locus for ethnography, animality, and morality. For the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, as for many late ancient writers (e.g., Ovid, Aelian, Oppian, Pliny, though not the still influential Aristotle), hyenas transitioned periodically between male and female. Their prohibition in the Bible stood for the command to avoid becoming "an adulterer or seducer or becoming like them (*homoiōthēsē*)."[73] Clement of Alexandria's hyena is so highly sexed that they possess an extra sex orifice that goes nowhere. They have nonprocreative and same-sex sex, which is in turn linked to idolatry.[74] Citing "you shall not eat the hyena and whatever resembles it," the second-fourth-century *Physiologus* makes resemblance do the work of warning against imitating bad behavior.[75] Recall, conversely, how, in the previous chapter, the Sifra used resemblance thinking to extrapolate additional creatures. The hyena for the *Physiologus* has dual sex and also transitions from time to time between male and female. This the

Physiologus likens to the "double-minded" person, such as those who come into church "in the form of men," but who leave in the "habits of women."[76] The *Physiologus* was written in Greek, being translated into various languages, including Latin around the fourth century. The earliest copy of the Latin translation (Bern, cod. 233 or *Physiologus* B) instead states that Jews are considered "like it" the hyena because at first, they served God, but later, "given over to pleasure and lust, they adored idols."[77] In this way, a transgender animal serves to castigate genderqueer Christians while simultaneously standing for false-dealing Jews. This should be compared with the Palestinian Talmud, in which God "changes the world every seven years." This includes God transforming various creatures from one species to another, as well as God's switching the hyena from "male to female."[78]

The ancient interest in organizing, curating, and displaying nonhuman creatures did not express itself solely in literary contexts. Textual and material sources (including zooarchaeological evidence and artistic depictions) attest to global shifts in patterns of movement of nonhuman beings in the context of capture, enslavement, and trade. Roughly contemporaries, Josephus and Suetonius recount the ostentatious exhibition of human, animal, and plant life, alongside material plunder, in Roman victory celebrations.[79] Such conspicuous displays represented the subjugation of colonized peoples, animals, plants, and lands. Related to this were parks, hunting grounds, and also stylized hunts and battles between humans and animals: the latter were staged for entertainment both in Rome and beyond.[80]

Josephus describes the ceremonial procession and wondrous spectacle of the triumph of Vespasian and Titus, whose conquests included Judea.

> It is impossible adequately to describe the multitude of those spectacles and their magnificence under every conceivable aspect, whether in works of art or diversity of riches or natural rarities . . . the wonderful and precious productions of various nations—by their collective exhibition on that day displayed the majesty of the Roman empire . . . Then, too, there were carried images of their gods, of marvelous size and no mean craftsmanship, and of these not one but was of some rich material. Beasts of many species (*zōōn . . . pollai phuseis*) were led along all caparisoned with appropriate trappings. The numerous attendants conducting each group of animals were decked in garments of true purple dye, interwoven with gold . . .[81]

He recounts how not only gods, objects, animals, and plants, but also subjugated peoples, were processed in Roman triumphal celebrations.[82] Similarly, Roman coinage displayed humans, plants, and animals as emblems of conquest and capture. *Judea capta* (Judea captured) coins included those upon which Judea is depicted and personified as a despondent, weeping woman, seated under a palm tree (also a personification of Judea), with a Roman soldier or a trophy composed of Roman arms standing over them.[83] *Aegypto capta* (Egypt captured) coins displayed a crocodile below those words.[84] Not coincidentally, in both Jewish revolts in the first and second centuries, Jews struck (or overstruck Roman) coins including those depicting the palm fronds (*lulav*) and a palm tree.[85] Palm fronds certainly invoke victory or, when depicted with a citron, the ritual "four species" of the Sukkot festival. But such valences do not exclude additional connotations and associations with Judea. The later revolt coins can be read as efforts to "recapture" or to relocalize what had been "captured" both physically—Judean people and plant life—and visually in imperial iconography.

E. A. Pollard distinguishes between the "colonial botany" of Rome, or "the process by which this imperial power collected and transported plants for study (i.e., the natural historical impulse) and what she terms Roman "botanical imperialism"—that is, "the ideological and practical constructs and claims of cultural hegemony and military power that develop out of that transplantation and study."[86] A vivid instance of the former is the Judean balsam tree, which surfaces precisely as an object of natural historical in Pliny's writings. Surely their content, describing the tree that "now serves (*servit*) [as subject] of Rome, and pays tribute together with the people (*gente*) to which it belongs," expresses botanical imperialism.[87] The balsam, like the palm tree, as a nonhuman member of the Judean people, was captured along with Jews and subject to the same power. To Pollard's "botanical imperialism" I would add "zoological imperialism." While the analysis of Pollard and others is focused on Roman capture, display, and knowledge-making projects, our focus is on Palestine and what we might call "zoological provincialism."

Of course, imperial conditions do not make for unidirectional, static, top-down or active-passive dynamics between metropole and province. Roman rule did not only enable the extraction and exploitation of human, animal, and plant life, though this it did aplenty. It also facilitated the transport, trade, and circulation thereof. Thus, colonial botany and zoology entailed not only extraction from Palestine to Rome in order to undergird imperial botany and zoology but also the circulation and influx of materials and animals to Palestine, which, in turn, fueled local collections and provincial knowledge making.[88] Take, for instance, Nile scenes in mosaics or frescos that were hugely popular across the empire, including in Palestine.[89] Caitlin Barrett shows how, alongside the inevitable exoticization that these scenes excited, such Nilotic iconography enabled people to "participate in the ongoing creation and negotiation of a Roman-controlled but pan-Mediterranean, cultural koine." On the trade front, the Mishnah cites Rabbi Theodoros "the physician" declaring that "no cow or pig leaves Alexandria without its uterus removed, so that it does not give birth."[90] Here the Mishnah speaks not only to breeding practices but also to a violent form of patent that made it impossible for importers to instigate the reproduction of these animals. Both the Mishnah and the zooarchaeological record testify to this flow of animals, plants, and people. But this was not inaugurated with Roman rule: the intertwining of trade and successive imperial presences meant that Palestine was not exempted from the connectivity and movement of humans and nonhumans across the Middle East and the Mediterranean over the previous centuries.[91]

Roman roadworks in Palestine demonstrate that so-called "beasts of burden"—camel, mules, horses, and donkeys—traversed them.[92] Palestine witnessed the building of theaters and other centers for games and entertainment, from Herod onward.[93] These constructions enjoyed continued use and ongoing development, with the erection of additional theaters, amphitheaters, and hippodromes, from the late first century onward (including in Tiberias, Jericho, Samaria, Gerasa, Gedara, Caesarea, Scypotholis, Ascalon, Neapolis, Eleutheropolis, Hammat Gader, and Dor).[94] At the turn of the second and during the first part of the third century, there was "a veritable flourish both in the construction of new buildings and the expansion and renovation of existing structures."[95] The entertainments housed in such buildings included parades of exotic animals, displays of animals trained to perform tricks, staged hunts (*venationes*), combat between animals and people, or animals pitted against each other.

Artistic depictions of menageries abounded, from the second through the sixth centuries, in mosaics and frescoes, on pottery, glassware, and silverware, throughout the Mediterranean and in North Africa.[96] Collections of animals appear in hunting scenes,[97] Nilotic scenes celebrating faunal and vegetal fertility around the Nile,[98] "animal combat" scenes,[99] "zoo" or "display" scenes, scenes of mythical or biblical figures ("Noah," "Orpheus," "Adam," or "David") surrounded by animals, or nested in so-called medallion carpet designs in Roman Palestine and beyond.[100]

Besides mosaics in Palestine, we find wall paintings in the amphitheater in Caesarea (second century), Neapolis, and fragments from Euletheropolis and Scythopolis,[101]depicting local animals in combination with exoticized creatures such as the elephant, the leopard, and the lion.[102]A particularly rich example of the menagerie that juxtaposes exotica with prosaica is the third- or fourth-century Lod mosaic, which depicts pigeons, doves, cows, chickens, horses, as well as elephants, giraffes, rhinoceroses, and sea life, the latter including "fantastic" creatures.[103] Similar assortments of natural life populate the third- through sixth-century mosaics in Sepphoris and Bet Shean, which also juxtapose animal, human, and part-human/part-animal iconography.[104]

I run through these various menageries, whether artistic depictions, embodied spectacles, or literary catalogs, to summon a world in which elites were heavily engaged in the traffic, collection, and deployment of animals as forms of economic and political capital, and in which nonelites were also exposed to displays thereof. I suggest that the peculiar concatenation of menageries in the tractate of Kilayim, and elsewhere in tannaitic sources, can in part be understood as taking up this curatorial impulse. The tannaim were engaged in a conspicuous display of knowledge making, albeit on a far more modest scale than what we find in Aristotle's classificatory enterprise or Pliny's zooethnography.[105] While Aristotle's concern was the function of animal parts and behavior, and Pliny's efforts conveniently showcased the extractive potentials of the imperium, rabbinic classification entailed its own peculiar aims and consequences. While the framing of ritual purity may render rabbinic sources atypical after a fashion, pragmatic entailments fail to account for the inclusion of all the creatures discussed, particularly the "exotica." I will now suggest that the Kilayim menagerie itself fails, or at least points to a creaturely excess that renders the menagerie—both as a frame and classificatory project—precarious. I will do so by attending to the (para)human bookends of the Mishnah's catalog, and to the theory of territorial doubles that punctuates the Tosefta.

UNRAVELING DIFFERENCE

Creatures strained against and even exceeded the menagerie's attempt to capture and classify them. The key to the slips in the menagerie's attempt to contain lies in the doubling effect of likeness, and the fugitive excess to which this gives rise. We can see this most clearly when we focus on the troubling double of the *adam*—the human. The human forms a literary and substantive Archimedean point. It bookends mKilayim 8:5–6 and makes an entrance in the Tosefta. By this I mean that the human, in the form of the ambiguous field human (*adne hasadeh*), inaugurates the Mishnah's list of animals in mKilayim 8:5 who defy easy classification, which is tailed by the monkey (literarily and literally human adjacent). The human (*adam*) closes the passage in mKilayim 8:6, being juxtaposed with the aforementioned creatures, or "any of them." This juxtaposition is echoed in the generation principle in tKilayim 5:8, according to which the human is contrasted with nonhuman creatures using the *adam* versus "any of them" phrasing.

It is worth dwelling on the Mishnah's coda: the human, or the human proper, is permitted "to pull, plow with, and lead" any of the aforementioned animals. To reiterate, the prohibition that ostensibly motivates the whole classificatory enterprise of this tractate demands the separation of different species. This is in terms of sex and in the realm of labor. Thus, a cow and an ox may neither mate nor pull at the same plow. This line reminds us, however, that the human *does not count as a species* for the purposes of this prohibition and may work with and oversee an animal of any kind. The phrasing emphatically sets the human apart from and yet thereby also *together with* "any of these." Having raised the specter of the double, and, in particular, the human double, the passage implicates the human *among* animal kinds. This final line seemingly restores the singularity of the human amid all the messy questions of species distinctions and resemblance. The human is not only over and above the project of animal-animal difference. It cosponsors that project. The human is outside *kilayim's* economies: it can interact uninhibited with all the creatures. Rather than being subject to the strictures of *kilayim*, the human manages and enforces the concomitant knowledge enterprise. Yet the figure of the *adne ha-sadeh* lingers, troubling this seemingly easy distinction. Moreover, the human's vaunted singularity here is perhaps undermined by its fungibility.[106] The human's uniqueness lies in its ability to pair with "any of these": it can be a companion to all species. While the pairing is envisioned in the realm of labor rather than that of reproduction, what nonetheless emerges is a theory of species boundaries over which the human can happily step.

This fungibility of the human versus "any of them" is echoed in the extended generation principle of tKilayim 5:9.[107] Here, too, at first blush, it may seem as if the principle sets humans apart from other creatures. However, closer inspection reveals that it folds them within itself. This principle, as we saw in chapter 1, is a variation on the Aristotelian commonplace "human begets *human*," paraphrased in Pseudo-Aristotle's *Problems* as "if from a horse, a horse, if from a human, a human."[108] As discussed previously, this principle not only limits the possibilities of offspring ensuing from cross-species sex, it also underpins Aristotle's insistence that any seeming such "monstrosities" are "appearances only." In addition to this he admits that species-nonconforming offspring are generated, including among humans. It is this phenomenon of humans appearing to deliver nonhuman kinds, and even vice versa, that the tannaitic extended generation principle concedes.[109] It is thereby that the human is included among, rather than distinguished from, other species.

The generation principle therefore upholds the idea that the field human, for instance, is genealogically *unrelated* to the human. The human and animal cannot produce offspring. But to what end does the Tosefta include the sentences that follow? I contend that those statements constitute a "theory of territorial doubles" that explains resemblances among species. Further, the theory undergirds the generation principle, explaining why those cases of resemblances are "appearances only." In other words, the existence of territorial doubles explains why the dog and the wolf are not the products of shared ancestry. We now turn to that theory to see how it interacts with the menagerie of Kilayim.

Territorial Doubles and Creaturely Excess

The theory of territorial doubles embedded in the zoological passage in Tosefta Kilayim—and, I would argue, commenting on Mishnah Kilayim—bears repetition:[110]

> Every [creature] that there is in the settlement (*yishuv*) there is in the wild (*midbar*), whereas many [creatures] that are in the wilderness do not exist in the settlement.
>
> Every [creature] that is on dry land (*yabashah*) there is in the sea (*yam*), whereas many [creatures] that are in the sea are not on dry land. But there is no marten of the sea (*ḥuldat hayam*). (tKilayim 5:10)[111]

Here is a striking explanation for the phenomena of likeness and difference that pepper Tractate Kilayim and rabbinic zoology broadly speaking. It serves as an interpretive key to the broader Tosefta passage as well as to the parallel Mishnah passage. It also partly justifies our heuristic groupings of Kilayim's catalog into prosaica and exotica. The theory affirms the generation principle: the idea that when resemblance occurs, it is *not the result of cross-species sex*. Instead, this explanation posits something that has been intimated all along: species that "resemble one another" are distinct creatures. They are parallels without any genealogical or vertical intersection. The principle also acknowledges that humans, just like other kinds, *seem* to pop up in other contexts. What I am intimating here is that the *adam* creature emerges at the nexus of contradictions of sameness and difference.

How does the theory operate? It effectively sets up a series of geographic-zoological zones. First, it distinguishes between settled, human habitation, the *yishuv* or *oikoumenē*, and the wilderness—*midbar* or *erēmos*. Such a contrast maps onto Roman and earlier Hellenistic geographies.[112] Second, the theory joins together humanly settled territory and the wilderness as dry land (*yabasha*), which, in turn, is set against the sea (*yam*). This map of the settlement or *oikoumenē*, successively surrounded by wilderness or *erēmos*, and then a vast ocean, as well as the notion of exotic and fabulous creatures living in those contiguous distant lands and waterways, is found in many variations in ancient geographic, ethnographic, and zoo-ethnographic treatises.[113] Altogether, this is a distinctively flat and horizontal topography: neither the heavens nor the deity feature. But what makes such absences even more significant, in this context, is how the human is caught up in the zoological frame of doubles. As we shall see, alternate theories of doubles do find ways to preserve theologically inflected, top-down orientations.

A closer look at what is implied about life-forms themselves reveals a theory of parallel realms that moves laterally, from the interior and outward. All creatures that dwell in settled habitation, including even, or especially, the human—after all, what says "settlement" more than humans?—have analogs or doubles in the wild. So too, does everything on dry land have its counterpart in the water.[114] But, just as crucially, the principle of territorial doubles acknowledges an *excess* of life-forms in successive beyonds. It declares that there are many creatures in the wild that have no analog in the settlement, just as there are many unique sea creatures that do not have land-based counterparts. Outside human habitation lives a creaturely surplus, including life-forms that do not mirror our own. If nature is always interlocked with culture, then the rabbis highlight that both those animals and humans that live together are embedded within a much larger domain, being only a fraction of "nature." That which is supposedly outside nature (*the* human, *yishuv*, or "culture") is in fact already (the smallest) part of it. Here we have a potent sense of the unpredictable and unknowable qualities of the wild.[115]

The rabbinic classification of *behemah/ḥayah*, usually translated as domesticated and wild, roughly maps onto the distinction between creatures of the settlement and of the wilderness, although, as we saw earlier, this does not always pan out in expected ways. Sometimes a creature is called "wild" (*bar*) but its classification as such is in dispute. Above we noted the case of the wild ox (*shor bar*, mKilayim 8:6), whose status is debated as domesticated (anonymous voice) or wild (Rabbi Yose) in tKilayim 1:9.[116] Commenting on this debate, the Yerushalmi explains the dispute in these terms: the sages say "it was from here (settled territory) and escaped to there (the wilderness)," whereas Rabbi Yose—the same sage who attributes a human-type impurity to the *adne ha-sadeh*—reasons that, "its roots are from there."[117] In this debate about the origins of the "wild" ox, we get a sense of the etiology and territoriality involved in classification ("here" and "there"), as well as the understanding that animals could move from one region to another. This understanding, while attributed to the tannaitic rabbis (including second-century Rabbi Yose), is potentially a later (amoraic) reconstruction of what was at stake in the Mishnah's debate. Clearly drawing in part on the principle of territorial doubles (which it records elsewhere), the Talmud continues with a discussion about whether geese of different regions—"the goose and the desert goose (*avaz midbar*)" and the "sea goose"—constitute distinct kinds (*kilayim*).[118]

Aside from the examples in Tractate Kilayim, rabbinic literature is scattered with references to "wild" or "field" or "sea" versions of animals, not to mention "fantastic" creatures which (according to the theory of territorial doubles) do not correspond to any tame or dry land equivalent. These include the sea dog, the sea mouse, the sea goat, and the sea crow.[119] As for the excess of species found beyond settled (*yishuv*) and dry land (*yabashah*): sources refer to the *ḥad keren* (unicorn) or taḥash, the *koy*, the *teo*, the *re'emim*, the *behemot*, the *leviyatan*, the salamander, dragonlike creatures, and various "fantastic" sea creatures.[120]

As stated, the words for "living creature" (*ḥayah*) and "animal" (*behemah*) are drawn from the Bible; their usage, as terms of art for wild as opposed to domesticated animal, respectively, is a rabbinic innovation.[121] It is one that matches Greek distinctions between tame (*hēmeros*) and wild (*agrios*). Relying on this distinction, Aristotle proposes that "any kind of animal which is tame exists also in a wild state, e.g., horses, oxen, swine, humans, sheep, goats, dogs."[122] Pliny similarly states that "in all animals as well whenever there is any tame variety of a genus there is also found a wild one of the same genus, inasmuch as even in the case of the human an equal number of savage peoples have been predicted to exist."[123] We thus have other ancient versions of "anything that is found in the settlement is found in the wilderness," which also explicitly include variations of parahumans.[124]

That wild zones beyond the *oikoumenē* were populated with wild and exotic human varieties, and even animal-like humans or chimeras, were key to ancient Greek and Roman zooethnographic and geographic traditions.[125] Daniel Sperber suggests that there are similar ethno-racializing overtones to the humanlike creatures of the wild and of the sea referenced by the tannaim.[126] It is true that later rabbinic sources animalize "idol worshippers," identifying religioracialization as "a question of species."[127] Christian writers such as the authors of the Epistle of Barnabas (late first or early second century) and the *Physiologus* animalized Jews themselves, comparing them to hyenas.[128] However, while there are tannaitic discussions of field humans and sirens, as well as a concomitant territorial theory that might explain these wild and sea-based humanlike creatures, there is no suggestion that these are linked to ethno-racialized ideas of animality and species.

We will focus on this more in the next chapter on hybridity. However, this does not mean that the tannaim were "innocent of this more generalized context."[129] And the uncanny echoes of the theory of territorial doubles, coupled with ethnoracialized explications in both Aristotle and Pliny, make it harder to deny this possibility. At the very least, Sperber's suggestion raises crucial questions about the relationships between rabbinic provincial zoology and imperial zoologies.

While we cannot know whether the works of Aristotle circulated in some fashion among the rabbis, or whether first- and late second-century tannaim knew of the first-century Pliny, we find here, as elsewhere in rabbinic "scientific" sources, a curious confluence of ideas and concepts.[130] In this instance, it is significant that Pliny uses virtually the same language as the rabbis, as he reports about "the common opinion that everything born in any department of nature exists also in the sea, as well as a number of things never found elsewhere."[131] Note that he not only echoes the idea in tKilayim 5:10 of "everything that is on dry land, there is in the sea," but also the concept of creaturely excess, such that "many entities that are in the sea are not on dry land."

While I have not found the principle formulated in this way beyond the tannaim and Pliny, it is significant that Pliny refers to it as "common opinion," giving us the sense that this was a widely held belief (not necessarily a point in its favor for the erudite audience Pliny has in mind).[132] Pliny proceeds to refine this belief, observing that the sea "contains likenesses of things and not of animals only," going on to list a variety of creatures that resemble objects and vegetables (e.g., swordfish and sea cucumber), and noting that this "makes it less surprising that in marine snails that are so tiny there are horses' heads projecting."[133] In this same section, Pliny details a selection of humanlike sea creatures alongside other sea animal creatures.[134]

Pliny describes an assortment of sea creatures with human features in various parts of India, as well as sightings closer to Rome, including Nereids, Tritons, and "aquatic monsters," such as the "man of the sea." Nereids, he suggests, have bodies "bristling with hair even in the parts where they have human shape." The Tritons, he claims, citing eyewitness accounts, bear a "complete resemblance to a human being in every part of his body."[135] Saul Lieberman glosses the Sifra's siren as "a human being dwelling in the water," while tying it to the field human and to the theory of territorial doubles.[136] In artistic depictions, the siren features the upper body of a woman and the lower body of a bird: the sixth-century House of Leontis mosaic in Bet Shean arguably follows this convention, though much of the lower body is missing.[137] But the scene also includes a nereid (or "sea nymph") riding an ichthyocentaur (not a late ancient term), the latter a creature whose upper body is human, with horse forelegs, and a fishlike lower body with tail.[138] This artistic depiction, later than Pliny and the Mishnah and Tosefta, manifests the *excess* that these texts signal: "there are many [kinds] in the sea that are not on dry land."

FIGURE 10. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Untitled (or, Modest Proposal for World Making)*. Watercolor and on paper, 9.5" × 12.5". 2019.

It bears reiterating that the expanded generation principle powerfully forecloses the possibility that creatures like the siren are offspring of cross-species unions. They are not hybrids. Rather, and in accordance with the territoriality theory, they are each a sui generis likeness, or double, without any genealogical or reproductive relation to the earth-settled human. With humanlike creatures in particular—the siren and the field human—we encounter the troubling thought that humans, despite their vaunted legibility and singularity as images of God, are not so unique after all. We now turn to how this kind of doubling concords with our earlier observations about Kilayim's flattened zoological map and lack of heavens or deity.

Horizontal versus Vertical Doubling

The horizontal theory of territorial doubles subsumes the human among its denizens. This, and its notable lack of a divine figure, contrasts sharply to Origen's mid-third century-theory of creaturely correspondences, as laid out in his commentary on the Song of Songs:[139]

> The apostle Paul teaches us that the invisible things of God may be known through the visible, and things which are not seen may be contemplated by reason of and likeness to those things which are seen. He thus shows by this that this visible world

> teaches us about that which is invisible and that this earthly scene contains certain patterns of things heavenly. Thus it is possible for us to mount up from things below to things above, and to perceive and understand from the things we see on earth the things that belong to heaven. On the pattern of these the Creator gave to His creatures on earth a certain likeness to these, so that their great diversity might be more easily deduced and understood. And perhaps just as God made man to his own image and likeness, so also did He create the other creatures after the likeness of some other heavenly patterns. And perhaps the correspondence between all things on earth and their celestial prototypes goes so far, that even the grain of mustard seed . . . has something in heaven whose likeness and image it bears . . .
>
> In the same way, therefore, it is possible that other seeds too that are in the earth may have a likeness and relationship to something found in heaven. And, if this is the case with seeds, it is doubtless the same with plants; and if with plants, undoubtedly with animals, whether they fly or creep or go on all fours.[140]

What we find here is an altogether different theory of correspondences. Building on a combination of Pauline thought and a related idea of the imago dei, Origen extrapolates more broadly to all creation: from the human to the humble mustard seed, and from the plant to the four-footed animal. He suggests that every facet of nature has its origins in a heavenly prototype. On the one hand, this potentially de-exceptionalizes humanity's divine, mimetic status as described in Genesis 1:26–27. On the other hand, the "last and final use" of nonhumans "is to serve the bodily needs of men . . . yet they also have the shapes and likeness of incorporeal things; and thus by them the soul may be instructed and taught how to contemplate those other things that are invisible and heavenly."[141]

Patricia Cox Miller takes this Origenian theory of correspondences, especially as taken up in the *Physiologus* bestiary, to be sponsoring a "fantastical" rather than literal "bestial poetics" that corresponds "imaginally" rather than "literally."[142] Pressing on Origen's ideas of the pedagogical value of earthly creatures as pointing upward toward heavenly patterns, Cox Miller reads the *Physiologus* as a spiritual healing science that draws from the Greek and Roman natural history traditions. Certainly, Origen's text moves away from earthy literalism in the reorientation from the terrestrial realm of seeds, plants, and animals, to gazing upward at the heavens. The potential radicalism of seeing all the world, including nonhumans, as "in the image," is softened, given Origen's insistence that it is humans, uniquely set in God's image, who are tasked with "reading" (according to Cox Miller) the text of nature.[143]

By contrast, Tosefta Kilayim's correspondence theory is not based in heavenly referents. Rather than offering a vertical and upwardly mobile hermeneutic that simultaneously renders all other creatures in service to humans as both sustenance and pedagogy, the zoological orientation of the tannaim is horizontal.[144] All creatures hold in common their doubling, just as all are subject to the same constraints of generation. This is not to deny the human-centric, or Jewish-centric, stresses of the tannaim. Nor can we ignore the Adamic hierarchical posture adopted in the classificatory project as a whole, especially when tasked with ordering animals in terms of food permissibility and, to some extent, other utilitarian ends. Nonetheless, the tannaitic sources treated in this chapter here allow unexpected and contradictory configurations of species relations to emerge, ones that do not conform to a simplistic human/nonhuman binary or hierarchy and ones that are based on ideas of likeness and difference that challenge a purely exceptionalist account of the human.

CONCLUSION

Tractate Kilayim presents sets of creatures and their respective species designations in terms of wild animal, domesticated animal, creeping creature, or human. We investigated the play of likeness and difference across these sets through the frame of the menagerie. As we saw, the pairings of creatures that "resemble each other but are kilayim with one another" in the first menageries demonstrate that looks can be deceiving. Pairings of kinds were posed as different, frustrating the logics of resemblance as a classificatory identifier, much as our spontaneously variant offspring did in chapter 1. Our search for a unified organizing principle instead revealed multiple logics for how pairs were bound together.

In the second sets of menageries, we met creatures whose appearances or names could be deceptive. A creature living among humans might be "wild" (the dog); those in the wild could be considered domesticated (the wild ox). Some creatures are ambiguous: bird-"like," they do not fly (*na'amit* and *yerodin*). Others seem to cross categories: looking reptilian but treated as wild animals (the marten); appearing human but being wild animals and/or humans (the field human). Here, too, assignations of domesticated/wild did not exactly map onto what might be expected. Neither was there a singular or binary principle of organization; rather, categories moved across or between domesticated animal (*behemah*), wild animal (*ḥayah*), crawler (*sherets*), bird (*of*), and human (*adam*).

These menageries hardly constitute an "encyclopedic" or "ethnographic" zoological collection in the fashion of other ancient collections. Instead, like other menageries scattered across tannaitic literature, they pop up on a seemingly need to know basis. The ostensible motivation for this non exhaustive catalog is the kilayim prohibition and its ramified rabbinic elaborations. In other words, it is the need to know creaturely classifications so as to avoid forbidden juxtapositions. Animals thus circulate and cluster at particular locations. At each point we can see the obvious prompts: how to extrapolate additional creatures from the relatively sparse verses of Leviticus? How to exchange or trade animals with those who are not Jewish? What are the possibilities for raising or hunting various kinds of animals in Palestine? What are the distinctions between species' reproductive periods and modes? What are the relationships across different species and how ought similar kinds be classified in the light of the crossbreeding prohibition? Which animals are considered to be "attested," such that, if they injure someone or cause damage, there is full liability? Thus a lengthy passage in tBava Kamma about animals permitted or forbidden for breeding and hunting constitutes a disquisition cataloging creatures of the "settlement" (*yishuv*) and of the "wilderness" (*midbar*).[145] As we saw in chapter 1, tBekhorot 1:10 is another instance, clustering dogs, cats, pigs, foxes, creeping creatures, wolves, lions, bears, panthers, leopards, elephants, baboons, monkeys, snakes, dolphins, humans, and fish, parsing their gestational times and their gestational modes (e.g., viviparous, etc.), ostensibly to classify pure/impure kinds. A group of creatures in mBava Kamma 1:4 is named as inherently "attested" dangers, making for full liability for damage or injury that they cause. These include the human (*adam*), the wolf, the lion, the bear, the leopard, the panther (*bardelas*), and the snake.[146] Rabbi Eleazar qualifies that, except for the snake, these creatures are not "attested" if they are "tamed (or bred, *tarbut*)"—that is, by humans.[147] As the Mishnah continues, it confirms that humans are (like snakes) always attested (mBava Kamma 1:6), whether aware or unaware.[148] The Mishnah also names the wolf, the lion, the bear, the leopard, the panther, and the snake as creatures (aside from the ox) who are tried, like humans, in a court of twenty-three judges for capital offenses.[149]

These occasions for pop-up menageries, however, do not present the full picture. Because the answers or elaborations supplied to the above questions in many ways exceed their ostensibly pragmatic applicability. In this chapter I have sought to argue that the fact that such assemblages are at least in part introduced for ritually directed purposes does not negate their role as conspicuous displays of animal knowledge. The specificity, the clustered relationships, and repetitions of particular species, start to coalesce into patterns.[150] The tannaim formed these menageries into rabbinically inflected interventions into natural history. Such displays of zoological prowess were not, as I've suggested, without political resonance. In fact, we might think of them in terms similar to the Sifra's staging of Moses as grasping each animal in Leviticus and displaying it to the Israelites (in the previous chapter).

Related to this chapter's argument that the rabbis' menageries are virtuoso spectacles of how the rabbis can capture and classify creatures, much in the way that powerful people across the empire sought to do in material ways, is their combination of "prosaica" and "exotica." I have argued against approaching exoticized creatures as fanciful, mythical, or imaginary—a theme we return to in the next chapter. Similarly, I have refrained from correcting or interpreting the tannaim according to positivist zoological categories—by suggesting, for example, that the field human is an ape.[151] Certainly, "wondrous" tales about "fabulous" creatures were a stock of storytelling and ethnography in antiquity.[152] But the line between "fabulous," because faraway and rarely, if ever, encountered, and incredible, because a product of imagination or misapprehension, is not one we can make for ancient people. Similar problems beset our instinct to write off what we deem "fantastic" creatures by claiming that the rabbis were merely inventing whimsical liminal cases or legalistic hypotheticals with which to think.

An overly contemporary and narrow notion of pragmatic motivations for or positivist accounts of rabbinic knowledge making fails on two scores. First, it doesn't account for the fact that this anachronistically conceived motivation is insufficient to explain all the listed animals. Second, it forces us to assume that "fabulous" exotica, and particularly creatures, like the siren, are merely playful theoretical postulates.[153] It is likely that rabbis would have encountered or heard tell of these exoticized animals (including ones that *we* might regard as fanciful), whether in stories or mosaics, or in the flesh. It is thus that I have sought to attend precisely to the *casual* concatenation and *unacknowledged* juxtaposition of the "prosaic" and the "exotic": the unmarked inclusion of what *we* might see as fantastical. Furthermore, I have contended that these juxtapositions concord with a distinctive curatorial logic that we find in late ancient Mediterranean and Middle Eastern contexts: the menagerie.

I find myself in the position of arguing against both overly positivist accounts for the rabbis' zoological interest, as well as comprehensive explanations based in pragmatism. The insufficiency of positivist explanations for the creatures in the rabbinic menagerie complements the sense that pragmatic motivations do not exhaust the logics of what is captured in (or what exceeds) their collections. This returns us to the point about how ritual interests shape knowledge formation but do not exhaust its attempted reach. To read these rabbinic texts is not the same as reading Pliny. Nor is it quite like looking at Nilotic scenes in Sepphoris nor those in Pompei. The dimension of rabbinic ritual, the thinking with, elaborating, and reinventing biblical rudiments, is what contours these menageries into a distinctively localized form. The rabbis took on the idiom of the menagerie—itself marked as a form imperial domination—as a type of provincial cosmopolitanism or, one could say, "zoological localism."

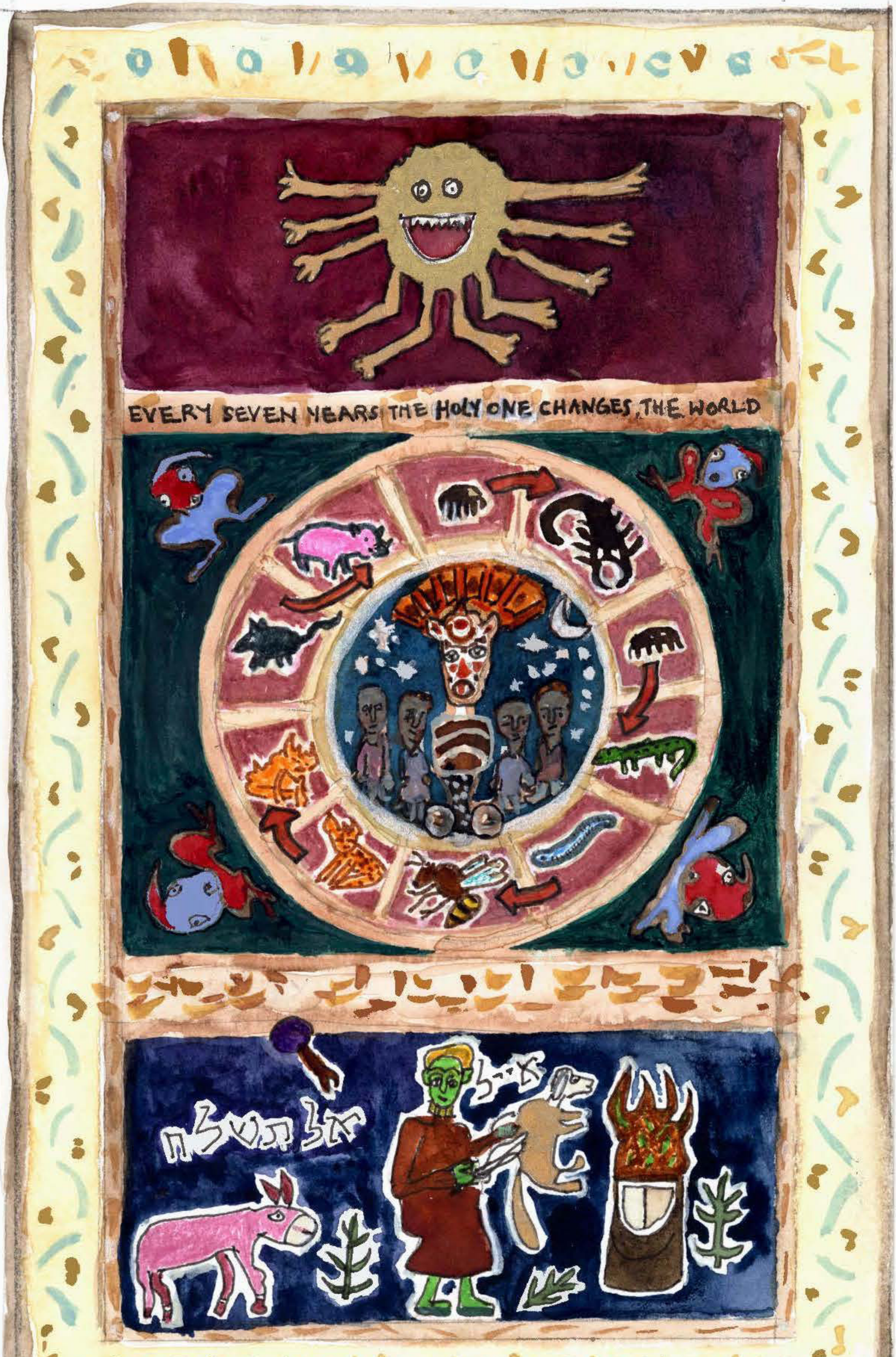
These various efforts to stake out claims by assembling animals also need to be considered as different attempts to pattern species, the human among them. In collecting a heterogenous sampling of creatures and in seeking to tame their unruliness through the control of classification and their display as knowledge, the rabbis cultivate, if not entirely exhaustively, a way of being human. In their words: "one who does not have Bible, Mishnah, and ways of the world (*derekh erets*) is not part of the settlement (*yishuv*)."[154] While they could in this instance be talking about "children of Israel" who do or do not have such knowledges and "ways," this does not mean that the tannaim do not essentially extrapolate this to all peoples. In other words, all who do not engage in this "threefold cord" are wild. This is the perfect rebuke to those who thought of themselves as having dominion of the *oikumenē* (or the *yishuv*)—Romans—and of their knowledge conquests as extensions of this control.[155]

. . .

In Kilayim's menageries humans emerge at the joint of difference and sameness. While they supposedly enforce classification with consequences and stand outside the prohibition *as a species*, they also, like other animals, face several creaturely doubles. Likeness itself has a proliferative effect, implicating and connecting multiple creatures. For the field human likeness and difference are in dispute. On one reading, it seems the creature is classified as *both* alike (human) and different (nonhuman). In this sense, we might think of the human and its doubles as *multiple in themselves* (rather than as alike or different: recall Rabbi Hanina's approach to the human and animal as *sharing* features in tNiddah 4:5). This, in its own way, breaks down dichotomous divisions—or binary notions of difference—between humans and nonhumans via multiplicity.

The theory of territorial doubles accounts for this troubling effect of likeness but does so by dispersing it across concentric wild and watery realms. This is the reason that the Tosefta's commentary and complement to the Mishnah cites the expanded principle of generation (including the human) together with the theory of territorial parallels. These two statements—both principle and theory—are an attempt to put a stop to the fuzzy, (con)fusing, and contagious properties of likeness, one that captures the human as well. However, the creaturely excess outside human habitation (*yishuv*) also points to the ways that likeness as an organizing mechanism is proliferative (again, sweeping up the human). The sum of life-forms exceeds rabbinic attempts to capture their totality, their unruly abundance outpacing classification: recall the queer excess of creatures in the wild and in the sea, which do not double those found in human territory or on dry land. Furthermore, creaturely doubles are not *identical* to their dry land or settlement counterparts. They, together with their queerly excessive comrades, are reminders that the contagion of likeness need not create clones but rather ever more variation and multiplicity.

FIGURE 11. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Transformations*. Mixed media, 2022.


EVERY SEVEN YEARS THE HOLY ONE CHANGES THE WORLD
אל תשלח
איל

4

Hybrid

It is true that they [the rabbis] were willing to concede that "a pure-bred individual may be produced by a hybrid mated with a pure bred," for they found examples of that nature in Ruth the Moabitess, Naamah the Ammonitess, Hezekiah and Mordecai. As a general eugenic rule, however, they maintained that "one cannot produce a clean thing out of an unclean," and discouraged any kind of intermarriage even with proselytes. Their ideal was a race healthy in body and spirit, pure and undefiled, devoid of any mixture of inferior human protoplasm.

—REICHLER, *JEWISH EUGENICS*

IN THIS CHAPTER WE TURN OUR GAZE TO THE HYBRID. The hybrid lies at the intersection of the two axes of our inquiry: generation and species. On the one hand, we have generation, or accounts of how life comes into being, which we can visualize along a vertical axis: for example, as a way of mapping how "progenitors" bring about "offspring." On the other hand, we have posed the concept of species as a way to account for distinctions and overlaps among beings (or to make cuts along the fabric of beings). We can imagine this as distributed across a horizontal axis. In its late ancient definition, the hybrid emerges at the crux of these two orientations. It is the offspring that is generated (along the vertical axis) as the product of beings that are considered to be distinctive species (across the horizontal axis).

This definition may seem trivial, but I hope to persuade you of two related points in this chapter. The first is that this description belies the complexity and multiplicity that the hybrid embodies—and I use this term, rather than "symbolizes," deliberately—for the rabbis. It is this variety that we will pursue in these pages. As they unfold, we will see that, aside from embodying both species and generation, the hybrid also provokes considerations about prohibition and permission, human and divine agency, and the distinctiveness of Jewish ritual. The second larger claim in this chapter relates to the multiplicity of the hybrid. The hybrid is theoretically consequential for how the rabbis—and others through them—think of the relationships between reproduction and speciation, and, in the later sources, between hybridity and transgression in the realm of sex and reproduction. This relates to a substantive finding: in later, post-tannaitic sources, the reach of the hybrid extends somewhat and becomes a tool (perhaps even a symbol) of moralizing and uneasy thinking about varied human couplings, and a way to think about fidelity/adultery and genealogical im/purity. This is in decided contrast to the nonmoralizing discourse we find in tannaitic texts. The hybrid also, more surprisingly, becomes a means to conceptualize the generation of all human beings.

As with many elements of rabbinic world making, the hybrid exposes not only the particularities of rabbinic creativity; it also activates resonances in modern and contemporary scholarship. The rabbinic usage of *kilayim* refers to the combination of two kinds, or what we might call a hybrid as described above. The epigraph at the top of the chapter is emblematic of how kilayim have been used to substantiate racializing Jewish eugenics. Yet the tannaim do *not* associate kilayim with intra-Jewish and Jewish/non-Jewish unions. Neither do they associate it with kilayim with same-sex sex, adultery, or bestiality. Nevertheless, an influential stream of scholarship, beginning at least in the twentieth century, reads the tannaitic sources about kilayim precisely in terms of such associations and symbolic meanings, importing into them ideas of the hybrid as a violation of the "natural order." Those arguments rest on assumptions about the supposedly obvious morals underlying kilayim, which I show to be unwarranted. My efforts here are to sketch what is possible when kilayim are not taken for granted in these ways.

What we find in the earlier corpus of rabbinic literature are multiple ways of getting at kilayim. In one direction there is the familiar expansion of a slender biblical prohibition, a prohibition that is presented as peculiarly and distinctively Jewish. Tugging in another direction is an arguably pragmatically driven quest to exploit existing hybrids. Additionally, while we see a curious ambiguity ascribed to kilayim in the scheme of creation, there is a simultaneous repudiation of the search for logical explanation and instead an invocation of kilayim (among other commandments) as an inexplicable, divinely ordained statute. These several ways to understand the hybrid, as well as multiple means of manipulating it, resist singular and unifying logics.

I begin this chapter by defending a nontrivial premise: that "multiformity" does not always or inevitably entail hybridity. This calls for a brief recap of the limits of reproductive outcomes for interspecies coupling as understood by the tannaim, as well as a review of the various causes by which a multiform creature might come into being. I bolster this account by demonstrating that the tannaim themselves explicitly distinguish in this way. The point here is to tighten our usages of hybrid/kilayim in accordance with ancient rabbinic concepts. This has a corollary effect on the theoretical implications of the tannaitic kilayim.

I go on to briefly survey the contents of rubrics that constitute kilayim in order to posit that a negative understanding of it, one that exists solely though prohibition, is inadequate. Instead, as I show, we see a multifaceted oscillation between tannaitic distinctions and expansions. For instance, the tannaim use the term "kilayim" to signify not just the forbidden coupling or working or planting of two kinds but also the ensuing offspring or product thereof. By surfacing the complexity around which people (e.g., Jews vs. non-Jews), territories (e.g., holy land vs. diaspora), and objects (e.g., permitted secondary use of certain gentiles kilayim products) are subject to prohibition and permission, I further illustrate the insufficiencies of the binary logics underlying a negative, essentializing lens. Even more potent is the evidence that I adduce from the Sifra, whose treatment of kilayim does not moralize about purity of species or essential categories. Instead, the Sifra presents kilayim as inexplicable and without justification: hence its susceptibility to mockery and attack as a peculiar and distinctive marker of Jewishness.

To the extent that the tannaim evince an etiology for kilayim (in the Tosefta and the Sifre), it appears alongside the creation of fire, as a singular creature or element, with a nonlinear reproductive, ad hoc relationship to its originary entry into the world. Kilayim, as a philosophical problem, are worked out by the tannaim in customary succinctness in contrast with the rather more explicit elaborations of the much earlier Aristotelian, Theophrastus, who also struggled with the same. For the tannaim, kilayim and fire are parts of divine creation, albeit in a somewhat liminal temporal positioning (similar to other unique entities like Bala'am's talking donkey, Numbers 22:28–30). Here is an instance in which kilayim provide the opportunity for theorizing about singular entities that are outside the usual circuits of creation, generation, and reproduction. Freed from conceptual encumbrances that essentialize and moralize it, kilayim prove themselves to be a more supple, ambiguous, and theoretically opportunistic practice and entity, one that marks Jewishness while grappling with broader problems about exchange, creation, singularity, and reproducibility. All in all, these conceptual circuits force us to rethink a notion of hybridity that rests on taken-for-granted ideas of dualisms between "nature" and human agency or what we might call "culture" or "science."

But whence the righteously naturalistic and didactic reputation attributed to kilayim? Here I point to Second Temple sources, such as the writings of Philo of Alexandria, and contemporary scholarship, in which such depictions are found. Contemporary scholars' analyses of kilayim have affinity with ideas held by Philo of Alexandria (and those of nineteenth-/early twentieth-century eugenics) but, as I show, are difficult to track with tannaitic sources. Turning to post-tannaitic texts, we see that some of the negative meanings attached to kilayim by latter-day scholars find expression therein—for example, etiologies for kilayim related to transgressive human hubris. Similarly, there is a turn to attaching symbolic valences to kilayim—for example, by associating the term with illicit sex (adultery, bestiality, same-sex sex), and eugenics (intra-Jewish genealogies and intra-non-Jewish genealogies related to adultery).

Even with these usages of kilayim that signify adultery and related genealogically suspect offspring, the Palestinian amoraim also deploy the term to consider human generation writ large. There, the Talmud (yKilayim 31c) juxtaposes an account of the mule as bearing a composite of its horse and donkey parents' features with a formula for the human as a trihybrid: the product of a man, a woman, and the deity. I suggest that this curious notion of human conception queerly bypasses the usual circuits of generation and reproduction. While, on the one hand, it affirms human exceptionalism, it also disrupts expected heterosexual generation and theorizes the human itself as the product of kilayim (albeit one that is generative). By distinguishing between earlier and later valences of kilayim, this chapter showcases the rabbinic hybrid to be a repository of multiple and shifting meanings, whether among generations of rabbis, or in scholarly conversation.

MULTIFORMITY'S MULTIPLES

The rabbinic hybrid is often a multiform creature, seen as bearing features of more than one kind. The rabbis knew of the hybrid from Leviticus 19:19, which forbids the mating of different species of animals, the sowing of different kinds of seeds in the field, and the weaving together of different fibers. Leviticus dubs the juxtaposition of different kinds of animal, seed, and cloth, as kilayim—a dual form referring to precisely two entities.[1] Deuteronomy 22:9, using the same terminology, prohibits the planting of distinct species in the same vineyard. It adds that the produce arising from this forbidden act is sanctified (hence forbidden). In the following verse, Deuteronomy 22:10 proscribes the ploughing together of the ox and the donkey (but does not use the language of kilayim).[2]

These biblical strictures all concern human interventions in animal and plant generation.[3] But, centuries later, the tannaim extrapolated a broader set of proscriptions and prescriptions. For example, they added the horticultural grafting of trees, vegetables, and plants to what is disallowed under the original biblical prohibition. They also read the admonition against setting an ox and a donkey at the same plough (Deut 22:10) as part of the kilayim prohibition of the previous verse (not an entirely necessary reading), and they extrapolated the prohibition to *any* species mixing—not just of the ox and the donkey—and not just at the plough, but also to leading or being drawn (mKil. 8:2).[4] Furthermore, while the biblical term "kilayim" applies to the generative mixing of two different animals or plants (or, in the case of cloth, the interweaving), in rabbinic parlance it comes to also designate the products thereof.

Leviticus 19:19 enjoins one to not bring about the "copulation" (*r.b.'* in the causative/*hiphil*) of a female animal of one kind, by the male of another.[5] Echoing this, in tKilayim 1:8, Rabbi Judah opines that in the case of a female mule (*peradah*) who seeks a male (*zakhar*) "they do not bring to copulate on her (or: with her; *ein marvi'in aleiha*) the horse species (*min ha-sus*) or the donkey species (*min ha-hamor*) but rather the mule species (*min ha-pered*)." This case illustrates the distinction between kilayim as an act that is humanly instigated and the consequential offspring. Given that mules were known to be sterile, the scenario of a sterile animal in heat demonstrates that the tannaim are concerned about the instigation of cross-species copulation, irrespective of outcome.[6] Similarly, the Sifra argues that Leviticus 19:19 forbids the mating of different combinations (male/female) of wild and domesticated animals and of pure/impure animals. Here, again, the concern is patently not about potential offspring but rather the active human intervention in mating animals of different species.[7]

When we explored early rabbinic ideas about reproduction and variation, we repeatedly ran up against the limits and potentialities of generation as the rabbis knew it. As we saw, the rabbis lived in a world of spontaneously occurring species variation. They knew that animals could deliver creatures that, to a greater or lesser degree, resembled a different species from their parents: a cow might deliver a camel-like creature, for example. This calf, however, was fundamentally different from the creature that might theoretically emerge from the mating of a camel and a cow. The tannaitic principle of generation clarified the limits of generative potential, particularly (though not exclusively) in nonhuman animals.

In the long-form version of the generation principle (tBekh. 1:9), the rabbis follow with a short explication of the gestation periods (tBekh. 1:10) and reproductive modes of various creatures (tBekh. 1:11, live birth, spawning, etc.). That disquisition, we saw in chapter 1, explains why coupling across particular categories of animals—sheep and goats (*behemah daqah*) with cows (*behemah gasah*), pure species with impure species, and animals with humans—would necessarily fail to result in offspring. But we can also take it to be illuminating complementary information about what it takes to engender successful progeny across kinds. Here, for instance, is Aristotle's version thereof:

> The partners in coupling are naturally of the *same* kind (*homogeneis*); but beside that, animals that have *similar* natures copulate, and also ones that are not the same in species (*eidos*), but are nearly *alike* in size and their periods of gestation are equal in length. Although such crossing is rare among the majority of animals, it [is possible] among dogs, foxes, wolves <and jackals>; the Indian dog also is produced from the union of a dog with some wild doglike beast.[8]

Similarly, we may recall the various pairings of animals about which the first chapter of Mishnah and Tosefta Kilayim declared, "even though they *resemble* one another they are kilayim with one another." By bringing these pairings under the umbrella of likeness, and by simultaneously forbidding their joining as constituting kilayim (distinct kinds), the tannaim may also be pointing to the potential of such joinings to realize progeny. Ancient farmers and agriculturalists mated and grafted across "wild" and "domesticated" kinds regularly.

The construal of similarity, as we have seen, did a lot of work in allowing humans to manage, interact with, and explain the world around them. But its usefulness was also compromised by its multivalence and multicausality. This made similarity legible as a sign of relation, but also a potential source of confusion. So far, we have encountered a total of *five* scenarios in which likeness among creatures might arise. The first is the normalized case: "like begets like." For example, two donkeys generate a creature that looks like a donkey: this creature may have generic and particular features resembling their parents'. The second is the animal born to two parents of the same species, but that spontaneously resembles another kind, either fully or partly. For instance, two donkey parents generate a donkey that looks completely or partly like a horse. The third case is the hybrid: the donkey and the horse produce a mule that looks partly or entirely like both or one species. The fourth, of course, involves creatures that are considered distinct kinds but resemble one another: for example, the horse and the mule (each share some features; mKil 1:6) or the human and the wild/domesticated animal (tNidd 4:5). Finally, there is the creature that is a distinct species (*biryah bifene ʿatzmah, biryah le-ʾatsmo* or *meyuhad*) but that bears characteristics of one or more other species. The siren is an example of such a creature, because its form is simultaneously fish and human, yet it is not the product of hybridization.[9]

That the tannaim felt the need to distinguish between some of these cases of resemblance, specifically between spontaneous variation and hybrids, is explicit in the following text:

> A horse who delivered a donkey kind (*min*), they are permitted with their mother['s kind].[10] But if their father was a donkey, they are forbidden with their mother['s kind].
>
> A donkey who delivered a horse kind (*min*), they are permitted with their mother['s kind]. But if their father was a horse, they are forbidden with their mother['s kind].
>
> A ewe who delivered [a goat kind],[11] they are permitted with their mother ['s kind]. But if their father was a goat (lit., a ewe), they are forbidden with their mother['s kind].
>
> A goat who delivered a sheep kind, they are permitted with their mother['s kind]. But if their father was a sheep (lit., a ewe), they are forbidden with their mother ['s kind].
>
> And there is no offering at the altar. (tKil. 5:3)[12]

Here are two contrasting scenarios in which a female of species A can (seemingly) deliver species B: through same-species mating and through cross-species mating (cases two and three of multiformity, as above).[13] We observe that the Tosefta presents hybridization across a rather narrow range of species that—according to Aristotle and the constraints of the expanded generation principle—have compatible generative processes and already resemble each other.[14] According to the Tosefta, the hybrid offspring of crossbreeding (e.g., a mule born of a female horse) is *not* a member of its mother's kind (species A, e.g., a horse), and therefore "is forbidden with its mother." In other words, they may not be mated or yoked with members of their mother's species (e.g., horses).[15] The Tosefta thus views the kilayim offspring as a species distinct from their mother's, who is forbidden to mate with her. Notably, matrilineal species assignment is not operative.[16] The Tosefta says nothing about whether such kilayim offspring are deemed to be the same species as their father or whether they are a new species who are distinct from *both* of their parents. The hybrid (our third case of likeness above) therefore stands in contrast with *same*-species mating, resulting in spontaneous variation (our second case) in which—in accord with the generation principle—the delivery is simply classified according to its parentage.[17] This is a clear instance of the tannaim needing to differentiate between two types of multiformity: that due to spontaneous variation and that due to hybridization.

The Ab Initio Multiform Creature Is Not the Hybrid

The fifth case described above was the multiform animal who possesses features that might be ascribed to two different species. The siren is one obvious example that I raised: rather than being a product of a fish and a human, this creatures is, as we saw in chapter 3, a creature unto itself. The theory of creaturely doubles ensures that the siren resembles the human as its watery other, but that it is parallel rather than intersecting with the human in terms of classification. Other multiform creatures that are not hybrids include the field human and the marten, whose forms similarly attract contested or multiple classifications.[18] The *koy* (untranslatable) is another such creature. The tannaim do not describe their appearance, instead teasing out permutations of resemblance to and difference from the usually distinct groupings of wild animals and domesticated animals:

> There are ways in which it is equivalent (*shaveh*) to a wild animal;[19]
> there are ways in which it is equivalent to a domesticated animal;
> there are ways in which it is equivalent to both domesticated and wild animals;
> and there are ways in which it is not equivalent to either domesticated or wild animals. (mBik. 2:8)[20]

Judith Romney Wegner reads the koy, in light of the later Babylonian Talmud (bHul. 79b), as the offspring of the goat and the gazelle. The koy, she declares, is the Mishnah's "paradigm for hybrids and the problem of their classification." As she puts it,

> The figure of the hybrid, in its turn, is really a metaphor for a larger underlying problem: the Mishnah's obsession with marginal phenomena and its abhorrence of mixtures. This antipathy, stemming partly from the sages' sense of cosmic order and partly from their penchant for dichotomous thought, appears throughout the Mishnah as a preoccupation with the dividing line between a given category and its polar opposite.[21]

Pace Wegner, it is my contention that the koy is *not* an example of kilayim offspring. The rabbis know perfectly well how to name kilayim offspring as such. Thus, they tag the products of donkeys and horses, or goats and sheep, as kilayim. And in discussing various ritual questions related to animals, the tannaim consistently treat the kilayim, and then the koy (rather than subsuming the latter under the former). For instance, in discussing which animals can be donated to the temple instead of the donkey firstborn (or the "redemption of the firstborn donkey"), they list creatures who may not be used for redemption, including kilayim and the koy, both categories noted separately.[22] That the specific creature called the koy is not simply an instance of kilayim is borne out in its distinct treatment in various ritual determinations. Moreover, the very definition of kilayim comprises various combinations and permutations, as we see here:

> A domesticated animal (*behemah*) with a domesticated animal (*behemah*) [of another species]
> a wild animal (*hayah*) with a wild animal [of another species];
> a domesticated animal (*behemah*) with a wild animal (*hayah*);
> a wild animal (*hayah*) with a domesticated animal (*behemah*);
> an impure animal with a pure animal [of another species];
> a pure animal with an impure animal [of another species];
> or an impure animal with a pure animal;
> or a pure animal with an impure animal;
> they are forbidden for plowing, and to pull them or lead them [together]. (mKil. 8:2)

As we see, the term "kilayim" already includes the offspring of the wild and domesticated quadruped. The fact that the koy is subsumed under an ontological uncertainty (*safek*) about its classification makes it unusual and suggests that it is akin to the creatures named above. Indeed, the Tosefta parallels mKilayim 8:5's list of multiform creatures, such as the *adne ha-sadeh* (field human) and the *kipod*, by describing the *koy* as "subject to two stringencies" (tKil. 5:3), perhaps meaning that it is treated as both wild and domesticated for the purposes of extending (rather than minimizing) the prohibition against mixing it with other animals (domestic or wild).[23] This is also directly spelled out in mBikkurim 2:11.[24]

The Tosefta cites Rabbi Yose describing the koy as a "creature unto itself" (*biryah le'atsmo*), which the sages "could not harmonize" or "compel" between the binary classes of wild animal and domesticated animal (tBikkurim 2:5).[25] This language of "creature unto itself" is also used in tKilayim 1:6 when referring to the wild ox (*shor bar*). There, the first anonymous view declares that it is treated "like a domesticated animal for all matters." The second opinion of Rabbi Yose is that this is the biblical creature *te'o* and that they are "like a wild animal for all matters." Finally, the sages declare that "the *te'o* is a creature unto itself and the wild ox is a creature unto itself." Aside from the curiosity of this attempt to parse contemporary and preexisting nomenclature, we can see that the term "creature unto itself" is used to distinguish between two species in toto. I would further suggest that this understanding, when deployed with the koy, comes to denote it as a fully distinct kind, and that, further, its designation as a *biryah*–a creature or created entity—folds it within divinely created kinds.[26] Something of this is at play in the debate about the koy in the Palestinian Talmud. There, Rabbi Eleazar declares the koy to be the offspring of a goat and a deer. But the rabbis say the koy is a species of their own.[27]

We have previously seen how thinkers like Aristotle also distinguished between the ad hoc hybrid offspring of two different species (even if humanly induced on a large scale) and the self-perpetuating discrete species that is multiform (i.e., looks like it could be a hybrid). However, Wegner is not alone in referring to the latter as hybrids.[28] My concern about this figurative use of a term, which is in fact quite concrete, is that it obfuscates our ability to sensitively capture the particularities of how the rabbis conceptualized kilayim precisely as embodiments of two kinds that were joined. Thus, I believe we must part ways with Romney Wegner's invocation of the koy as a "figure" (and a "monstrous" one at that), especially because of how she consigns the koy to a mere myth for the rabbis, thus perpetuating an embodied erasure both of this being and of the rabbis' efforts to know them.

Kilayim, Before Metaphor

Even if I am correct about this distinction—that the rabbinic kilayim is but one subset of a variety of multiform creatures—the question remains as to what is lost by deploying an overly capacious usage of the term "hybrid" to include all multiformity. What does this narrower notion of hybridity accomplish, apart from the admitted pleasures of pedantry? Or, to put it otherwise, what is lost when we assimilate rabbinic kilayim with other kinds of multiformity?

Romney Wegner, as we saw, views the hybrid as a "figure" for the Mishnah's larger "abhorrence for . . . mixture."[29] This language summons strong affective antipathy and puts the heavy burden of maintaining the Mishnah's apparent love for categorical purity on any such deviant "mixtures." Romney Wegner goes on to sharpen the koy's focus as a figure, claiming, without real evidence, that the sages themselves didn't really believe in its literal existence, thus rendering it as an abstraction unencumbered by the messiness of the flesh.[30] This is a rationalizing modernist approach to the tannaim, one that is not that different from assessing their science in terms of contemporary knowledge and then finding it wanting. The burden, it seems, is on us to justify such remakings of the rabbis in our own image. For the tannaim, the conceptual framing of the koy is almost always incarnate, whether filtered through its ritual im/purity and hence its corpse, or through rules about its slaughter, sacrifice,[31] or consumption (it is a pure species). Why, then, does Romney Wegner insist on denying the very terms of thinking through how this "figure" of thought is, in fact, thought?

When we metaphorize the koy and the hybrid we lose access to their "biology" according to the tannaim. Rather than relying on Romney Wegner's disembodied kilayim, we ought to consider the rabbinic hybrid precisely as the opposite: a combination of abstract thought entangled in the messiness of flesh—a hybrid in form and in content, as it were. Another difficulty with Romney Wegner's approach is that it engages in a common move, which is to make nonhuman beings inevitably stand in for something else. Perhaps this inevitability is part of our training that animals are "good to think with," as Claude Levi-Strauss shows.[32] We will press more on this as it pertains to kilayim below. Meanwhile, the framing of tannaitic engagement insists that koy creatures, like sirens, were not—and, indeed, could not—be hybrids. This tells us something important about the specificity and concreteness of what were hybrids for the tannaim. In a set of sources that is hyperfocused precisely on parsing out such specificities, it is problematic to ignore them (even if they seem to our contemporary eyes to be trivial distractions), simply out of a desire for an elevated abstraction.

In fact, what intrigues me here is precisely the particulate granularity—the very narrow specificity—of the hybrid. This is parsed at length by the rabbis, especially through the case of the mule (which, if *any* species is chosen as emblematic of the hybrid, deserves such a designation) versus the potential category-busting ab initio multiform creature. Both such creatures (e.g., the mule and the koy), blend likeness and difference in ways that upset automatic species assignment. And the distinct causes and implications thereof are significant for ritual and everyday action. Neither are purely theoretical: they each demand materialized accounts of the fragility and contingency of the "pure" category.

Regardless of whether the tannaim succeed in placing every kind of multiform creature into the available classes of species (pure/impure, wild/domesticated, distinct/blended), multiform and multicategorical "creatures unto themselves" expose the incompleteness of a closed, originary network of such categories. Their existence means that the world contains divinely wrought species that already exist outside the multiple, binary rabbinic classifications and that challenge the notion of a closed classificatory system from the get-go. As we will see with kilayim, the tannaim do not simply abject such creatures. On the contrary, they contemplate a world in which the hybrid and the ab initio multiform creature (by which I designate creatures such as the koy) exist side by side with other creatures whose combinations of likeness and difference also blend or surprise species designations.[33]

What flows from this analysis? The hybrid proper is shrunk to a narrower space than that granted to them by some scholars, one that constrains agricultural labor in very particular ways but also facilitates the hybrid's incorporation into Jewish lives. In addition, the hybrid is encompassed within a web of halakhic rubrics, and its (potential) presence in the world is sorted, rather than immediately ejected as taboo. When we do not succumb to the idea of the hybrid's threat of epistemic failure, or the horrors of mixing and the rebukes of transgression, we find both greater complexity and greater simplicity. One might say that kilayim is technical rather than existential.

The distinction between the hybrid and the ab initio multiform creature means that likeness (and its corollary, difference) is a potentially unreliable indicator for species assignment. In fact, as we have already established, there are several ways in which creatures can come to look like mixtures of species, including the unpredictable bodily variation that arises spontaneously. All these cases—including the hybrid, the spontaneously occurring species variation, and the species that has multiform characteristics—challenge the classificatory impulse that seeks immediate fulfilment. The hybrid is not unique. There are several causes by which the multiple (as in species multiformity) can come together. This causal multiplicity *of* multiformity has perhaps confused scholars who use the term "hybrid" way too broadly to encompass all sorts of variation, contrary to the rabbis' rather particular usages, which depend in turn on the diversity of generation itself.

THE MAKING AND USE OF KILAYIM

As we have seen in earlier chapters, the rabbis expended considerable energy in figuring out what counted as a distinct species in order to avoid and not to constrain certain actions unnecessarily. It is in this sense—of avoidance—that kilayim is in some ways constitutive of the very project of determining species difference. The prohibition of kilayim was one of the instigators of this zoological knowledge, including the need to classify and know what to do with the offspring or fruits of forbidden mixings. While some products of hybridization were forbidden for consumption or use, not all were: the Bible clearly states that hybrid fruit of the vine are "sanctified"—that is, forbidden; it says naught about animal or other plant cases. From this silence, the rabbis weave a rather capacious and flexible set of guidelines about animal and plant life (mKil. 8:1). They also often inquire about the potential use of kilayim offspring in sacrificial, firstborn donation, tithe, and other animal-related actions and obligations. As we will shortly see, the rabbis also consider who is bound by kilayim, where, and how this in turn impacts the treatment or usage of hybrid products.[34]

It is this capacious inquiry, coupled with the way that kilayim participates in the generation of classificatory knowledge, that makes prohibition understood as uniformly negative, an insufficient lens. Thus, what *we* might consider to be distinct species are called "a kind with its own kind: this becomes a way to permit the planting of two "species" together and to also permit the produce that arises."[35] The rabbis often permit even what are, properly speaking, products of hybridization.[36] Across their writings, the tannaim seem to presume that mules—offspring of a horse and a donkey—are owned by Jews (even if it is clear that their breeding would be forbidden). It is after a cluster of discussions about mules and their usage that we find this dispute about their use in the first place:

> Issi the Babylonian says: It is forbidden to ride upon a mule, as we learn from an *a fortiori* argument: if in the case in which it is permitted to wear two garments as one, behold it is forbidden with their mixture (*beta'arovtan*), in a case in which it is prohibited to lead two animals as one, would they not be forbidden with their mixture (*beta'arovtan*)?[37]

By this logic Issi hazards that juxtaposing two kinds (donkey and horse) is surely less severe than deploying their offspring (the mule). Therefore, if the former is banned, then so must the latter be. The sages attempt to refute this by citing the biblical precedent of King David who commanded that Solomon be driven to the Gihon spring to be anointed as king on David's own mule (1 Kgs 1:33). Issi responds by denying that one may derive authority from a person such as David, leaving the sages with the final word that "David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord" (1 Kgs 15:5). The Tosefta closes with a note of permission to ride mules based on royal precedent. This is in notable contrast with the later Palestinian Talmud, which adds that Solomon's mule was specifically made by God during the six days of creation. Thus, the Yerushalmi implies that his was a bespoke exception.

Production, Prohibition, Peculiarity

The mule becomes an example of kilayim for many who consider hybridity because it was such a ubiquitously used load-bearing and transport animal in the Mediterranean. Besides their discussions of the mule and its use in Tractate Kilayim, the tannaim casually discuss mules as means of transport (e.g., mB. Bat. 5:1: one who sells a wagon has not sold the mules [implicitly]; one who sells mules has not sold the wagon).[38] But if Jews are permitted to use some hybrid creatures and plant life, but are forbidden to breed or grow them, where are they getting them from?

In the case of plants, the Tosefta intimates that non-Jews produce kilayim: it also takes a relatively permissive approach by allowing Jews to plant secondary shoots from new hybrids instigated by non-Jews, under certain circumstances even allowing Jews to work with non-Jews on kilayim in fields owned by the latter.[39] That the rabbis also contemplate (or testify to) Jews producing kilayim is evidenced in their discussion of enforcement against transgressors.[40] This question of supply and demand of kilayim for and by Jews, as well as by gentiles, brings us to the tannaim's understanding of who exactly was subject to these strictures. Rather than being the subject of dry technical disquisitions, the rabbis' determinations shed further light on the qualities of kilayim itself.

Ethnogeographic Limits of Kilayim

The Bible does not tag kilayim as a prohibition specifically linked to Canaan. Notably, it is not included with the agricultural strictures in Leviticus 19:23–25 that are introduced with the phrase "and when you enter the land." And yet, tannaitic sources proceed as if it is obvious that kilayim joins such explicitly land-dependent strictures as those for new produce (*hadash*) and the fruit of young trees (*orlah*). Moreover, the tannaim act as if extending kilayim rules beyond Palestine is a rabbinic innovation:

> New produce (*hadash*) is forbidden by the Torah in all places; produce of young trees (*orlah*) is *halakhah*, and kilayim by the words of the scribes (*divrei soferim*).[41]

This has the effect, arguably, of de-essentializing kilayim. In other words, if the prohibition were (as many scholars argue) grounded in an idea of nature or, even still, an idea of "natural law," in which category distinctions must be preserved at all costs, then surely it would be in the rabbis' scope to read it—as it is ensconced in its biblical settings—as a generalized prohibition about the kinds and their mixings rather than as a land-specific injunction. One might think that kilayim would be more akin to dietary rules pertaining to animals, which travel with/in the relevant animals themselves, rather than being geographically confined. That the rabbis strain against the more obvious contextualization of scripture to claim the reverse—and that they do so while behaving as if this is *not from the Torah*—is doubly distancing from essentialist readings of kilayim.

This impression about the nonessential character of kilayim is reinforced when we consider the fact that the tannaim approvingly permitted Jews to enjoy the secondary use of grafts of plants and seeds created by gentiles. But what of the permissibility of kilayim for people who are not Jewish in the first place? Does the rabbis' supposed extension of kilayim beyond the limits of Palestine make for a universalizable set of prohibitions across all humans? Here we must infer from teachings in the Tosefta and the Sifre. In tAvodah Zarah 8:4–9, the tannaim enumerate "the seven commandments of the Noahides." To this, individual sages successively augment additional commandments to which gentiles are subject. The last, of these, Rabbi Eleazar posits:[42]

> The children of Noah may sow [seeds] and wear kilayim *but* may not mate animals or graft trees.[43]

Eleazer's additional Noahide rule does not follow the plain sense of the biblical verses (after all, grafting trees is itself a rabbinic expansion, whereas sowing seeds and wearing kilayim are explicitly forbidden). The Palestinian Talmud cites a midrash by Eleazar on Leviticus 19:19's introduction—"and my statutes you must observe"—to its kilayim rules: "because of the statutes (*huqim*) that I inscribed into my world."[44] The exegesis suggests that distinctions between species of animals and plant-life—inaugurated with the world's creation (according to both biblical narratives in Genesis 1 and 2)—are etched into the very fabric of the universe and concludes that the first human(s) already observed these strictures, which means all humans (Jewish and not Jewish alike) must continue to do so. This is the sort of natural law ideology that we might expect to see of kilayim in tannaitic corpora but that we simply do not see. It is problematic, however, to read this later Talmudic teaching back into the Tosefta (despite its attribution).

The Sifra similarly incorporates intra-Jewish and extra-Jewish crossbreeding into the kilayim prohibition.

> I only have "*your* animal" (Lev 19:19) with your animal. From where do I derive "your animal" with that of others [gentiles]; the animals of others with your animals, the animals of others with the animals of others? From "My statutes you must observe" (Lev 19:19).[45]

Despite these ways in which kilayim is ostentatiously yet disingenuously extended across the entire world and in which its animal-directed restrictions are, at least theoretically, meant to be observed by non-Jews, we also find another strain of tannaitic thinking according to which it is presented as a distinctively Jewish observance, one that marks Jewish bodies.[46] This leads to and overlaps with another aspect of our inquiry, which scrutinizes the ways that the tannaim justified or explained the prohibition.

Ethnicity, Explanation, Exclusion

Tannaitic sources discuss kilayim as statutes (*huqim*) in two places. In both instances, kilayim is presented as bound up with Jewish separatism. In the first example, the Sifra plumbs the verse "my judgements you shall do, my statutes (*huqotai*) you shall observe, to walk with them, I am the lord your God" (Lev 18:4). This verse comes on the tails of another in which Israelites are enjoined against "going after their [Egyptian or Canaanite] statutes" (Lev 18:3). Thus runs the Sifra:

> "My judgments you shall do" (Lev 18:4). These are the things, which if they had not been written, by logic they ought to have been *written* (*be-din hayah le-kotvan*), for example, theft, illicit sex, blaspheming the name [of God], and bloodshed. For if they had not been written, they should have been *written* by logic.[47]

First, the Sifra distinguishes divine judgments (*misphatim*), including those pronounced on robbery and bloodshed, which are logically deducible and hence "written" (and legible as such). But the Sifra opposes these to statutes (*huqim*), which include kilayim, and which are "engraved." The Sifra then builds on the idea that, unlike judgments, statutes are not logically deducible and seemingly are even illogical or at least susceptible to attack on those grounds:

> "And my statutes (*huqim*) you shall observe" (Lev 18:4). These are the things that are engraved (*ha-haquqin*) in the Torah that the evil inclination queries and that the nations of the world query, for instance, eating pig and wearing kilayim,

> and the levirate *halitsah* ceremony, the purification of the leper, and the sent-away he-goat. For the evil inclination queries them and the nations of the world query them. Therefore, it comes to teach you, “I, the Lord” (Lev 18:4), I engraved them (*haqaqtim*): you are not permitted to query (or: respond about) them.[48]

The evil inclination—presumably both of Jews and of people who are not Jewish—questions (and, as other literary evidence shows, mocks) certain Jewish practices that seem not to conform to the dictates of reason. Rather than cave to these requests for justification, God, in this midrash, dares Jews to engage in philosophical exchange about statutes that God has personally incised. Note that these statutes are engraved into the Torah rather than, as in the Palestinian Talmud, into the creation itself. The Sifra’s defensiveness, described by Beth Berkowitz, then, is not based in arguments about the immutability of created beings or the essential qualities of categories.[49] If this is defense, it is in the vein of defiance. And yet, it is also significant that the justification itself is simultaneously outwardly directed—toward putative gentile attacks—and inwardly oriented, toward Jewish doubt. This transparent example of internalized and externalized skepticism entangled, translates the peculiarity of prohibitions such as kilayim into a bold and unapologetic mark of Jewish distinction, as is evinced by the next sequence.

> “To walk in them” (Lev 18:4). Make them fundamental (*iqqar*) and not incidental (*tfelah*).[50]

Reveling in these statutes, the Sifra then closes the verse’s readings with the following:

> “To walk in them,” so that your exchanges should be only in them, so that you do not mix (*tit’arev*) them with other [gentile] things. Do not say: I have learned the wisdom of Israel; now I will learn the wisdom of the nations. It comes to teach you, “to walk in them.”[51]

The Sifra concludes by entwining the earlier motifs of Jewish distinctiveness and gentile exchanges in ways that curiously dovetail with the kilayim prohibition’s caution against mixing (ʿ*r.v.*).[52] One might add that it is no coincidence that the kind of kilayim that is conspicuously guarded against is that of clothing—in other words, as Beth Berkowitz highlights, a visible marker of Jewish difference on the body. In this way, Jews quite literally “walk *in* them” as garments.

Earlier Jewish writings found in the community settlement at Qumran (dating from the second century BCE to the first century CE) pull on kilayim in slightly different ways. That is, these sources similarly exploit its separatist potentials, but they do so by transferring its meanings explicitly to intrahuman joining (whether social or marital). Thus, in 4QMMT B 75–82 (and parallels) we find marriage between priests and other Israelites or Israelites and non-Israelites described as kilayim, together with talk of contaminating “holy seed.” 4Q271.3 7–15 (and parallels) also describes allowing one's daughter to wed "unfit" people in terms of kilayim.[53] Elsewhere, the mixing of one's wealth with others' is dubbed kilayim. As Menachem Kister puts it, "the Qumran texts use the notion of *kilʾayim* to refer both to intermarriage and to social separation."[54] The mid-first century Pauline 2 Corinthians uses the Greek term "misyoked" (*heterozugos*); the same term appears in the (earlier) Septuagint translation for the animal kilayim prohibition of Leviticus 19:19.[55] In 2 Corinthians 6:14, Paul uses the term to enjoin members of the Christ-following community not to "be misyoked with unbelievers."[56] However, we do not find this phenomenon of extending kilayim's reach beyond its earlier Hebrew biblical meaning of animal-, plant-, and fabric-related mixings of kinds, especially in communal contexts, in tannaitic sources.

Tannaitic texts call for pride in the distinctiveness that prohibitions like kilayim confer upon the children of Israel. They reject justification, explanation, or moralization in response to internal or external inquires for the explanatory mechanics that underpin the prohibition. The Sifra extends this refusal of driving logics even to personal affect or repulsion:

> "And you shall be holy to me, for I, God, am holy" (Lev 20:26): Just as I am holy, so, you be holy. Just as I am set apart, so, you be set apart.
>
> "And I have separated you (*ve-avdil*) from the peoples to be mine" (Lev 20:26): if you separate yourselves from other peoples, you belong to me. But if not, you belong to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his companions.
>
> R. Eleazar b. Azariah says: From where is it derived that a man should not say, "I do not want to wear kilayim; I do not want to eat pig meat; I do not want to enter into forbidden sexual relations (*ʿervah*)," but [should] rather [say], "I *do* want it, but what can I do? My father in heaven has decreed over me thus." [From] "and I have separated you from the peoples to be mine" (Lev 20:26). Thus, he sets himself apart from transgression and accepts the kingdom of heaven.[57]

Here the readings iterate the biblical text's blend of Israelite distinction from Canaanite practices and separation/holiness. The second reading offered by Eleazar enters into the peculiarities of Jewish observances, two of which (kilayim and pig meat) overlap with the Sifra source we just discussed. Eleazar's prooftext regarding Israelite/Jewish separateness touches on the motives (if not the reasoning) for prohibitions such as kilayim, but this time it relates to affective contrivances. A person, says the rabbi, should not pretend that there is anything instinctively repulsive about kilayim, pig meat, or sexual transgression. Rather, they ought to admit their desire for them and nonetheless refrain as part of their submission to divine sovereignty. This claim about desire is surely heightened by the presence of sexual transgression in this list. While this source does not explicitly eschew reason (*din*) as the basis of such observances as in our previous source, it does put paid to notions of "natural law" as their unstated rationale.

The emphasis on the singularity and irreducible underpinnings of commandments such as kilayim dovetails with the absence of justifications or explanations across tannaitic texts. This absence stands, furthermore, in opposition to earlier Jewish writers such as Philo, who holds:

> Actually so great are the provisions made in the law to ensure that humans should admit no unlawful matings, that it ordains that even cattle are not to be bred with others of a different species. No Jewish shepherd will allow a he-goat to mount a ewe or a ram a she-goat, or a bull a mare, or if he does he will be punished as an offender against the decree of nature, who is careful to preserve the primary species without adulteration. It is true that some people value mules above all other beasts of burden, because their bodies are compact and exceedingly muscular, and accordingly in horse-stables or other places where horses are kept they rear donkeys of huge size to which they give the name of "Celons" to copulate with the female colts, who then give birth to a hybrid animal, the mule. But Moses, recognizing that the way in which this animal is produced contravenes nature, stringently forbade it under the wider order by which he refused permission for animals of either sex to breed with those of an unlike species. In making this provision he considered what was in accord with decency and conformity to nature, but beyond this he gave us as from some far-off commanding height a warning to men and women alike that they should learn from these examples to abstain from unlawful forms of intercourse.[58]

For Philo there is a general principle on which the prohibition of mating across species boundaries rests, which is to "preserve the primary species without adulteration," something in "accord with decency and conformity to nature." However, as he presents it, the real issue is "no unlawful matings" by humans. Thus, the ultimate reason that crossbreeding animals is disallowed is so that humans "learn from these examples to abstain from unlawful forms of intercourse," such as bestiality.[59] In other words, aside from nature's mandate to keep species "unadulterated," the real impetus for the kilayim prohibition is pedagogical and human-centered. The quotation above is a diversionary second to the passage's prime focus on the human-animal sex, which Philo worries might result in monstrous offspring.[60]

The human desire for sexual transgression is stigmatized as unnatural and wicked by Philo, a rather different approach from that of the Sifra, which enjoins people to acknowledge their craving for both kilayim and prohibited sex (which includes bestiality). Notably, the Sifra's coupling of kilayim and sexual transgression places these two transgressions on equal footing, rather than making the former a mere allegorical stand-in for the latter. Neither does the Sifra cite a generalized universalizable principle of natural law for kilayim, something that we might consider given its approach to sins like theft, illicit relations, blasphemy, and bloodshed, which it does consider prohibitions that one could deduce without the Torah. Whereas Philo does not explicitly claim that the kilayim prohibition is something peculiar to Jews, he regularly points to Moses's *nomoi* (regulations) as singular and superior to those of Greeks and Romans, both in *On the Special Laws* and across many of his writings. In this regard, he arguably accords with the

Sifra. However, he differs in not singling out kilayim (among other markers) as a particular marker of Jewish difference.[61]

In presenting kilayim as something potentially desirable, unlike the obvious crime of murder, the Sifra converts its lack of reasoning into a cause for a kind of nonsymbolic, purposely opaque, and singular Jewish feature, vulnerable to critique and attack. This is in stark contrast to Philo, who subsumes it under a generalized natural law of observing species distinctions but ultimately of pointing to a different kind of mixing transgression (human-animal). The Sifra is also very different from Paul and the writers at Qumran, who invoke it indirectly to frame certain kinds of heterogenous human-human couplings. None of these features are present for the tannaim. And yet, scholars have frequently argued precisely for such characteristics for the rabbis, a matter that we will address in greater detail below.[62] But first we will ask: if the tannaim did not represent kilayim as a violation of nature, what relationship did they posit between the hybrid and God's creation? Their theories of kilayim's origins concern us now.

Etiologies of Kilayim

Etiology is not necessarily destiny and yet speculations about the origins of things often shade, or are in turn impacted by, their ongoing iterations. Earlier, we pointed to the ways that the rabbis extended or narrowed the kilayim prohibition spatially (Palestine and beyond) and religio-ethnically (Jews and others). Specifically, the tannaim take full credit for extending the kilayim prohibition to the entire world (beyond Palestine), meaning that while they do so, they simultaneously assert a nonessentialist (or, one might say, nonrealist) approach to crossbreeding kilayim (not the same, for instance, as their approach to purity schemes for animal classification, contact, and consumption). The latter are grounded in the creatures themselves rather than in their location. While a minority view adds the prohibition of grafting and animal kilayim to the seven Noahide commandments, the same view allows the sowing and wearing of kilayim. These trends, as well as the other considerations of kilayim we have discussed here, such as the instruction to forego justifications, lead us to the conclusion that the tannaim did not essentialize or moralize it. In this section, we look to two instances in which the tannaim consider the origins of kilayim so that we can check whether these might reveal more about its "nature" or lend us a clue about the reasons for its prohibition.

Our first source, in the Tosefta, arises in the context of a dispute in the parallel Mishnah passage about the precise blessing over the flame used as part of the ritual marking the end of the Sabbath (for the *havdalah* or separation ceremony).[63] On one view, a person should bless the "one who creat*ed the* light of fire" (school of Shammai), whereas the other argues that one blesses "one who creat*es lights* of fire" (school of Hillel). This is seemingly a debate about the ontological status of any particular flame with respect to divine creation. When you bless over the *havadalah* flame, are you praising God for creating the primeval originary fire? If so, then the blessing formula is for the singular fire with the verb "he created" as an already completed and discrete action, in the past tense. Or ought you bless God for fire as an entity whose creation is iterative, ongoing, and multiple, and so use the present tense ("creates") and plural ("lights")? Why would fire in particular trigger this debate? Could it be that fire, rather than being a continuous element that is generated from a proximate or primordial ancestor, is somehow begotten anew each time it appears (arguably Hillel's school's position)? To this debate the Tosefta contributes the following:

> Fire and kilayim are not from the six days of creation but are considered (*hashuvin*) to be from the six days of creation.[64]

The Tosefta is explicating the Mishnah in this short but trenchant comment. First, it renders explicit what was merely implicit in the Mishnah: that the question is whether fire was part of the scheme of things created in the originary creation in Genesis. This in turn opens up the potentially difficult possibility that there exist entities and creatures that are somehow not created by the deity. The confusion about fire arises from the absence of its creation in the Genesis account. To the statement above, the Tosefta supplements a particular teaching about a subcategory of fire, whose creation is placed firmly within the standard six days:

> Rabbi Yose says: The fire of hell was created on the second day [of creation] and will never be extinguished, as it is said, "and they will go out and see the corpses of men who rebelled against me, because their worms will not die and their fire will not be extinguished, and they will be loathsome to all mankind." (Isa 66:24) [65]

Notably, besides deepening its consideration of fire by distinguishing "fire" (not part of creation) from "hell's fire" (second day of creation), the Tosefta has also broadened the Mishnah's focus (originally triggered by the *havadalah* ritual flame) by introducing kilayim. Why is kilayim thus joined with fire as an entity that was not part of creation per se?

For the tannaim, as for others in antiquity, both fire and hybrid creatures were a potential problem, especially if one held that the world, and all that is in it, is the product of divine creation. On an obvious level, fire and kilayim are conspicuously absent in the Genesis account. While we saw a minority view that reads the creation of hellfire into the works of the second day (which, in the Genesis account, only entails God's separation of heaven from the waters), the Tosefta refrains from reading fire's genesis into the narrative, for example, as occurring along with God's creation of the heavenly luminaries, including the sun and the moon on the fourth day. Similarly, we are implicitly given to understand that God's making of various creatures "according to their kinds" excludes kilayim.

What is particularly tricky about kilayim is that it is expressly forbidden. The same may not be the case for fire, but both entities can be engendered by humans. Perhaps more importantly, there is something peculiar about the generation of both, which is what may be contributing to their selection among things that God did or did not create in the original six days. For the hybrid, every single instance is singular. There are (usually) no lineages of hybrids. In this sense, reproduction is ad hoc and discontinuous. This is also typically the case with fire. In both cases, there is something of a de novo generation afoot in their coming into being, whether a "new" kind is produced by two different species, or whether fire is sparked by flint. It is in this sense, then, that every instance or entity of fire and the hybrid is singular, that their generation is a multiplicity composed of discrete individualities. Therefore, a particular effort—usually (though, again, not necessarily) human—is characteristic of their emergence. Whether this effort, if realized, is permitted or forbidden also calls into question the (non)genealogical relationship of the fire or the hybrid creature with a putative originary ancestor.

Aristotle's student, Theophrastus, grappled with this aspect of fire in his treatise dedicated to the topic.[66] Of all the four elements—fire, water, earth, and wind—only fire, he declares, is "self-generating," capable of utter destruction (including of itself), and of being generated in so many different ways.[67] It is also a particular problem for Theophrastus that the relationship of earthly fires (plural) with the primal originary fire (in the celestial, first world), from which they must of necessity derive, is hard to define. This chasm, between the celestial, eternal fire, and the multiple fires that come to be and pass away on earth, potentially dovetails with Hillel's formulation of the blessing over the iterative present-tense creation of fires (plural) versus Shammai's blessing for the (singular) creation of the (originary) fire in the past tense. In fact, Theophrastus fails to resolve the problems that he exposes.[68]

The Tosefta, however, seeks to find a middle path of sorts, even as it, too, fails to fall on one or another side of the Hillel versus Shammai debate about blessings. It seeks to have its cake and eat it by having both fire and kilayim as technically not part of the six days of official creation but as somehow still being "considered" or "thought of as if" part of creation. This could accommodate the idea that humans can instigate (perpetuate?) the generation of these entities in a unique way that is unrelated to divinely wrought origins or ancestors, while nonetheless perhaps paradoxically attributing their existence to God. Perhaps this is a way of expressing that unresolved chasm that Theophrastus was also unable to breach, between an originary creation and its earthly, oddly self-generating instantiations. The Tosefta thus refuses to choose between the Mishnah's ongoing multiple present (Hillel) or single past perfect (Shammai) but instead sets up kilayim and fire as existing in a temporally liminal zone, both inside and outside creation's span. The Tosefta's passive voice formulation of kilayim and fire being "thought of (*hashuvin*) as from creation" foregoes the more direct agentive voice of a blessing of "one who creates."[69]

What might this idea of being both outside and yet inside creation mean? One concrete way of conceptualizing it that appears to be in dialogue in some ways with our Tosefta can be found in the Sifre's discussion of Moses's tomb. The grave, says the Sifre, is one of the things created on the eve of the first Sabbath at twilight. The Sifre goes on to enumerate a series of twelve entities to which various individual sages supplement particular items, including Rabbi Nehemiah who adds "also fire (*ha-ur*) and the female mule (*ha-peredah*)."[70]

The Sifre thus concretizes a temporal liminal zone inside/outside the six days of creation, and specifically pairs both fire and the hybrid creature. Twilight is an ambiguous time for the tannaim as it is neither quite day nor quite night (by which the next day is counted). We also observe that the Sifre homes in on a particular species—the (female) mule (*peredah*)—one that is often taken as exemplary of hybrids and about whose incapacity for reproduction the Sifre reports.[71] The larger list itself gathers together a variety of entities that we might lump together under the banner of singularity: the rainbow (that appears to Noah after the flood), manna, Miriam's well, writing, the tablets of the Ten Commandments, tongs, the mouth of Bala'am's talking donkey, the ram to be sacrificed in Isaac's stead, demons (*mazikin*), and the *shamir* creature. Other tannaitic parallels—Mishnah Avot 5:6 and the Mekhilta—contain a similar but not identical series of entities created on Friday at twilight.[72] Like kilayim most of these things created are sui generis, one of a kind, and not reproduced, but are directly brought into being by God. In some ways like fire, some of these are not what we would think of as organic "biological" entities—for example, the two tablets, writing, and tongs—but instead seem to backdate the origination of what we might call "technologies" or of what we might think of as human "inventions" (or "discoveries") with God's originary creation. In fact, these logics entwine the creation of certain bio-techno-cultural entities with creation, albeit in a somewhat liminal timescape.

That these are created during twilight (*bein hashemashot*), which is both outside the six days of creation but nonetheless not quite the Sabbath, is an ingenious way of resolving the temporal paradox of certain entities being both outside the scheme of creation yet somehow still calculated and counted (*hashuvin*) within it.[73] And despite their ambiguous alterity to and simultaneous affiliation with the official period of creation's vaunted six days, the mule/hybrid and fire (and other things) make it by a hair's breadth into the divinely wrought universe. One could imagine that this kind of equivocal positioning could seed a moralizing tone, particularly about kilayim, which is, after all, forbidden. However, like the instances noted thus far, the tannaim do not exploit such opportunities for making these ideological moves, unlike later rabbinic texts that do. Instead, the tannaitic sources put an end to the possibility that God did *not* create these himself.[74]

For our purposes, let us note two points. First, the tannaim do not present the earliest coming into being of kilayim as a humanly instigated act. Second, neither the creation of kilayim nor that of fire is presented in any way as negative: indeed, the context of the Tosefta's introduction of this tradition about their inside/outside status is that of praise: a *blessing* of God for fire's creation. We will see that neither of these observations is true in the Palestinian Talmud's retelling. Contrast this with late second-/early third-century CE Aelian, who claims, echoing Philo, that the mule (for example) was "not a product of nature, but a sneaky trick born of the ingenuity and (you might say adulterous) audacity of humans."[75] Instead, for the tannaim, kilayim's etiologies are theorized among other singular entities whose existence lie outside the usual or expected circuits of creation and reproduction.

KILAYIM AFTER THE TANNAIM

If I have persuaded you that hybridity for the tannaim is not the bogeyman, the violation of all that is god-given, natural, and bounded, I have also conceded that some of these sentiments can be found in the writings of the rabbis that follow. In this section, we examine some of these later sources. We will close our inquiry with a particularly curious passage in the Palestinian Talmud, which, I will argue, stages a juxtaposition of the mule with the human in ways that challenge our ability to claim a universal condemnatory trend among the Palestinian amoraim toward kilayim, and even showcases how kilayim is productively used to think through human generation. But first, onward to the more sinister deployments of kilayim.

An amoraic teaching (by Resh Laqish, ca. mid-third-century CE) in both Genesis Rabbah and the Palestinian Talmud (products of the fifth century CE) links the species language ("according to their kind—*lemineihu*") in Genesis to kilayim.[76] Elsewhere, amoraim read the divine punishment of the flood as having been exacted against all life-forms ("human, animal, creeping creature, bird of the heavens," Gen 6:7) because all creatures, including nonhumans, sinned. The language, however, is instructive:

> Rabbi Azariah in the name of Rabbi Judah: Everyone's deeds were rotten (*qilqelu maʿaseihem*) in the generation of the flood: the dog with the wolf, the fowl with the peacock. Thus, it is written, "for all flesh was corrupted, etc." (Genesis 6:12). Rabbi Lulianus (Julian) son of Tiberius, in the name of Rabbi Isaac: Even the earth was promiscuous (*zintah*). They would sow in it wheat and it would produce tares (*zunin*). Our tares come from the generation of the flood.[77]

It is certainly the case that the first teaching echoes the language of the pairings in mKilayim 1:7 and tKilayim 1:6 (encountered in chapter 3), which are both referred to as kilayim "even though they resemble one another." The second teaching also echoes mKilayim 1:1: "wheat and *zunin* do not constitute kilayim one with the other." Interestingly, despite these clear allusions to the transgression of kilayim, Genesis Rabbah does not name it. And a vital element of kilayim—human instigation—is missing. Indeed, the whole moral force of ascribing a "sin" to animals and, it seems, plant life too, is that they have agency and thus culpability.[78] So perhaps, while fascinating in its own right, this is not the best example of kilayim after all.

Elsewhere, the Palestinian Talmud describes transgressive sexuality by using kilayim as a metaphor. Thus, a Palestinian amora (Rabbi Isaac) teaches that Samson's parents pointed to Philistine vineyards—"sown (*zeru'im*) with kilayim"—sown, that is, with two different species of seeds. They then explained, "just as their vineyards are sown with kilayim, so are their daughters sown with kilayim."[79] What exactly this means is not explicated, but it is not implausible that this refers to adulterous sex, or to sex with multiple male partners.[80] This idea of Philistine women as fields sown with multiple seeds (or semen) is clearly an insult designed to reference intra-Philistine promiscuity rather than racialized or interethnic "intermarriage." In fact, it is noteworthy that the amoraim do *not* describe Israelite-Philistine marriage as kilayim. The "mixed seeds" point to cultural-sexual practices that render Philistine woman unsuitable marriage partners (a different form of racism, after all). A similar idea is expressed elsewhere in the Palestinian Talmud, but in terms of grafting (*harkavah*). Psalms 128:3 likens a wife to a "fruitful vine" and sons to "saplings of olive trees." From this verse, a Palestinian amora spins the following homily: "just as olive trees are not subject to grafting, so no unfitness will be detected in your sons."[81] In both this case and the previous one, kilayim is used to express ideas of adultery threatening the patriline in the context of human marriage and offspring.

Aside from these cases in which kilayim is figured symbolically and/or transgressively, and yet without gesturing (thus far) to Jewish/non-Jewish offspring, we can also observe a negative gloss in certain instances when the Palestinian Talmud addresses earlier sources from the Mishnah and Tosefta. For example, whereas we saw that the Tosefta leaves Solomon's use of a mule in place as legitimate (tKil. 5:6), the Yerushalmi hastens to add that this mule was made by God during the creation, implying that, otherwise, Solomon's use thereof would be a transgression (or, at the very least, that it is unreliable as a precedent for the usage of mules).[82] Creation figuring as the basis of a strand in the Palestinian Talmud that essentializes kilayim appears in a complex concatenation of teachings that will not detain us here. However, these teachings rewrite earlier tannaitic traditions about whether gentiles are subject to kilayim prohibitions and importantly link ideas of God having engraved kilayim into the universe with creation, Adam's, and therefore all humanity's obligation to preserve kilayim and species.[83]

Two more instances of this shift in the Yerushalmi merit further scrutiny. The first associates kilayim with both creation and transgression. The second complicates all the foregoing. Both think kilayim through mules. In the former case, the Palestinian Talmud intervenes in the account of kilayim and fire's creation (in accord with the debate in mBer. 8:5 about the blessing of the *havdalah* flame). Recall that the Tosefta taught that fire and kilayim are considered as if (*hashuvim*) part of creation. However, the Palestinian Talmud cites this teaching as "even though fire and kilayim were not created during the six days of creation, they arose in thought (*alu bemakhshava*) during the six days of creation."[84] This is quite a different proposition and points to a kind of Neoplatonic theology (the idea that entities need to be divinely conceived to be ontologically possible) that works kilayim through as a struggle between divine creation and human manipulation—something that we did not see in earlier rabbinic texts. Palestinian amoraic sources, however, paint kilayim with a more negative tint, and in the previous two examples, this seems to contribute to their depicting their tannaitic predecessors' traditions in this light.

This conceptual shift that I am arguing for can be seen in the entire passage in the Palestinian Talmud that ensues from this discussion of fire and mules, which are treated differentially. Fire is treated positively as an element that Adam came on thanks to divine providence after the first Sabbath, making for its memorialization and the use of a flame as part of the closing Sabbath ritual.[85] Hybrids, on the other hand, figure as follows:

> Fire and hybrids although they were not created during the six days of creation, they arose in thought during the six days of creation. Hybrids: "These are the sons of Zivon, Ayyah and Anah. He is the Anah who found the *yemim* in the wilderness (*midbar*)" (Gen 36:24)." What is *yemim?* Rabbi Judah son of Simon said *hemionos* and the rabbis say *hemis*, half of it horse, and half of it donkey.[86]
>
> And these are its signs (*simanin*). Rabbi Judah says: all whose ears are small, its mother is a horse and its father a donkey. If they are large, its mother is a donkey and its father a horse. Rabbi Mana ordered those of the patriarchate: If you want to buy a mule (*mullion*), you should buy one with small ears whose mother is a horse and whose father is a donkey (par. yKil 8:4, 31c).
>
> What did Zivon and Anah do? He prepared a female donkey and mounted on[87] her a male horse; and a mule came out of them. The holy blessed One said to them: You brought something into the world that is harmful,[88] therefore I shall bring to that person something that will harm him. What did the holy blessed One do? They prepared a snake and mounted on her[89] a *hardon*[90] and a *havarvar*[91] came out of her. Never will a human tell you that he was bitten by a *harvarvar* and lived, a rabid dog bit him and he lived; he was kicked by a mule and he lived, except for a white mule.[92]

The stakes for the creation of fire and kilayim, as I have analyzed them for the tannaim, are quite different for the Palestinian amoraim. As we see, it is not that fire and kilayim are "thought of as if part of creation." Rather they are now understood to be prethought by God during creation, but they actually come into being after the divinely wrought period of creation, and in kilayim's case owing to transgressive human intervention, which is then followed by a measure for measure punishment. The Yerushalmi, then, is less concerned with the problem of originary versus iterative generation than with the theological ramifications of singular entities as human "inventions" or "discoveries." How can humans "create"? Surely God is the only creator? The notion of God having already thought these entities (during creation) is a middle path solution that allows for both divine credit and human "discovery."[93] But the two elaborations that then follow, of the etiologies of the mule and fire, respectively, are studies in contrast. In the latter case, which is what triggers the insertion of this passage here, God is ultimately blessed by the first human (*adam*), and subsequently by all Jews, at the close of the Sabbath. Fire, then, is a source of blessing, its "discovery" by humans engineered by God.

In the case of kilayim, however, the paradox is that while God had to conceptualize it in potential in order for it to exist, its materialization and actualization are the result of a transgressive human act. The transgression here is cast less in terms of the humans' hybridization of two species than in terms of their bringing a harmful creature into existence. Rather than inaugurating a perpetual blessing like fire, kilayim triggers punishment. The mule is its own punishment—characterized as inherently harmful, even deadly—and it also stimulates mimetic propagation of additional kilayim (like begets like) as just as dangerous.

We close our discussion of Palestinian amoraic texts with a passage in Yerushalmi Kilayim that shares a segment with the passage we just surveyed in Yerushalmi Berakhot. The context is also mules, but, as we will see, the human is juxtaposed in a very different fashion.

> Rabbi Judah says: all animals born from a horse are permitted with one another even if their father was a donkey, all animals born from a donkey are permitted with one another even if their father was a horse, but those born from a horse are forbidden with those from a donkey. (mKil. 8:4) . . . Rabbi Isaac bar Nahman (third century CE) in the name of Rabbi Hoshaiah: the *halakhah* (practice) follows the student. The words of the sages: all species (*min*) of mules are one. (par. tKil. 5:5)
>
> And these are the signs. Rabbi Jonah says: all whose ears are small, their mother is a horse and their father a donkey. If they are large, their mother is a donkey and their father a horse. Rabbi Mana ordered those of [the household of] the patriarch Rabbi Yudan: If you want to buy a mule (*mullion*), you should buy one with small ears whose mother is a horse and whose father is a donkey. (Par. yBer. 8:5, 12b)
>
> [In the human,] the white substance comes from the man (*ish*), for from him derive the brain, bones, and tendons. And the red substance comes from the woman (*isha*), for from her derive skin, flesh, and blood. And the breath and soul and spirit come from the holy one, blessed be he. And all three of them are partners in him (human).[94]

The Talmudic commentary is triggered by the Mishnah (and a partly cited portion of Tosefta) about the species assignment of mules. Do we distinguish between mules of different parentage for the purposes of the kilayim prohibition? Rabbi Judah says yes; the sages say no. Then follows the paragraph with a formula for discerning "the signs" by which one can discern mule parentage (cited in yBer. 8:5, 12b). It is attributed to the fourth-century Rabbi Jonah, and it is followed by a brief teaching by his father, Rabbi Mana.[95]

The idea of a formula, by which one can discern the "signs" of species, should alert us to similar language we have encountered in species assignation. Signs crop up as means to discern species (pure and impure quadrupeds, sea creatures, fowl, creeping and crawling creatures) and also, in more closely related contexts to this one, in situations when one kind (e.g., a cow) delivers a creature that is resembles another kind (e.g., a camel).[96] More specifically, the very locution "these are the signs" appears in but one other context in the Palestinian Talmud aside from the above parallel in Berakhot. This is a discussion in yNiddah regarding the threshold by which a multiform creature delivered by a woman is considered to be human offspring. The formula there is also in terms of specific facial features.[97] In other words, there are multiple resonances between these passages, especially when we consider what follows here regarding the makeup of human offspring.

What we observe about the mule formula is that the maternal species seems to determine the shape of the mule's ears with the smaller ears of a horse mother or mare being prominent, or longer ears if she is a donkey. This comports with Galen's position on hybrids. According to him, in general, both species contribute to the form (*eidos*) of the offspring, but Galen also discusses reports that the mother tends to have greater impact on hybrid offspring's species form.[98] Mules were used to draw wagons and carts in Rome and across the Roman Empire, and Rome and its environs were a center for mule breeding, with there having been great interest in mule varieties.[99] Romans distinguished (albeit somewhat inconsistently) among mules, between mules proper (offspring of a mare and a male donkey) and hinnies (offspring of a female donkey and a male horse).[100] The first-century BCE author Varro, in his breeding instructions, distinguishes the hinny from the mule, noting that it is "usually rather redder, with ears like a horse's, but with mane and tail like those of the ass."[101] But Columella (first century CE) describes how hinnies "show in every respect a greater resemblance to their dam," recommending therefore that one prefer the "donkey as sire for a race of mules whose appearance, as I have said, is proved by experience to be handsomer."[102] Like our Yerushalmi passage, Columella discusses the ways that mules/hinnies resemble or differ from their distinctive parentage combinations, also using terminology of "signs" to warn that "sometimes also a stallion shapes mules very different from himself in respects other than the signs (*signa*) mentioned above."[103]

The Yerushalmi's engagement with mule breeding knowledge is ostensibly related to the earlier concern about avoiding the kilayim prohibition; there is, therefore, something curious about its deployment in the service of mule trading and the brandishing of expertise therein. While there is no suggestion that Jews are breeding mules—indeed, the patriarch's household is likely purchasing mules under the direction of Rabbi Mana, no less, and for this very reason—we see no hesitation about Jews and mules per se. Neither does this this passage evince condemnation. Rather, the initial prompt of the Mishnah, a concern to avoid the prohibition of kilayim among mules of different parentage, gives way to an entirely neutral and even approving conversation in which preference for one kind of mule is expressed over another.[104] This is rather different from yBer 8:5, 12b on the etiology of the mule, which cites the same teaching about distinguishing signs and the advice about purchase, in the midst of its account of Anah's breeding project.

But as vital as the neutral-to-permissive mule anecdote and formula in our passage are, what then follows about human generation is highly significant for our study. In general terms, this passage calls into question a blanket assertion that the Palestinian amoraim—as opposed, say, to the tannaim—were uniformly condemnatory about kilayim. My understanding of this passage, which stiches together two formulae about the elements in the generation of mules and humans, is that hybrid creatures are not only valued by and useful to Jews, but also bear the burden of thinking through the makings of human. In the form of the mule, the hybrid is not only a beast of burden; it is also a tool for acknowledging the hybridity inherent in human generation. We find this move from hybrid to human, as a conceptual analog in Galen's *On Semen*.[105] To some extent, the difference of species allows a kind of morphological analog or model that then maps onto the heterosexual division of binary gender. But even for Galen the species division (of donkey/horse) does not make gender *itself* into a difference of species. Rather, as with the Palestinian amoraim, it is in service of his broader argument about all kinds of reproduction being the sum of both parents' contributions. Galen, after all, moves from arguments about reproduction in general to hybrids and then back again, in order to illustrate that female creatures, and ultimately, women (i.e., humans) contribute to generation with their semen just as men do.

For the rabbis, too, the larger principle is not to argue that male and female are different species—the mule simply illustrates a larger principle in which both parents contribute. Or to be more exact, perhaps we can even state that, given this context, the human case serves to illustrate the mule/animal case! However, even the larger principle that both parties to mating contribute to the offspring does not exactly reinforce a heterosexual division of reproductive labor for humans. After all, the human, it turns out, is even *more* hybridized than the mule, and, in this sense, it is unique among all species.[106] It is not a hybrid, but a trihybrid (yes, that's a real word). The human is the product of three "partners"—a man, a woman, and God. The divine element is a curious addition that is largely absent from the set of sources we have examined on tannaitic reproduction, and, to a large extent, from Yerushalmi Niddah's later discussions thereof.

Divine coparentage of the human harkens back to the exceptionalism invested in the human as "image of God." Yet, in its current configuration, it also—unlike Galen's conception of conception—bypasses heterosexual circuits of generation. In this sense, I would argue, this offers a strong riposte to readings of homosexuality, qua kilayim, as founded in strongly naturalized notions of binary-sexgender heterosexuality. On the contrary, this literary unit (*sugya*) asserts or inserts kilayim at the very heart of the human project: it is a way of theorizing human generation itself. And the human turns out to be much more than the product of two. In fact, if there were a crossing of kinds it is of the human-divine variety. Thus, human heterosexuality is a ménage à trois. Kilayim's symbolics undergird its mechanics. These sources certainly provide no evidence for a concept of kilayim that undergirds a ban against men having sex with men or even against sex between Jews and non-Jews in Palestinian sources. Kilayim cannot be taken as an obvious or essentialized wrong. Its meanings shift contextually. It can thus never suffice as an explanation in and of itself for a system, or natural order, that scholars presuppose.

MORALIZING HYBRIDITY: HYBRIDS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY ONWARD

> *The law of fittest surviving, aided by the breeding of hereditary qualities in a pure race, has given the Jews a physiological and mental superiority which can be perpetuated only by the perpetuation of the race purity.*
>
> —*THE AMERICAN HEBREW*, MARCH 14, 1884

Whence the righteously naturalistic reputation of kilayim? Various scholars read kilayim as supremely transgressive and in terms of banned human "mixtures" of various kinds. Two prime exemplars of this tendency concern "homosexuality" and "intermarriage." Treating homosexuality, Daniel Boyarin puts it thus:

> Sexual taboo enters into an entire system forbidden practices . . . of hybrids. In that system, one may not hybridize or even plant two species together, mate a horse to a donkey, weave linen and wool into linseywoolsey. God-given categories must be kept separate.[107]

Boyarin seeks to de-essentialize and historicize the category of the "homosexual." He draws on David Halperin who, like Michel Foucault, argues the category is modern and was nonexistent in ancient Greece.[108] Boyarin claims the same for the Bible and the rabbis. However, in doing so he accepts as inevitable, and indeed rallies, a very particular sanctification and naturalization of species (or *minim*). Moreover, Boyarin goes a step further: while Genesis does not describe the Adamic creation as one of two kinds (*minim*), he avers that "male and female he created them" is a "species" distinction. Building on this idea that the two genders are "species," despite the lack of explicit biblical or tannaitic warrant, Boyarin explains the logics behind both the prohibition in Leviticus of men who lie with men and bestiality as variations on kilayim. It is further noteworthy that the proscriptions of kilayim are not in the same chapters as these prohibitions. But the cumulative effect of these forced associations is to transfer to kilayim the moral weight of these two sexual "sins" and to color kilayim as a generalized "abhorrence of mixtures."[109] Boyarin declares:

> These prohibitions belong to the Priestly Torah that emphasizes over and over in its account of the Creation in Genesis 1 that God has created from the beginning the separate kinds of creatures. Male and female are among the kinds that were created

> at the very beginning (Gen. 1:27). Now if we understand that it is the kinds that have to be kept separate, that is, the categories or types, because confusing their borders (*tebhel*) is an abomination—as opposed to a mere necessity to keep physically separate the tokens of the categories—then we can understand the specifics of the Torah's interdiction of male-male anal intercourse.[110]

This reading is not dissimilar from that of Judith Romney Wegner on the koy and kilayim. It takes for granted a somewhat ahistorical horror of mixing that is then available for use as an explanation for other phenomena. This move also bears a certain likeness to Philo of Alexandria's secondary explanation for kilayim as upsetting species distinctions that nature put in place. What Boyarin's interpretation shares with Romney Wegner's is a certain natural law-modulated circularity in which kilayim functions as an explanation for itself. For Boyarin, kilayim undergirds a system whose "God-given categories" make for a gender binarity that abhors anal sex between men.[111] For Romney Wegner, kilayim stands in for the inviolability of the "system" as a whole.[112] However, as we saw, no such potent associations uphold tannaitic conceptions of kilayim. Rather, kilayim is understood to bear no explanation, and often, its products may be used.

The second tendency to read kilayim as coextensive with forbidden human mixtures is in the realm of "intermarriage." As we saw, the pre-tannaitic Dead Sea Scrolls used kilayim to designate proscribed marital or social mingling and forbid sharing teachings "to the stranger and to *kilayin*."[113] Scholars such as Christine Hayes, Shaye Cohen, and Luca Arcari view the Dead Sea Scroll usages of kilayim as indicative of ethnocentric—and racialized—conceptions of genealogical im/purity or seed.[114] While Hayes denies that her "genealogical purity" is racialized, Arcari, and especially Cohen, are forthright in this regard. Tellingly, Cohen draws a line between Qumranic kilayim, the allusion to Leviticus 19:19's kilayim terminology of "misyoking" believer and unbeliever in 2 Corinthians, and the rabbis.[115] He thereby mounts the following argument:

> In sum, in the rabbinic mind the sexual union of a Jew with a gentile was akin to the sexual union of a human with an animal, or of animals of diverse species. It was a union that violated the natural order established by God and the scriptural prohibition of mixing seed. Rabbinic law and lore, or at least some strands of rabbinic law and lore, regarded the offspring of such forbidden unions, paradigmatically represented by the mule, as belonging to the class of its mother.[116]

For Cohen, "the laws of kilayim, prohibited mixtures, provide an ideological context for the matrilineal principle."[117] We note that he assumes kilayim is a principle of the "natural order established by God." One of the problems with this approach, similar to that of Boyarin and Romney Wegner, is that it presents a natural law gloss on kilayim as if its meaning is inherent and unchanging. Yet it is precisely this quality that we have shown to be missing, or even explicitly denied, in tannaitic texts. Furthermore, in a manner that is strikingly reminiscent of Philo, yet that is simply stated rather than demonstrated, Cohen elides bestiality with mating of two different animal species. Philo distinguishes the two, making the latter serve as a reminder for the former. We recall also that these distinct couplings are treated separately by the tannaim.[118]

Cohen ultimately uses his argument that kilayim is the ideological background for "intermarriage" to drive home the claim that the tannaitic rabbis innovated a matrilineal principle of Jewish descent, believing as he does that the tannaim had a principle of matrimonial descent for hybrid animals.[119] However, one problem is that, in order to claim kilayim as the conceptual context for Jewish/non-Jewish marriage, Cohen has to attribute continuity from Qumran, to the tannaim, through to the later rabbis. He thus misreads tannaitic texts in light of both earlier and later sources. For his post-tannaitic source, Cohen summons a Bavli source.

Even if one were to overlook the problem of using an earlier and later source to posit a through line that does not actually appear in the middle tannaitic era, the cited latter text also fails to fit the argument. In bQiddushin 68a, Rav Huna (a third-century CE Babylonian sage) cites Genesis 22:5 as a prooftext for the inefficacy of a betrothal between non-Jewish enslaved women and Jewish men. In the biblical narrative, Abraham, on his way to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah, tells his "lads": "you stay here with the donkey" (*shevu ʿim ha-hamor*). The rabbis understand these unnamed "lads" to be enslaved Canaanites.[120] Rav Huna reads the words "with the donkey" (*ʿim ha-hamor*) as "the people that resemble the donkey" (*ʿam ha-domeh lahamor*).[121] His analogy equates the incapacity of a donkey to betroth an Israelite with that of an enslaved gentile.[122] In citing this Bavli text, Shaye Cohen qualifies that he is:

> not about to suggest that this oft-repeated exegesis accurately portrays the ideological origins of our Mishnah . . . but I am suggesting that the Mishnah's treatment of the consequences of intermarriage should be juxtaposed to its discussion of the results of mixed breeding in the animal kingdom.[123]

Nonetheless, the rhetorical effect of this sequence is profound. For although this offensive exegesis in the Bavli comments in mQiddushin 3:12 on lineage and offspring, it does *not* equate sex between an Israelite and a non-Israelite (enslaved woman) to bestiality. Neither does it even speak to the designation of any resultant offspring (for which it offers a *different* prooftext).[124] Rather, it speaks to the ineffectiveness of a betrothal (*kiddushin*) between a Jewish man and an enslaved non-Jewish woman. This does not make its equation of enslaved non-Jewish persons' and nonhuman incapacity to betroth a Jewish woman any less distasteful (or "unecumenical," as Cohen puts it). But, as disturbing as this idea that animal/human and non-Jewish/Jewish betrothals are similarly inefficacious is, it is not the same as parsing Jewish/non-Jewish unions or their resultant offspring in terms of interspecies animal mating and hybrid offspring respectively. And it is this latter (absent) connection that Cohen asserts as the *background* for the claim that the earlier tannaim thought of the issue of Jewish/non-Jewish marriage as interspecies hybrid progeny or kilayim. Over and above the claim that interspecies mating is the *ideological* background for thinking interethnic couples, Cohen asserts that the substance of a supposed "matrilineal principle" of animal species descent came to be transposed on the human offspring of Jewish/non-Jewish couples.

While this is not the place to go into the tannaitic "matrilineal principle" of ethnoracial descent, I will briefly weigh in on this principle's supposed application to species designations of kilayim offspring. The supposed matrilineal principle of kilayim is based in m. Bekhorot 1:2:[125]

> A cow that delivers something like the donkey kind (*ke-min hamor*) or a donkey that delivers something like the horse kind (*ke-min sus*)—it is exempt from the laws of the firstborn. But what about eating? If a pure animal delivers something like an impure kind (*ke-min temeah)*, it is permissible to eat (the offspring). If an impure animal delivers something that is like a pure kind (*min tehorah*), it is forbidden to eat. For that which emerges from the impure is impure, and that which emerges from the pure is pure.

As I have already shown, this passage and others like it do not refer to kilayim offspring but to spontaneously occurring reproductive variation, a phenomenon understood to take place across all species.[126] Tannaitic literature knows well to distinguish between such cases and those that are hybrid offspring, referring to the latter as kilayim.[127] It is true that the Mishnah records a minority opinion of Rabbi Judah that seems to espouse a version of species "matrilineality" in the case of kilayim proper (mKil. 8:4). However, the Tosefta does not attribute this view to either the same individual or to majority opinion (tKil. 1:8, 5:5, 5:3). Furthermore, the Tosefta's anonymous view seems to espouse a version of a "patrilineal" principle or, at the very least, to explicitly negate the matrilineal principle. Thus, in the Tosefta, a horse that is the offspring of a mare and donkey "is forbidden to its mother's [kind]" (t. Kilayim 5:3), so it is clearly not the same species as her. Finally, as we have seen, the principle of "that which emerges from the pure is pure" is not, pace Cohen, a principle of matrilineal species descent. Rather, like Aristotle's generation principle, it speaks to reproductive limits.[128]

In sum, there is inadequate to no support for equating kilayim and "intermarriage" or for assuming a moralizing natural law understanding of kilayim on technical grounds. We may then wonder what pressures and contexts might have made these disquieting associations and explanations appear so salient?[129] It is my contention that the elements of these claims—biology, zoology, species, and interhuman difference in reproductive contexts—unwittingly trade in a set of ideas germinated in the eighteenth century and still hidden in plain sight in many contemporary discourses. Ideas about the biological basis of human difference in the eighteenth century inserted humans into the animal kingdom, subdivided them into distinct species termed "races," ranked them hierarchically, and coalesced them into various scientific racisms.[130] Conflicting arguments would play out over these concepts, and across the next three centuries. These included debates about monogenesis and polygenesis (was there one human species or "race," or were there separate creations of multiple "races" as distinct species?), racial unity or essentialized difference, and the implications of these for "racial mixing" through eugenics. Clearly these debates did not remain at the level of theory, but were to materialize themselves across a variety of religious, political, social, scientific, and legal realms, the effects of which remain today. Some members of the very communities subject to these theories, whether in the form of scientific racism or antisemitism (often intertwined), would nonetheless advocate for eugenics policies.[131] The citation at the beginning of this chapter is an example of how some Jewish leaders and rabbis embraced eugenic thinking. The excerpt is from a talk that Max Reichler, an influential reform rabbi, gave on "Jewish Eugenics" to the New York Board of Jewish Ministers.[132] At the same event, Rabbi Joel Blau lectured on "The Defective in Jewish Law and Literature."[133]

While eugenics, as well as its underpinnings in scientific racism as an ideology, ostensibly lost credibility after the Second World War, there are those who argue that it lived or lives on in modern medicine and public health policy. Alexandra Minna Stern, among others, revises the historiographic conceit that eugenics thinking or "the movement for better breeding" ceased after 1945, instead showing its salience through the seventies (through which racialized involuntary sterilization continued).[134] Nancy Ordover points to the ongoing legacies of eugenics in the scientific discourse on the "gay gene," and Judith Daar argues that differential access to health care, particularly reproductive technologies, makes for a "new eugenics" that disproportionately reproduces white, wealthy, straight Americans.[135] Finally, scholars have shown that "twentieth-century promises of the science of better breeding was a precursor to the twenty-first-century promise of genetic engineering."[136] Historian of science Raphael Falk argued that "eugenic notions of the Jews prosper today, as ever before."[137] Building on the work of anthropologists, we may see how this, coupled with Zionist pronatalism and the embrace of reproductive biotechnologies, have made for a biologizing (or racializing) population eugenics in modern-day Israel.[138] Recent criticisms of the production and use of demographic data by Jewish sociologists to declare a "Jewish continuity crisis," along with the evils of "assimilation" and "intermarriage" (also known as "out-marriage" and "mixed marriage"), have focused on their tendentious construal of who "counts" as Jewish and the instrumentalization of Jewish women's reproductive capacities.[139] Less has been said about the ways this dovetails (or differs) with the reproductive biologization of Jewishness: in other words, its racializing undertones.[140]

When it first appeared, Cohen's work on matrilineal Jewishness responded to the then-recent Jewish Reform movement's decision in 1983 to allow patrilineal descent equal weight in determining an individual's Jewishness. Previously, the movement had, like other Jewish denominations, considered Jewishness to pass only through mothers to their progeny (in cases of children of Jewish/non-Jewish cisgender heterosexual "biological" parents). In the context of studies that demonstrated an ongoing increase in the trend of Jews marrying people who were not Jewish, this was the heyday of the American Jewish "continuity crisis." As Alexander Schindler put it, "[the] demographic imperative facing the Jewish people today was the single most important motive" for the Reform movement's change.[141] Schindler welcomed Cohen's illustration that the matrilineal principle was a tannaitic innovation, viewing his paper as "progressive." While Cohen gestured to the contemporary debate, he did not weigh in. He published his paper in long form in the *Association for Jewish Studies Review* and in shorter form in *Judaism*, with responses by several rabbis, scholars, and rabbi-scholars of differing denominational persuasions.[142] However, despite his refusal to offer an explicit opinion on the matter, these circumstances are most certainly pertinent. And it is in the unwarranted insertion of "interbreeding" or even bestiality as early throughlines in "intermarriage" concepts that legacies of eugenic thinking unconsciously lurk.[143]

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have sought to undo hybridity as a metaphor and a symbol that is self-evident and hence a guarantor of morality or categories. I have argued that there is a particularity to kilayim that is not reducible to the mere idea of all kinds of formal or substantive difference that come to be juxtaposed any old way ("multiformity"), or to some notion of mixture of previously pure categories (even if those are socially construed). It is important to let go of imprecise notions of hybridity, so that we do not inadvertently smuggle in ideas that were broader than or different from those held by those in late antiquity themselves.

Second, but no less crucially, I aimed to undo the inadvertent reification of a very specific eighteenth-/nineteenth-century-derived, biological notion of hybridity, one that unwittingly reifies a normative, natural law, essentialist idea of originary pure and distinct species that the hybrid threatens to corrupt.[144] These modernist underpinnings of hybridity carried over into biological and scientific racisms and in turn shored up ideas of racial purity and eugenics that are difficult to prize apart from modern and contemporary notions of "intermarriage" or "mixed marriage." This clarifies my purpose in attending to the historical and concrete particularities of hybridity as they were expressed over time by Palestinian rabbis. Third, I attempted to avoid an overly rigid understanding of prohibition in general, and of the kilayim prohibition in particular, as something that is essentially and necessarily moralized. There is every reason to understand prohibition as a productive force shaping behaviors and worlds rather than as purely a force of restraint or negation.[145]

Instead of the above, I sought to show that rabbinic hybrids were a subset of multiple multiform creatures that could be encountered in the world. They themselves were also sites of meaningful multiplicity and multiple meanings. The hybrid, after all, was not one. Thus, the geographical spread of the prohibition beyond Palestine was presented as a rabbinic innovation: in other words, the prohibition was not understood as fundamentally global and inherent to animal and plant life. Similarly, there was ambiguity about whether those who were not Jewish were supposed to be subject to its restrictions; and indeed, regulations allowed for Jewish use and secondary benefit of kilayim products (engineered by non-Jews). Instead of moralizing, we find refusal of justifications and explanations and the embrace of kilayim's peculiarity as a mark of Jewishness. Its etiology is not narrated as the result of human overreach (unlike in later Palestinian sources). Rather, the tannaim consider kilayim in terms of its relationship to originary creation and ongoing generation (similar to fire). The Palestinian amoraim evidence more hesitation about kilayim: a transgressive etiology; some withdrawal of tannaitic permissiveness or neutrality; some negative metaphorical transfer. But none of this is in service of analogies about "intermarriage" as "crossbreeding" or as a rebuke about same-sex sex. Not only this; we also find, in the later Palestinian amoraic sources, a studied neutrality and even a positive exploitation of the hybrid as a conceptual foundation or analog to the making of the human.

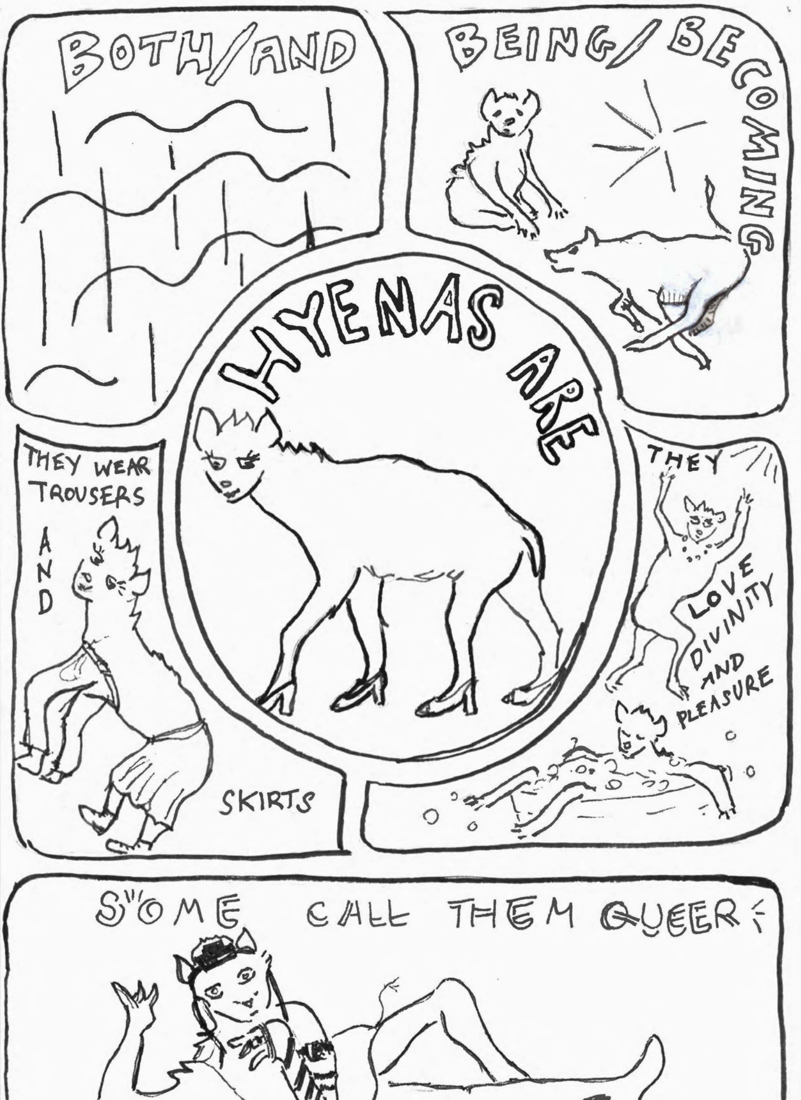

BOTH/AND
BEING/BECOMING
HYENAS ARE
THEY WEAR TROUSERS AND SKIRTS
THEY LOVE DIVINITY AND PLEASURE
SOME CALL THEM QUEER
OTHERS CALL THEM JEWS

FIGURE 12. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Hyenas*. Ink on paper, 2022.

5

Generation

garbage-gut humans should not continue ourselves
it can only come a frightful cropper
—JULIAN TALAMANTEZ BROLASKI, "AGAINST BREEDING"

IN THIS BOOK, I HAVE USED THE TERM "GENERATION" AS MUCH AS "REPRODUCTION." I have done so to interrupt the ease with which we might be tempted to think about "reproduction" as a transhistorical, continuous, phenomenon. This might seem counterintuitive to some, for surely there is nothing more stable as the very "*facts* of life." The *Oxford English Dictionary* documents something along these lines. In two entries under the word "fact" it defines "facts of life." The first refers to the phrase as "a thing that cannot be changed and so needs to be accepted, however unpleasant or unpalatable that may be; a (stark) reality of existence." The second, "the details of human sexual functions and practices, especially as given to children," is dubbed a colloquialism. We can already see some of the constraints that the obvious conceals: the link between the idea that "life's" facticity is given and a particularly narrow understanding of the subjects of this "life" as humans. This narrowing conforms with the relatively recent entry of "reproduction" into our lexicon. Historians of science and medicine describe the shift that occurred in European languages in the mid-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as a more humancentric conception of life bound up with industrialization and production. Susanne Lettow shows how from the mid-eighteenth through nineteenth centuries, the new "reproduction" was "constituted through the three interrelated biopolitical problematics of 'population', 'race', and 'gender,'" the latter "enmeshed with ideas of sexual complementarity."[1] These studies demonstrate the ways in which science and culture are inextricably linked: hence the recourse to the neologism "natureculture."

In both their more colloquial and technical variants, accounts of reproduction today often create and replicate specific kinds of cultural work. These accounts are often rooted in the idea that coitus is essential, focus on reproductive "rights" or "choice," and implicitly center white, cisgender, heterosexual, and able-bodied humans.[2] That "reproduction" is a recent coinage and that it does not properly describe the full range of how most beings—including humans—generate, even in the present, is affirmed by a range of scholarship in and on science and medicine. This research demonstrates the range of ways that life proliferates, the diversity of ways that humans generate, and how the latter goes well beyond cherished conventional stories about two people engaging in coitus.[3] While reproduction is so freighted for us, it can be salutary and humbling to confront how life can proliferate by so many other means. Seeking to similarly widen our gaze, this book as a whole has sought to bring the full otherness of ancient generation into view.[4] As part of this effort, it has pointed to the multiplicity of actors, both human and nonhuman, as well as the variety of *modes* involved in life-making.[5]

In this chapter, I turn to two types of evidence—in the Talmud and in the Babylonian incantation bowls—and attempt to build on this generative multiplicity. While the arena of human proliferation can particularly attract the desire to promote certain kinds of normativity and to curtail nonnormativity, we experiment here and ask what happens when we read ancient Jewish sources without limiting ourselves to our default humancentric, dual notions of gender, sexuality, and "reproduction."

GENERATION BEYOND HUMAN DYADIC COITUS

Before conducting these alternate readings, let us recall that coming into being in antiquity could involve a variety of actors—more than two—and multiple mechanisms. The latter included spontaneous generation; parthenogenesis; and interspecies generation.[6] The signature characteristic of these differently generated beings is that they are not the products of two heterosexual, same-species beings engaging in coitus. In this sense, they are the ultimate breakers of the rule that like begets like. Earth, silt, water, oil, and wine beget mice, flies, mosquitoes; rotting flesh or other organic material generate bees, flies, maggots, and worms.[7]

As we will see in our examination of Babylonian incantation bowls, the role of nonhumans in human reproduction is accounted for in a variety of ways. We see this in earlier sources, too: in the (roughly) third-century CE Mekhilta, God is figured as an artist commissioned to paint a portrait of a son in the image of its father. No uterus or gestating parent is mentioned.[8] All that is needed is God as artisan and the ingredient of "a drop of water."[9] On the one hand, this is patrilineal generation in a dyadic relation with the nonhuman/divine; on the other hand, it renders men's contribution entirely passive. The Mekhilta's conception and generation is a curious reconfiguration of Aristotle. Where for Aristotle the female provides inert matter or blood, which agentive male seed forms in the manner of an "artist," here divine artistry molds the passive matter of *male* seed.

The absenting of women in the Mekhilta differs from those rabbinic accounts of "three partners" in generation. Here there is a divine-(hetero)human threesome.

The rabbis also think about what happens when a *fourth* actor enters the scene under the aegis of "adultery" (for them always entailing a married woman and a man who is not her spouse). The fifth-century CE Palestinian midrash, Leviticus Rabbah, describes a scenario in which a pregnant woman "ruins" the fetus as portrait of her spouse: she has sex with another man, making God's "hands shake."[10] In a more sanguine scenario, Palestinian amoraim rely on God's first person plural declaration "let us make *adam* in our image" (Genesis 1:26) to signify that the generation of the human (*adam*) is a three-way enterprise.[11]

Vision is another way in which actors outside marital relationships enter human—and nonhuman—generation. These entrants upset tropes that rely on parental (not to mention paternal,) mimesis and can introduce women's erotic and generative agency. Thus, the fifth-century CE midrash Genesis Rabbah elaborates the story in which "the sons of God saw the daughters of humans; and they took them as wives" (Genesis 6:2) and "came in unto the daughters of men and generated children to them" (Genesis 6:4). Reversing the dynamic in which the sons of God saw the human women, the midrash declares: "a woman would go out into the marketplace, and she would see a young man (*bahur*) and desire (*mit'avah*) him. She would go serve her bed (have sex with her spouse: *meshameshet mitatah*) and bring forth a young man like him."[12] These women transfer their desire—and vision—to the marital bed and their ensuing progeny. Their process allows far more agency than the passivity conjured by the term "maternal impressions."[13] The active posture is ever so unsubtly tagged as transgressive by these women going out into the marketplace.

Such objects of vision involving reproduction were also used proactively. Genesis Rabbah recounts how Jacob compelled female sheep to gaze at spotted rods while being mounted by rams in order to engineer a different patterned wool in their progeny.[14] A variety of sources testify to the technique—gazing at particular visual objects during intercourse—in human and nonhuman generation in Greek, Roman, and Persian contexts.[15] This mechanism is transferred to men in the Bavli.[16] Likewise, the Bavli suggests that in the wake of Jewish enslavement, elite Roman couples gazed at bound young captives who replaced the seals previously used.[17] Here, the Babylonian rabbis incorporate a coercive, homoerotic dimension into the threesome. Perhaps more transgressively, this anecdote suggests that Roman elites were effectively reproducing Jews. It is thus that various parties—Israelite youths, sons of God, signets, painted rods—intrude on dyadic cisheterosexual reproduction via the eyes. Genesis Rabbah also presents an alternative view about how Jacob's visual technique operated. The claim supposes that no rams were introduced. Rather, as an amora has it, the water that the sheep drank was transformed into seed: a novel mode of reproduction involving no male parent.

This variety of mechanisms—including in scenarios involving humans—allow outsiders to "straight" sex between dyads of man-woman to become tangled in conception. Other kinds of nonhuman entrants to heterosexual human marriage also feature in later rabbinic accounts of generation. Genesis Rabbah reads the "all" in Eve's title "mother of all who live" (Genesis 3:20) expansively to include spirits. During a period of sexual separation between Eve and Adam, we learn that "male spirits (*ruḥot ha-zekharim*) were heated (*mitḥamenin*) by her and she would give birth (*yoledet*) and female spirits (*ruḥot neqevot*) became heated (*mitḥamemot*) by Adam and would give birth (*yoldot*)."[18] The implication here is that a generative mechanism involving heat joined humans and demons—seemingly heterosexually, though it is unclear whether this is knowingly or consensually on both parts—and that these unions were generative of progeny

The Bavli transmits a variation on this theme focusing solely on Adam in which he begets (*holid*) spirits, demons, and Liliths. This ostensibly explains why the Bible declares that Adam begat (*holid*) Seth in his image and likeness at the age of 130 (Gen 5:3). Until then he abstained from sex with Eve, but (as the Bavli explains) through involuntary seminal emissions he generated those quasi-demonic offspring who were *not* in the image and likeness of the fully human/*adam*.[19] In a chronologically reversed exegesis, Genesis Rabbah extrapolates that *after* the generations of Adam, Seth, and Enoch, humans ceased being born "in the likeness and in the image." Instead—in a play on Kenan (Enoch's firstborn, Gen 5:9–14)—they were born centaurs (*kintorin*).[20] The Zoroastrian Bundahišn tells of how demons interfere with the sex drives of the primal human couple Mašyā and Mašyāne, who, succumbing to them, cannot get themselves to have sex with each other for fifty years.[21] It also recounts that the mythical Iranian king Jam and his sister/wife Jamag each married demons and that these unions generated "harmful" creatures.[22] While elements of the preoccupation with seed resonate with the Bavli, the attention to both members of the human couple matches human-demonic non/generative encounters in Palestinian sources.[23] It is with some of this variety in mind—the plurality of actors and mechanisms, and also with this sense of the ways that humans become generatively linked with nonhuman beings—that we turn to a narrative about nonmonogamous generation in the Babylonian Talmud and then to the demons, in particular Lilith, in the Aramaic incantation bowls.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL AND RABBI YOḤANAN

The Bavli arranges and assembles a variety of traditions attributed to, and narratives about, tannaim, and Palestinian and Babylonian amoraim. The form in which it reaches us—in discernable literary units (*sugyot*), with a sizeable editorial layer, sequenced across tractates—is understood by scholars to be the work of later anonymous editors (stammaim). These editors are supposed to have flourished in the sixth and seventh centuries and perhaps beyond.[24] The passage we examine is inserted within a larger framing passage and is considered to be late.[25] Our story features Rabbi Yoḥanan, a third-century Palestinian amora, and is embedded amid a long narrative sequence about the second-century Palestinian tanna, Rabbi

Eleazar son of Shimon. A crucial motif in this framing narrative is generation. The theme emerges most obviously just before, and as a pivot to, Rabbi Yoḥanan's entry, when a Roman matron casts aspersions on the legitimacy of the children of Rabbi Eleazar son of Simon and Rabbi Ishmael son of Yose given their size. As the Talmud puts it, "a herd of oxen could pass between them without touching them" (bBava Metsia 84a).

The pivot to the embedded sequence with Rabbi Yoḥanan as protagonist is achieved when Rabbi Yoḥanan reports on the size of Rabbi Ishmael's penis. Printed edition and manuscripts, but *not* the one that we follow here, also include a tradition about Yoḥanan's.[26] Yoḥanan's next statement introduces the narrative that then follows, which I present minus the interruption of the later editorial layer of the Bavli: the latter I signal with an ellipsis.[27]

> Rabbi Yoḥanan said, "I am one of the last of the Jerusalem beauties." . . .
>
> Rabbi Yoḥanan would go sit at the opening of the [place of ritual] immersion, saying, "when the daughters of Israel come up,[28] let them gaze at me that they will have seed (or offspring, *zara*) as beautiful as me."[29]
>
> They (other rabbis) said to them (Yoḥanan), "our rabbi, are you not concerned about the eye?"
>
> [Yoḥanan] said to them: "I come from the seed of Joseph and the evil eye does not rule over Joseph's seed."
>
> As it says, "Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a fountain" (Genesis 49:22).[30]

Yoḥanan performatively announces their own singular and nearly extinct beauty, which they reiterate as they explicate the reasoning for their appearance to Israelite women's eyes. These women are emerging from the ritual bath, marking the end of menstrual impurity and the laconic narrative arguably implies that they're on their way to have sex with their spouses. This, then, is akin to the Palestinian Genesis Rabbah's read of how the daughters of humans viewed objects of their desire only to later bed their spouses and conceive offspring like the sons of God. In the Bavli, the anecdote moves from the women's eye to their seed ("they gaze"; "seed"), which is then chiastically reinforced as Yoḥanan signals that, as "seed" of Joseph, they are immune to the evil "eye."

Let us consider a more radical possibility for the kind of conception that Yoḥanan proposes at the mikveh. Read without the implication that these women go home and sleep with their spouses, one is tempted to wonder whether Yoḥanan is describing a process of conception that is more akin to the view in Genesis Rabbah in which sheep imbibe water-become-seed while gazing at spotted rods. A parallel text that recounts the Yoḥanan/women episode, precedes it with another (bBerakhot 20a). Rav Giddal also sits at the ritual immersion entrance, but his practice was to correct the women while they immersed themselves. In that case, he is challenged about his evil inclination. His defense is that the women "appear" (*damyan*) to him as white geese. Then, in what is clearly an inversion, we read the anecdote about Rabbi Yoḥanan sitting in the same place. Instead of Giddal looking at these naked women, Yoḥanan appears as the visual object of these immersing women. In that case, then, it makes sense to ask given Yoḥanan is the one who is seen, whether they are not worried about the evil eye. Here it also makes sense to understand that women are as proximate as in the previous scenario, immersing and rising to the surface to gaze at Yoḥanan. Consider, then, the possibility that the Bavli's protagonist Yoḥanan relies on a mechanism akin to the midrash's account of sheep who gaze at spotted rods as they imbibe water turned into semen. If the Bavli's storytellers are signaling that something in the very water effects conception of Yoḥanan look-alikes, we find a suggestive narrative about the Zoroastrian savior figure. In the Bundahišn, a Pahlavi composition that probably reached its final form around the ninth century CE, the seed of Zoroaster, "entrusted to the divine Anahid," is secreted in a lake. Over three eras, three savior figures—Saošyant—are born when a virgin bathes in the lake and Zoroaster's "Glory will mingle with her body and she will become pregnant."[31]

Yoḥanan's vulnerability to the evil eye consists in their ostentatious display of beauty.[32] Their ability to withstand the evil eye, like their aesthetic quality, is a matter of pedigree; related to this is their generativity—the fruitful vine (*ben porat*) that is Joseph being Jacob's deathbed blessing. It is also a form of ritual power (what some would call "magical" skill). Indeed, elsewhere the Bavli recommends that one who enters a city and is afraid of the evil eye can recite Yoḥanan's words ("I come from the seed of Joseph . . .") as an incantation.[33] Do this, it specifies, while placing each thumb (*ziqpa*, or an erection) in the opposite hand, making a double *mano fica* (fig., hand): an ancient and ubiquitous gesture possibly representing a phallus penetrating or emerging from a vulva, an apotropaic symbol, along with the phallus on its own.[34]

Elsewhere the Bavli and Palestinian sources link this exegesis on Jacob's blessing to Joseph (and seed) and sexual temptation. In those sources, and here, instead of the Joseph being a "fruitful vine (*ben porat*), a fruitful vine by a spring (*aley ayin*)" (Gen. 49:22), Joseph and seed are a "fruitful vine that transcends the eye (*oley ayin*)." The exegesis continues by summoning an earlier blessing (Gen. 48:16) that Jacob gave Joseph and children: "and may they multiply into a multitude (*veyidgu larov*) in the midst of the earth (*bekerev haarets*)." Reading the verb *veyidgu* (*d.g.h.*) as fish (*dagah*), we note, relatedly, that it says: "just as fish (*dagim*) in the sea, the water covers over them (*alehem*), so that the evil eye (*ayin ra ʿah*) cannot dominate them, so, too, the evil eye cannot dominate the seed of Joseph."[35] This full midrash is presented after Yoḥanan's own defensive words, transparently binding the themes of the evil eye, fruitfulness, multiplication, and Joseph's seed in water.

Related to the proliferation of seed/progeny is the very device that brought Yoḥanan in originally: Yoḥanan's affirmation of the fruitfulness of the framing story's protagonists. Echoing that move, the Bavli's anonymous editorial voice steps in to affirm Yoḥanan's beauty—marked in the quotation above by the ellipsis between Yoḥanan's first pronouncement about their beauty and the ritual bath anecdote.

The editor recommends a procedure if one "desires to see Rabbi Yoḥanan's beauty." One must procure a freshly forged silver cup, fill it with pomegranate seeds, frame its rim with roses, and then set it in the spot between sunlight and shade. And lo, you have "Rabbi Yoḥanan's beauty." The phrasing, "one who desires to see . . . let them . . .," and the content of these instructions, ingredients, and actions amount to a ritual recipe (or "magical" ritual) for conjuring Yoḥanan's beauty.[36] I would go further and propose that the editor's placement of this recipe, inserted in between Yoḥanan's declaration of beauty and the episode at the ritual bath, suggests it is offered as an alternative summons for a vision of Yoḥanan's generative beauty. In other words, I suggest that this is one of several techniques, of which we find quite a few in the Bavli, for manipulating generation: a how-to for those at home who want to beget Yoḥanan-like progeny. The incorporation of pomegranate seeds—a fertility symbol—marks this openly as such. Ritual power (or "magic") reverberates through the passage, including in Yoḥanan's incantation of immunity against the evil eye. As we will see in the next section on Babylonian bowls, the evil eye and averting its deleterious effects served as an important impetus for incantations.

Having affirmed Yoḥanan's self-reported fabulosity, the editorial voice (in typical fashion) challenges it.[37]

> Is that so? But didn't the master say, "Rav Kahana's beauty (*me'ein shufrey*) is like the beauty of Rav; Rav's beauty is like the beauty of Rabbi Abbahu's; Rabbi Abbahu's beauty is like the beauty of our forefather Jacob's; our forefather Jacob's beauty was like the beauty of the first Adam."[38]

This list constitutes a select chain of people whose beauty is ultimately derived—*me'ein shufrey*, literally "from (*me*) the eye or appearance (*ayin*)"—from that of the primeval human, who was in God's own image. Surely, if Yoḥanan's looks matched their boast, they would be there.[39] The counter is: "Rabbi Yoḥanan did not have *hadrat panim*." Elsewhere in the Bavli, a sage insults someone as a eunuch (*gozaa*) for not having children, a spouse, or "*hadrat panim*" (glory of the face); the latter is explained as referring to a "beard" (*zaqan*).[40] Lack of facial hair is further racialized: in a disturbing discussion of Tamar, the Babylonian amora Rava notes that Israelite women have a unique beauty in that they produce no armpit or groin hair, but that Tamar (inversely to Yoḥanan) was "different" in this regard because she was the daughter of a captive (gentile) woman.[41] The term *hadrat panim* itself alludes to the Aramaic *h.d.r.*—that is, to return, repeat, circle. In fact, a beard encircles the face with hair, and so forms a literal *hadrat panim*. The motif of encircling is one of the elements in the Yoḥanan conjuring recipe that calls for "encircling" (*h.d.r.*) a silver goblet with roses.[42] And, as we see, the associations conjured by Yoḥanan's peculiar genre of beauty threaten variables that materialize gendered bodies.

To reiterate, Yoḥanan's claim to exceptional beauty is upheld, despite their omission, precisely because theirs is a different kind of beauty than the list's bearded members.[43] Notably, Yoḥanan is Joseph's seed. The Bible describes Joseph, unlike

"Jacob our father," as beautiful but Joseph is also not on our list: here is another character whose gender variation the rabbis emphasize. Adam *is* on the list. Yet some rabbinic exegeses read Genesis's account of God creating the first human literally, as a creature who was both "male *and* female" or, in rabbinic parlance, *androginus*.[44] While God ultimately severs this *androginus* human into two (man and woman) and thus relegates the *androginus* default to a mythical past, rabbinic ritual deliberations also recognized ongoing variety in gendered embodiment, including *androginus* people. If a "facial glory" signifies anything, it is a particular concept of masculinity. Yoḥanan, however, has a singular beauty, a unique genealogy, a different gender. Their beauty troubles a stable binary sexgender scheme. But whose? The Babylonian storytellers' or ours?

You'll notice by now that I've been using "they" for Yoḥanan. I'm doing this even though the Hebrew and Aramaic describing them uses masculine pronouns and verb endings, and even though classical Aramaic and Hebrew inflects all grammatical subjects—animate or inanimate—of verbs, adjectives, pronouns, and nouns, in a binary gendered fashion. Our hesitation to entertain sexgender multiplicity when translating languages whose grammars seems to only express gender duality for fear that it is an imposition, or our concerns about anachronism might make my move challenging. I would suggest that such hesitation is as much about our own culturally shaped—and uneven—commitments regarding sexgender. The sense that sexgender beyond male and female is anachronistic, if applied to a cultural epoch outside the present, is rooted in the conviction (sometimes explicit and sometimes unacknowledged) that cisness—meaning the idea of binary sexgender—is an essential and transhistorical phenomenon.

To unpack this further, let me reiterate what I mean by the term binary sexgender. First, I use the term "sexgender" to deliberately fuse what is often taken to be a distinction between sex—as biological, something given and natural—versus culturally enacted and shaped gender. That is, I take sex itself to be a culturally instantiated product of shifting variables—including scientization, racialization, disability, and species. Indeed, as queerfeminist theorists and feminist science scholars have shown, "sex" (like other dimensions of "nature") is inseparable from culture. This does not mean that it is not embodied. It means that there is no neutral ground before culture: hence sexgender. Binary sexgender then refers to the convictions or ways of thinking that presume there is only male and female (and, correspondingly, masculine and feminine), or that view variation outside these possibilities as exceptions or deviations. This is a cultural commitment to reading a variety of data—be they "cultural" or "biological"—in a binary fashion, rather than recognizing their multiplicity and variety.[45] A commitment to binary sexgender is a commitment to cisnormativity.

As scholars, we—and I include myself—often take cisness for granted and as the default without even realizing it. We tend to be cisnormative interpreters. By this I mean that we do not question but instead center an account of "sex" and its alignments with forms of embodiment that we take to be legible, stable, and also dual. We naturalize this understanding of embodiment and sexgender *as nature* (or "sex" as opposed to "gender"), an understanding heavily informed by contemporary notions of "common sense" and "biological" Euro-American accounts. Cisness is taken to be the unmarked, transhistorical ground—the way things always were/are—against which transness or nonbinarity must define itself, and over which it historically emerged. In other words, only transness is an historical phenomenon, and a recent one at that, rendering it a deviation from what is taken to be the long-established norm. Not only this; given the invisible hold of cisness, "queerness" can often be deployed to uphold it when a person's "gender" doesn't "conform" to the certainty of sexgender alignments and expected embodiments. Thus, for instance, scholars (including me) have read Yoḥanan as queer, in one or both ways. First, by taking sex to be naturalized dually, they have read Yoḥanan as genderqueer, "effeminate," and/or enacting a very particular form of rabbinic "masculinity."[46] Second, they have read the interaction between Yoḥanan and any number of actors—Resh Laqish (whom we will soon encounter in this passage), for example, or the Bavli's storyteller or editor—to express homoerotic desire of some kind. These gendered and eroticized forms of queerness have served to preserve the character's cisness and even shore up a hierarchical heteronormativity that is ultimately uncompromised by homoeroticism.[47]

How does this all relate to Aramaic, Hebrew, and grammatical gender? Sometimes the argument against considering past (or contemporary) sexgender variation and multiplicity in languages that have binary grammatical gender is that this multiplicity is impossible if one wishes to maintain fidelity to linguistic norms (e.g., in rabbinic Hebrew). This assumes a rather narrow theory of translation, as well as a very transparent view of language and its relationship to sexgender, embodiment, and culture. And, of course, it often fails to acknowledge multiplicity in the "target language"—for us English—both past and present.

Linguists note that English is a language of great variability when it comes to gender. Even a conservative characterization of English as a triple pronominal gender system (he, she, and it) with relative pronouns (who and which) that distinguish along the lines of animacy hierarchy must admit the variability of gender assignations.[48] Thus, a cat can be he, she, or it, though certain animals are rarely referred to as "he" or "she." A ship can be it or she.[49] Linguists have noted many more examples, in which speaker perspective or affect can shift pronoun usage, to the extent that some declare that English has no fixed gender system.[50] As outlined in my note on style at the beginning of this book, I have chosen to work against the predilection in English to deny the animacy of nonhuman animals by using the neutral "they" and at times "he" or "she." And this leads me to my second reassurance for those who worry that it is anachronistic to use "they" as an English translation for binary-gendered Aramaic and Hebrew words. In Hebrew and Aramaic all nouns are gendered (and verbs, adjectives, and pronouns agree) in a binary fashion. This pertains to all entities: human, animal, plant, mineral, and otherwise. Thus, a bed—*mitah* – is feminine and a table—*shulhan*—is masculine. Yet, all the time, we blithely translate these words, as well as animal vocabulary in Hebrew, using "it" as the singular pronoun, rather than "he" or "she." We freely assign "it"—a neutral gender—despite the "source" language specifying otherwise. That we do so without any caveats or reflection says everything about how our commitments to dual gender (as a kind of cisnormativity) and humanness—as Max Strassfeld and Mel Chen have argued—are intertwined.[51] To assume that grammatical gender binaries in ancient languages necessarily mapped onto a directly corresponding sexgender "reality" (or our own limited conception thereof) is to ascribe a realistic epistemology and the correspondence theory of truth to all language (or at least to ancient languages). That is a lot to assume.[52] Instead, I suggest we make room for the possibility that our own limitations in languaging or conceptualizing sexgender beyond duality were not necessarily those of late ancient people.

By conjuring nonbinarity or gender plurality for Rabbi Yoḥanan—a little like the evocative yet nonhuman object-oriented process for conjuring their beauty—I seek to open a space for the possibility of Rabbi Yoḥanan *not* being what *we* might think of as a cisgender man. Certainly, this ought to be as plausible to countenance as the by now neutral request to forgive the "anachronism" of positing Yoḥanan (or their progenitor Joseph) as queer. Of course, I am not making a biographical claim: rather, I suggest instead that the storytellers and editors of the Bavli shape the figure of Yoḥanan as someone who doesn't quite fall on either side of a sexgender binary.[53]

Recall that the framing narrative had paused after introducing an insult calling into question rabbinic propagation: "your children are not yours." Having ostensibly dispelled any ensuing disquiet by wielding a set of penises, and having now dwelt on Yoḥanan's beauty, the embedded tale ventured back into the same morass, this time with Yoḥanan deliberately introducing themselves into the "seed" of (or in my more suggestive reading, by introducing their seed into) the "daughters of Israel."[54] We will return to those mechanics shortly, but for now we will move to the next episode in the Yoḥanan subplot that solidifies my claim about Yoḥanan:

> One day they (Yoḥanan) were bathing in the waters of the Jordan, and Resh Laqish came by.[55] They (Yoḥanan) looked like a woman (*damyey ke-itetah*).[56]
>
> He (Resh Laqish) thrust his spear in the Jordan and leapt behind them (Yoḥanan).[57]
>
> They (Yoḥanan) said to him: your strength is of the ~~ox~~ Torah (*le-~~tura~~ orayta*).[58]
>
> He said to them: your beauty is of women.
>
> They said to him: if you withdraw yourself (*hadarat bakh*), I have a sister who is more beautiful than I am and I will give her to you.
>
> He withdrew himself (*hadar beih*).[59] He wanted to return (*lemeihadar*) to get his gear but he wasn't able to.[60]

Yoḥanan, rather than the "daughters of Israel," is now immersed in water. Like the latter, Yoḥanan is presumably unclothed and they look like a woman. The version of the tale we are following has "and Resh Laqish came by, and they (Yoḥanan) looked like a woman."[61] This is different from other witnesses that have "Resh Laqish saw them (*hazyey*) and he (Resh Laqish) thought they were a woman (*savar ke'ittetah*)." The latter versions endeavor to clarify that it is Resh Laqish's subjective and mistaken impression that casts Yoḥanan as a woman, thereby upholding Yoḥanan's sexgender as a man. Our version does not make this a question of Resh Laqish's perspective and faulty perception; instead, the omniscient narrator describes Yoḥanan's appearance, which is in concert with the earlier part of the passage about their lack of masculine marked beauty. Resh Laqish's approach to R. Yoḥanan is aggressive, proximate, and direct "thrust his spear . . . leapt behind them." This should be contrasted with the version in the Hamburg manuscript:

> He (Resh Laqish) leapt to the Jordan after them (Yoḥanan). He (Resh Laqish) stuck his lance in the Jordan and vaulted to the other side of the Jordan. When Rabbi Yoḥanan saw Resh Laqish they said to him . . .

In this version Resh Laqish approaches Yoḥanan from a distance initially, rather circuitously, to end up on the other side of the river. Its additional detail—"when Rabbi Yoḥanan saw Resh Laqish"—implies less of a physical approach and adds an interval of space or time, during which Yoḥanan realizes the presence of Resh Laqish.[62] These extra elements thicken a comedy of errors or "mistaken-identity" plotline in which Resh Laqish, as Daniel Boyarin has it, "misprises" Rabbi Yoḥanan's gender because of the "distance" between them.[63] Contrast these details absent in our version, in which instead Resh Laqish leaps into the river, right behind Yoḥanan, with the latter responding immediately.

The thrusting spear has been interpreted as a phallic metaphor. Yoḥanan earlier claimed to be impervious to the evil eye. Notably, phallic imagery was used ubiquitously in the ancient Middle East to ward off the evil eye. Paintings, amulets, and other media depicted entities such as a phallus, spear, snake, or lion thrusting into the evil eye. The evidence ranges from Arabia to Dura-Europos and from Rome to Palestine.[64] Therefore the doubled reversal of Resh Laqish's lance/ phallic assault in the face of Yoḥanan's prior claim would not be lost on readers.

The ensuing exchange is cryptic:

> They (Yoḥanan) said to him (Resh Laqish): your strength is your strength is for (or, of) the ~~ox~~ Torah (*le-~~tura~~ orayta*).
>
> He (Resh Laqish) said to them (Yoḥanan): your beauty is of women.

The Florence manuscript has Yoḥanan describe Resh Laqish's strength in bovine terms. The word "ox" (*tura*) is then struck out and Torah (*orayta*) is penned on top. While this is the only textual witness of "ox," and while it has been corrected, it is a poignant error (if it was one) as it lines up with other characteristics of this story version. These include the following: its brevity in key instances and its omission of plot elements that tend to either neutralize the physicality and proximity of the encounter between Yoḥanan and Resh Laqish, and the absence of features that undermine the literalism of Yoḥanan's sexgender or that emphasize the subjective and erroneous perception of Resh Laqish.

This manuscript preserves a significantly different version of the passage overall. It has fewer glosses than others (including Hamburg), particularly fewer explanatory phrases, such as putting Resh Laqish's attack on Rabbi Yoḥanan down to a case of mistaken identity, or preserving more physical distance between the two. It generally presents a more compact, coherent (anachronistic as that may be), and perhaps, for some tastes, a less "pious" version of the passage.[65] On this reading, it is not implausible if Yoḥanan reacts to Resh Laqish's forceful and seemingly nonconsensual sexual advance by casting his force as bovine. This is rather different from Yoḥanan righteously advising Resh Laqish to redirect it to the higher purposes of Torah study.[66]

Palestinian midrashim in fact make a similar move. Genesis Rabbah narrates that Yoḥanan's claimed ancestor Joseph, a legendary gender-variant figure, is confronted by a bear–a motif also alluding to sexual aggression. In one exegesis this bear is Potiphar's wife; in another the bear is Potiphar.[67] In the case of Potiphar, divine intervention involves his castration, which the midrash depicts as the bear's defanging. In the encounter with Potiphar's wife, we can find key elements in the midrash parable that are present in our narrative: a gender-variant character announces and displays their beauty and is then almost immediately attacked by a figurative bear who attempts to have sex with them.[68] These themes of Joseph and animal sexuality resound yet louder considering Yohanan's citation of Joseph. If "ox" was indeed the intended word here, then its use nicely echoes the framing narrative's "herd of oxen" (*baqra detura*), which testify to the size of Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Eleazar.[69] The ox itself is a classic figure in southwest Asia known for its unpredictable violence and danger, and this reputation continued as the rabbis parsed biblical rules about liability, as well as human obligations to oxen exploited in agricultural contexts—a subject of inquiry in this very chapter and tractate.[70]

On the reading of "Torah" rather than "ox," what we seem to have is Yoḥanan exclaiming, on being confronted by Resh Laqish and his lance, that his force would be ideal for—or better directed to—the labor of Torah study. The notion that Torah study is weakening is found in other rabbinic contexts and is arguably presaged in the end of this scene when Resh Laqish finds himself unable to retrieve his "gear."[71]

Resh Laqish's retort to Yoḥanan quite straightforwardly confirms the storyteller's earlier statement that Yoḥanan "appeared as a woman." "Your beauty is of women," he says. On my reading, this is a frank doubling down of what attracted Resh Laqish in the first place (not a regretful statement). This is harder to sustain in the face of those manuscript versions that gloss Resh Laqish's attack as based on an erroneous gender identification ("Resh Laqish *thought* they were a woman"). Centering this error as explanation, allows scholars to read the two protagonists as the two men (one "masculine," the other "effeminate") whose responses mirror one another: "your strength *should be* for Torah," and "your beauty *should be* for women." In other words, the anecdote becomes a story of two men admiringly or enviously seeking to redirect each other's appeal.[72] Relatedly, one might read "your beauty is *of* women" to indicate that Yoḥanan has a kind of femme beauty, which is taken to support a homoerotic reading.[73]

Yoḥanan deflects with the desperate but disturbing offer of a sister "more beautiful than I am" but only "if you withdraw (*h.d.r.*) yourself."[74] Most—myself included—have read this, plausibly enough, as "if you repent."[75] I now propose that we read that instruction quite plainly, with the prior phallic thrust. Yoḥanan bargains with their assailant: if he retracts his threat or phallus, they will "give" their sister to him. Resh Laqish does so, then tries to "withdraw" (*hadar*, *lemehadar*) to get his "gear" (*maneh*) and finds that he cannot. Here again, I suggest allusions to the rabbinic Joseph. In some accounts, when Joseph, like Yoḥanan, is attacked by Potiphar's wife, they find themselves sexually responsive: "the bow was extended." Yet they manage to "retract" (*hazar*, Hebrew; equivalent to *hadar*, Aramaic).[76] In something of a turnaround, it is the assailant here, Resh Laqish, who is thus quelled. He retracts his lance, perhaps unchastened, tries to retrieve it, but finds he can no longer access his "gear."[77]In this scene, at least, Yoḥanan has confounded him.

In sum, this manuscript's narrative provides a coherent, tight, though less pious version than the version usually read by scholars. Yoḥanan wishes to proliferate their singular arguably nonbinary beauty and seed, taking unusual measures as women surface from immersing in water, but confident in their proliferative and invulnerable inheritance.[78] When Yoḥanan bathes, Resh Laqish jumps in right behind them, his lance proffered. In the first round, Yoḥanan exclaims about Resh Laqish's taurine qualities; this then becomes a redirection to Torah study. In the Florence manuscript, Resh Laqish never explicitly "accepted upon himself" Yoḥanan's proposal.[79] These elements—together with the earlier representations of Yoḥanan as a person whose embodied sexgender does not conform to a cisgender binary—amount to a tale about a person whose effects on others are generative and unpredictably potent.[80]

Taking all this to heart does not make this is a tale about a "mistake"—a trope that presumes that any sexgendered embodiment outside of binarity only *seems to be such* and simply needs to be ascertained, or that such nonnormate embodiment leads to confusion that must be corrected or ascertained by uncovering a person's "real" sex. Rather, Resh Laqish sees Yoḥanan as they are—"they appear as a woman"—and doubles down on this, "your beauty, of women." They are not exactly a man—as has been established—and they are not exactly a woman, though their beauty is often assigned as such. A noncisnormative approach lets the difficulty that this may arouse in our logics be, without trying to "compel" Yoḥanan into the category of a man or a woman.[81]

Turning back to the women surfacing from the waters of the mikvah, I find myself revisiting what I previously suggested elsewhere, albeit in a more cisnormative vein. Previously I suggested that we should afford consideration to the women who, like Resh Laqish, saw Yoḥanan as a woman and desired them. Yoḥanan's beauty is indeed "for women." But I upheld a cisnormative reading by insisting on Yoḥanan as "passing as a woman" in a sense that ultimately upheld their cisness as a man. I therefore entertained the possibility of women's desire for women, albeit in the guise of a kind of mistake (allowed by Yoḥanan's genderqueerness). However, an alternative reading that does not insist on the impossibility of sexgender outside of man/woman allows that these women gazed at Yoḥanan with queer desire for their nonbinary embodiment. It is of course important to observe that even this agentive account for women's queer desire is figured through Yoḥanan's telling.[82] We can nonetheless consider the ocular and erotic agency of those women (or femme people) "who will see" Yoḥanan. They, too, express a species of queer desire that is of generative potency.

RABBINIC NONBINARITY

So, am I arguing that Yoḥanan is nonbinary? Naturally, my answer is yes and no. First, I am not claiming or defining a specific and reified version of nonbinarity in the realm of sexgender for the present, which I then apply to the past. Rather, I hold the term lightly, aware that even now it is an umbrella term—for a variety of embodiments and ways of doing queer sexgender beyond dual cisnormativity—rather than a narrow prescription. I offer nonbinarity *as an approach* to our sources that seeks to dislodge ahistorical and essentialist perspectives on sexgender duality. The rabbis entertained a variety of sexgender embodiments, some of which they seem to have characterized as nonnormate ways of being men or women (e.g., *saris* and *ʿaylonit*) and others that were understood as multidimensional or utterly distinctive (e.g., androginus). It is the latter that may offer us some direction, if our concern is to place Yoḥanan in a potentially compatible rabbinic category. I will emphasize that my goal is not diagnostic. Furthermore, we as contemporary interpreters need not subscribe to a totalizing and systematic ritual scheme—or halakhah—as determinative. Indeed, I am not certain, despite the imperialist desire of the rabbis to subsume their known world and everything in it to their knowledge making enterprise, that we can speak of their total conviction therein. We have, after all, adduced instances where they acknowledge their own limits or the excess of what remains outside. Nonetheless, it can be helpful for us to consider that rabbinic sexgender categories admit some variety and multiplicity. For instance, the tannaim institute various signs of maturity (*simane bagrut*) to assess when or whether a child assigned as a boy or a girl has become a man or woman (respectively). Those who do not develop those "signs" are considered a person who is a *seris hammah* (born "eunuch") or *aylonit*, respectively. The inability to produce hair (above and below) is one of the signs for the *saris*.[83] In tYevamot 10:6 the signs of a saris are someone who hasn't produced two (pubic) hairs, does not have a beard (*zaqan*), has soft flesh (*basar*), and whose genital emissions—urine, semen—are nonnormate.[84] While most translate *basar* as skin rather than flesh, it could be understood as penis. An additional sign is a thin or weak voice, which "is not distinguishable (*niqar*) as a man's or woman's." As Sarra Lev astutely notes, the latter phrasing may refer not to the voice but to the entire person.[85]

Signs of maturity not only mean that a person has come of age and is now obligated to fulfill the Torah's *mitsvot*. If a person is a saris rather than a normate adult man (or woman), they have no generative levirate obligation. The levirate is operative when a married man dies without children: his widow is expected to marry his brother and generate offspring. Pertinently, in our Bavli passage, the stakes are generative from the get-go.[86] We should also notice that, in an almost mirror levirate, Resh Laqish goes on to marry Yoḥanan's sibling, who is their "more beautiful" sister. Yet generation does not really occur in our Bavli passage, or in the framing narrative, in ways that exclusively privilege what might be seen as conventional methods (e.g., coitus between cisheterosexual couples). While a saris person is treated as a man ritually, as Lev points out, beyond this treatment, the ways the rabbis talk about them indicates they didn't see them as "entirely male." In Lev's words, "Ultimately, they treat him as a man, but see her as a woman." Lev rightly reads rabbinic texts beyond the purely ritualistic. I suggest then that there are aspects of Yoḥanan that map onto saris.

It is also possible to view Yoḥanan and their treatment in these texts as congruent with the rabbinic recognition of the androginus person. While it is plausible that being androginus includes embodied variation of the sort that we might think of as combining "dual sexgender" based in genitalia, Lev notes "no descriptions of the androginus whatsoever can be found in the tannaitic literature."[87] Some have argued that despite—or even in the course of—considering androginus people over and over again, the rabbis ultimately maintained sexgender duality. In an influential essay Charlotte Fonrobert maintains that "rabbinic halakhic discourse institutes a functional gender duality, anchored in the need of reproduction of the Jewish collective body."[88] This scheme "imagines the human body to be sexed as either male or female," and as genitally determinative. The Tosefta explains that circumcision happens on an organ that excludes women, being "the place where it is distinguishable whether they are male or female."[89] However, as we saw, tannaitic sources use precisely this phrase to describe the existence of those who are "not distinguishable." That is, the rabbis understood that recourse to an essential dualism can be insufficient.

Still, it is hard to deny that a sexgender binary plays a large part in shaping rabbinic conceptions of obligation and that, to the extent that this binary is operative, it is deeply hierarchical. It is also true that to quite an extent the same hierarchical binary shapes even rabbinic approaches to those sexgender embodiments that challenge it. Yet, several significant factors counter a reduction of rabbinic embodiments in toto to man versus woman, based in "commonsense" "sex" assignments. First, while it is vital to expose how the rabbis varyingly place those they designated as women in subordinated positions, it is important not to do the job for them, as it were. Second, and this very much relates to the previous point, to overly prioritize an assumed sexgender binary as prior, is to do so on behalf of an imagined coherent system. This entails buying into a particular, potentially anachronistic, and certainly reified idea of "halakhah" that is exhaustive and systematic. Thirdly, and relatedly, it is to prioritize this dualism over other sexgender embodiments recognized within the system (on the basis of their minority) as well as additional embodiments that intersect with sexgender (e.g., related to ethnicity, race, or ability) and that also determine status.

The passage that is central to positioning the androginus person is tBikkurim 2:3–7:[90]

> The androginus person has ways they are like men and ways that they are like women, and ways that they are like men and women, and ways that they are neither like men nor women. (tBikkurim 2:3)

The passage then outlines these permutations and combinations, including the idea that an androginus person, like a man, may take a woman in marriage (*noseh*) but not be married (*nisah*) by a man.[91] Elsewhere this is worked out as a problem of improper sex between men (thus potentially permitted if an androginus person has vaginal sex with a man).[92] We may recall that Resh Laqish declaims "your beauty, of women" to Yoḥanan. One could equally translate this as "your beauty, of wives." A coercive marriage proposal makes sense of Yoḥanan's reply: "if you withdraw yourself, I will bring you my sister who is more beautiful than I am."[93]

The variety of ways that the androginus person is likened to men, women, both, and neither, exposes their embodied polyvalence and sexgender multiplicity beyond binarity. The rabbis show a conceptual flexibility in parsing them via these *four* permutations. Certainly, given that men/women form not a neutral but a hierarchical relation, it can be shown, as both Charlotte Fonrobert and Sarra Lev do, how this makes for stringencies based on their male dimensions. As the passage closes, however, the final voice is that of Rabbi Yose:

> An androginus person is a creature unto themselves (*biryah le-atsmo*) and the sages were unable to decide about them, whether he is a man or she is a woman (*ve-lo yakhlu hakhamim le-hakhria alav im ish hu oh isha hi*).[94]

The term for "decide" (*le-hakhria*) can equally be understood in the sense of "compel" or "force," which suggests more than indecisiveness: it denotes an inability to force or to slot the androginus person into a fixed either/or, he/she, man/woman, binary sexgender system in an essential way. This does—and did—not foreclose the pragmatic (even coercive) efforts to make them "legible" as Max Strassfeld has emphasized, even as rabbis may disagree about the particulars, for instance, when it concerns who is having sex with whom.[95] Lest one valorize the marginality of the androginus person, Strassfeld vividly points to the costs of being illegible under the “law.” Yet I do not take this summary or position (whichever it is) of Rabbi Yose’s to represent an aporia that banishes the androginus person to outside the rabbis’ ritual project. That is, I understand Rabbi Yose to be describing precisely the simultaneity of the four aforementioned permutations as a form of *multiplicity* that is unique to the androginus person. They are a combination of yes, no, both, and none. *And* they are not just defined by negation/addition or likeness/difference: they are their own creatures.[96]

In our previous chapter we saw that this move toward both/and is very much a Rabbi Yose orientation. This tractate follows its discussion of androginus people with an identically structured disquisition on the koy. Recall that in the same series laying out four permutations of likeness/difference (although, in this instance, with wild and domesticated creatures) Rabbi Yose consigned the koy with similar or even identical multiplicity: the koy is a “creature unto themselves (*biryah le‘atsmo*),” whom the sages also “could not compel” into an either/or of wild as opposed to domesticated.[97] As we saw, this term of “creature unto themselves” is used by the sages to carve out discrete categories. The koy is beyond the binary of wild/domesticated; containing aspects of both and elements that match neither. This is a kind of nonbinary multiplicity and complexity that Yose recognizes and summarizes and extends to other creatures like the field human and the marten. The former, declared a wild animal by the anonymous voice, is said by Rabbi Yose to possess the ultimate human feature—conveying tent corpse impurity. Likewise, the Mishnah simply asserts that the marten is a wild animal, but Rabbi Yose ascribes to them *two* kinds of purity: one typical of reptiles (*sheratsim*); the other typical of wild animals. In the previous chapter, I described such creatures as the field human and koy as multiform. By this I meant to convey that the seeming complex morphology or form of these beings does not indicate that they are products of two different species (i.e., hybrids): they are kinds of their own. We can build on that given our consideration of binarity here. The multiplicity I have in mind here pertains not necessarily (or only) to species forms but (also) to classifications and their contents (e.g., man/woman or wild/domesticated and their entailments), and it includes content that is entirely unique to the creatures themselves.[98]

NONBINARY GENERATION

How does all this classificatory multiplicity—of species and gender—help us understand the mechanics at play in bBava Metsia 84a? It might deter us from being dazzled by the chain of penises that inaugurates the switch from the main narrative to our embedded passage, especially as a naturalized understanding of what this may have meant to our ancient editors is far from clear. I suggest that the earlier rabbinic frameworks—which allow for gender variation and which are taken up by the later rabbis—create the context for someone such as Yoḥanan, whose genitalia MS Florence doesn't consider among those ostensibly measured or marked male, and who looks like a woman. Yoḥanan's visibly femme gender, moreover, is pictured as highly desirable by all who encounter them.

As I said previously, I am loathe to closely scrutinize Yoḥanan's body in a diagnostic fashion in order to slide them into one or other of rabbinic sexgenders (e.g., man, woman, androginus) or as a man who is nonnormate (e.g., a saris or person with nonnormate genitals).[99] This does not mean, as Mira Balberg and Charlotte Fonrobert have pointed out, that the rabbis would have hesitated.[100] Their writings about close examinations of people's bodies violated their own modesty customs (whether or not these were in fact maintained), as Balberg points out, and comports with the scrutiny in other parts of their classificatory projects, projects that included nonhuman beings. Nonetheless, the Mishnah (mSanhedrin 8:1) describes its own reticence to talk about pubic hair as euphemistic language (*lashon neqiyah*). The rabbis thus explicitly name a linguistic reticence or gap that we as readers may wish to consider. This, coupled with their forensic gaze, makes the (cultural) story of an easy, simple, and (anachronistically) legible "biological" sexgender dualism less easily universalizable.[101] If what you see is what you are, then Yoḥanan comes to disrupt precisely this. At the same time, I do not necessarily see this as a punishment tale for nonbinary visibility.

In anachronistic terms, Yoḥanan was not a cisgender man inasmuch as they did not have the features that tend to be associated with men (in a cisgender-oriented framework). In analytic terms, a nonbinary lens allows their profound interruption of sexgender duality to come into relief.[102] A nonbinary approach helps us denaturalize the inevitability of cisness that underpins the seemingly essential and transhistorical duality of gender. This may seem like a radical recentering of the margins: and it is. Moments such as these, in which sources stumble or suspend the ease with which the links between embodiment and sexgender come together, are the precise opportunity to see how the assumptions and assignments are iterated rather than natural; all the more so when we are dealing with a culture in which there already exist conceptual resources for considering sexgender variation. With these cautions in mind, we can check the ease with which we might even be willing to entertain cisgender queerness or homoerotics—which almost always end up affirming marriage and babies on the side—before countenancing these other femme, queer, nonnormate, and nonbinary bodies and circuits of desire and generation.[103]

Yoḥanan's generative method is transgressive in its adulterous targeting of married women, who, in the heteropatriarchal terms of rabbinic marriage, owe their sexual and generative capacities exclusively to their husbands. While monogamy is far from the only game in town for the rabbis—men can have more than one wife—(simultaneous) polyamory for women is not countenanced: and indeed the offspring resulting from such unions are heavily stigmatized as *mamzerim* (illegitimate).[104] This may explain the legitimacy—on a technicality—of a method that forgoes sexual intercourse. If we take the method at face value as a form of conception in the ritual waters that is triggered by gazing at Yoḥanan, then we may have a form of parthenogenesis, or possibly a kind of insemination in/of the water.[105] However, even on this reading, which centers figures "(d)etached from the geometry of straight lineage," we must face the problematic generative imperative that insists on progeny begotten by women.[106]

LILITH AND THE DAUGHTERS OF ISRAEL

The larger pretext for this exercise has been to illustrate my quest to decelerate habitual analytic reflexes about seemingly "natural" accounts of reproduction, even those (including my own) that have sought to "queer" them. When people started using the word "queer," it was a deliberate repudiation of the unmarked "natural" as normative and a celebratory embrace of what had previously been an insult. The notion that there is nothing more "natural" than that which is designated by "nature" is itself an artifact that counts on a cultural split between nature and culture. The artifice of the "natural" is as operative today as ever, its invocation as rhetorically calculated. The idea of the natural, often couched as etiology, serves normative claims. Whether or not we can even rightly say that the rabbis had a concept of "nature," or whether it is more accurate to talk of the rabbis being "before nature" given the absence of the term in the Hebrew of the Mishnah and the Talmud, this book has focused on dimensions *we* might think of as part of nature—generation, species, sexgender—and the knowledges (or "sciences") about them.[107] In this vein, I offer another case study of what happens when we let go of modernist naturalizing and moralizing assumptions, this time focusing on nonhumans. The protagonists we center here are Lilith and the Jewish women of Babylonia, the latter often named in the evidence we are treating. Together these beings unseat monogamous, same-species, heterosexual reproduction. The evidence I adduce is from the large corpus of incantation bowls (roughly two thousand known) found in the central and southern regions of Iraq dating from the third to seventh centuries CE. These were everyday earthenware bowls used in domestic spaces, whose interiors were inscribed by ritual experts in ink, often with space left for a drawing of a demon at their center and/or on the exterior.

While demons existed for Palestinian rabbis and Jews, they take on a far larger role in Babylonian life, as demonstrated in both the Bavli and the bowls.[108] The Bavli relates that "if the eye were given power to see no creature would be able to survive the demons" and that they outnumber humans by far.[109] Demons are said to have three elements in common with angels—wings, flight, and foresight—and three with humans: eating and drinking, generation (*parin ve-ravin*), and death.[110] Scholars have shown this ubiquity of demons was a feature of other communities in the Persian-ruled Mesopotamian world.[111] The bowls, all of which imprecate against demons, and some of which are written in Syriac or Mandean Aramaic, contain multiple and sometimes simultaneous Christian, Mandean, Persian, and Zoroastrian elements (e.g., names, demons, divinities, holy figures, and the like).

As we have seen, divine involvement in human generation expands heterosexual reproduction from the supposedly sacrosanct dyad to a divine-human ménage à trois. By the same token, others could intervene, including humans like Rabbi Yoḥanan, or nonhumans, including demons.[112] The incantation bowls—especially but not only those which we can identify as "Jewish" owing to their invocations of rabbis, the script and style of their Aramaic, and other features—offer an intriguing vantage point on such coupling (or tripling). These bowls, inscribed with incantations, commissioned by women and men, and to be placed or buried in the homes of clients, were overwhelmingly in aid of protecting or healing against a variety of afflictions attributed to demons. These afflictions ranged from migraines and miscarriage to lawsuits and lovesickness. There was frequent usage of divorce formulae to expel these demons, particularly Lilith, including by women clients.[113] I would like to focus our on how these devices testify to nonheterosexual *marriages*, albeit in associations that had clearly gone sour—necessitating these divorces.

Here is an excerpt from one such incantation:

> This day of all days, years, and generations of the world, I, Komiš daughter of Mahlaphta, have dismissed and released and divorced you. You Lilith, lilith of the wilderness,[114] grabber, and snatcher. You, the three of you, the four of you, the five of you, you are stripped naked and are not clothed.[115] Your hair is unraveled, cast over your back. It has been heard about you that your mother's name is Palhan and your father is Palhadad Lilith. Listen and get out and do not associate[116] with Komiš daughter of Mahlaphta in her house. So you get out[117] of her house and of her dwelling and from her daughter-in-law and Artasherit her children. I have decreed against you, a ban that Joshua bar Perahiah sent against you. I adjure you by the honor of your father and by the honor of your mother, and take your divorces and separations, your divorce and your separation, in the ban that is sent against you by Joshua son of Perahiah, for thus has spoken to you Joshua ben Perahiah: A divorce has come to us from across the sea . . .[118]

The incantation begins in the first person: the voice of the client. As Avigayil Manekin-Bamberger has shown, this, along with other features in this incantation, like other incantations, echoes formulae in rabbinic divorces (or divorces discussed by the rabbis).[119] The incantation marks time, introduces the ritual actor (ostensibly the client commissioning the incantation), addresses the other party, Lilith, and states its business—divorce. One imagines Komiš commissioning the bowl, and participating in its ritual deposit and burial at the entrance or corner of "*her* home" (my emphasis), which might include having the incantation recited aloud. Of the exact troubles Lilith has wrought we are not informed. She is named as she often is—grabber and snatcher—in terms that allude to her interference with offspring and generation.[120] Thrice she is commanded not to "associate" with

Komiš and to leave her house; in two instances this is coupled with the imperative to "get out" of Komiš's house and dwelling (one of those times again in the short continuation after the citation above). I will return to this emphasis on space and domesticity—a theme in many bowls—below.

The deployment of divorce formulae, the effort to address Lilith in accordance with rabbinic ritual juridical norms, along with the invocation of a rabbinic figure, manifest a form of respect for the parties involved, even as they register discontent. Divorce need not be viewed as stigmatizing per se: as scholars have observed in the human-human Jewish realm, remarriage for reasons of divorce or death was common, even as traumatic circumstances may have sometimes led to it.[121] That Christians, including Mesopotamian Christians, may have condemned it is another matter.[122] In fact, as we see from the liturgical poetry of Ephrem and the writings of Aphrahat, marriage itself was cast into question in the Christian communities of Mesopotamia, with people remaining celibate virgins. Those who did this they considered holy, angelic even, having entered into marriage with Christ.[123] Aphrahat, in defending this practice, represents it as an object of attack by members of the local Jewish community.

The idea that angels were nonsexual beings who did not proliferate is found in Jewish and Christian sources. Palestinian rabbis, for instance, positioned humans as a species between angels and animals, sharing sexual generation (*periyah ureviyah*) in common with the latter. Not coincidentally, the Babylonian rabbis add demons to the mix of charting differences and overlaps between angels, humans, and animals (bHagigah 16a). And it is demons, who, like humans, proliferate sexually—though this is also implicit in the Palestinian midrashim we discussed that dub Eve "mother of *all* life" (including demonic progeny). What the rabbinic sources lack, however, is the idea that it is aspirational to repudiate marriage and abstain from sexual proliferation. Christian sources reflect additional support at large among Mesopotamian Jews for marriage rather than abstinence. And both Palestinian and Babylonian accounts of the generation of demonic-human point to the sexual separation of Adam and Eve as its originating cause. Demons, in this scenario, jump in all too enthusiastically when the marriage bed is cold.

My point in reminding us of these cultural unions between demons, humans, and generation, then, is to account for the substantive resonances in using divorce formulae in many of the bowl incantations. Certainly, these generative resonances are frequently named in the bowls, with references to interference with offspring, to bedchambers, to nighttime appearances, and even to more explicit sexual harassment. It is also worth recalling that in order to divorce someone you need to be married to them in the first place and that for the rabbis one way of establishing a marital relationship is through intercourse. In plain terms, to divorce a demon suggests that one was in some way married to them as well as being potentially sexually involved with them. I suggest that a sensitive reading of the divorce formulae in the incantation above, and in the bowls generally, demands our attention to the full spectrum of their meanings. This includes, but is not limited to, the familiarity that these formulae demonstrate with rabbinic ritual language and procedure. The scribes who wrote the bowls, and the clients who demanded them, did not choose to deploy other rabbinic ritual formulae or concepts. For instance, they did not treat the Lilith as an unlawful occupier of their property and register a formal "protest" or accuse the demon of tortious injury, including the kind related to miscarriage.[124] This points to the deliberate use of divorce and its allusions to the fruits of marriage—including sex and progeny—gone sour.

DEMONIZING LILITH

The writers of the bowls address a properly named Lilith regularly, particularly as the object of divorce proceedings between the demon and their client (both men and women). Scholars have sought to link Lilith to the few mentions in the Bavli to the earlier Isaiah 34:14, to the Dead Sea Scrolls, and on, to the earlier Babylonian Lamashtu and/or Lilitu, to other child-killing demons, and to the likely somewhat later child-killing first wife of Adam named Lilith in the *Alphabet of Ben Sira*.[125] The few mentions in the Talmud seem to echo some of the affective and descriptive associations in the bowls. One is forbidden to sleep in a house alone in case Lilith seizes them.[126] Lilith seems to (implicitly) be of human form, as the rabbis deem a being that looks like her is that is delivered by a human to be offspring (thus implicitly with "something of human form").[127] These few allusions, along with one discussed below, are hardly flattering, but I am less concerned with establishing questions about Lilith's derivation or originality, and more interested in ways that the bowls and also scholars target Lilith, as a protagonist.

While divorce language is itself not necessarily disparaging, bowl incantations often join it with insults and threats toward demons, and toward Lilith in particular. Lilith is "evil" and (generic, plural) liliths are "evil".[128] Scholars have also written of Lilith herself in highly charged terms, pointing to her wretchedness, abjection, and sexual promiscuity. Emblematic of this are the influential Shaul Shaked, who declares Lilith "an object of degradation . . . repulsive and degenerate," and Rebecca Lesses, who, in a foundational article, characterizes them as "dangerous, seductive creatures."[129] Scholars highlight elements such as "you are stripped naked and are not clothed" and "your hair is unraveled, cast over your back." There is certainly good reason to consider imagery of disheveled hair and undress in negative terms, as an ignominious ejection of an adulterous wife (as in Hosea 2:5, "I strip her naked"). It evokes biblical and rabbinic descriptions of stigmatized sexuality that involve exposure of hair and nudity.[130] Furthermore, the few Talmudic traditions about Lilith are not necessarily complimentary. Take the following, which fuses Lilith with women *in general*, in the context of the punishments owed to Eve: "It was taught in a tannaitic tradition: she grows her hair like Lilith, she sits and urinates like an animal (*kivehemah*), and she is made into a bolster for her husband (*le-ve'alah*)."[131]

Post-Edenic Eve's (and hence all women's) embodiment is demonic, animalized, and sexualized in a diminished fashion. Yet the anonymous voice of the Talmud questions the above view—namely, that these women's ways are negative—suggesting instead that they are marks of distinction. Lesses, however, takes the above source as emblematic of rabbinic constructions of women. Joining it with other rabbinic traditions on the hair of married women, she argues that it signifies "illicit female sexuality" across the incantations and images on the bowls. The married woman must therefore "cover the hair that makes her like the demonic lilith, seducer of men and slayer of children." Lesses applies this to the Lilith figures: "although they have a marriage relationship with men, they do not cover their hair as respectable Jewish married women should."[132] Although I also believe that the marriage relationship within the bowls must be treated with the gravity that Lesses accords them, governing their interpretation with a fully rationalized rabbinic halakhic model is unwarranted. It not only strains the limits of the rabbinic sources themselves; it also imposes on them a particular modernist halakhic conception of halakhah that insists on uniformity, totality, and coherence. Let us pause, then, over the descriptions of Lilith that have aroused these sorts of reactions. Scholars often use the term "disheveled" rather than "unraveled" to describe Lilith's hairdo, which gives a rather different sense to the expression: "your hair is unraveled (*r.m.y*), cast over your back."[133] A similar expression utilized as an idiomatic phrase in Syriac with "casting" (*r.m.y*), with or without an object "hair," can refer to either loosening or casting one's hair or clothing back over one's shoulders. The fifth-century Syriac *Acts of Pelagia* describes the great beauty of the saint (before repenting) who had their "[hair] spilled (*r.m.y*) over the shoulders without modesty like a man (*gbry'yt*)" or their "clothing loose around the shoulders like a man."[134] However, before one assumes that this exposure of hair confirms an affective resonance of shame and humiliation, let us note that the underlying issue is hair/gender out of place. Hair on its own is not at issue. It becomes so only when someone who is not considered a normate man is nonetheless wearing it "like a man." The narrative does not depict the hair as unequivocally and inherently shameful. The protagonist, whose appearance captivates everyone, repents, affirms Christ, and eventually must flee. Escaping to Jerusalem, they become known as Pelagios, the eunuch monk. There, the narrator recounts meeting them, but failing to recognize them. Pelagios speaks and—again—looks "like a man," albeit one emaciated by an ascetic regimen.[135] Their earlier manifestation of manliness clearly presages this later transition. The example of Pelagios suggests rich and complex associations with the phrase "unraveled hair cast over your back" that is not coincidentally pinned to a figure whose sexgender itself is far more complex than traditional analyses of women as whore/virgin that seem to still haunt the way scholars view

Lilith and rabbinic women. Exposed hair worn about the shoulders and back does not inevitably indicate feminized humiliation.

Lilith's unraveled hair and bodily exposure may, at the very least, have been multivalent. To read these descriptions (and images) from the perspective of utter abjection is to flatten the complexity that these bowls manage to convey of the Lilith figure, even in their repetitive variety of epithets and descriptions. Relatedly, not all nudity—the other element in Lilith's description in the incantation above and in general in the bowls and to some degree in the images that adorn them—was bound up with a prurient and moralizing late ancient gaze.[136]

Scholars of art and visual culture, have investigated the shared visual idioms and distinctive styles in Sasanian Persian and Roman mosaics, statuary, architecture, silver plate, clothing, and coinage.[137] Such stylistic commonality and variation did not only obtain at the register of elite urban centers and state sponsored art. Take the third-century frescos of the Dura-Europos synagogue, for instance.[138] Nudity—including genitalia—is depicted in the paintings, perhaps most memorably that of Pharoah's daughter who while bathing, takes up a similarly nude baby Moses. Likewise, gods such as Anahita were sometimes depicted nude or partly undressed in Sasanian art.[139] In like manner, the motif of a dancing woman or of a woman playing musical instruments adorned Sasanian seals, mosaics, and silver plates. This is to say that the unclothed body did not inevitably make for associations of shame and degradation.

To the extent that the pose and frontality of Pharaoh's daughter in the Dura Europos fresco, evoke iconography of Aphrodite and Anahita, those images can certainly be taken to express—among other things—power and invulnerability, depending on context (including viewership and use).[140] A cursory glance at the Dura-Europos image reveals Pharaoh's daughter in a forthright stance, holding the infant, gazing to her right, and signaling her entourage. Unlike them, she is bejeweled about her neck and upper arm; her long black hair is *unraveled and uncovered* (theirs is veiled) and *cast over her shoulders and back*. Even though baby Moses is ostensibly the internal and external focus of the scene, our eye is drawn to the princess who alone occupies the register of the painting that is the lower and most proximate to the viewer. She commands not only our gaze but the subservience of the attendants behind her, whose body languages speaks of their hastening to do her bidding in answer to her peremptory gesture. It would take an assumed and transhistorical understanding of nudity and uncovered loose hair—women's, divine, or demonic—as inherently shameful to insist that the artists set out to demean the royal figure in this Parthian-Roman era depiction from Syro-Mesopotamia. In fact, scholars suggest a variety of understandings of this figure raising the infant Moses.[141]

Returning to Lilith, and to verbal and iconographic depictions of her loose hair and nude body on the bowls at large: we need not succumb to the false lure that these are necessarily—or at least unequivocally—expressions of "humiliation and degradation."[142] The bowls themselves point to a Jewish culture that was not disconnected from that of the Talmudic rabbis, and that was also linked in complex ways with Christian, Persian-Zoroastrian, and other communities.[143] It is thus no surprise to find, even in the relatively spare drawings on the magic bowls, resonances with a multiplicity of elite, subelite, and nonelite iconographic motifs and styles, including partial or whole nudity and variously coifed hairstyles.

Let us take a particularly vivid bowl image (see fig. 13) on the interior of an incantation bowl. Drawing on biblical and rabbinic associations of women's hair and women's sexual licentiousness, Rebecca Lesses considers the depictions of nudity, hair, and genitalia to "point to the sexual meaning of the demonesses' nakedness."[144] Gideon Bohak interprets the drawing in the context of a larger argument about how demons excited both sexual attraction and fear in late antiquity. For him, "the iconographic imaginaire" manifests the appeal and repulsion of demons for human men. This attraction/repulsion dynamic consists "especially of female demons seducing *innocent* men."[145] Bohak considers that an ancient viewer would see the nakedness and "disheveled" hair as "extreme humiliation" for the demon thus portrayed. Of this image, he avers that: "Looking at such an image, a modern viewer is immediately reminded of *Playboy* magazine, or of Gustave Courbet's notorious picture, *L'Origine du monde*."[146] The apparently instant association of our bowl's image with the portrayal of women in a publication aimed at men and most well-known for its centerfold nudes is, at least to my eyes, far from self-evident. Such a ready association says far more about particular twentieth-century Europeanized ideas of gender, bodily exposure, and cisheterosexuality. So, too, is linking an ancient image to a nineteenth-century realist painting of vulva amid a prone and (compositionally) cropped body. The notion that nineteenth- and twentieth-century construals of gender, power, and pleasure— from a "male" gaze—can be projected back to late ancient Mesopotamia is unsustainable. Bohak's bold attention to the affective relationships between demons and their humans companions materialized through iconography is commendable. Let us consider the drawing itself from a somewhat different point of view.[147]

The style does not deploy the conventions of naturalism.[148] Across the Sasanian and Roman empires a variety of heterogenous visual idioms and conventions flourished, from the mimetically inflected conceit of naturalism to more schematic stylizations like that of the incantation bowls.[149] Our demon faces us in a frontal pose. The countenance is a semicircular oval, with eyebrows and nose joined by a single line, large emphatic eyes with prominent irises, and lips rendered relatively schematically with two short lines. On the head's flat top rests an elaborate coiffure: aside from a middle part are two plaited, knotted coils of hair that extend to just above the ear (or its position). From the topknots, on each side, stream several straight strands (possibly ribbons), with braided (or perhaps bejeweled) topmost tresses. This extended, longer hair curves along and frames the face, shoulders, and upper arms. We can recognize this sort of hairstyling on multiple

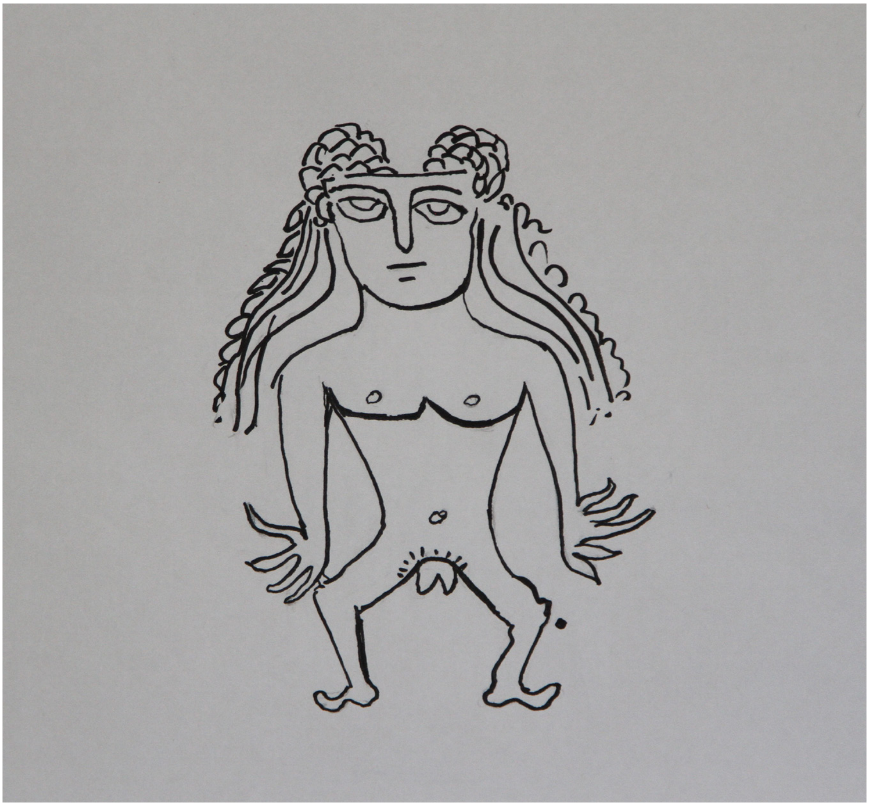


FIGURE 13. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Lilith*. Rendering of image in the interior of "Incantation Bowl Representing the Demon Lilith," Musée des Explorations du Monde, Cannes.

genders (men, women, "eunuchs," divinities) from Sasanian coinage, seals, and silverwork.[150] Wide, squared shoulders top a torso that narrows to the hips. An uneven line extends all the way from one edge of the chest to the other, dipping upward in the center. Extending from the left of the torso, this line forms a square base, as if following the pectoral muscle. On the right, the line forms a gentle curve, as if outlining the base of the breast tissue. Atop this are two small circles, indicating nipples; below, the navel is outlined. The demon stands in a powerful frontal pose, long arms by their sides, hands open with flared elongated fingers.[151] Their torso looms large, joining their smaller hips and their shorter, solidly planted legs that turn outward and bend in a slight squat. The feet are bare, with high arches. Between the legs are prominent, protuberant genitalia (vulva or perhaps testicles or a double phallus); above is a semicircular row of small lines depicting pubic hair (not vagina dentata, as Bohak suggests).[152] From a perspective that does not assume cisness as transhistorical and normative, this being's sexgender is altogether outside constructed binaries. Neither is their "gender" unambiguously assignable to a simple reduction of their "sex." The particular image we are discussing, as a depiction of a naked being who possesses gender nonbinarity, may have also projected defiance and strength rather than a chastened and sexually humiliated femininity. One could argue that it is this very quality that is transgressive, and if so, it is curious that the image does not represent the demon as having been overcome (other bowls do seem to).[153] While this image does not stand for all demons or illustrations thereof, the genders of demon images, as scholars have recognized for some time in varying ways, generally express more multiplicity than has been acknowledged until recently.[154]

Na'ama Vilozny, in her book on the art of incantation bowls, analyzes the figures' anatomical and iconographic components.[155] She mounts a meticulous argument, demonstrating the deliberately "blurred," "confused," "dual-," "asexual," or "ambivalent sex" of many of the bowls' images (particularly representations of Lilith).[156] Vilozny's is the first sustained analysis of the images as a corpus in their local Mesopotamian and broader Middle Eastern cultural contexts. She links the sexgender of our demons with earlier ancient and late ancient representations and figures like Lamashtu, Ishtar, and the Gorgon, who were sometimes represented with a beard or other "male" features.

Lilith, for Vilozny, similarly embodies fertility and its structural opposite—death and destruction, as well as the so-called male and female principles. On the one hand, these correspond in a mimetic way to Vilozny's view of gender as a binary matter. This is what then allows her to grasp their "mixture" as meaningful. For example, "a beard can also hint at other, more masculine roles, of the female goddess, including her ability to be a warrior or destroyer."[157] On the other hand, this "mixture" is "no contradiction," following good old-fashioned structuralist principles of the "union" of opposites. It is thus that "sexual ambivalence" mirrors the structural binaries associated with fertility, life/death, healing/destruction, and, of course, male/female.[158]

Vilozny begins with an a priori assumption of sexgender binarity and ends with it, suggesting that the figures' "lack" (where things are unclear) or "dual sex" of the figure was deliberate (which is correct), so that the demons can be understood to "seduce people of both sexes."[159] This allows Lilith to take on a "male likeness and seduce women and a female likeness and seduce men." While Vilozny is absolutely right in taking Aramaic bowl iconography as deliberate and intentional, she errs in her insistence on reading it in ways that preserve sexgender dualism and concomitant heterosexuality at all costs. In doing so, she blatantly ignores the explicit and more subtle evidence of Lilith's erotic associations with women (whether as clients or members of the sponsoring client's family) in the incantations.

Vilozny's achievement is worth dwelling on, both in itself and for how it ultimately supports a nonbinary understanding of Lilith as manifested both in the incantation texts and the images in the bowls. Her argument bases itself on an implied but never stated transhistorical sexgender binary which is taken to normatively correspond with visually legible "sex" (whether genitalia, body shape, hair, or clothing). Yet it is precisely through Vilozny's scrupulous and painstaking analysis of drawing after drawing, undertaken on the basis of these very coordinates, that the argument founders: none of these indicia turn out to be stable.[160] The principles by which Vilozny measures exceptions, make for an accumulation of exceptions that she acknowledges outrun the rules by far. This ought to prompt a radical questioning of the way the principles are instituted in the first place. Rather, and despite the evidence that Vilozny mounts to the contrary, she turns to essentialist notions of gender—even returning to the long debunked "Great Mother" fertility goddess myth.[161] And the cisnormativity of the sex binarity serves, not coincidentally, to uphold heterosexuality.

Vilozny's "confusion" is expressed in the way that she describes the gender "confusion" (or complexity) of the images as deliberate, while still maintaining that many of them are "female." Despite this, Vilozny insists that genitalia, long hair, and chest—features that she herself had destabilized as reliable gender markers in this corpus—establish this, theoretically via the figure of the Great Mother. The dual-sexed nature of the Lilith drawings also allows the heterosexuality of erotics to be maintained.[162] The hesitation to accept the evidence that she has herself amassed is understandable. The epistemic pressures and constraints of a cisheteronormative gaze dominate the fields of Jewish studies, ancient history, and art history. This is happily beginning to shift. These bowls as artifacts provide us with a remarkable opportunity to explore the "rich and rapidly proliferating ecologies of embodied difference."[163] This evidence also offers us a chance to interrogate other binaries that scholars still use to evaluate the images and their makers. These include realism versus abstraction, skill versus crudeness, and creativity versus influence, as well as the boundaries of communities and "religions."[164]

SOURED ASSOCIATIONS

Some of the relationships between Lilith and the women with whom Lilith "associates" are made more explicit in the incantations. Several bowls enjoin Lilith to "not lie with" the client, and sometimes also their spouse and/or children.[165] The named client is just as often as not a woman. In this vein, two bowls, both addressed to Aphrodite, describe how she enslaves all women who are "shown to her" at night. One of the incantations on the bowls demands

> that you should not come near [her], nor be visible in the form of daughters of Eve during her sleep at any place, whether by day or by night, to this Bahroi daughter of Sisai or to this Mahkird, her husband, son of Denak, and that you should not come near them, or touch them, or cause injury to their sons and daughters, those that they have and those that they will have from this day and forever, Hallelujah.[166]

At night, Bahroi, the primary focus of this incantation, is “shown to” Aphrodite and vice versa. Bahroi, like all Aphrodite’s women, is enslaved to her: Aphrodite comes (*tavoiy*) to her at night during her sleep in the form of a fellow human woman—”in the image of daughters of Eve”—and we infer she comes to “draw near . . . [to] touch,” which can cause injury. Shaul Shaked suggests:

> That Aphrodite . . . represents female profligacy. She is thus one of the female figures that make themselves visible to people in sleep in female form, probably in a sexually arousing context for men, and in a menacing, corrupting, context for women. The immediate danger is to the children, born or unborn, who may be harmed by their mothers’ misbehaviour being shown to her “by authority at night.”

Here Shaked attempts to disavow the homoerotic enslavement that the incantation expresses. Assuming heterosexual circuits of gendered desire makes it hard to contemplate what it means for Bahroi—the one who is in fact named in this encounter—to fall under the spell of Aphrodite who appears in “female form.” The incantation actually describes a form of reciprocal visual encounter that is at the heart of ritual viewing: each protagonist appears to and sees the other.[167] This is Aphrodite after all: the erotic nature of their encounter is hard to deny, but then this supposedly “represents female prolificacy” writ large. The danger to women (“mother’s misbehavior”) is in the realm of generation, but the eroticism is between the demon and the husband. More recently Shaked has revised this approach as follows:

> In this text the overriding concern is not the fate of the children, but an apprehension (felt presumably by the husband) with regard to the sexual attachment of a woman to her husband: the menacing demonic power appears to cause women to divert their sexual craving away from the rightful owner of their affection and their obedience.[168]

More on the mark, this observation still centers the Mahkird, despite the prominence of Bahroi in the incantation. Shaked characterizes the incantation’s enslavement language as a distortion of what he takes to be the real ownership of husband over wife’s affections. Bernadette Brooten has shown, however, in what ways language of domination, including of enslavement and bondage, is a feature not only of ancient heteroerotic love spells but also of homoerotic love spells between women.[169] Shaked acknowledges this but from a perspective, again, that takes for granted the stigmatization of the erotic bond between Bahroi and Aphrodite:

> it is likely that the full story of how the demon causes this diversion of sexual interest from the husband to a female demon—in fact, to herself—was told, perhaps in a hushed voice, intimately and outside the written records of the bowls.[170]

Despite its plain expression in the incantation, this comment relegates Bahroi and Aphrodite’s sexual involvement to a space beyond the historical record. This recalls Brooten’s description of how a scholar publishing a homoerotic love spell between women emended the tablets to “correct” one of the women to a man. As she puts it:

> no other female-female love spells were known, so perhaps it did not even cross Boll’s mind that women would commission love spells to attract women. Further, in

> 1910—as now—relationships between women and men occupied a more prominent place in people's minds that relationships between women, and many people would have preferred not to think about sexual love between women at all.[171]

While Shaked does admit the homoerotic dimensions of this incantation, his shunting of the plainly visible to a realm outside of history is a manifestation of a wider trend. In Brooten's words, this "teaches us something . . . about ourselves as scholars." Our "failure to consider the possibility that this spell could be homoerotic . . . exemplifies why we lack knowledge of the history of women . . . Our ignorance does not stem from a lack of sources, but rather from our ignoring and misinterpreting the available sources."[172] While my project is not working in quite the same recovery vein as Brooten, her words contain import for the writing of any nonnormative gender histories.

Another incantation in which the Aphrodite demon enslaves specifically women (*shefahot*) with no mention of men, but whose primary client is the man in a household, involves her appearing to the married couple "in the form of Adam and Eve" (*bidmut adam ve-hava*). The incantation names congeries of demons, who have taken up residence "within the house" of the husband and "the threshold of the house" of his wife. This longer incantation deploys divorce formulae and invokes Rabbi Joshua son of Perahia, clarifying that this bond has the shape of a marriage whose dissolution is effected by formal ritual means.[173]

In several bowls demonic nighttime visitations allude to sexual liaisons in other ways. One incantation invokes the aid of "Rafael Mital," "evil spirit smiter," on behalf of the client Mihranahid daughter of Ahat, who is troubled by a "spirit (*ruha*) that lies (*deshakhva*) in the body, the head, the temple, the ear, and the nostril, and in all the members (*hadamey*) of the body of Mihranahid daughter of Aḥat."[174] This is Shaked and others' translation. However, one could translate *hadamey* as sexual organs, so that the detailing of the demon's "lying in" every part of Mihranahid's body includes a more pointed sexual reference. Rabbi Hanina is invoked against the demon in question, Agag. And she is enjoined "not to come and become to her (the client) . . . not as a companion in the night and not as a companion in the day in the body . . ."[175] Then follows a repetition of the various body parts ending with Mihranahid's members or genitals. The terms for coming (*a.z.l*) and becoming (*h.v.y*) can both have sexual connotations (as in "do not enter into or have intercourse with Mihranahid"), which are reinforced when juxtaposed with the request to not be Mihranahid's "companion (*tsavta*)."[176] All the more so, when, toward the close of this lengthy incantation, the supplicant requests the removal of the "evil spirit . . . that services her (*sh.m.sh*)," where the term *sh.m.sh* can just as well mean "has intercourse with her."[177]

Other bowls combine divorcing Lilith with references to sexuality and more explicit generative distress. Dukhtoy daughter of Hormizdukh asks for her children and her own body to continue to endure and that "no demon (*maziq*) in the world shall touch her."[178] In particular, a Lilith "dwells on her house's threshold" and "appears to boys and girls." After a violent threat, divorce language appears, along with references to Dukhtoy and "the children that she has and that she will have." This appears again at the very end of the incantation. Lilith is bidden to "take your deed of divorce" and, while words are missing, we can infer that she is told "[I have written to you just as demons write deeds of divorce to] their wives and they do not come back again to them." Dukhtoy dispatches Lilith as a demon husband may dispatch his wife: Assuming the unilateral power of a man in a heterosexual marriage (demonic and human), she dismisses Lilith from "*her* house and dwelling" (my emphasis). Toward the end, the demon is enjoined not to appear to her, approach her, or harm her present or future children, and her husband's name is mentioned. A drawing of a demon appears (largely faded) in the bowl's center.

Certain elements in this bowl echo across others. Firstly, Lilith is taken to be causing generative harm to a woman. Implicit in her names "grabber and snatcher," this is one way of naming the problems that some incantations come to solve. Other bowls make Lilith's threat even more graphic: she feasts on babies' blood and women's milk, or she kills her own and her companions' babies.[179] Many ban Lilith not just from the threshold, house, and dwelling, but from entering the client(s)' bedchamber (*bet mishqeveihon*) or "entrance," (*p.t.h.*) and against appearing to her (or them) at night. We find a recurrence of attention to the architecture of the home (*beitah*) and dwelling (*dirtah*), and entrances, which, as Cynthia Baker and Charlotte Fonrobert have shown, were used by the rabbis to construe and constrain women's bodies. The word *petah* has the double connotation of both opening (as in doorway) and the vaginal canal or introitus.[180] The incantations will often switch back and forth from persons to places. The demon is thus bidden to depart from "the opening (*p.t.h.*) of, the dwelling of, Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh, and from her house, from her grandchild, from her child, from her opening (*p.t.h*), and from her family."[181]

Scholars have been quick to infer Lilith's sexual liaisons with men, doubtless from these mentions of bedchambers and nighttime visitations. They have also to a lesser and sometimes ambivalent degree considered these unsubtle allusions to also pertain to her women lovers.[182] Let us take one such incantation that details something of the mechanics of demonic coercion:

> I adjure you, all species (*minei*) of Lilith[s], by [the na]me of your [s]eed (*zaritkhin*), which [de]mons beget (*deyaldin*) . . . By the wind they [fly] and spread about in an impure place (*be-atar mesa'av*) [---]. And they whip and wound and inflame. And they press and muzzle (or restrain) with kinds of bridles and in your place they [---] and they [---] they go around to strike and [th]ey resem[ble] hu[man] beings, to men [in the l]ikeness of women and to women in the likeness of men, and with human beings they lie (*sh.kh.v*) [by] night and they resemble (them) by day. I [be]swear you b[y] the [name] of šʿšgš gšk. I have written against you, evil Lilith, for you have (many) resemblances, and with the wind you fly, and with the weather you change, and you stand at the side [of G]ista daughter of Ifra-Hormiṣ and you appear to her by day, and you resemble her by night. . . .

> I adjure all of you by the name of your god, in order that you should be struck in your pericardiums and not appear to Gista daughter of Ifra-Hormiṣ, neither by night nor by day, and neither as male nor as female, because this amulet shall [b]e for you your deeds of divorce and your (writs of) release, just as demons take deeds of divorce to their wives and they do not come back again unto them. Evil spirits, evil liliths, male and female, you [shall] not come back again [n]or appear to Gista daughter of Ifra-Hormiṣ from this day and forever. [Amen], Amen, Selah, Hallelujah [---][183]

This incantation details the ways in which Lilith(s) torment(s) Gista daughter of Ifra-Hormis in particular and humans in general. It begins with an allusion to the propagation of the demons, who move to attack and sexually "inflame" humans. Recall a similar mechanism by which demons were "heated" by Eve and Adam during their separation in Palestinian midrash. Shaked and others suggest that the "impure place" (which they translate as "unclean place") that the demons occupy, could reference "the idea that demons frequent latrines." Derivatives of the term for impure (*s.’.b*) can denote sexual "defilement" or coercion, and even menstrual impurity. I would therefore suggest that "impure place" may equally refer to human genitalia. The Bavli various refers, particularly to women's genitalia, variously as "that place" (*oto maqom*), "place of dirt" (*maqom hatinofet*), or "place of filth" (*maqom haturpah*).[184] From this location demons cause injury, sexually "inflaming" their human victims, whom they constrain: the language suggests sexual coercion and compulsion.

The demon also appears to humans, taking on human shape. These appearances themselves, as Shaked notes, are a form of sexual contact and excitation.[185] Things seem to get more complex as the demons—who in some incantations are named as male Liliths (or spirits) and female Liliths (or spirits)—are here marked for their changeability (*sh.n.*y) and range of likeness or kinds (*gavney*, *g.v.n*), taking on a different sexgender "likeness" (*demut*), depending on the gender of the "human beings they lie with." It is thus that by shifting between likeness, difference, and both in Gista's case, and also by blending internal and external compulsion, that the demon captures their human target. Despite the illusory heterosexuality of the demon that the incantation depicts, it castigates "evil Lilith" for "resemble[ing]" Gista at night and demands that the demons cease appearing to Gista "neither as male nor as female." Shifting its gendering again, the incantation closes by designating itself as a divorce deed that is the equivalent of the kinds of writs that demons deliver to their wives. This gendering positions Gista with demon-husbands and renders "evil Lilith" and the various other demons Gista's wives. They must comply with this divorce writ, leaving Gista's domain, just as they would in the context of demonic relationships.

In this section of the chapter, I have sought to delineate the ways that Liliths appear in the incantations and to the humans in them, including women. Lilith's appearance and sexgender are, it seems, difficult to pin down, just as in many of the figure drawings that populate the bowls. Similarly, and relatedly, the gendering of the sexual encounters is capacious beyond the strictures of heterosexuality. Fully recognizing this can enable us to not shy away from the implications of human women issuing divorces to demons just as demon husbands do to their wives.

NONHUMAN, NONMONOGAMOUS, NONGENERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Several incantations not only focus on women clients but also reference generation and Lilith's interference with it. There are those that focus on men and reference generation, including their reproductive material.[186] It becomes all too easy to essentialize women and "women's history" around the themes of reproduction and to ascribe universalizing and supposedly easy-to-access feelings about what it must have meant to want to have children or to face the potentially mortal dangers of childbirth in antiquity. Hence, for instance, the overinterpretation of figures with supposedly feminine forms as embodied icons of fertility and women's religion. The combination of themes we have noted in the incantation bowls offer us an opportunity to explore alternate configurations of sexgender, embodiment, and sexuality, even when generation does explicitly arise. A nonbinary approach to sexgender and generation that allows their pluralities to emerge, rather than an essentialized, ahistorical concept of reproduction, allows the "weirdness" of these bowls, their images and texts, to materialize.

Giselle Liza Anatol suggests that ancient-medieval Lilith stories and Afro-Caribbean soucouyant tales express disgust at the woman who refuses her naturalized place as a "maternal, nurturing female presence," while also using this demonized woman to "control women's behavior, especially when it comes to child-bearing and child-rearing."[187] Anatol contrasts such stories with those by contemporary women who "imbue their works with a narrative strain that undermines orthodox models of womanhood and motherhood . . . with characters who refuse to use their bodies as the 'locus of patrilineal preservation' and instead thrive as single mothers, Other-Mothers, or women who privilege their own physical and sexual needs over and above others.'"[188]

Lilith, we find across the incantations, not only sleeps with women and snatches children, but also appears in various "likenesses," as women, as men, as both, and as nonhuman and multiform creatures.[189] Lilith is blamed for a variety of failed generative outcomes.[190] The Bavli expresses this concern, including even the possibility that her likeness might transfer to a fetus:

> She who expels a likeness of Lilith (*demut lilit*), its mother has childbirth impurity; it is offspring (*valad*), but it has wings. It was also taught: there was a case of a woman from Simoni who expelled the likeness of a Lilith and the case came before the sages and they said, it is offspring except it has wings.[191]

This pseudo-Tannaitic case is clearly a variation on the earlier Tosefta's woman from Sidon who "expelled a likeness of a raven" the residues of which are embodied in their wings.

Lilith here is a winged creature—yet seemingly human-appearing in other respects (the Bavli does consider the fetus offspring). As we saw, the rabbis knew that demon-human coupling of one sort or another could yield offspring. Perhaps the prospect of generation without husbands was even more threatening than the danger to fully human offspring. But what if the incantations' (and the Bavli's) concern about offspring is sending us on a false path the way that figurines from ancient Judah with significant chest size trigger supposedly obvious associations with women and fertility? What would it mean to read these bowls, especially those commissioned by women both with and against their spiraling script and vivid visual grain? Perhaps Lilith is someone who is akin to Donna Haraway's cyborg figure:

> I would suggest that cyborgs have more to do with regeneration and are suspicious of the reproductive matrix and of most birthing . . . We require regeneration, not rebirth, and the possibilities for our reconstitution include the utopian dream of the hope for a monstrous world without gender.[192]

Lilith seems to embody this "monstrous world without gender." Such a world can admit nonprocreative intimacies and associations that altogether disrupt the propagative harmonies of the marital heterosexual wife and husband pairing. Perhaps the lack of celebration and the demonization at play in the bowls express something about those who refuse their naturalized roles? Reckoning with the marriages that these divorces end, and allowing that they occurred between demons and women and not just men, certainly does not quite map onto the pronatalism and sanctioned polygyny in Babylonian rabbinic kinship relations.[193] Nor does it map onto the basic tenet of divorce according to which only men, in rabbinic ritual, may initiate it (although even within rabbinic sources we see that focusing on this act alone misses the relational contexts in which divorces may have occurred at the insistence of wives).[194] Other cases exist of women initiating divorce and we do not know enough about the institutional or communal cultures of Jews who were not rabbis. But we do have these bowls. While they reveal a host of shared cultural and ritual themes and mechanisms—including the divorce mechanism itself—we cannot assume that this tells us anything about the direction or flow of knowledge among rabbis, scribes, and artists (who wrote and drew on the bowls), and their Jewish and other clientele.[195]

For those Mesopotamian Jewish (and Christian and Zoroastrian) women who were unable to divorce, whether through reasons of custom and/or lack of resources, this lends a further poignancy to these artifacts.[196] Their ability to shake things up domestically may have been limited for some women, but we can only speculate about how divorcing Lilith may have effected a shift in dynamics between human spouses. There are a few potential problems with this suggestion about the motivations for some of these divorces of Lilith by women. First, men, women without men, and couples deploy them too. However, we need not espouse a unified explanation across the divorce corpus. Second, we need to be careful about assuming a total passivity and lack of agency by women in their domestic-human relationships. Third, my suggestion runs the danger of making the human-demon divorces metaphoric or symbolic devices whose sole purpose is to stand in for relations between the human couples. Again, here I don't think that we need to succumb to a false choice between human-demon divorce being just about those parties versus the ways it can stand for additional tensions. Finally, perhaps this suggestion is less sensitive to the erotic dimensions between women and the demons that we have named.

The Aphrodite bowls that describe the demon's enslavement of women may provide us with some clues, to the extent that we can extrapolate from them something regarding the dynamics of demon-human erotic bonds. The rhetoric of bondage, of enslavement, and of lovesickness in love spells, as well as physicalized accounts of lovesickness in other contexts, give us a picture of the terrain of nonconsensual erotic ties in late antiquity.[197] In suggesting that the Aramaic incantations express erotic and even ritual bonds—marriages—between Lilith and women, we have to acknowledge that, at least in theory, at the time of these bowls' commission, such relationships were unwanted and were depicted as having always been unwanted. That they may also testify to the desires of women for Lilith—whether in her form as Aphrodite or otherwise—including in their beds at night, is also the case.

The corpus of bowls published thus far testifies to repeat clients who had multiple bowls made.[198] Here we might consider the relative affordability of such devices and their domestic usage inside homes. This allows the possibility that in some contexts, while the situations described and the language expressed are pointed and dramatic, they are nonetheless prophylactic in the sense that they describe genuine conditions related to sex, among other things, but also are ways to live *with them*, and to materially (literally) domesticate them. Consider that the incantation, likely with attendant ritual burying in the home, seeks to drive Lilith and attendant demons away. Yet it materializes the bond between the client and the demon, and by being deposited in the house ensures that Lilith and company stay on in some capacity. Finally, if demons were as effective as the incantations claim, we might do well to remind ourselves that the bowls only reveal those relationships that soured. And we only hear the human side of the story.

• • •

Bavli Bava Metsia 84a and the incantation bowls are companions, cultural products of the Jewish communities of Persian Babylonia. While the presence of their immediate generators—rabbis and incantation scribes and their clients—is perhaps most obviously evident, the creative contributions of other participants can also be discerned. Let us begin with the account of the Jewish women as they rise to the surface and behold the sage sitting at the entrance, resulting in their conceiving children who are beautiful like Yoḥanan. While this bears traces of Palestinian conception concepts, we pointed to Zoroastrian notions of mythic conception in which water conveyed male seed to bathing virgin women. What is missing there, however, is the particular combination of a visual trigger and water-seed conception in the Palestinian midrash. It is not impossible that the Babylonian rabbinic storytellers consciously combine these elements to furnish their tale. The search for origins and influences, however, can often unwittingly cause us to narrow our ideas of how creative work is generated. We can be tempted to succumb to the false choices of Jewish versus non-Jewish, internal versus external, resistance versus influence. Indeed, in scrutinizing the mechanics of conception in the Bundahišn, scholars have pointed to its own Galenic resonances, which in turn have been discerned in various rabbinic sources pointing to female seed as an active contributor to generation.[199]

The fantasy of the virgin birth, scholars have noted, is not unique to the making of the Zoroastrian savior figure. Much ink has been spilled to account for its origins and spread in ancient sources. It is certainly worth observing that the virgin birth fantasy itself is a very particular way of putting a stop to the endless search for origins. Preserving as it does the supposed sexual "integrity" of the woman concerned, and guaranteeing the paternity of the sperm donor, the myth spawns something of a unidirectional or influence model of generation. It is a patrilineal model in which a person's (often nonconsenting) reception of seminal "influence" or influx, is tendentiously gendered. But simultaneously, virginity might frustrate patriarchal attempts to verify paternity, allowing for parthenogenesis.

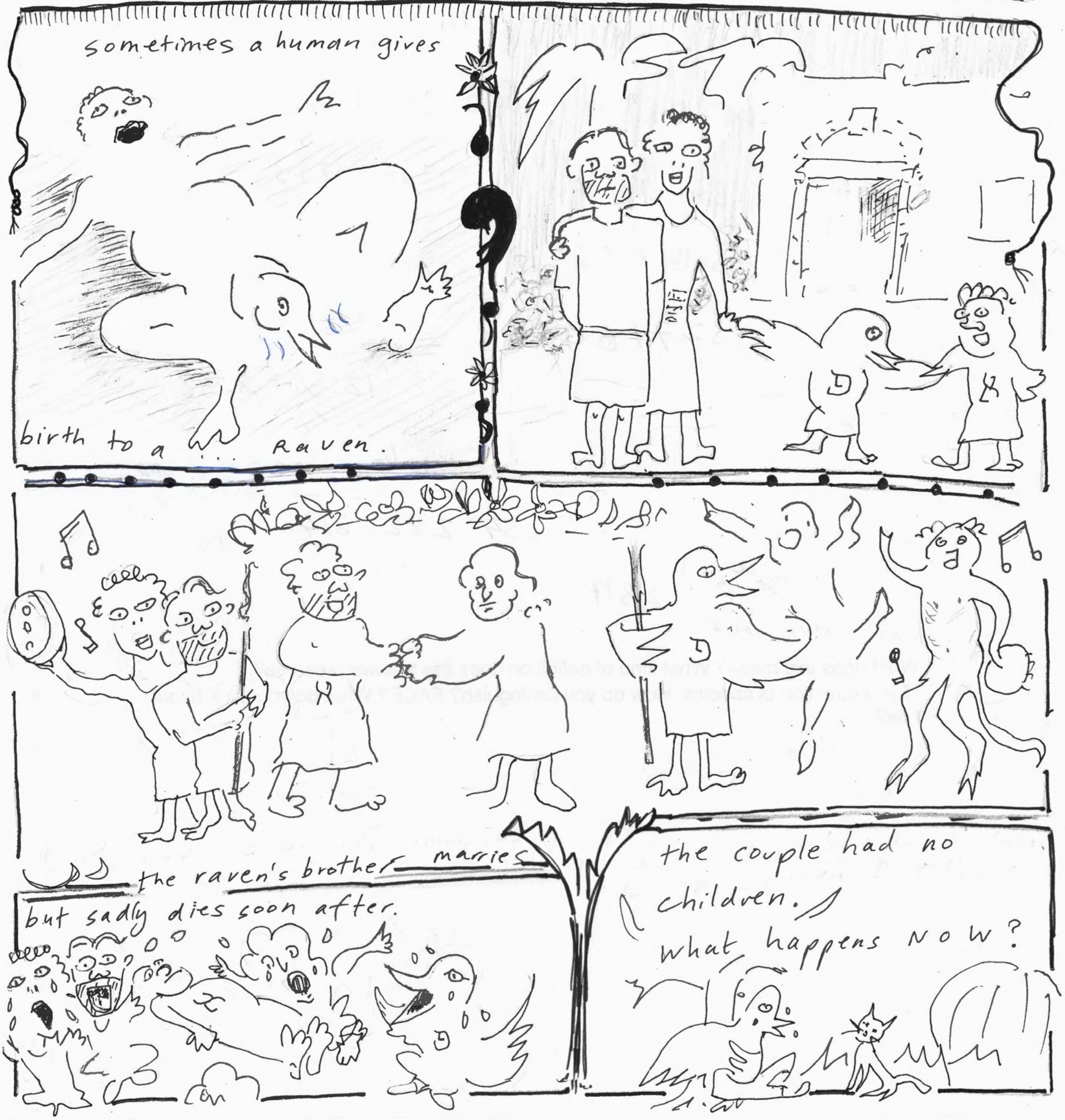
To take this back to the rabbinic storytellers and the story's transmitters and recipients: it is reasonable to suppose their exposure to a variety of Zoroastrian ideas, stories, and rituals and that some of these elements resounded in the tales they crafted and heard. Similarly, the links between demon worship, lack of sexual desire, and infertility with the primal humans, and the story of mythical humans marrying demons and begetting "harmful" offspring in Pahlavi sources, all echo the motifs of demons entering conventional human marriages and interfering with human propagation in the incantation bowls. However, the generative practices we have discussed, of the rabbis' Yoḥanan and Adam, as well as of the Zoroastrian characters, all belong to singular mythic—even transgressive—figures. They are hardly presented as models for human propagation writ large. Precisely what is exciting about the incantation bowls—albeit mediated in formulaic language—is the glimpse they allow into social classes broader than those of the religious scholars responsible for crafting the rabbinic and Zoroastrian legends.[200] It is worth contemplating the appeal that a not exactly cis Rabbi Yoḥanan and their unconventional reproductive methods would have held for a rabbinic audience. How shall we make sense of this next to the roughly contemporary ambivalent attraction that the not exactly cis, nonhuman Lilith assumed for the clients, women and men, who commissioned the incantation bowls?

. . .

Ancient women are manifested through the medium of these incantations and their scribes, enacting ritual divorce writs to eject Lilith from their lives. We can discern that, at some point, some of these women were quite taken with the demon. Yoḥanan, or the storyteller, imagines women captivated by Yoḥanan's brand of beauty. In these scenarios, both figures—Yoḥanan and Lilith—disrupt formalized relationships, "marriages," in which (only) women were supposed to be monogamous and sexually exclusive to their spouse. Both protagonists inaugurate alternate forms and products of generation, while embodying sexgender in ways that defy a cisgender sex binary. They transgress and go beyond: beyond human and beyond man/woman. One haunts ritual baths, beds, and rivers. The other inserts themselves in the bodies, beds, and dwellings of women, as much as men. Both have peculiar relationships with those ritual practices known as magic and both trade in the potent effects of vision, sexuality, and generation combined. I have sought to show what might be gained by opening our parameters of the possible beyond supposedly obvious circuits of sexuality, the "natural," and reproduction as they pertain to humans. If the "standardized" account in rabbinic ideas of human generation is already a menage-a-trois of sorts, these figures step into the opening offered by the more-than-two it takes to generate. These variations mix things up even further, with sex and sexuality beyond cisgender humans and nonhuman kinds. To venture into late ancient generation is to find ourselves not only in a realm of species and sexual strangeness, in which humans and nonhumans cohabit and couple or triple, but also in a world of genuine reproductive uncertainty. Yet for some of us, this combination of weirdness and uncertainty is perhaps not so unfamiliar after all.

"THOSE RABBIS!"

Yerushalmi Niddah 3:2,50c


sometimes a human gives
birth to a raven.
the raven's brother marries
but sadly dies soon after.
the couple had no children.
what happens now?

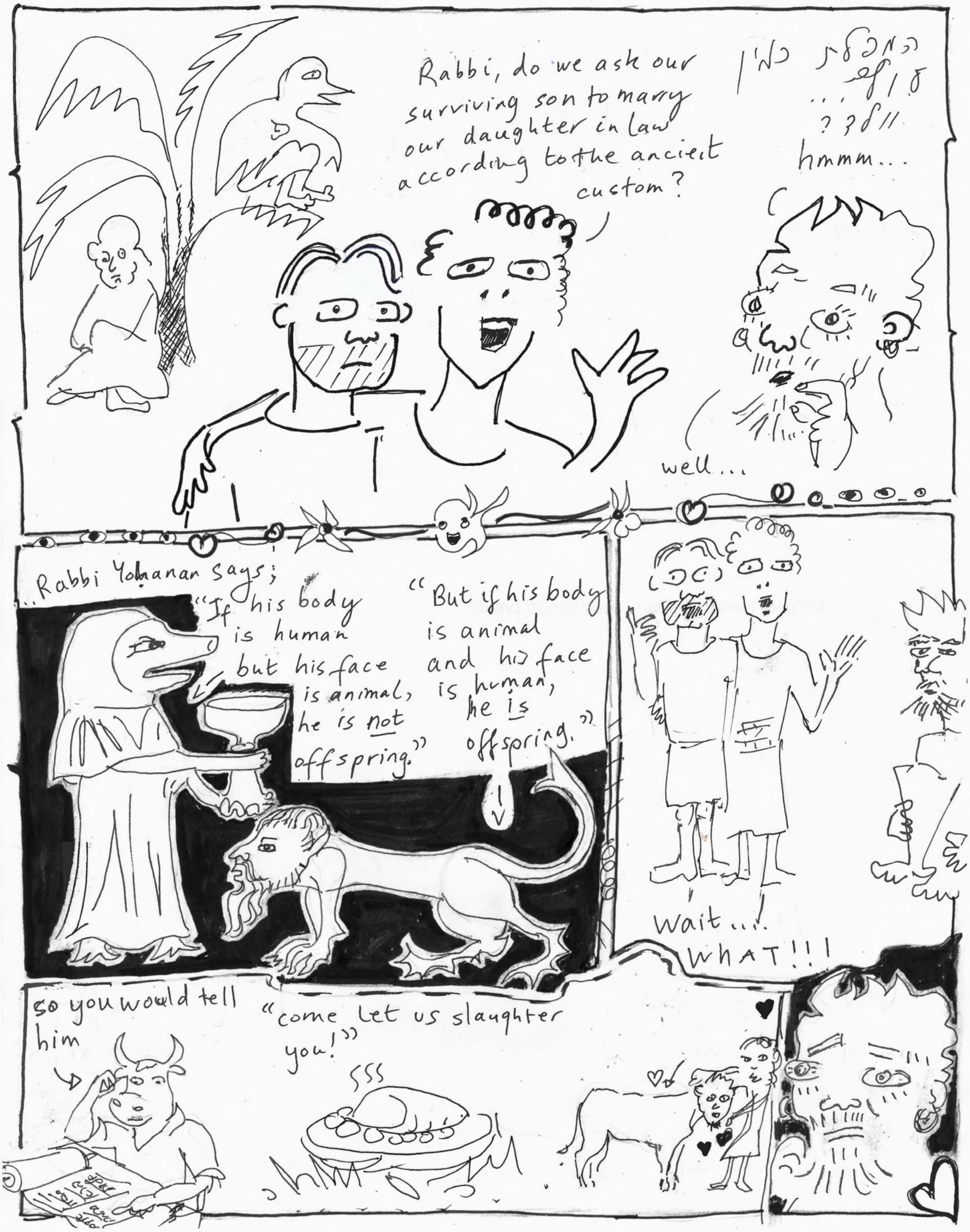

Rabbi, do we ask our surviving son to marry our daughter in law according to the ancient custom?
המפלת כמין
עוף
...
וולד ? ?
hmmm...
well...
Rabbi Yohanan says;
"If his body is human but his face is animal, he is not offspring."
"But if his body is animal and his face is human, he is offspring."
wait...
WHAT!!!
so you would tell him
"come let us slaughter you!"
SSS

FIGURE 14. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Those Rabbis*. Ink on paper, published in *The Huckleberry Notice*, Winter 2022.

Epilogue

There was a case of a woman from Sidon who three times expelled a likeness of a raven.

—tNiddah 4:6

I think by now it's pretty clear
Most animals are somehow queer,
But Gluttons, Grunts, the Wanderoo
Are beasts we haven't time to do,
And though you'd like the Pangolin
There isn't room to put him in.
The Dugong, too, is queer. And then
The queerest things of all are Men!
They'd need two books, or even three
To show how odd they like to be.

—Charles Mortimer, "Tail Piece," *Some Queer Animals and Why*

A panoply of creatures populates late ancient rabbinic literature. There are too many "beings we haven't had time to do," and places and sources we have yet to visit. A perverse premise and effort instigated and sustained this project: to read the rabbis specifically for their "science" (less anachronistically perhaps, '"natural history.") This was partly motivated by my wish to upset the overly simplistic association between "antiquity" and Greece or Rome and to unseat Christianity as the naturalized unmarked "late antiquity" from which everything else deviates. Together these two still dominant—though increasingly challenged—moves in ancient studies serve to foreground an "antiquity" that too easily becomes both foil and progenitor of a European "modernity" and a Euro-American present.

To decenter Greek and Roman sources in conversations about antiquity is also to collaborate in more recent work in decolonizing knowledge making inside and outside the academy. This means not simply "adding" rabbinics to the mix in a liberal project of "inclusion." Rather, I hope that this romp through a sliver of rabbinic sources, alongside various others, can allow us to loosen our grip on what we think of *as* knowledge, *as* science, *as* species, *as* sexgender, *as* "reproduction," and as sources of authority (ancient and present). Opening up these frameworks of *our* own knowledge making and centering resources that do not appear to be as obviously concerned with creaturely life as Pliny's *Natural History*, or as focused on generation as Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*, also attunes us to the ways queer creatures escaped the rabbis' (and, dare we say, Aristotle's and Pliny's?) grasp. And ours. If, as we saw in the Sifre, to know the creatures means grasping or possessing (Sifra Sheratsim 2:1), epistemic justice can entail letting go.

. . .

As I have approached late antiquity through this book, we have spent a lot of time with sources that may seem patently "absurd" or "unrealistic" from "*our*" perspective and that could be dismissed as exercises in scholastic casuistry, legalistic hypotheticals, or thought experiments. Instead, I have suggested that we take these scenarios and debates as constitutive of ancient world making. By demonstrating that the details of these texts make a difference, I have sought to show that they open up a much more complex and surprising world than is usually ascribed to the rabbis.

I have centered sources that at first glance seem marginal to the great histories of science. Their oddness and illegibility as knowledge, given their idiomatic and ritual constraints, do not conform to our expectations about what we have been conditioned to expect of "expertise" about these topics. But rather than anachronistically dismissing or rationalizing their salience, I have lingered in the thick texture of their particularity. By giving these peripheral perspectives their due, I hope I have convinced you that that these people took the life-forms that they encountered in scripture, at home, in the markets, and in the fields of Palestine (and Mesopotamia) seriously, too. Thus, the uterine materials and species variation in Niddah and Bekhorot, the generative multiplicity of the Sifra's species, the unruly menageries of Mishnah and Tosefta Kilayim, the diverse dimensions and specific saliences of the hybrid, and the potentialities of queer and nonbinary generation all defy truisms commonly ascribed to the rabbis. Certainly, the worlds encountered here have very little to do with what has subsequently been appropriated and reified into an invented "Judeo-Christian tradition."

Instead, we listen in on a conversation, inflected by peculiar rabbinic scriptural and ritual idioms, about the multiple and entangled forms of life itself. I have sought to demonstrate that the rabbis themselves took these matters to heart. The texts we have discussed reflect a profound investment in the differences that difference made across kinds, in the humbling yet uncanny reverberations generated by likeness, and in the many mechanisms by which multiplicity came to be. As we have seen, parsing the plenitude of kinds and their ways of coming into being entailed a challenge to human exceptionalism in a number of ways. I have sought to grapple with the visceral, painful, rich, and joyous unpredictability with which life and its emergence were suffused in the late ancient world. That the proliferation of life could occur through mechanisms that were nonlinear, nonreproductive, or nonmimetic was a phenomenon we have sought to register across this book. While there is surely some hubris in ascribing God's constant input in the generation of humans—hubris not unrelated to the scriptural legacy of the image of God—it was also the case that this recognition of more than two partners in human generation was of a piece with the larger fabric of varied generative mechanisms. That it also opened the door for yet more parties, as well as different ones—human and nonhuman, divine and demonic—was yet another reminder of the rich challenges that multiplicity and its adjacent unpredictability entailed.

I suggest that the "trouble" the rabbis and other ancient actors had with the variability of generative outcomes and the multiplicity of kinds was genuine and, at the same time, generated by a multitude of causes and agents. Some of this trouble involved the pressures of what the rabbis construed as biblical claims and legacies, as well as their own efforts to claim specialist knowledge of Torah (broadly construed). These efforts themselves were shaped by the rabbis' and others' varying positionalities, some of which impacted the mix of necessity and arbitrariness of historical processes that bring sources of the past to us. Some of the trouble with and troubling of "species" and "generation" in antiquity related to the material exigencies of living under imperial regimes: whether in the early Roman Empire, or in the generations of its eventual complex intertwining with Christianity, or amid the various communities of Persian Mesopotamia. Perhaps most crucially, to take rabbinic words and worlds in earnest, means to attend to the women, the human and nonhuman parturients, the demons, the diversely bodied fetuses and infants, the people and beings whose species and sexgender embodiments were named and unnamed, the cows, goats, sheep, mules, chickens, and ravens whose lives are registered in these sources. They mattered.

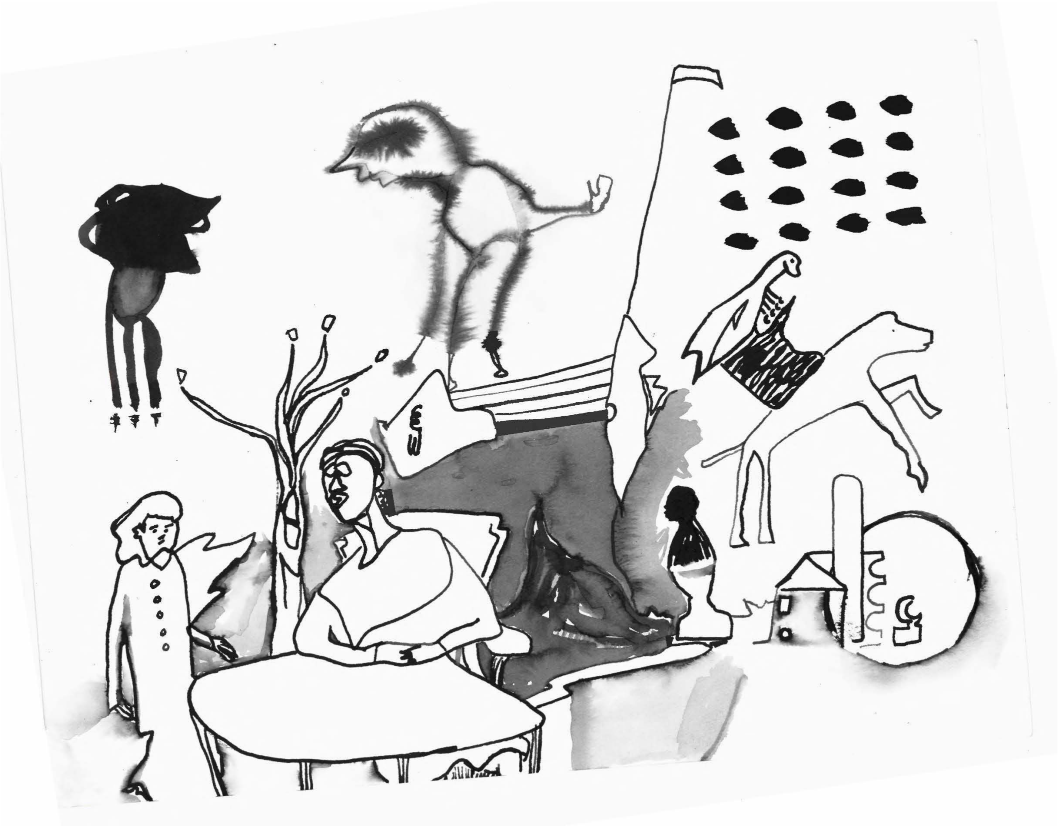


FIGURE 15. Rafael Rachel Neis, *Perseverations*. Pen and ink on paper, 9.5 in. × 12.5 in., 2010.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. On "nature" and science, see the still excellent essays in Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 164–69 and 215–18. See also Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass;* Tsing, *Mushroom*; Subramaniam et al., "Feminism, Postcolonialism, Technoscience." On natural knowledge or natural philosophy versus the modern understandings of science, see Lehoux "Natural Laws"; Lehoux, *What Did the Romans Know?*, 8–13 and 133–34; Lehoux, "Natural Knowledge"; French, *Ancient Natural History*.

2. As in Butler, *Survivor*, e.g. 28, 32–34, 59; Haraway, *Primate Visions*, 378–80; Haraway, *Simians*, *Cyborgs, and Women* 226–28.

3. One might argue that dualized binaries are inevitably structured around the poles of likeness/difference.

4. Genesis ostensibly writes difference into likeness with the human image made "male and female." This has often been read to designate binary sexgender rather than multiplicity within the same.

5. On the use of polygenetic (preadamite theories of race) as justifications of slavery and white supremacy, see Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors*.

6. Haraway, *Simians*, 81.

7. See Linnaeus, *A General System of Nature*, trans. William Turton, 9–10; Salih, "Racism, Speciesism, and the Androphilic Ape."

8. Haraway, *Simians*, 82.

9. Myra Hird, "Animal Transex," 35 and 42; but cf. also the animal rights activist (and ableist) Peter Singer.

10. See Silk, "Judeo-Christian Tradition"; Moore, "Jewish GIs"; and Gaston, *Imagining Judeo-Christian America*.

11. In fact, the account I will offer here is one of a strain of thought within rabbinic sources, not one that I claim to be totalizing by any means. In this regard, I dispute the way that Yair Lorberbaum, basing himself on the slender evidence of imago dei passages in Tannaitic literature, claims it as the foundation for the entire rabbinic project, though I heartily agree with his literal-corporeal readings. See Lorberbaum, *In God's Image*.

12. On "normate" as a shorthand term by disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson in *Extraordinary Bodies*, 8, see the following: "the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries. The term normate usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings. Normate, then, is the constructed identity of those who, by way of the bodily configurations and cultural capital they assume, can step into a position of authority and wield the power it grants them."

13. Even Linnaeus understood that membership in a species was a matter of convention, with his criteria serving as "diagnostics" (rather than being essential). See Wilkins, "Biological Essentialism," esp. p. 222.

14. Seeholzer et al., "A New Species of Barbet."

15. They used the so-called "phylogenetic species concept," citing Cracraft, "Species Concepts." Note that the use of "collected specimens" (i.e., nonliving bird samples) is standard in such research and descriptions. On the tensions between specimen collection and conservation see Peterson, "Type Specimens."

16. The International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species did include the Sira barbet (Birdlife International, 2020).

17. Waterton et al., *Barcoding Nature*.

18. Zachos, "Species Delimitation"; Kunz, *Do Species Exist*; Wilkins, *Species*.

19. Haraway, *Simians;* Latour, Woolgar, and Salk, *Laboratory Life;* Harding, *The Science Question*.

20. Seneca, *Epistles* 58.9–10, trans. Gummere, 392–93.

21. Farina, "Vegetal continuity."

22. Haraway, *When Species Meet*, 4.

23. Lettow, "Generation, Genealogy, and Time"; Hopwood, Flemming, and Kassell, "Introduction," esp. 380, 384. For further bibliographic examples, see Neis, "Fetus, Flesh, Food."

24. Aristotle, who toggles between the human and the nonhuman in *Generation of Animals*, slips into defaulting the human when discussing variation. In other words, he discusses variation as moving from resemblance to the female parent all the way to a random generic human, and finally to the "mere animal," as in *Gen. an.* 4.3, 767b—769b—i.e., the nonhuman—rendering his model for resemblance/variation a humancentric one. Variation within and among animal kinds is not treated to a similarly graded model, and it is not clear what the most generic "mere animal" would be for such cases. In a sense, animality becomes the generically animate and is marked by its nonhumanness, and nothing more, thus rendering a nonhumancentric/species-specific view of variation impossible.

25. Hopwood et al., *Reproduction*, 4.

26. Ibid.; Totelin, "Animal and Plant Generation," 53.

27. Chin, "Cosmos"; Lehoux, *What Did the Romans Know*, 121–22, 130, 133. As Lehoux notes, likeness, in the form of the "common ancient causal trope, which can essentially be

summarized as "like affects like,"" also did a lot of work in serving as an *explanation* for causes across various phenomena (122). See also Lehoux, "Why Doesn't My Baby Look Like Me?"

28. Sometimes at the expense of the female parent: see Kessler, *Conceiving Israel*, 14–16, 78, 82, 104. On destabilizing the naturalization and humancentricity of kinship, see Riggs and Peel, *Critical Kinship Studies*; Tallbear, "Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sexualities"; Tallbear, "Caretaking Relations."

29. Jackson, *Becoming Human*; Chen, *Animacies*; see also Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*; Weheliye, *Habeus Viscus*.

30. It is in this way that I recuperate "species" as a more variable and multiply attuned lens than "animality." Scholars use the term "animality" or "being animal" to refer to the ways that a certain way or certain ways of being are used to not only mark the "animal" but also to mark certain beings as such in contradiction to humanness/human. Animality can envelop humans along, as we've intimated, raced, gendered, and dis/abled lines, in opposition to certain idealized ways of being and doing humanness (for instance, Euro-American whiteness). Thus, in critical animal studies, such distinctions are understood to be far from neutral, shifting over time and in differing contexts, and ultimately unstable and unsustainable for all.

31. TallBear, "Why Interspecies Thinking Needs Indigenous Standpoints"; Kimmerer, "Restoration and Reciprocity."

32. Haraway, *The Companion Species Manifesto*.

33. Hayward, "Lessons from a Starfish." See also "tranimals," per Kelley ("Menagerie à tranimals"), who writes, "The prefix 'trans-' surrounds the 'animal' with a pluralizing effect. This portmanteau word describes those who traverse species, bodies and other taxonomic categories" (98).

34. Stryker, "Frankenstein"; Stryker, Currah, Moore, "Introduction."

35. Sandahl, "Queering the Crip," 37. In this way, transgender studies are very much aligned with disability studies, or "crip" theory.

36. Stryker et al., "Introduction," 13: we might similarly swap "gender" for "species" here to see how taxonomies align "species" into similarly contingently associated embodiments.

37. Enke, "Transgender History," 225.

38. Hird, "Animal trans"; Gumbs, *Undrowned*. The premise of a biology versus culture distinction between "sex" and "gender" respectively is most often utterly anthropocentric.

39. Lehoux, Creatures *Born of Mud and Slime*, 88. For bees from a cow's hide, for example, see Virgil, *Georgics* 4.281–314, 4.554–58. Other animals that were thought to conceive without sexual intercourse are partridges (Pliny, *Natural History* 10.51.102) and mice (Ael., *NA* 6.41).

40. See yShabbat 1:3, 3b on cows transforming into bees (par bBava Kamma 16a); Pliny *NH* 10.86.188.

41. See, e.g., bHullin 58a and bBetsah 7a, hens getting pregnant from earth.

42. See Stroumsa, *Another Seed*.

43. See Rothschild, "Embryology, Plant Biology, and Divine Generation in the Fourth Gospel"; Petrey, "Semen Stains"; Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud*, 15–24, 97.

44. See Sifra Qedoshim 1:1, yKila'im 8:4, 31c, and bNiddah 31a.

45. Hird, "Animal Trans," 239.

46. Weismantel, "Moche Sex Pots." See also Hird, "Meeting with the Microcosmos"; Zelinger, "Race and Animal-Breeding."

47. Chin, “Marvelous Things Heard.”

48. *Avot de Rabbi Natan* 18 (Shechter ed., 34a in Kister, *Avot de Rabbi Natan*). MS JTS Rab. 25 has “coins upon coins.” Cf. Sifre Pisqa 48: student sitting and “sifting words of Torah” into “forbidden,” “permitted,” “impure,” “and “pure” compared to a sieve that separates flour, bran, and coarse meal.

49. On the organization and content of the tractates, see Elman, “Order, Sequence, and Selection”; Alexander, “Recent Literary Approaches to the Mishnah.”

50. In truth the dichotomy doesn’t quite work. For instance, the order of seeds entwines ritual and agricultural practices. See Neis, “The Seduction of Law.”

51. Lapin (*Rabbis as* Romans, 222n5) notes that Zuckermandel’s count of 120 excludes names that should be counted.

52. Lapin goes carefully through all these problems in *Rabbis as Romans*. Levine considers Albeck’s estimate too conservative, suggesting that one round up the total number of both Palestinian and Babylonian Amoraim of 761 to a full thousand.

53. As it continues to be. See, e.g., Kravel-Tovi, “Specter of Dwindling Numbers.”

54. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*. See also, more recently, Schwartz, *The Ancient Jews*.

55. See Seo (“Classics for All,” 709), who describes a global classics curriculum that “led us to see the field of Classics as comprising not only the study of Mediterranean culture, but also of the ancient cultures of Asia, India, and Africa.” Examples of how scholars assume that the ostensibly unmarked “ancient history” inevitably refers to Greek, Roman, or Christian-centric accounts are too numerous to mention. A useful illustration are the more recent volumes in the multivolume *The Cambridge Ancient History*, particularly from volume 7 and onward.

56. For example, see Flemming, “Empires of knowledge”; Pollard, “Pliny’s Natural History”; Murphy, “*Natural History*.”

57. For a trenchant critique of “new” materialisms and their failure to acknowledge or engage indigenous theories, see Hokowhitu, “Indigenous Materialisms”; Rosiek, Snyder, and Pratt, “Indigenous Theories”; Todd, “An Indigenous Feminist’s Take.” For indigenous, Black, and women of color scholarship on the situatedness and resistance of marginalized viewpoints (some of which Haraway cites in her “Situated Knowledges”), see Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes” and “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited”; Sandoval, *Methodology*, Anzaldua, *Borderlands*; and Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*. For criticism of Haraway’s treatment and use of the native American coyote, see Wilson, “Ecofeminism and First Nations Peoples.” On avoiding “homogenizing distinct tribal cultures” and romanticizing or animalizing indigenous peoples, see Hudson, “First Beings in American Indian Literatures.” On respectful versus extractive misunderstanding and extractive use of “traditional ecological knowledges,” see Colorado, “Bridging Native and Western Science,” and McGregor, “Coming Full Circle.” On the general failure of critical animal studies to incorporate race into their analyses or to engage “Native and Black Studies,” see Belcourt, “An Indigenous Critique.” On indigenous knowledge and nonhuman beings, see Mere, “Natural World of the Maori”; Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*; LaDuke, *All Our Relations*; Watts, “Indigenous Place-Thought”; Whitt, Roberts, Norman, Grieves, “Belonging to Land.” Bosak-Schroder (*Other Natures*) is an instructive model of working with indigenous cosmovisions, alongside new materialisms, to illuminate ancient Greek ethnographies.

58. Halberstam, *Queer Art of Failure*, 19; see also Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*.

59. Sifre Pisqa 48 (Finkelstein ed., 110).

60. Stryker, "(De)Subjugated Knowledges." I do not undertake the kinds of inspirational writing exemplified by Saaidiya Hartman's "critical fabulation," Haraway's "speculative fabulations," and Subramaniam's "fictional science." (See Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts"; Haraway, "Speculative fabulations"; Subramaniam, *Ghost Stories for* Darwin). Nor do I venture to emulate the science or speculative fiction of those such as Octavia Butler or Ursula Le Guin (e.g., Butler, *Xenogenesis* and *Kindred* and Le Guin, "Author of the Acacia Seeds," "She Unnames Them.") Nonetheless, I am indebted to these distinctive writers who in a variety of modes model what it is to imagine otherwise and beyond the overdetermined hegemony and constraints of the historical "archive," both past and present.

1. DIFFERENCE

1. Others would date it earlier, or later: see Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible*; Faust, "The World of P"; Firmage, "Genesis."

2. See Coogan, "P." Scholars understand the Pentateuch to be composed of several different sources that were stitched together: the Yahwist, the Elohist, the Deuteronomic, and the Priestly traditions. They surmise that Genesis 1:1–2:3 is authored by the Priestly writers, whereas Genesis 2:4–2:25 is a Yahwist source.

3. Olyan, "Exodus 31:12–17."

4. Firmage, "Genesis."

5. The term *adam* (human) in the book of Genesis is almost always used as a term for the human species rather than as a proper noun (Adam; on which, see Sarna et al., *The JPS Torah Commentary*, 353n21). It is grammatically masculine (there was no neuter in biblical Hebrew), but, as with the species named previously, this is a collective noun (and the biblical text goes on to specify gender inclusivity).

6. Butler, *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies that Matter*. This is similar to Haraway's nonbinary natureculture, which refuses a preexisting essentialized material biology that an ideational culture overlays. Instead, Haraway points to their mutual entanglement and co-constitution that unfolds in a process she dubs as "material-semiotic." In the case of sexgender, the notion that there are only two ways to group multiple variables along the lines of a male/female binary is itself a culturally specific construal. Not only are there more than two groupings that could be made, and more than two ways of materially embodying "sex," but also the very notion that this is a significant way to group lifeforms rather than by other embodied markers is culturally determined.

7. It is possible, of course, that this particular blessing, almost always construed as directed to God's most recent creation, the human, is in directed to *all* creatures—humans *and* land animals—created that day.

8. This is an added argument in favor of seeing the entire blessing as directed to all land creatures, human and animal. So too, is the emphasis on a vegetation-based diet. It is only later in Genesis 9:1–7 that the blessing is explicitly (redirected) to only humans, and, along with that human exclusivity, animals are introduced into the human diet. I translate *peru u-revu* variously as "fructify and multiply," "be fruitful and multiply," "proliferate and multiply," etc. to draw out the term's multivalence.

9. See, e.g., Sarna et al., *The JPS Torah Commentary*, 12 and 353.

10. See, e.g., Strømmen, *Biblical Animality*; Sherman, "Hebrew Bible and 'Animal Turn.'"

11. If Seth as Adam's child has the same relationship that Adam has to God, then (as Firmage observes in "Genesis," 101n12.), humans claim kinship with God.

12. Firmage, 109–10.

13. The impurity is forbidden a priori in the sense that it is not accepted as simply a fact of life in the way that ritual impurity after intercourse, seminal emissions, or menstruation is; rather, it is to be avoided. See Meshel, "Food for Thought."

14. Milgrom observes that the "first six days (Genesis 1) have not left many traces in the Bible (e.g., the forbidden animals, Leviticus 11)" (Milgrom, "Hr in Leviticus and Elsewhere in the Torah," 36). See also Milgrom, "Two Priestly Terms." Leviticus adds the water, flying, and earth swarmer (*sherets*); the noun appears in Genesis 1:20 (swarm of living being[s], *sherets nefesh hayah*) and the verb (Genesis 1:20, 21, *yishretsu, shartsu*).

15. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

16. Firmage ("Genesis," 108) suggests that H, being concerned with everyday lives, extrapolated commonly sacrificed domesticated cattle (cows, sheep, goats) as basic elements for human consumption and as the foundation of the classificatory system.

17. Meshel, "Food for Thought." This is because so-called impure animals only actually render a person impure when the animal is dead, not when it is alive. But I agree that the introduction of priestly ritual im/purity extends beyond ritual defilement into a larger classification project and that, moreover, this semantic-conceptual meaning of pure/impure animals to indicate species is preserved by the rabbis.

18. Milgrom (*Leviticus 1–16*, 684–88, 694–98; "Two Biblical Terms") suggests that these verses (44–45 and also 43), paralleling Leviticus 20:24–26, are authored by the Holiness school.

19. Elsewhere the Holiness school links the notion of differentiation and distinction (or "separation") among pure and impure nonhuman animals to Israel's distinction from other peoples by God himself (Lev 20:24–26). See Milgrom and Sperling, "Leviticus, Book of."

20. In Leviticus 11:44–45, we see a corresponding focus: while all humans (*adam*) are in God's image, Israelites should be "holy as God is holy," thus enjoying a particular kinship with the deity. See mAvot 3:14.

21. Milgrom further argues that the animal world's separation into pure/impure mirrors the human whereby Israel is to separate itself from the nations; see Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 120–21.

22. See introduction, 15–15.

23. On *behemah* and *b.h.m.*, see Brown-Driver-Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*; *Koehler, Baumgartner, Stamm, and Richardson, The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*.

24. The rabbis' primary distinctions between wild and domesticated animals, and sometimes also fowl, do not map onto Priestly ones (land-water-heavens trinary). See, e.g., the trinaries in Genesis 1:26–28 and *hayah* and *'of* in Genesis 1:20–21. Sometimes *behemah* is a subcategory of the broader class of *hayot* (e.g., Gen 1:24) or vice versa (e.g., Lev 1:2). See Meshel, "Food for Thought"; Berkowitz, "Animal"; Maori, "Problem of Lexical Inconsistency."

25. Genesis: nominal form *remes* Genesis 1:24, 25, 26; verbal *r.m.s.* Genesis 1:21, 26, 28, 30.

26. Leviticus 11:44: "the forbidden "crawler that swarms (*haromes*) upon the earth"; Lev 11:46: "the living being that slithers (*haromeset*) in the water." Leviticus prefers the term *sherets* or *sh.r.ts.*, which has a similar meaning to swarmer or creeper, rather than *remes*, in

both nominal and verbal form (11:10, 20, 21, 23, 29, 31). Some of these swarming creatures (*sheratsim*), such as the locust, are permitted for consumption (11:21–22), and some are not and are dubbed forbidden *(sheqets)*. Genesis uses the verbal and noun form (*sherets*) once each at 1:20–21.

27. *Sh.q.ts* is used in Leviticus 11:10, 20, 23, 41–42).

28. Milgrom, "Two Biblical Terms."

29. *Sheqatsim u-remasim* appear as a pair in Tannaitic literature (e.g., mShabbat 14:1). The joining of these four entities together in Tannaitic sources occurs only once outside the uterine context (Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael Bahodesh 6, all MSS). The only place this set is considered as potential menstrual material is mNiddah 3:2; tNiddah 4:1–17 omits it; whereas in other parallels (m. Keritot 1:5; mBekhorot 8:1) it is explicitly ruled out as offspring. Sifra Sheratsim par. 11:1 excludes these entities from transmitting childbirth impurity because they "do not have something of human form" (per MS. Vatican and other MSS.). Shemesh (‘*Onashim Ṿa-Ḥaṭaʾim*, 189–92) suggests that *sheqatsim* refer to small forbidden water creatures and that *remasim* refer to small forbidden land creatures but also that their pairing refers to crawling (reptile) and fowl (flying) creatures forbidden for consumption.

30. For example, tTerumot 9:6: "a human may eat fish and locusts whether they are living or dead and need not hesitate."

31. Leviticus 11:22 marks permitted locusts with the tag *lemineihu*, "of its kind." The rabbis often pair fish and locusts (e.g., tTerumot 9:6; mOktsin 3:9; mHullin 8:1; tHullin 8:2; tNedarim 3:5; and mKeritot 5:1) and also often contrast them with other classes of animals (tSotah 6:8).

32. Also Genesis 1:11–25; 6:19–20; 7:14; Leviticus 11:14–29; Deuteronomy 14:13–18. The term *min* is used also for plant life (e.g., Gen 1:11–12). In Tannaitic literature, see mBikkurim 1:3; mBikkurim 3:9; mKilʿayim 2:1.

33. See, e.g., mKilʿayim 8:6: "the wild ox is a domesticated animal kind (*min behemah*). Rabbi Yosi says, a wild animal kind (*min hayah*)."

34. See, e.g., mBava Kamma 4:2: "If an ox was an attested danger to its own kind (*le-mino*) but not to any other kind (*leshe'eino mino*)." For *min* as designating variety within kinds (what we might call subspecies or varieties)—e.g., two kinds of wheat—see mPeah 2:5. The rabbis extend the meaning of *min* to kinds in nonzoological contexts.

35. See Pellegrin et al., *Aristotle's Classification of Animals*, 94–95.

36. I translate *hipilah* as she or one who expelled (lit., she or one who caused to fall or dropped): what we might today call miscarriage or (involuntary) abortion.

37. I translate *valad* as offspring (for this usage with animals see also mBekhorot 2:4). In early rabbinic Hebrew it can refer to what we might call a fetus and a neonate. Offspring entertains this ambiguity. For *valad* as child or offspring, see Genesis 11:30. I use "offspring" as a general word, but when I translate rabbinic texts I mean to use it in a technical sense. Context will clarify when I use it in the latter sense.

38. See Leviticus 11:15: "raven, according to its kind." On Saidan, see Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 68; Rosenfeld, *Torah Centers*, 134–35.

39. On "unlikely" cases, see Alexander, "Casuistic Elements in Mishnaic Law." See references in Neis, "Reproduction," 9 nn39 and 42 and Neis, "Fetus, Flesh, Food," 204n90 for examples of scholarship that assesses rabbinic ideas in terms of modern science. For an exemplary approach see Reed, "Jewish Sciences."

40. Goodey and Rose, *Disability History*, 47–51. This is explicitly the approach in Marianberg, "Female Fertility."

41. Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 8.

42. Taylor, "Beasts of Burden," 192.

43. Taylor, "Beasts," 195.

44. For a rhetorical analysis of medieval Muslim voices in the "slippery business" of construing resemblance owing to the "tenuous nature of paternity" and the need to assert "the centrality of the patriarchal family over rival permutations in medieval Muslim society," see Kueny, "Marking the Body."

45. The miscarriage or fallen entity (*nefel*) that is properly considered offspring may not even necessarily be *dead*. While "*nefel*" can refer to a miscarried fetus—the term can also refer to a being who is born living, but who is not expected to survive and who is thus not considered an "existent being" (*ben qeyama*) until they have survived for thirty days. An example of this is the fetus delivered at eight months (tShabbat 15:7). Thus, mBava Qamma 4:6 talks of an ox that intended to kill "*nefalim*" but instead killed a "*ben qeyama*." See also mBekh 8:1, tBekh 6:1, tShabb 15:7, mNaz 2:8, Sifra Emor 14:3 (Weiss ed., 104d).

46. See tAhilot 16:12–13; Balberg, *Purity*, 113–15.

47. See Haraway, "Awash in Urine," 301. "'Queer' here means not committed to reproduction of kind and having bumptious relations with futurities."

48. By "parallel," I mean text that is verbatim or very similar to that found in the Mishnah. There is a large body of scholarship that addresses the relationship between the Tosefta and Mishnah. See, e.g., Hauptman, "Tosefta as Commentary"; Friedman, "Literary Dependencies."

49. Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 1328 and discussion at 744–45 on the roots *n.d.h.* or *n.d.d.* See Greenberg, "Etymology of Niddah."

50. Zohar and Koren, "Bekhorot."

51. In the form of nonhuman beings (so-called *sandal* in tNiddah 4:7); body parts (tNiddah 4:11 and Sifra Sheratsim 11:1).

52. The word is vocalized as *se'orah* (barley) in MS Kaufmann and MS Parma B (De Rossi Parma 497). Parma (De Rossi 138) does not have vowels and omits the *vav*, and so conceivably spells the word *se'arah* (hair). The expression *ke-se'orah* (like a [grain of] barley) is used to quantify the minimal quantity of bone or limb that could potentially convey corpse impurity (see, e.g., mKeritot 3:8, mOhalot 2:3).

53. Per MS Kaufmann, *yavhushim*. Albeck (Shishah Sidrei Mishnah, mNiddah, ad loc.) describes this as a type of water insect. Even-Shoshan (*Dictionary*, s.v. "*yavhush*") defines it as a species of the mosquito family. Jastrow (*Dictionary*, s.v. "*yavhush*") translates it as gnat or red insect found in liquids. Lieberman does not translate the word; indeed, noting its obscure etymology, he glosses it as "a general term for insects generated in liquids" ("Light on the Cave Scrolls," 396).

54. On signs (*simanim*) and the purity of species, see mHullin 3:7; tHullin 3:25–26. In the Mishnah, the word *simanim* (calque of Greek *semeia*) means distinctive marks or visible means of identification across a range of entities—from objects, to determinations of gendered human adulthood, to species determinations (particularly pure versus impure kinds).

55. Cf. Halivni, "The word *adam*" on cases in which the rabbis read or themselves use *adam* to refer to men (and not women).

56. See mBekhorot 1:2 and 2:5 and tBekhorot 1:9 and 7:6, which use *ke-min* ("*like* the kind") in scenarios where one kind delivers a creature that looks like another kind.

57. For the biblical obligation to sacrifice or "redeem" the firstborn of specific animals that belong to God, see Exodus 13:2, 11–15, 22:28–29, 34:19–20; Numbers 3:12–13, 18:15–18; Leviticus 21:17–23 and 27:26–27; Deuteronomy 15:19–23. Exodus 13:2 links the holiness of both human and animal (male) firstborns: both belong to God. Exodus 13:15 explains this in terms of the slaughter of the Egyptian firstborns (human and animal: the tenth plague). Human firstborns were to be redeemed with payment to priests; and the donkey firstborn was to be redeemed with a lamb. See Levine and Schereschewsky, "Firstborn."

58. See mBekhorot 1:2. See the parallels in tBekhorot 1:6 and 1:9.

59. For animals, see Deuteronomy 15:21 and Leviticus 22:20–25; for priests, see Leviticus 21:17–23.

60. For animals, see mBekhorot 6:8: "eyeball round like that of a human, mouth resembles that of a pig." See also mBekhorot 6:9: "tail of a kid goat that resembles that of a pig." For priests, see mBekhorot 7:4 (tBekhorot 5:3): "eyes large like those of a calf, or small like those of a goose"; soles "as wide as a goose" (mBekhorot 7:6).

61. For more on the distinction between spontaneously occurring species variation and hybrid offspring, and the ways both might entail *similar-looking* multiformity, see chapter 4.

62. The context is about whether deliveries that are miscarriages constitute "births" to make this a firstborn with implications both for inheritance and priestly redemption.

63. The Tannaim will often use the term *ra'uy* for humans and animals that are unblemished. Usually translated as "worthy" or "fitting," the word literally means "viewable." As I have shown, this fixation on seeing/being seen was central to the pilgrimage cult and was based on the notion of a reciprocal vision between the idealized male able-bodied Israelite and God. This extended to all priests who entered the sanctum on a daily basis in accordance with the biblical blemish regulations. See Neis, *Sense of Sight*.

64. In similar cases, in Mishnah Bekhorot, of a sheep who delivers some like a goat kind (*ke-min ʿez*) and of a goat who delivers something like a sheep kind (*ke-min rahel*), there is only a discussion of the firstborn obligation, but nothing about classification per se (mBekhorot 5:2). The latter *mishnah* adds: "and if he has some of the signs (*mi-ketsat simanin*) he is obligated (as firstborn)." This move goes so far as to relax the exclusionary dimensions of excluding nonnormate animal bodies from the cult. Note the similar language to what appears in mNiddah 3:2—namely, "something of human form (*mi-tsurat ha-ʾadam*) that allows combination of species features (multiformity)."

65. Neis, "Reproduction." While I sympathize with the historical impulse to answer these questions, I don't believe there is enough evidence to so with any certainty. I am also wary of "influence"-style arguments.

66. There is little in the biblical tradition, beyond possible references to miscarriage in Exodus 23:26, and Job 3:16 and 21:10. Some speculate that the *nefilim* (fallen ones) in Genesis 6:4 refer to miscarriages (or *nefalim*)—on this linkage, see Stroumsa, *Another Seed*, 22–23, 161–63. and Genesis Rabbah 26:7. On the *nefilim*, see Reed, *Fallen Angels*.

67. Rochberg, "Empiricism in Babylonian Omen Texts," 569. See Leichty, *Omen Series*.

68. Pace Alexander ("Casuistic Elements in Mishnaic Law"), who astutely notes similarities with *Summa izbu*, following Bottéro (*Mesopotamia*, esp. 132), who sees these "so-called scientific texts" as conveying only theoretical knowledge. Rochberg disagrees with the latter in *Before Nature* (140–43) and *The Heavenly Writing* (265–73).

69. Rochberg, "Empiricism in Babylonian Omen Texts," 569.

70. Rochberg, *Before Nature*, 252 and 282; Rochberg, "Empiricism in Babylonian Omen Texts." See also Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway*; Haraway, "Situated Knowledges."

71. See Maul et al. ("Divination") on the shared form (protasis/apidosis) of divination, medical, and law texts.

72. The same cases in mNiddah 3:1–2 also appear in mKeritot 1:5 and mBekhorot 8:1 with implications for sacrificial obligations, firstborn primogeniture, and priestly redemption.

73. Rochberg, *Before Nature*, 112–19.

74. Josephus, *BJ* 6.292–93.

75. Phlegon flourished in Asia Minor in the second century CE.

76. Phlegon, *Mir*. 22–24. Authors such as Philo discuss so-called mythical creatures such as the minotaur in terms of hybrid offspring but does not treat spontaneously occurring species' nonconformity. Galen, similarly, negates the possibility of such hybrids occurring owing to incompatibility—as does Aristotle: see chapter 4 below.

77. See Hdt., 7.57; Ael., *VH* 1.29: "a sign (*sēmeion*) to Nicias" (trans. Wilson, 52–53); Tac., *Hist*. 1.86; Livy, *Ab urbe cond*. 23.31 (cow to a foal), 27.11.5 (elephant's head), and 31.12.6–8 (intersex infant and adolescent, and a lamb with pig's head); Dio Cass. 48.40.3 (mule to part horse and part mule); Plin. *NH* 7.34–35 (elephant, snake, hippo-centaur); Plutarch, *Marcellus* 28.2 (elephant's head); Cicero, *De divinatione* 1.43 (intersex infant) and 1.53 (infant with two heads). See Beagon, *Pliny on the Human Animal;* Doroszewska, "Between the Monstrous and the Divine."

78. For example, tShabbat 7:5; van der Horst, "Two Notes on Hellenistic Lore."

79. See Lehoux, "Why Doesn't My Baby Look like Me?" Scholars consider *Problems* to contain the work of more than one author and to have been redacted in late antiquity. Pseudo-Aristotle (*Pr*. 4.878a1–4) continues: "why, then, if something is like us, is it more our own, but if it is like another, it is not?"

80. See Lehoux, 210; Ps.-Arist., *Pr*. 4.878a20–24. On the notion that excrement or other kinds of bodily material generated insects or worms, see LevRab 19:1 (Margulies ed., 415–16) on *yitushin* generated from excrement and Genesis Rabbah 23:6 (Theodor-Albeck, 227): dead (bodies) began to swarm with worms (*marhish*). On small quadrupeds as more likely to generate monsters than humans and larger animals see ps.-Arist., *Pr*. 10.898a10–19; also 10, 898b5–11.

81. Ps.-Arist., *Pr*. 4.878a1–3 and 878a25–29; cf. Aristotle's repeated maxim "the human generates the human"—for example, in *Parts of Animals* 1.640a 20–28 and *Metaphysics* 7.1032a12–1034b19; see Balme, "Anthrōpos Anthrōpon Gennai." Bekhorot also invokes signs (*simanim*) and resemblance in assessing species-variant creatures (mBekhorot 2:5, tBekhorot 1:6). Compare the *Problems*' questions and distinctions with tBekhorot 1:5–13.

82. In a part of the text that is corrupt (*Pr*. 4.878a30–33), Ps. Aristotle describes how sometimes seeds can result in a mass (*ogkos*) with flesh (*sarx*) being generated (*ginetai*).

83. Ps.-Arist., *Pr*. 4.878a9: "*hosa ex apokatharmatos ginetai kai ekkriseōs* . . ."

84. Not so in Qumran purity schemes: see Neis, "The Temple and Toilet Practices."

85. See Schrenk, *Aristotle in Late Antiquity*.

86. Aristotle, *Generation of Animals* 767b–769b. Compare Genesis 5:3, where Adam "begets" a son in his image and likeness.

87. Bianchi (*The Feminine Symptom*) argues that an active/passive dualistic hierarchy for Aristotle's theory of generation overlooks the role of "unruly" female matter, which (necessarily) disrupts the reproductive process.

88. As for Aristotle's theory of male semen impressing form on female blood or matter, we find nothing that explicit in Tannaitic sources except for a fascinating lone text: Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Beshallah, 8 likens God to an icon painter who shapes offspring "in the form of his father" (*tsurat aviv*). This text further exploits the artisanal language of image making that Aristotle uses to characterize agentive male seed, which is likened to a carpenter, a painter, and a sculptor shaping his material (*Gen. an.* 725a25–29, 729b15–19, 730b5–30, 735a5, 743b21–25). But the Mekhilta uses it to characterize God as an image maker (*oseh tselamim*) who paints (*tsar*) icons (*eikonin)* in the father's image.

89. Arist., *Gen. an.* 769b4–10 (and 767b1–9). The animal (*zōion*) is more general than the more individual characteristic of human. While Aristotle purportedly treats all creaturely generation in *the Generation of Animals*, in this particular section of that work he makes the human the unmarked subject. On the breadth of what is included in *zōion* (animals, humans, the divine), see Brill, "Aristotle's Meta-Zoology," 106. See also Güremen, "Merely Living Animals in Aristotle."

90. Arist., *Gen. an.* 767b7–9.

91. Females, for example, are a necessary deviation required for the perpetuation of species (Arist., *Gen. an.* 767b9–10).

92. E.g., in tBekhorot and Mekhilta Beshallah 8. See Neis, "Reproduction" and "Interspecies"; see also Friedman, "Aristotle"; Naeh, "Hippocratic Concepts."

93. Arist., *Gen. an.* 769b22–26.

94. Arist., *Gen. an.* 759b17–19.

95. Galen (*On the Usefulness of Parts* 3.1) rejects the existence of centaurs because humans and horses cannot successfully reproduce; see also Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things* 2.700–710 and 5.878–924. On Aristotle and centaurs and his lack of direct discussion of their existence, see Shannon-Henderson, "Phlegon's Paradoxical Physiology."

96. This is also echoed in GenRab, which describes the devolution of humans and their loss of the "image of God" in terms of animalization: humans' faces resemble those of monkeys and humans go on to become centaurs (this is not hybridization—see chapter 4 of this book): GenRab 23:6 and 24:6 (Theodor-Albeck ed., 227 and 235, correspondingly).

97. The closest thing to the idea of human reproduction as resemblance to the male parent in terms of gender and appearance is realized in Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael, Beshallah, 8 (see above). See mYevamot 6:6 and tYevamot 8:7 on the mandate for reproduction and its idealized fulfilment in terms of the gender and quantity of offspring, as well as in terms of who is obligated.

98. Curiously, Galen, while in engaging Aristotle's theory of generation, does not talk much about deviation. For him, given that generation is a result of both male seed, female seed, and female matter, there is no need to consider female progeny as deviation; however, he does explain why offspring might resemble one parent or another. In so doing, he argues that females tend to determine the species aspect of offspring. He focuses solely on the narrow range of potentially genuine hybrids like between sheep and goats or donkeys and horses, following Aristotle in negating the possibility of hybrids among most species. Unlike Aristotle, he fails to consider spontaneously arising variation. See Gal., *On Semen* 2. Wilberding ("Teratology in Neoplatonism," 1022) notes that Galen, like the Neoplatonists, did not develop "a sustained discussion of teratology."

99. See mBekhorot 7:1: "these [aforementioned animal firstborn] blemishes (*mumin*), whether permanent or temporary, disqualify the human (*ba-ʾadam*), and in addition to them . . ."

100. See mKetubot 7:7. For husbands, see mKetubot 7:9–10; tKetubot 7:9. See also Watts Belser, "Brides and Blemishes"; Rosen-Zvi, "Temple of the Body."

101. Thus, those excluded/exempted are those of lesser status—for example, women, enslaved people, minors, and people with disabilities. See Hauptman, *Rereading the Rabbis*.

102. Soranus, *Gynecology* 1.39 and 1.47, on how what women and animals perceive during conception impacts fetal formation (potentially causing "something misshapen," *kakamorphos* and *amorphos*), including women who gave birth to "children resembling monkeys" because they saw monkeys during intercourse (Sor., *Gyn*. 1.39). Oppian (*Cynegetica* 1.316–67) refers to these techniques among breeders' attempts to control the appearance of their progeny. Pliny (*HN* 7.52) describes both parents' perceptions resulting in variation (which for him explains why there is more variation among humans). Heliodorus (*Aethiopica* 4.8) attributes skin color to a likeness beheld during conception.

103. For example, bBava Metsia 84a.

104. On the difficulties of using the sixth-century Digest as a source for earlier Roman law, see Johnston, *Roman Law in Context*, 14–29.

105. *Dig*. 1.5.14 (Paul, *Sent*. 4), according to the translation by Watson (*Digest* 1.16), but *formam humani* could be translated as human species.

106. *Dig*. 50.16.135 (Ulpian, *Lex Iul. et Pap*. 4) (trans. Watson, *Digest* 4:459). The *ius trium liberorum* was a reward granted to those who had three children or more.

107. *Dig*. 28.2.12.1 (Ulpian, *ad Sab*. 9).

108. Lehoux, *What Did the Romans Know*, 121–22, 130, 133.

109. I expand on these gendered, species, imperial/provincial dimensions of rabbinic knowledge-making drawing on materialist feminist and science studies lenses in Neis, "Fetus, Flesh, Food." For earlier considerations of some of these issues, see Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*; Balberg, "Rabbinic Authority"; Shinnar, "Experiments of Cleopatra." For discussion of niddah that considers feminist critique, see Meacham, "Abbreviated History." Compare, e.g., the conclusions with 37n8 on rabbinic empiricism. For an approach that reckons with rabbinic entanglement in and with various groups and spaces see Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life* and *Tales of the Neighborhood*.

110. Of course we need not resolve differences at all or expect a harmonistic agreement with the sages in Niddah and the anonymous *mishnah's* generation principle in Bekhorot.

111. I have analyzed it in detail in Neis, "The Reproduction of Species."

112. Also tBekhorot 2:6.

113. Rabbi Simon (or perhaps a later interpolator) concedes that in a case in which the creature resembles both camel and cow—in other words, "if its head and the majority of its body" have bovine features—the offspring is permissible. We infer that in such a scenario, the hybrid-appearing creature is classed as a cow. While this supplement to Simon's exclusion of species-nonconforming offspring may seem surprising, it does overlap with the majority view about similarly appearing offspring in the case of the human parturient in accordance with mNiddah 3:2 (and tNid. 4:5), except in the latter case a lower threshold of resemblance is required. I cannot be certain that these words are those of a later interpolator, but they, like the similarly added formulation to Rabbi Yose's view in tBekhorot 1:5, undermine what originally are pretty straightforward views.

114. Parallels to the generation principle in mBekhorot 1:2 and tBekhorot 1:9 are tKilayim 5:8 and bBekhorot 7a.

115. Cf. tḤullin 3:14.

116. A version of the principle is also cited at tBekhorot 1:6, but it is not elaborated in quite the same way as tBekhorot 1:9.

117. Neis, "Reproduction"; Neis, "Fetus, Flesh, Food." The sequence of reasoning here from cross-species resemblances to reproductive modes and gestational periods echoes both the content and the form of Aristotle's musings in *Gen. an*. As we saw, he insists that species nonconformity is "appearance only" rather than the result of cross-species hybridization. He also follows this with a short account of the differing gestation modes and times for various creatures, which, he explicitly argues, prevent successful crossbreeding.

118. The *editio princeps* has "something of human form (*mi-tsurat adam*)." Compare yNiddah 3:3, 33c and bNiddah 26b ("she expelled a raven likeness and with a placenta.") On the relationship between yNiddah and tNiddah, see Meacham, "Tosefta as Template."

119. To my knowledge this term does not appear elsewhere in Tannaitic literature. It appears in LevRab 33:5 (Margulies ed., 763) as a gloss on mYevamot 16:3 (cf. tYevamot 14:7).

120. The Tosefta refers to "the facial form of which they spoke," as if citing a parallel *mishnah*, but we have no version of the Mishnah with this phrase. It is conceivable that the Tosefta elides human form with facial form. It is also possible that it cites a tradition that did not find its way into our current version of the Mishnah; on such instances, see Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah*, 37.

121. Following MS Vienna. The *editio princeps* has *ad sheyeh ba mitsurat adam*.

122. Compare to the exclusion of an animal from the firstborn obligation for having an eye that "is round like that of a human" (mBekhorot 6:8; tBekhorot 4:11); this contradiction is taken up in bNiddah 23a. See GenRab 8:11, where the difference between human and animal vision is discussed.

123. Note the mimetic language of *demut*.

124. Human form is also a minimal requirement elsewhere: in tNiddah 4:7 contd. (for a kind of flattened fetal entity called *sandal*); Sifra Sheratsim 11:1 (for a creature of undefined head or body, or one of two backs or two spines). A notion of human form shapes the *ekphrasis* of the textured sac in tNiddah 4:10 as well as of the requirement that deliveries of certain body parts are "incised" versus "stumped" in tNiddah 4:15.

125. mYevamot 16:3.

126. On Levinas's insistence that there is something unique about the claim of a human face, see Neis, "Settlement," 23–25 and notes 34–35.

127. Pliny, *HN* 7.8 (trans. Rackham 510–13). See also Pliny, *HN* 11.138 and Beagon, *Pliny on the Human Animal*, 43–46. See mSanhedrin 4:13, which praises God for being able to "mint all of humanity (*et kol ha-adam*) with the seal of the first human yet not a single one of them resembles (*domeh*) its companion" and tSanhedrin 8:6, which describes "faces not like one another (*ein hapartsufot domot zu la-zu*)."

128. This three-part division of animal studies is helpfully laid out in Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals* and "Identity, Difference, Indistinction." See also Berkowitz, *Animals and Animality*, 8–14.

2. MULTIPLICITY

1. Pliny peppers his writings with occasional first-person testimony and secondhand reports; moreover, he wrote with one eye on Aristotle's writings and the other on his patron Titus. See Beagon, *Roman Nature*; Murphy, *Empire in the Encyclopedia*.

2. There is some scholarly debate about whether the core of the Tannaitic midrashim were put together independently of, before, or after the composition of the Mishnah. Unless otherwise noted, I cite from MS Vatican 66 (pagination per the Weiss edition). On the Sifra, see Kahana, "Halakhic Midrashim"; Naeh, "Structure and Division (A)" and "Structure and Division (B)." See also Kahana, "Relations between Exegeses."

3. The Sifra uses *a fortiori, a minori* analogy, and parallelism, among other exegetical techniques. See Kahanah, "Halakhic Midrashim"; Porton, "Early Rabbinic Biblical Exegesis."

4. I will mostly refer to the Sifra as a whole, and I will occasionally refer to the authors of the Sifra (whom scholars associate with the school of Rabbi Akiva, known for its creative approach to scriptural exegesis).

5. See, e.g., Yadin-Israel, *Scripture and Tradition*.

6. The Sifra will occasionally cite language and taxonomy from Deuteronomy 14, noting differences, redundancies, and repetitions across Deuteronomy and Leviticus, and extracting information from them.

7. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 2, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 47d–48a).

8. Gleason, "Shock and Awe."

9. Sifre Deut Piska 102 (Finkelstein ed., 161).

10. Note that tBekh 1:12 ascribes a similar expertise to hunters and experts who are relied on to know which species of birds and fish are pure.

11. Sifra Sheratsim, parashah 10, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 57b).

12. Sifra Qedoshim, parashah 5, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 93d) repeats the same elaboration, only adding this: "and I will separate (*ve-avdil*) you to be mine, if you separate yourselves from other peoples: thus, you are in my name (or mine). But if not, you are of (or belong to) Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and his companions."

13. Sifra Sheratsim, parashah 10, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 57b). MS Vatican 66 (our best MS), MS London, and MS Parma have: *lo bilvad ha-shoneh elah bi-yadu'ah* (literally: not only the one who studies (or repeats) but [also] that which is known); MS Vatican 31 (per Kahana, the next best MS): *lo bishvil hashoneh elah leyd'ah*; MS Oxford: *elah bilvad shoneh elah leyd'ah*. MS NY (and Venice printed edition): *lo bilvad ha-shoneh elah be-yode'ah*. Cf. Ezekiel 22:26, 44:23 for linking the separation of pure and impure with teaching others this knowledge.

14. On the "hairbreadth" (*melo sa'arah*) distinction between validly and invalidly slaughtered animals, see the continuation in Sifra Sheratsim, parashah 10, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 57c).

15. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 2, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 48a).

16. Ibid. The elements *hayah … mi… behemah* allow for *hayah min behemah*. The Sifra then runs through various other permutations of hybrids—wild/domesticated, domesticated/wild, pure/impure, impure/pure and finds support to include those as well (cf. mKilayim 8:2).

17. Ibid. Thus, "the earth" is limited to land creatures and excludes the wild sea animal (*hayot hayam*) and domesticated sea animal (*behemat hayam*): these terms *hayah* and *behemah* refer to quadrupeds when on land.

18. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 2, pereq 2, (Weiss ed., 48b–48c).

19. Sifra Sheratsim parasha 3 pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 49d): "'This you may eat' to include a pure fish inside an impure fish. I might think that this also [means] an impure fish inside a pure fish; it is, therefore, written 'those.' Why do you say about animals that [a pure one] inside an impure animal is unclean, and that [an impure animal] in a pure animal is pure, whereas with fish, [impure] in the pure fish is impure, and [pure] in an impure fish is pure? Because it (the latter) is not its products" (par. mBekh 1:2 and tBekh 1:9). MS Vatican 66 has *otah* (it) rather than the *otam* (those) of Leviticus 11:9.

20. The word *me'ayim* can designate uterus or the innards or guts more broadly speaking. For uterus, see, e.g., GenRab 34:10 (Theodor-Albeck ed., 320–21), mHullin 4:3, Sifre Numbers 127 (Kahana ed., 164), and 11QTa 50:10.

21. For example, Ps.-Arist., *Pr.* 4.878a20–28.

22. Cf tBekh 1:6–7: "A pure animal that gave birth to an impure kind of animal [the offspring] is permitted for eating, and if it has some of the signs [of its parents] it is obligated for the firstborn. And an impure animal which delivers a pure animal, [the offspring] is forbidden for eating. For that which emerges from the impure is impure and that which emerges from the pure is pure. An impure fish that swallowed a pure fish, it [the latter] is permissible for eating. And a pure fish that swallowed an impure fish, it [the latter] is forbidden for eating because it is not its products (*giddulav*)." This knowing, however, is undermined in tBekh 1:12 in which one must rely on an "expert" before eating a fish's "innards (*kirvei*) or embryos (*'ubaran*)."

23. For example, Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 49c): "which species (*min*) did I permit? Those which have bones and that reproduce and multiply." It uses the term *min* to describe the *ḥuldah* and the mouse each as a "kind that grows on the land" [Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 52b)]. It tags as *min* two creatures of the same kind and two of different kinds that can join for the purposes of minimal quantities of impure dead bodily material (e.g., blood, flesh) in Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 52b). The Sifra creates the space for additional prohibited land creatures *besides* the four land animals explicitly prohibited in Lev 11:5–7, all of which have one of the two required purity signs via an a-fortiori claim of the type, "if these which have [some of the] signs of purity (*simanei taharah*) . . . then how much more so those that have no signs of purity" (Sifra, Sheratsim, Pereq 2, Weiss, ed., 48b). The Sifra also uses logical argumentation (*din*) to extrapolate additional impure animals as subsumed under the prohibited species listed in Leviticus. On Aristotle's construction of the "concept of the vertebrate" as distinct from his division of "blooded and bloodless" as "a point of view that is not ours," see Pellegrin, *Aristotle's Classification of Animals*, 170, n. 11.

24. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 2, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 48a). Juxtaposing seeming redundancies or differing usages with Deuteronomy 14:4, the Sifra declares that "domesticated animal is in the general [class] of wild animal (*behemah bi-khlal hayah*)" and "the wild animal is in the general [class] of domesticated animal (*hayah bi-khlal behemah*)." See bHullin 70b-71a. Cf. Pellegrin, 22, on refusal of Platonic dichotomous classifications: "Aristotle could also elucidate the relative and precarious character of the distinction being made. Thus, animals are divided into wild and tame, but some can pass from one category to the other, and, in any case, as Aristotle repeats several times, "all tame animals are also found in a wild condition."" (*Hist an.* 1.1 488a31; see further Pellegrin, 173, n. 13.).

25. See Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 49c) with in/vertebrate; Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 52a) with in/vertebrate; Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 52b) on its own, earth-flesh mouse; Sifra Sheratsim parashah 10, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 57b) on its own, *remes*. The Sifra also makes this distinction without the terminology of *pareh ve-raveh*, instead using *sharets* and *romes* as verbs to refer to proliferation and generation.

26. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 49c).

27. *Ibid*. This implies that all permitted sea creatures not only have fins and scales but are also necessarily vertebrates and sexual reproducers.

28. Cf. Arist., *Hist. an*. 1.1 487a17–21 (trans. Peck, 9): "There are two ways of being water-animals. Some both live and feed in the water, take in water and emit it, and are unable to live if deprived of it: this is the case with many of the fishes. Others feed and live in the water; but what they take in is air, not water; and they breed away from the water." Pseudo-Raavad admits his uncertainty about sexual reproducers that are not vertebrates are but speculates that this refers to creatures like mussels. Similarly, he suggests that those that do not sexually reproduce but are vertebrates refers to the *tortois* (*tartajz*). Cf. Aristotle on creatures that are *both* land creatures and water creatures, which are said to "belong to both groups and also neither" (*Part. an*. 4.13 697a29–697b2), on which, see Pellegrin, *Aristotle's Classification of Animals*, 119–20.

29. See Blits, "Aristotle: Form, Function, and Comparative Anatomy," 60: "because each category of difference is complex in itself and may overlap others, there is no simple method for comparing animals, even though some sort of grouping is necessary in order to discern which attributes occur together and to determine significant patterns of affinity. Among the several ways in which Aristotle divides animals are by their mode of parturition into viviparous, oviparous, and larviparous; into blooded and bloodless; and according to their habitat—for example, land- or water-dwelling. Aristotle's ways of dividing and then subdividing and associating certain groups turn out to be heuristic, an analytical tool for characterizing animal kinds in relation to one another rather than an attempt to establish a unified scheme of classification, a systematic taxonomy."

30. Arist., *Hist. an*. 3.7–8 516b23–33 (trans. Peck, 196–97): "all blooded animals have a backbone, whether bony or spinous . . . cartilage is of 'the same nature' as bone." However, Aristotle places bones as one of several features of blooded animals, rather than using boniness as a classification criterion. He divides bloodless animals into four kinds, depending on the hardness/softness of their exterior/interior (*Hist. an*. 4.1 523b2–22). See Timofeeva, *The History of Animals*, 79: "Aristotle divides living beings into animals that have blood and animals that do not. All the animals with blood, according to Aristotle, have a spine. Later on, this principle was refuted, but its essence remained in place as a kind of basis for further scientific constructions. Thus, in Lamarck, animals are divided into vertebrates and invertebrates."

31. Arist., *Gen. an*. 1.1 715a19–26 (trans. Peck, 5): "Now of course some animals are formed as a result of the copulation of male and female, namely, animals belonging to those groups in which there exist both male and female, for we must remember that not all groups have both male and female. Among the blooded animals, with a few exceptions, the individual when completely formed is either male or female: but among the bloodless animals, while some groups have both male and female and hence generate offspring which are identical in kind with their parents, there are other groups which, although they generate, do

not generate offspring identical with their parents. Such are the creatures which come into being not as the result of the copulation of living animals, but out of putrescent soil and out of residues." This is what is often described as spontaneous generation. Cf. Arist., *Gen. an.* 1.16 721a3–6: "As regards insects, some of them copulate, and in those cases the young are generated from animals which are the same name and nature as themselves, just as happens in the blooded creatures; instances of this are locusts, cicadas, spiders, wasps, ants."

32. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 49b). Cf. bHullin 67a.

33. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 50a) par. tTerumot 7:11.

34. See tYadayim 2:3: "a *yavḥush* whose creation is from water." See Lieberman, "Light on the Cave Scrolls."

35. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 10, pereq 2, (Weiss ed., 57a), par. tTerumot 7:11. Based on "all the swarming creatures that swarm on the *earth*" (Lev 11:41), the Sifra goes on "to exclude" (*lehotsi*) these creatures because they are generated by plant life rather than normal "earth" swarmers. The *yatush* (mosquito or gnat) is taken as an example of a small and almost insignificant creature, yet as Sifre Deuteronomy piska 32 (Finkelstein ed., 54) puts it, "even if all the people in the universe gathered to try to create but one mosquito (*yatush*) and to attempt to animate it (lit. to introduce *neshama* into it), they couldn't" (par. GenRab 39:14, Theodor Albeck ed., 1:139–39; y. Sanhedrin 7:11, 25d). See tSanhedrin 8:5, which reminds humans not to be too proud because their creation was preceded by that of the *yatush*.

36. Regarding my translations of creaturely nomenclature: I discuss the difficulties inherent in identifying creatures known in ancient terminology with modern zoological terminology in more detail in the next chapter. Scrupulous work on the identification of animals considering ancient (Greek, Latin, etc.) evidence and using modern taxa include the following: Dor, *Animals in the Era of the Bible, Mishnah, and Talmud*; Talshir, *Living Names;* Feliks, *Animal World;* Löw, *Fauna und Mineralien der Juden*; Bodenheimer, *Animal and Human*.

37. Firmage ("Zoology (Fauna)") gives "rodent" for *ḥoled*, whereas Dor and Talshir define *ḥoled* and *ḥuldah* as a mammal like the stone marten or the Egyptian mongoose rather than as a rodent. See Talshir and Dor, "*Ḥuldah* and *Ḥoled*"; see also Talshir, *Living Names*, 95–106. The *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon* has "mole," following Bodenheimer (*Life* 99, 102) and noting that it is *ḥulda* in rabbinic ("middle") Hebrew. Even-Shoshan on *ḥoled* has "rodent mammal, close to rat family," identifying it as *Spalax ehrenbergi* but they define *ḥulda* as a rat (*Rattus*).

38. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 52b). The term *kishmuʿo* can also be translated "as it seems" or "according to its meaning." On this term as characteristic of "Ishmaelian" midrash, see Rosen-Zvi, "Terminology and Its Meaning."

39. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 52b).

40. Or in all the parts that "swarm" (i.e., generate).

41. See mHullin 9:10 (half flesh, half earth mouse), bSanhedrin 91a, and bHullin 127a.

42. Plin., *NH* 9.84 (trans. Rackham, 283). See van der Horst, "Two Notes on Hellenistic Lore"; Lehoux, *Mud and Slime*. Cf. Diod. Sic. 1.10.2 (trans. Oldfather, 34–35): "even at the present day the soil of the Thebaid at certain times generates mice in such numbers and of such size as to astonish all who have witnessed the phenomenon; for some of them are fully formed as far as the breast and front feet and are able to move, while the rest of the body is unformed, the clod of earth still retaining its natural character."

43. LevRab 19:1 (ed. Margulies, 415–16) and GenRab 23:6 and 24:6 (Theodor-Albeck ed., 227 and 235, correspondingly). Cf. mAvot 3:1.

44. Although see tNiddah 2:3, for a dispute about how long/when infants ought to nurse, and where they are characterized in certain cases as "one who nurses from a forbidden creature (*sheqets*)." *Sheqatsim* On *sheqatsim u-remasim* as a rabbinic classificatory grouping, see chapter 1, 30–31. See tNiddah 2:5, which allows nursing from non-Jewish women and impure animals (*behemah teme'ah*) and in which Abba Saul declares "we would nurse from a pure animal (*behemah tehorah*) on festival days." Cf. tShabbat 9:22 and Labovitz, "Woman Nursing her Child" as well as Emanuel, "Christian Wet Nurse."

45. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 2, pereq 3 (Weiss ed., 48d); cf. bKetubot 60a and bKeritot 22a, which have different outcomes (flesh is forbidden).

46. Sifra Tsav parashah 10, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 39a) shows they are *not* subject. While showing how the bird and domesticated animal are "distinguished" from the other kinds, the Sifra observes that, unlike the bird, animal, and the other kinds, "eggs are not of the meat kind (*min basar*)"

47. See mBikkurim 2:7: "the blood of those who walk on two [legs] is like (*shaveh*) the blood of domesticated animals (*behemah*) in that it renders seeds susceptible [to impurity]. And it is like the blood of a *sherets*, in that one is not liable for eating it." See bKeritot 21a and bKetubot 60a.

48. Arist., *Part. an.* 4.12 693b4–5: "Birds, like humans, have two legs, which are bent inwards as in the quadrupeds, not outwards as in the human" (trans. Peck, 405–7 with minor changes). Aristotle notes how singular binary (or monothetic) criteria for grouping animals inevitably fail, for either animals can be members of multiple groupings based on multiple criteria, or similar animals (*tōn homogenōn*) are separated (*Part. an.* 1.2 642b17–20). Thus, even though birds and humans are two-footed and blooded, they are so in ways that are essentially different. He also shows how certain logics put the same group into two opposing categories (e.g., wild/ tame includes humans in both).

49. Plato, *Plt.* 266e. For Galen this is one of the various *differentia* used to describe humans; see, e.g., *Methodus medendi* 2.7 129K.

50. "Plato had defined human as an animal, biped and featherless, and was applauded. Diogenes plucked a chicken and brought it into the lecture room and said, 'This is Plato's human.' Consequently, having broad nails was added to the definition" (Diog. Laert. 6.2.40) (ed. and trans. Hicks, 157, with changes).

51. In Aristotle's *Metaphysics* and logical treatises "he consistently defines humans as two-legged animals," (Kietzmann, "What It Is to Be Human," 27.). See Arist., *Metaph.* 1037b1124; cf. Pliny, *NH* 10.83 (trans. Rackham, 401, with minor changes): "The human is the only animal-bearing biped" (*Bipedum solus homo animal gignit)*. Occasionally, in Greek dramatic literature, a particular person is described as a "two-legged creature" and given, in addition, a suitably insulting adjective, apparently as a way of being referred to as barely human, or as more animal than human.

52. See Pellegrin, *Aristotle's Classification of Animals*, 64: "Aristotle's biological writings, and notably his work on the *Progression of Animals*, treat foot, wing, and fin as the *eide* of the *genos* 'organs of locomotion.'" This is species (*eide*) and *genos* in the logical senses.

53. Leviticus 11:1–2 names Moses, Aaron, and the Israelites. An implied Israelite audience is the subject of various verbs of restriction and permission. Leviticus 11:44–45 states that Israel should be holy as God is.

54. Garland Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 8: "the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries. The term *normate* usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings."

55. Contrast this to Numbers 19:11–14: "One who touches the dead of any human (*adam*) person shall be impure for seven days . . . Whoever touches the dead, the human (*adam*) person that is dead . . . This is the instruction (*torah*): when a human (*adam*) dies in a tent . . ."

56. See the excellent discussion in Hasan-Rokem, "Odysseus and the Sirens."

57. See Balberg, "Animalistic Gullet, Godlike Soul."

58. See discussion in chapter 1, 30–31, 37, 204–205nn20–31, Milgrom, "Two Priestly Terms."

59. Sifra Sheratsim parasha 3, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 49d).

60. It considers whether the word *nefesh* is the basis for including the siren (*sirene*) among prohibited sea creatures. In other words, is it among those without fins and scales who must not be eaten and whose "carcasses—*nivlatam*" are to be abjected?

61. Cf. Lieberman, "Light on the Cave Scrolls" and *Hellenism*, 183. The nineteenth-century biblical commentator Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Wisser ingeniously suggests that the textual hook for considering a seahuman is that the "*nefesh ha-hayah* (living creature) that is in the waters" echoes "and the human (*adam*) became a living creature (*nefesh hayah*)" in Genesis 2:7. He also links the siren to the *adne ha-sadeh*. On *nefesh* as soul versus human according to the Peshitta and Tannaim, see Maori, "Lexical Instability."

62. See Numbers 19:11: "one who touches the corpse (*met*) of any human being (*nefesh adam*) shall be impure for seven days."

63. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 4, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 51d) derives a variety of creatures from Leviticus 11:27: "and all that goes on its paws, of all the living creatures (*haḥayah*] that go on four, they are impure to you." The phrase "goes on their paws" refers to the monkey (*qof*); "all that walk" are said to include the *qipod* (hedgehog); the marten (*ḥuldat hasn'aim*), the *adne ha-sadeh* (field-human), and the sea dog (*qelev-yam*); "and all of the living creatures (*hayah;* wild animal for the rabbis)" to the elephant (*pil*). MSS Vatican 66 and other MSS have *adne ha-sadeh*, *w*hereas Mss Venice and Vatican 31 have *avne ha-sadeh*. Elephants, along with monkeys and baboons, feature in tBekhorot 1:10 (concerning the gestation periods of various species). The elephant and monkey are paired as wild animals (*ḥayah*) in mKilayim 8:6. Elephants (along with ostriches, doves, and deer) and their food are featured in tShabbat 14:8.

64. Jastrow translates *kipod* as "porcupine." The *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon* defines it as "hedgehog" or "owl." See Talshir, *Living Names*, 107–14.

65. See Sifra Sheratsim, Parasha 2 Pereq 2 (Weiss ed. 49d); par. tHull 3:27.

66. LevRab 22:10 (Margoliyot ed., 2. 522–23) bBava Batra 74b–75a. I am reluctant to use the term "monster" or to apply "monster theory" to Leviathan and like creatures. The term *monstrum* or omen (encountered in the previous chapter to characterize variant deliveries) carries with it particular affective and cultural connotations related to nonnormative bodies in overdetermined ways that do not necessarily map onto various biblical or rabbinic ways of conceptualizing Leviathan or similar creatures. See the powerful appropriation of "monster" in Stryker, "Frankenstein."

67. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 49d), par. tHullin 4:13. *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon* defines *tsav* as "thorn-tailed lizard."

68. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 52b) moves by various logics, including analogy (from the weasel/*ḥuldah* to the mouse/*akhbar* of Leviticus 11:29), whether the prohibition pertains only to "species that grow on the earth (*min hagadel ba-arets*)," thus excluding the "sea mouse" (*akhbar shebayam*), whether the prohibition extends to everything called "mouse" including the "sea mouse." The move from earth (e.g., mouse) to sea variations of creatures (e.g. sea mouse) is the subject of chapter 3, which treats the principle of territorial doubles (tKilayim 5:10). Cf. mKelim 17:13–14 on material from creatures that "grow in the sea" versus those that "grow in the land" (the latter created on the first, third, and sixth days of creation) and its susceptibility to impurity.

69. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 52b).

70. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 50d).

71. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 10, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 57a).

72. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 49c–d).

73. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 2, (Weiss ed., 50c); cf. Sifre Deut, Piska 103 (Finkelstein ed., 162) and Sifre Deut Piska 98 (Finkelstein ed., 159). The latter adds Issi ben Judah's statement that there are a hundred different species (*minei*) of the *ayah* bird in the east.

74. Cf. mHullin 3:6–7, tHullin 3:25–26, bHullin 65a–66a. The *nesher*, often translated as eagle, is listed in Leviticus 11:13.

75. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 50c).

76. While the permitted birds are not listed in either Leviticus 11 or Deuteronomy 14, the Sifra is surely relying on birds mentioned for sacrificial purposes (both pigeons and turtledoves are explicitly required in Lev 12:6).

77. See mHullin 3:6, par. tHullin 3:25–26. The rabbinic use of *simanim*, as visible and legible markers of certain categories, is widespread in Tannaitic literature and is deployed across a range of entities—from objects, to determinations of gendered human adulthood, to species determinations. For a critical assessment thereof, see Halberstam, *Law and Truth*, 42–75.

78. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 50d).

79. Even-Shoshan defines the *shalshul* as earthworm (citing bHullin 67b). Rashi s.v. Leviticus 11:42: a worm as long as a snake that is found in garbage.

80. Rashi s.v. Leviticus 11:42 gives scarab.

81. Rashi s.v. Leviticus 11:42 gives centipede.

82. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 10, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 57a) (par. bHullin 67b).

83. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 52b). See Talshir, *Living Names*, 78–79.

84. Par. bHullin 127a. Fox, "Circular Proem," 14 identifies this as a circular proem.

85. Kister, "Tohu Wa-Bohu."

86. Arist., *Hist. an.* 5.19 552b12 (trans. Peck, 185): "certain creatures are engendered in the fire (*entautha gignetai thēria en tō puri*)." Earlier in the same passage Aristotle describes other spontaneously generated creatures and their sources of generation, e.g. "The vinegar-fly comes out of small larvae which are engendered from the slime of vinegar" (*Hist. an.* 5.19 552b5–6, trans. Peck, 183). Elsewhere, though, Aristotle notes that "plants belong to the earth, aquatic creatures to the water, and land-animals to the air," but he rules out fire as the fourth *genos* (Peck translates this as "tribe") in favor of the moon (see Arist., *Gen. an.* 3.11 761b13–24, trans. Peck, 351–53). See Macfarlane ("Aristotle on Fire Animals") for

additional references and discussion of Aristotle's denials that creatures are generated in fire (vs. ether). Theophrastus opined that the salamander extinguished fire by secreting a cold, viscous liquid; see Theophrastus, *De Igne*, trans. Coutant, 39–40; see also *Physiologus* 47, on how the salamander as a kind of lizard that extinguishes fire; cf. Plin. *NH* 10.86.

87. Plato, *Timaeus* 40a, on the four kinds or forms (*eide*): the *genos* of gods made mostly out of fire, winged air travelers, water dwellers, and legged land dwellers. Cf. Plato, *Epin.* 981c5–8, which lists five elements, including ether, and which claims that "and by predominance of these are each of the many varieties of creatures perfected" (trans. Lamb, 453)."

88. Philo, *De gigantibus* 7, trans. Colson and Whitaker, 449, with minor changes; Yli-Karjanmaa, *Reincarnation in Philo*.

89. Aelian, *NA* 2.2, trans. Scholfield, 89–91. Elsewhere, Aelian follows Aristotle in denying that salamanders are generated in fire, even if they are capable of living in fire (*NA* 2.31, trans. Scholfield, 129).

90. Alter, *The Book of Psalms*, 367n25. Note that the chapter uses other Genesis 1 terminology such as *yibarei'un* (Ps. 104:30), *ma'asekha* (Ps. 104:24), sun and moon (Ps. 104:19), and *tehom* (Ps. 104:2). On the linking of Ps. 104 to Genesis 1 in Targum translations, see Shinan, "Aramaic Targums."

91. Also, Genesis 1:21 and 27. See Kutscher, "Rabbis' Language," 272–74 on the shift from the biblical *beriy'ah* (with an *aleph*) to postbiblical *beriyah* (or *biryah* without *aleph*) and *beriyot* (or *biryot*, pl. f. without *aleph*). On the gender of *beriyot* in rabbinic Hebrew, see Berggrün, *Lexical Issues*.

92. That is, the example of the semiflesh, semi-earth mouse (Sifra Sheratsim parashah 5, pereq 1 [Weiss ed., 52b]). See also Sifra Sheratsim parashah 10, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 57b).

93. We must look to the entire verse, not only the particulars cited.

94. Leviticus 11:29–30 details the *ḥoled* (mole), the mouse, and the *tsav* (turtle) according to its kinds, as well as the gecko, the land crocodile, the lizard, the sand lizard, and the chameleon. On these identifications, see Talshir, *Living Names*, 95–106. On the multiplicity of lifeforms and generative modes, see Neis, "Life."

95. The allusion more strongly evokes Genesis 1:28—directed toward the human (*adam*)—than Genesis 1:22 (in which this sequence of terms, *peru, revu, mil'u, ha'arets*, does not quite obtain).

96. His homily is also a praise directed to the preceding exegesis, an exegetical generation of multiple species of *tsav lemineihu*, which proceeds by "inclusion" or "multiplication," the exegetical technique of *ribbuy* (r.b.h.). This technique founds expansive (rather than restrictive) interpretations of biblical terms (in this case licensed by "according to its kinds").

97. See Squier, "Interspecies Reproduction," on nonsexual reproduction and contagion.

98. Sifra Negaim parasha 8, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 68b). See tSotah 11:-12 in which Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah interprets "the words of the wise are like goads and like nails planted," and so on (Qoh. 12:11) in terms of how words of Torah "bring life to the word" the way a goad directs a cow to bring life to the world and are "planted" the way "a plant increases and multiplies (*poreh veraveh*)." On these and related sources, see Werman, "Oral Torah"; Naeh, "*Ars memoriae*," esp. 570–74. In a future venue I analyze these sources along with others as they pertain to the generative fruitfulness of plant-life and sagely Torah.

99. Palms were understood to generate the most fruit in the valleys (see m Bikk 1:3; tBikkurim 1:5; cf. tShevi'it 7:8).

3. MENAGERIE

1. Many taxonomists argue that classification is prior to naming or nomenclature, though in some ways the *Physiologus* and the Sifra claim otherwise. See Ellen, "Classification," 33: "The relationship between categories and words varies, although the overall developmental primacy of categories over labels is now generally accepted." See Le Guin, "She Unnames Them." For additional historical studies of classification see Schmidt, "Ancient Iranian Animal Classification"; Moazami, "Evil animals in the Zoroastrian religion"; Sterckx, "Animal Classification in Ancient China."

2. Hoage, Mansour, and Roskell, "Menageries and Zoos."

3. For examples of animal iconography on the border of the Roman and Parthian empires, consider depictions at Dura Europos—e.g., the fresco in a domestic context of a banquet scene next to a hunting scene in Dirven, *Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos*, plate xi; also the hunting scene in the Mithraium (Dirven, "Mounted Hunters"). For animal figurines at Dura, see Downey, *Figurines*, 133–208. See also Poinsot, "Bestiary of the Sasanian."

4. This analysis is taken up in Neis, "Fetus, Food, Flesh." The notion that likenesses, or essentialist versions of classification theory, persist across time and space (some fields describe theories of classification as taxonomy rather than classification) is a claim that understands particular criteria for and assignations of similarity as persistently the same in and of themselves. At the same time, those who understand themselves as operating under this theory of classification (dubbed in some fields as essentialist, see, e.g., Khalidi, *Natural Categories*) may disavow their own agency in making classifications, understanding them to exist a priori in the objects themselves. See the pivotal piece by Mayr, "Theory of Biological Classification"; and Wilkins, *Species*.

5. This is not to say that the rabbis have a radically egalitarian or nonhierarchical approach.

6. Consider how important it was to the rabbis, in particular, to know these boundaries in order to fulfill the demands of dietary and purity ritual, for example; or vice versa, consider how these ritual orders made these boundaries knowable.

7. On Jewish dietary schemes, see Rosenblum, *Jewish Dietary Laws*. On classifying sources as law see Neis, "The Seduction of Law."

8. Pellegrin, *Aristotle's Classification of Animals*.

9. Arist., *Hist. an*. 1.6 490b7–491a4.

10. Hence, as Pellegrin has pointed out, it is wrong to attribute "chain of being" ideas to Aristotle.

11. To reiterate: this doesn't mean that the rabbis and Aristotle did not view life-forms hierarchically in some or even many ways.

12. Bailey, *Typologies and Taxonomies*, 2.

13. Taylor, "Beasts of Burden," 193–94; Taylor, *Beasts of Burden*; Stern, "Cautions About Medicalized Dehumanization"; Dudley, "the 'Medical Plantation' as a Cultural Location of Disability"; Mitchell and Snyder, "Eugenic Atlantic."

14. Shannon, *The Accommodated Animal*. On disability studies and ancient studies, see the content and bibliography of the following: Soon, "Disability and New Testament Studies"; Goodey and Rose, *Disability History and Greco-Roman Antiquity*, 1:41; Strassfeld, *Trans Talmud*, 115–17.

15. For projects that combine contemporary zoological research and philological method (and sometimes also zoology), see some of those works and authors below (e.g., nn. 28, 37, 146). See tKil 1:9 par. Sifre Deut piska 100 (Finkelstein ed., 160) for the rabbis'

attempt to identify their own terminology vis-a-vis biblical terms (and, in the former source, they dispute about this).

16. See nn. 158 and 163 below.

17. See mKilayim 8:2 for definitions of *kilayim* in terms of various combinations of domesticated/domesticated, domesticated/wild, wild/wild, pure/impure, impure/impure, pure/pure.

18. On the presence of pig bones in Jewish settlements in late ancient Roman Palestine, as well as the circular reasoning of assumptions of adherence to rabbinic slaughter techniques and impurity prohibitions as markers of Jewishness and the assumptions that more pig bones mean non-Jewish presence, see Lev-Tov, "Dietary Perspective." He points to a relative lack of pig bones in Middle Eastern remains, as opposed to an increase in fish bones (seen as related to Roman presence). For "even though they resemble one another" see mKilayim 1:4–6 and tKilayim 1:1, 7, 8.

19. On pigs in Rome, see MacKinnon, "High on the Hog." On Jewish pig breeding and consumption, see Lev-Tov, "Dietary Perspective." The rabbis may well have considered that Jews bred pigs without consuming them.

20. Mating is the kind of forbidden mixing that would apply to all these pairings (rather than using as labor animals).

21. Gal., *De semine* 2.

22. See the discussion and citations in Schwartz, "Dogs in Jewish Society."

23. The Tosefta here (tKilayim 1:7) and in the parallel to the Mishnah below (tKilayim 8:8) add birds into the mix of named creatures (birds not mentioned in Mishnah parallels).

24. The lines drawn between these animals forms a contrast between the relative "liberalism" with respect to plant life that precedes and follows them (mKilayim 1:1–5): some pairings, but not all, are what we could consider "subspecies" or "varieties." The Tosefta explains such cases—again, seemingly few being notably related to crops—as certain pairings of differently named and similar-looking kinds that may be mixed because they are "a species with its own species" (*min be-mino*).

25. In Greco-Roman classification, the dog was considered domesticated, with the wolf being its wild correlate. See Gordon, "Wolf-Men in the Graeco-Roman World," 27.

26. In that case, the Tosefta supplies a harmonizing line that blends Rabbi Meir's view with that of the sages.

27. Lieberman, *Tosefta Kifshuta*, Seder Zera'im I, 652–53.

28. While the term *adne ha-sadeh* is plural, I take the liberty of occasionally referring to them in the singular.

29. Par. Sifre Piska 100.

30. See tKilayim 1:6: the sages opine that "the *teo* is a creature unto itself, and the wild ox is a creature unto itself." They may be presenting a third view (not that of the first anonymous one) in which the wild ox and the *teo* are (arguably) both wild but nonetheless distinct species. We witness here a rabbinic effort to understand etiology and etymology of biblical and rabbinic Hebrew terms and to identify nomenclature in their own terms. See Feliks (*Animal World*, 21; *Mixed Sowing*, 125n21; and "Re'em, Teo, and Wild Ox"), who defines *teo* as bison, *re'em* as *shor bar* (wild ox). See also Dor, "Ruminants in the Bible"; Amar et al., "Identification of Kosher Species."

31. Another view declares that raising dogs is tantamount to raising pigs (not a good thing; tBK 8:17): cf. "a human may not breed the dog unless it is tied with a chain" (mBK 7:7; though cf. also tBK 8:17).

32. This is the reason for Schwartz's identification of *kelev kufri* as a jackal or even weasel-like creature. He also notes the pairing of dogs and pigs (as negative) in tannaitic literature. See mBava Kamma 7:7; tBava Kamma 8:9–15 and 8:17. Sifra Qedoshim parashah 4 pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 90c) mentions that the *ḥuldah* is used in divination.

33. On creatures like fish and birds and hedgehogs that were bred in semidomesticated contests in the Roman world as "pest control," see Kitchell, "Animal Literacy." MacKinnon ("Fauna"), however, disputes this. On vivaria, see mBetzah 3:1; cf. bShabbat 106b. See mShabbat 10:5, regarding these measures as minimal amounts for liability for carrying on the Sabbath. Richard Gordon describes the hedgehog, among "many kinds of wild animals, including rabbits and hares, wild pig, different varieties of deer, hedgehogs, dormice, snails, etc. in enclosures (*leporaria* in Latin), where they were fattened up for the kitchen, thus forming an anomalous class of animals neither domestic or wild." See Gordon, "Wolf-Men in the Graeco-Roman World," 50n19.

34. Thus, its corpse transmits impurity at the amount of an olive's worth to the person who carries or moves a wild animal (even without directly touching it); it does so at the rate of a lentil's worth to the person who touches a creeping animal. The *ḥuldat ha-senaim* is thus a liminal or hybrid creature according to R. Yose. One might argue that R. Yose similarly considers the *adne ha-sadeh* as a wild animal/human hybrid, conceding that the creature is a *ḥayah* or wild animal, but that they are *additionally* is treated as a human for the purposes of corpse impurity.

35. This term is related to Orientalism (see Said, *Orientalism*).

36. Bosak Schroeder, "Making Specimens."

37. Kim, "Murder and Mattering," 10.

38. Kletter, "Monkey Figurine." Besides, scriptural traditions' references to Indian animals appear in 1 Kings 10:22 (2 Chronicles 9:21), when Solomon, with Hiram's aid, imports fleets of "gold, silver, ivory (*shenhav*), monkeys (*kofim*), and peacocks (*tukim*)." Scholars argue that the terms for ivory (lit., tooth of elephant), monkeys, and peacocks derive from Sanskrit and Tamil: see *HALOT* s.v. *kof*; Holmstedt, "Historical Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew." On earlier menageries and imports of exoticized animals in Mesopotamia, see Llewellyn-Jones, "Tribute Animals in Ancient Persia."

39. See 87 below for my earlier remarks about the problems of translation and retrospective zoology which ought to caution us against using our own criteria for either assigning certain creatures "mythical" status or for projecting them onto late ancient people. Although I translate *kipod* and *ḥuldat hasenaim* as hedgehog and marten, respectively, I use these translations because they are convenient. The precise identity of *ḥuldat hasenaim* in contemporary taxonomic terms is uncertain, even for those who are determined to pursue a retrospective zoology. Scholars identify the *ḥuldah* variously as a mole, a weasel, a shrew, a hyrax, a rat, a mongoose, and a porcupine. Here it is paired with the *kipod*, which I have translated as hedgehog, but which could also be translated as porcupine (making this a possible reference to two kinds of porcupine). For mongoose, see Dor, *Animals in the Era of the Bible*, 73 and Feliks, *Animal World*, 227 and Talshir and Dor, "*Ḥuldah and Ḥoled*," 48. See also bBava Kamma 80a.

40. Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought*. The only other places in Tannaitic texts that mention elephants are tBekhorot 1:10 (in its discussion of the gestation periods of various species). Monkeys and baboons feature in the same source. See Tosefta

Hullin 1:1—slaughter by a monkey is invalid. Sifra Parashat Sheratsim parashah 4, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 51d) derives the im/purity of a variety of creatures from Leviticus 11:27,: "and all that walk on their paws, of all the animals (*ḥayah*) that go on four, they are impure to you." For the Sifra, "and all that walk on their paws" refers to the monkey (*qof*); "all that walk" refers to the long-tailed ape (*qipod*), the marten (*ḥuldat hasnaim*), the field human (*adne ha-sadeh*), and sea dog (*qelev-yam*); "and all of the animals (*ḥayah*)" points to the elephant (*pil*). Sifra Shemini parashah 4, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 51d). (Vatican 66 and other MSS have *adne ha-sadeh*, whereas MSS Venice and Vatican 31 have *avne ha-sadeh*.) For example, 2 Maccabees and 3 Maccabees, as well as Josephus (e.g., *BJ* 1.41–43), describe the Seleucid use of elephants in military contexts. For a remarkable mosaic display of the Seleucid army, see Britt and Boustan, *Elephant Mosaic*.

41. Connors, "Monkey Business," 182. Connors differentiates between the modern scientific distinctions between "monkey" and "ape" and the more fluid interchanging usages thereof in antiquity. Connors compares the imitative qualities of monkeys in Greek and Roman cultures and describes the Roman variation as follows: "In the Roman Republic, as it appropriates natural and cultural resources in the Mediterranean world, and establishes its masterfully imitative relation to Greek culture, thinking about imitation can generate something more like the question: 'How can a culture express its power?' 'Imitation!'"

42. Pliny, *HN* 8.80.216 (Rackham trans., 151). See also *HN* 11.100 246.

43. Ael., *NA* 16.10 on the monkeys of human intelligence in India; cf. 16.15 for his statement that, while there are intelligent animals in his own country, they are outnumbered by those in India (he mentions the elephant, the parrot, the sphinx ape, and the satyr). Galen wouldn't dissect monkeys because they resemble humans and therefore horrified audiences; see Gleason, "Shock and Awe," 111–13.

44. In mYadayim 1:5, the Tannaim determine that water poured by a monkey for ritual purposes is valid, though Rabbi Yose disagrees. But the Mishnah also stipulates that other Jewish people who usually do not have ritual status, such as a deaf-mute person, a person with intellectual or cognitive disabilities, and a minor, can also pour water with ritual efficacy. There is no requirement of intent for the ablution to be effective. On the other hand, tHullin 1:1 considers the monkey (*kof*) alongside the gentile (*goy*), as beings whose ritual animal slaughter is disqualified (*pesulah*). The Tosefta cites the verse, "and *you* shall slaughter . . . and *you* shall eat" (Deuteronomy 12:21), to designate solely Israelite slaughter and to exclude that which is slaughtered by the gentile, the monkey, "or that which is slaughtered by themselves" (tHullin 1:1). Notably, a Samaritan, an uncircumcised Israelite, and an apostate Israelite are fit (*ksherin*) to slaughter; the slaughter of a heretic (*min*) is strange worship (or idolatry, *avodah zarah*)—tHullin 1:1. The parallel mHullin 1:1 rules that the animal body ritually slaughtered by a gentile (*nokhri*) is carrion (*nevelah*) and allows the slaughter of a minor, a deaf-mute person, and a mentally disabled person if supervised. According to Sifra deNedava 4:2 (Weiss ed., 6a acc MS Vat. 66), "slaughter by all is fitting (*kesherah*): by strangers (*zarim*—nonpriests), by women, by slaves: even the most sacred sacrifices . . . slaughter is fitting (*kesherah*) by any human (*kol adam*); see tBerakhot 6:11 on blessing after performing ritual slaughter.

45. Bosak-Schroeder ("Making Specimens," 71) suggests the modern term "gorilla" is derived from *gorillai*. They argue that Romans were likely to have viewed "Gorillai as mythical monsters or another animal species altogether." But neither were they exactly human.

Bosak-Schroeder suggests that the human/animal border was fuzzy and that the Gorillai, described in various narrative iterations as “wild” and “hairy,” were ambiguous “specimens” through which “writers made knowledge about humanity, animality, and ethnicity.” See also Dench, “Barbarian”; Kominko, “Monsters and Barbarians”; McKoskey, *Race*.

46. In tannaitic sources—for example, tBerakhot 6:18—Rabbi Judah declares that a “human (*adam*) is obligated to make three daily blessings: Blessed is the one who did not make me a gentile (*goy*), blessed is the one who did not make me an uncultivated person (*bor*), blessed is the one who did not make me a woman.” These utterances produce the unmarked “human” as an Israelite (and rabbinic?) man. Cf. tBerahot 1:6 on how to distinguish a sage and a *bor* by the way a person blesses. According to Even Shoshan (*Dictionary*), the term *bor* refers to an uncultivated field and, metaphorically, to an ignorant or “brutish” person, an *‘am ha’arets* (lit., person of the earth). Klein (*Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language*) relates the noun *bor*, meaning fallow (land), uncultivated (field), with its secondary adjectival meaning of illiterate or ignorant, to the root *b.w.r.* (Aramaic *b.r.y.*). He points out that *bar*, which originally meant “open field” derives from *b.w.r.* (Job 39:4); similarly, Even Shoshan also lists the “wild animals” (*hayot ha-bar*) under the entry as a derived term in rabbinic texts in opposition to domestic animals and cites mKilayim 8:6 “wild ox” (*shor bar*) as an example. For the Bavli, see Berkowitz, *Animals and Animality*; Wasserman, *Jews, Gentiles and Other Animals*.

47. As Beagon (“Wondrous Animals”) argues, the line between the exoticized or geographically distant creature and the mythological or fabulous being was a slippery one. The ritualized performance of certain kinds of affect over “natural” entities, phenomena, and beings, including those that are not normate (in disability studies terms) and/or that are idealized in some way (i.e., marked as “beautiful”), can be found in the blessings of mBerakhot 9 and tBerakhot 6, many of which are saluted as God’s “work of creation.”

48. Many thanks to Galit Hasan-Rokem for this important insight.

49. The translation of *yerod or yeror* is unclear. Lieberman suggests that while *yeror* meant jackal (biblical *tanim*, Isaiah 35:7), the Tosefta refers to a bird with that name that is either “a legendary bird or a bird from the species of *benot haye’anah*, that do not use their wings for flight, but run with their legs” (for *benot haye’anah*, see Isaiah 43:20, Leviticus 11:16). On the *yerod* (*yeror*) demon, see Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*, 7n30, 20–23, 47, 53, and 58.

50. The term *benot ya’anah* or *ya’anah* (usually translated by scholars as ostrich, and in the Septuagint variously as *strouthos* or as siren). The Aramaic targums translate *ya’anah* as *na’amita*, cf. our *naamit*. See Talshir, *Living Names*, 67–68.

51. The phenomenon of *nun* being used in place of a *mem* is discussed by J. N. Epstein, who lists cases of אדן (instead of אדם) including this one (Epstein, *Mavo le-nusah ha-Mishnah*, 1230–31). On the *adne ha-sadeh*, see also Levias, “Excursions in the Field”; Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature*, 21–25; Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 183; Neis, “Interspecies,” 321–24. Rashi comments on Job 5:23 regarding *avne ha-sadeh* as follows: “they are a species of human (*min adam*),” identifying the verse’s *hayat ha-sadeh* as the *adne ha-sadeh*, which he glosses (in French) as *garou* (werewolf).

52. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, perek 1 (Weiss ed., 49d).

53. After all, the anonymous voice of the Tosefta declares the *naamit* and *yerod* birds “for all matters’”; perhaps in other cases multiple classificatory registers are possible.

54. For an analysis of grades of impurity for corpse material as related to humanness, see Balberg, *Purity*, 96–121.

55. See Michael Sokoloff, *Palestinian Aramaic*, 222 (on *tur*). He cites this passage and translates it as follows: "it is a man of the field, and he lives from the fields. If he is cut off from the fields, he will not live." This translation follows the insights of Lieberman, "*Tur—Sadeh*," 367; and Sperber, *Magic*, 23–24; Sperber argues that the word for field (*tur*, spelled in a way similar to the word for navel, *tabur*) led to the later gloss, "he lives from his navel and if he is cut off from his navel he will not live." This entered the Yerushalmi's text and caused some medieval commentators to think that the term *adne ha-sadeh* referenced some kind of plant or vegetable human.

56. Sifra Sheratsim parashah 4, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 51d) and Sifra Sheratsim parashah 3, pereq 1 (Weiss ed., 49d) respectively.

57. Hasan-Rokem, "Odysseus and the Sirens," 172.

58. The best manuscript (Vatican 66) reports this in the name of ben Ḥahinai (as does Vatican 33; cf. also JTS Rab. 2171 and London BL 314 with a slightly different spelling). Note both the Sifra here and tHull 4:13 reports a tradition according to which the Leviathan is a pure fish.

59. Irving, *Origins of the British Empire*; Jacoberger, "Sugar Rush"; Prieto, "Islands of Knowledge"; Morgan, *Slavery and the British Empire;* Rusert, "Plantation Ecologies"; Manjapra, "Plantation Dispossessions."

60. See Ramey, "Monstrous Alterity in Early Modern Travel Accounts," on Columbus's conviction that he saw sirens in the Caribbean Sea. For magical realism, see Braham, "Monstrous Caribbean."

61. See Miller, "Indigenous Spirituality and Caribbean Literature"; Alonso, *Diasporic Marvelous Realism*.

62. Padilla Peralta, "Epistemicide: The Roman Case," 175. According to Schwartz (*Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 15), Judaism was shattered. See also Schwartz, "Impact of the Jewish Rebellions"; Belser, *Rabbinic Tales of Destruction*; cf. Klawans, "Responses to Catastrophes."

63. The Hebrew "borrowing" of the Greek *seiren* is itself noteworthy. See Naeh, "Reception, in Rabbinic Judaism."

64. See Fernández-Götz et al. ("Dark Side of the Empire") for a critique of new materialist approaches that present "an unbalanced view of the working of imperialism," the counterargument in Khatchadourin ("False Dilemmas?"), and the response in Fernández-Götz et al. ("Power, Asymmetries").

65. For example, Clarke, *Shaping the Geography of Empire*; Bosak-Schroeder, *Other Natures;* Smith and Smith, *Man and Animal in Severan Rome*; König and Whitmarsh, *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire*; Geue, "The Imperial Animal"; Kachuck, "Humane Monsters"; Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*; Flemming, "Empires of Knowledge"; Kneebone, *Oppian's Halieutica* (esp. ch. 11); Laehn, *Pliny's Defense of Empire*.

66. On natural history or natural knowledge, see Lehoux, "Natural Knowledge"; French, *Ancient Natural History*.

67. Bosak-Schroeder, "Making Specimens"; Bosak-Schroeder, *Other Natures*.

68. Moser, "Roman Ethnozoological Tradition." On Diodorus Siculus's *Library of History*, portions of which contain ethnographic, geographic, zooethnographic, and also "paradoxographic" accounts, see Bosak-Schroeder, *Other Natures*.

69. Chin, "Marvelous Things Heard." Cf. Geus and King, "Paradoxography." On ancient disciplinarity, see Das, "Beyond the Disciplines of Medicine and Philosophy."

70. The work—thirty-seven books on a startlingly various array of subjects and (for lack of a better term) "—covers gynecology, anatomy, geography, and astronomy, for example, and the work gathers various kinds of knowledge, including several books about animals. As such, scholars have described the first-century Pliny's work as "encyclopedic," though not in the modern sense. See Beagon, *Pliny on the Human Animal*.

71. The *Physiologus* is a Greek work dated to between the second and the fourth century CE and composed in Syria or in Egypt. It is a Christian, Neoplatonic, allegorical reading of the natural world that draws from earlier natural histories and "paradoxographies." See Curley, *Physiologus*, xii–xxvi and *Physiologos* (ed. and trans. Zucker), 9–46.

72. Philo, *Spec*. 4.100–107; Kraft and Prigent, *Épître de Barnabé*; Muradyan, *Physiologus*; Zucker, *Physiologos*.

73. *Ep. Barn*. 10.6–7. See Drake, *Slandering the Jew*; Pendergraft, "'Thou Shalt Not Eat.'" The suggestion that their usage of Leviticus 11:7's *hazir* (pig), *hyaena*, or hyena (its etymology potentially deriving from the pig), instead of the Septuagint's pig as *hun* (acc.), is an error: see Kraß, "The Hyena's Cave." Note, however, that the author also discusses the pig in *Ep. Barn*. 10.3. See Moore, "Ideas of Genitalia"; Wilson, "Sexing the Hyena."

74. On these links, see Drake, *Slandering the Jew*.

75. *Physiologus* 27 (Muradyan ed. and trans., *Physiologus*, 131–32, 158–59). See also Greek edition, *Physiologus* 24 (Sbordone ed., 85–86).

76. *Physiologus* 27 (trans. Muradyan, 159).

77. The translation is from Curley, *Physiologus*, 53 (as a whole is based on Carmody [ed.], *Physiologus Latinus, versio Y*, adding this variant from Carmody [ed.], *Physiologus Latinus: Editions Preliminaires, versio B*, 34–35,): "The sons of Israel are like (*similes aestimati*) this animal since in the beginning they served the living God but later, given over to pleasure and lust, they adored idols. For this reason, the Prophet likens (*comparauit*) the synagogue to an unclean animal. Whoever among us is eager for pleasure and greed is compared to this unclean brute since he is neither man nor woman, that is, neither faithful nor unfaithful." *Physiologus latinus* (versio B) is also available through the *Library of Latin Texts*. MS Bern 233 was copied in France in the first third of the ninth century (Boodts and Magé, "The Latin Tradition", 124).

78. See yShabbat 1:3, 3b. For the idea of "transanimality," see Chen, *Animacies*, 127–55; Hayward and Weinstein, "Tranimalities in the Age of Trans* Life"; Weaver, "Trans Species." On the links between Jewishness and transness, see Cohen, "Eradication of Talmudic Abstractions." On the medieval bestiaries, see Hassig, "Jews and other Monstrous Races"; Strickland, "Jews, Leviticus, and the Unclean." See also Kraß, "The Hyena's Cave."

79. Joseph., *BJ* 7.5.5 132–37; Seut., *Nero* 31.1; Tac., *Ann*. 2.41. See also Totelin, "Botanizing Rulers"; Lovatt, "Flavian Spectacle."

80. See Miziur, "Exotic Animals"; Beagon, "Wondrous Animals"; Harden, "Animals and Public Entertainment."

81. Joseph., *BJ* 7.5.5 132–37 (Thackeray ed. and trans., 347).

82. On Pliny's *Natural History* as an encyclopedic Roman triumph, see Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, 51: "the biological books [of Pliny's *Natural History*] are punctuated by notices of triumphs in which this animal or that plant was first brought to Rome . . . no matter how distant the point of origin, everything known can be integrated into the city—to know a thing is almost to possess it."

83. For "Judea Capta" coins, see *Roman Imperial Coinage*, 2.1.159–69. For examples in the British Museum, see gold coin with sphinx and "[Armenia] Capta" on the reverse (*RIC* 1.513): Museum Number 1972,0201.1, British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1972-0201-1; and silver coin with crocodile and "Aegypto capta" on the reverse (*RIC* 1.650): Museum Number 1860,0328.114, British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/C_1860-0328-114.

84. *RIC* 2.1.275a.

85. Fine, "On the Development of a Symbol," 105–18.

86. Pollard, "Pliny's Natural History and the Flavian Templum Pacis."

87. Plin., *HN* 12.112 (Rackham ed. and trans., with minor modification, 80–81). Totelin translates *servit* as "is a slave" in "Botanizing Rulers," 122. Pliny also recounts the Jewish attempt to confound Roman extractive attempts: "the Jews vented their wrath upon this plant as they also did upon their own lives, but the Romans protected it against them" (*HN* 12.113, Rackham ed. and trans., 81). Though cf. Varro (*Rust*. 2.1.27–28): "swallows and storks, for instance, which bear in Italy, do not bear in all lands. Surely you are aware that the date-palms of Syria bear fruit in Judea but cannot in Italy." See Manolaraki, "Hebraei Liquores"; Totelin, "Botanizing Rulers."

88. Tannaitic literature registers plant life like the "Egyptian bean" (cf. Libya is Egypt), the Lesbos fig, Egyptian lentils, Egyptian gourds, and Egyptian mustard, all of which were grown in Palestine (and the subjects of considerations about planting and tithing—see mKilayim 1:2, 1:5, 3:4, 5:11, mMa'asrot 5:8; cf. also pigs and cows of Alexandria mBekhorot 4:4; tMakhhsirin 3:4 on Alexandrian wheat and a minority view on a boycott opposed by the sages; mMakhshirin 6:3 on fish from Egypt and Spain). These included also, as Sperber notes, fabric, baskets, minerals, wine, and enslaved people, as well as Palestinian exports of linen, bitumen, hides, wine, and oil (to Egypt). See Sperber, "Objects of Trade"; Weingarten, "Fish and Fish Products."

89. Barrett, "Recontextualizing Nilotic Scenes," 296.

90. See mBekhorot 4:4.

91. On connectivity, see Woolf, "Romanization 2.0."

92. Kloner, "Stepped Roads in Roman Palestine." On the frequent usage of mules for transporting baggage in Palestine in the third century BCE, see Hanson and Sijpesteijn, "'P. Oxy.' XVI 1919 and Mule-Breeding," 273. P. Yadin 56 instructs its recipients to transport some goods by mule.

93. On animals and entertainment in Palestine, see Weiss, *Public Spectacles*, 163.

94. Weiss, *Public Spectacles*.

95. Weiss, 69.

96. Thanks to Galit Hasan-Rokem for reminding me about the "Great Hunt" mosaic in the Roman villa of Casale, Piazza Armerina, Sicily, which shows animals captured and transported in ships from Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, and perhaps India to Rome. On the ecological devastation to animal populations wrought by the inexhaustible Roman appetite for "exotic" animals, as well as on the mosaic itself, see Nelis-Clément, "Roman Spectacles"; Hughes, "Europe as Consumer of Exotic Biodiversity."

97. See Hachlili, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements*, 155–69 for a discussion of the mosaics in the Gaza synagogue, Be'er Shem'a, and Sede Nahum, the Orpheus mosaic in Jerusalem (sixth century), and the Church of the Martyrs in Bet She'an.

98. Most in Palestine date to the fifth through sixth centuries (Hachlili, 157–58), except for that in the House of Dionysus at Sepphoris, which dates to the late third or early fourth

centuries (Hachlili, 157–58). See the elaborate El Alia mosaic (second century, Roman Tunisia) as discussed by Hachlili (169).

99. A favorite is the mongoose confronting a snake (some identify the *ḥulda*, which I have translated as weasel, as a mongoose)—for example, "early mosaic at the House of the Faun at Pompei" (Hachlili, 157 and figs. p. 257) and also Be'er Shema and Sde Nahum. See Jesnick (*The Image of Orpheus in Roman Mosaic*, 81) or Rosen ("Reidentified Animals," 182) on how these may show that the mongoose was semidomesticated in order to exterminate mice. A third-century triclinium Neapolis mosaic shows combat and hunting scenes in medallions of the scroll border (see Dauphin, "A Roman Mosaic Pavement," 14–18). Similar scenes appear in medallions of the scroll frame of the Sepphoris House of Dionysos (late second/early third century). See Hachlili, "House of Dionysos at Sepphoris," and, for fourth-century Lod, see also Mucznik, "Exotic Menagerie."

100. The majority of these Palestinian mosaics postdate the Tannaim (i.e., from the mid-third century on), but some (including those at Neapolis, Sepphoris House of Dionysus, Lod, and Caesarea) are roughly contemporary.

101. Elephant, lion, rhinoceros, panther, wild boar, deer, wolf in second-century wall CE paintings of Caesarea and Neapolis. Second-century BCE Marissa wall paintings of wild animals include the image of an elephant led by an African man; this is labeled "Aethiopia." See Jacobson, *Paintings of Maria*. On the Seleucid use of elephants in military contexts, see 1 Maccabees 6:35–37.

102. On Adam and animals as Christian genre, Orpheus and animals as Roman genre, and wall paintings in Israel, see the third-century Orpheus mosaic in Sepphoris (Talgam et al., *House of Dionysos*, 8–10).

103. See, e.g., Avni et. al. *The Lod Mosaic*. Creatures like the elephant, the monkey, the ostrich, and so on were seen as objects of exotica and luxury and as worthy of display in the Roman Empire; they were featured in collections, triumphs, and spectacles. Exoticized animals were also used for luxury goods (e.g., ostrich eggs were used for cups and elephant tusks were used for ivory); their depictions in the art of upper-class Roman dwellings and public buildings, including in Roman Palestine, only served to enhance these associations. See 1 Kings 10:22; 2 Chronicles 9:21; Ezekiel 27:15 (translating *shenhavim* or *shen* as ivory). Note the juxtaposition in the first two sources of ivory with silver, gold, monkeys, and peacocks (exported from Tarshish). Rabbinic sources point to a culture of animal spectacle, display, and conspicuous consumption (including their use of luxury goods, as in the case of ostrich eggs and ivory). See, e.g., mKelim 17:14. On Tannaim using ivory writing tablets, see Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 203–8.

104. The human is conspicuously absent in Lod (and fifth-century Taghba), but we find similar assortments of creaturely life in third- through sixth-century mosaics in Sepphoris, Bet Shean, and North Africa; these are also included in their animal, human, or part human/part animal iconography. Early rabbinic sources register gladiatorial and animal entertainment, and forbid Jews to sell gentiles bears or lions "or anything that may cause damage to the public" (mAvodah Zarah 1:7). The same mishnah follows with a prohibition against joining various non-Jewish building projects, including the stadium (*itstadia*) and the platform (*bema*).

105. The ethnozoology of animals was ichnographically expressed in the depiction of "exotic" animals originating from Africa and South Asia being led by people of color. Examples of this phenomenon in Roman Palestine and the Mediterranean include people

doing the following: leading a giraffe in the sixth-century monastery of Bet Shean; leading a zebra in the Baptistry of Moses, Mount Nebo, and Jordan; leading a giraffe in a sixth-century fragment from Syria or Lebanon (Art Institute of Chicago: "Mosaic Fragment with Man Leading a Giraffe"); and leading a zebra in sixth-century CE mosaic in the "Villa of the Amazons," Urfa.

106. Thanks to Sarra Lev for this helpful insight.

107. See par. tBekhorot 1:9, where the principle is doing different work in establishing the classification of species-variant offspring.

108. Ps.-Arist., *Pr*. 4.13, Mayhew trans., 159.

109. A shortened version of this principle is found in mBekhorot 1:2 and tBekhorot 1:6.

110. See Hasan-Rokem, "Odysseus and the Sirens," 173.

111. See yShabbat 14:1, 14c, and bHullin 127a. These only contain the second component of the principle of territorial doubles (i.e., dry land and sea). The version in yShabbat details species (*minim)*: "everything that exists on dry land exists in the sea, but there are many species (*minim*) in the sea which are not on land, and there is no marten in the sea."

112. Romm, *Edges of the Earth*.

113. Romm, *Edges*; Evans, "Ethnography's Freak Show."

114. Curiously, the marten is excepted.

115. That the Tannaim cast certain humanlike entities as beyond this we have seen. They also used this concept of wildness—the closest thing we might hazard to "nature" before nature—to deny the culture of certain humans who did not comply with their ways of life. Thus, mKiddushin 1:10 characterizes one who doesn't adhere to or know the Bible, the Mishnah, and "ways of the earth" (*derekh erets*) as "not part of the settlement (*yishuv*)." See n. 60 above for the relationship between the human *bor* and the animal of the wild (*bar*) or wilderness (*midbar*).

116. Jastrow opposes *bar* to *yishuv*, citing mKilayim 8:6 and bHullin 80a; he translates *shor habar* as "ox of the prairie, *buffalo*."

117. See yKilayim 8:6, 31c.

118. They do. See bGittin 68b on the *tarnegola bara* (lit., the wild rooster; cf. Jastrow's "hen of the prairie"): "and we translate it *nagar turah* (*mountain/rock/field-cutter* = woodpecker)" (par. bShabbat 78a); see also bHullin 80a (wild deer offered as *koy*) and yShabbat 14:1, 14b (wild pig).

119. See bBava Batra 74a, bHullin 63a. On the sea dog (*qelev hayam*), see Sifra Sheratsim, 4:2 (Weiss, 49d) mKelim 17:13; on animals, wild and domesticated, of the sea (*hayot hayam*, *behemot hayam*), see Sifra Sheratisim Parasha 2, 1; on the sea mouse (*akhbar yam*), see Sifra Sheratsim Parasha 5:1.

120. See bBava Batra 73a–74b.

121. Berkowitz, "Animal," 41.

122. Arist., *Hist. an*. 1.1, 488a 31–2 (Peck ed. and trans., 17, with minor modifications).

123. Plin., *HN* 8.79 213 (Rackham trans., 149, with minor modifications).

124. See nn. n38 and 42 regarding monkeys above; mYadayim 1:5 considers water poured by a monkey for ritual purposes to be valid; however, Rabbi Yose disagrees.

125. Bosak-Schroeder, *Other Natures*; Kominko, "Monsters and Barbarians"; Garland, "Racial Deformity"; Romm, *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought*, 82–120; cf. Beagon, *Pliny on the Human Animal*, 44.

126. Sperber, *Magic and Folklore*, 21–25.

127. Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 125–26. See also Wasserman, *Jews, Gentiles and Other Animals*, 73–119.

128. On John Chrysostom comparing Jews to dogs, heifers, hyenas, and stallions, see Drake, *Slandering the Jew*, 84–98; Stow, *Jewish Dogs*, 1–22.

129. Chen, *Animacies*, 97. Chen discusses this with reference to J. L. Austin's caveat that performativity without "proper capacity and goodwill" is a "mockery, like marriage to a monkey" (Chen, 94.). The "generalized context" is that of racist animalization of African colonial subjects at a time of liberationist struggle.

130. Friedman, "Aristotle in the Babylonian Talmud?"; Neis, "Reproduction"; Fonrobert, "Plato in Rabbi Shimeon bar Yohai's Cave"; Lieberman, *Hellenism*.

131. Plin., *HN* 9.1 2–3 (Rackham trans., 165); Leclercq-Marx, "L'idée d'un monde marin."

132. Beagon ("Situating Nature's Wonders," 23n18) suggests that Pliny may have drawn from Arist., *Gen. an.* 3.11 761b10–15.

133. Pliny, *NH* 9.1 3 (Rackham trans., 165). Pliny also reports that "great creatures resembling sheep come out on to the land in that country and after grazing on the roots of bushes return; and there are some with the heads of horses, asses and bulls that eat up the crops" (*Natural History* 9.2 7, Rackham trans., 167–69).

134. Throughout his writings Pliny refers to sea versions of nonhuman animals: the sea pig, which grunts like a hog when captured (*HN* 32.9 19); the sea calf; the sea horse (*HN* 32.20 58), and the sea mouse (*HN* 9.35 71). Pliny and Aelian mention the sea ram, the sea calf, the sea swallow, and the sea hare (or sea goat). See, e.g., Aelian, *Nature of Animals*, 15.2, 9.50. Varro points out how "very many names of fishes are transferred from land objects which are like them in some respect" (*On the Latin Language* 5.12.77, Kent trans., 75). Isidore of Seville (*Etymologiae* 12.6.4–5) claims that people first saw and named land animals, and then named sea creatures based, in part, on their similarity.

135. Pliny, *NH* 9.4 9–10 (Rackham trans., 169).

136. Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 113.

137. See Sadeh, "A Promise of Wisdom," 208. Sadeh compares the siren to the Lilith, also a birdlike, humanlike female creature. Next to the siren one can make out a bird with pinkish legs and claws/feet; to the right one can see similar legs and claws descending from the siren's plumage (itself like that of the bird). The scene also includes a Nereid riding an ichthyocentaur (bulbous body with fishlike tail, two horse legs in the front, human torso)—and another composite sea creature (we can make out a bulbous body with a sea creature's tail and horse legs and hooves). Galit Hasan-Rokem reads these images as potentially depicting half-fish and half-human sirens ("Odysseus and the Sirens.") Ceiling tiles at Dura Europos synagogue contain seventeen sea goats, twenty-one centaurs, fifteen dolphins, three hybrid "monster" serpents, and other creatures. See Stern, "Mapping Devotion." Other examples of animal-human creatures are to be found in Chorazin, Hammat Tiberias synagogue, and in the Huqoq synagogue mosaic.

138. The ichthyocentaur in the House of Leontis has part of its torso and head missing. There is also another composite sea creature (we can make out a bulbous body with a sea creature's tail and horse legs and hooves).

139. Origen lived from the late second century to the mid-third century CE. Scholars posit that his *Commentary* was written mostly in Caesarea in the final decade of his life (see Clark, "Origen.").

140. Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 3.12 (Lawson trans., 218–19).

141. Origen, *Commentary on the Song of Songs* 3.12 (Lawson trans., 219–20).

142. Cox Miller, *In the Eye of the Animal*, 71.; Cox Miller, "Origen and the Bestial Soul." See Curley, *Physiologus*, xiii–xiv.

143. For something of this idea, see Philo, *Opif.* 6 (Colson and Whitaker trans., 21): "Witness his (Moses's) express acknowledgement in the sequel, when setting on record the creation of man, that he was moulded after the image of God (Gen. i. 27). Now if the part is an image of an image, it is manifest that the whole is so too, and if the whole creation, this entire world perceived by our senses (seeing that it is greater than any human image) is a copy of the Divine image, it is manifest that the archetypal seal also, which we aver to be the world descried by the mind, would be the very Word of God." See Cox, "The Physiologus," 473.

144. Cf. Sifre Deuteronomy §306 (Finkelstein ed., 340–41).

145. See tBava Kamma 8:9–19. We go from raising chickens, pigeons, and small, domesticated animals (sheep and goats), to importing smaller, domesticated animals to Palestine and refraining from breeding domesticated cattle. This passage then revisits exceptions to the prohibition against breeding small cattle, moving thence to several tales in which people have become poor owing to their transgression of this prohibition, to the selling of inheritances of small cattle and pigs, to the "small wild animal" group just mentioned, and to dog breeding exceptions. The passage then moves to the parameters of hunting (pigeons, wild animals and birds, fish). It reads like a condensed, partly normative ("dos and don'ts"), quite informative (we hear about dovecotes, nets, frontier tons with roaming dogs, chained dogs, sheep and goat import industry), and exegetical (what parts of the land of Israel belong to whom, to whom does the wilderness belong, how were the various topographical and geological elements of Israel divided among the Israelite tribes) rabbinic version of the Greco-Roman hunting *Cynegetica* (lit., "to lead the dogs") literature. It contemplates people breeding pigeons in dovecotes and asks about who owns the creatures in different topographical and geographical areas of Palestine (cf. tBetsah on fish and wild animal vivaria). See also the restrictions on commerce with gentiles for village dogs, martens, cats, and monkeys: tShevi'it 5:9; giving an *eruv* to a monkey or domesticated animal who transports it is effective (tEruvin 2:12).

146. The meaning of *bardelas* in Greek is contested. See Nicholas, "A Conundrum of Cats." See Berkowitz, *Animals and Animality*, 120–52. On these animals in terms of whose attack on sheep does or does not count as an unavoidable accident, see mBava Metsia 7:9.

147. On *tarbut* (r.v.h.) as breeding, as well as cultivation or taming; and for a reversal of Lieberman's interpretation of tBava Kamma 1:4, see Zlotnik, "Different Readings."

148. See tBava Kamma 1:4 adds *tsavua* (hyena) and explains the Mishnah's logic. See Lieberman, *Tosefta Kifshuta*.

149. See mSanhedrin 1:4.

150. Some of them follow similar patterns to Kilayim. For instance, the Sifra enumerates the monkey (*qof*), the hedgehog (*qipod*), the marten (*ḥuldat hasn'aim*), the *adne ha-sadeh* (or field human), the sea dog (*qelev hayam*), and the elephant (*pil*) from various components of Leviticus 11:27. The pairing of dogs and pigs or the grouping of dogs, martens, monkeys, and cats appear surface in tBava Kamma 8:17 (dubbed as "small wild animals") and tAvodah Zarah 2:3, in discussions about the permissibility of breeding and selling animals. These appear in the Sifra, the Sifre, Mishnah and Tosefta Bava Kamma,

Mishnah and Tosefta Avodah Zarah, Mishnah and Tosefta Kelim, and Tosefta Bekhorot. Thus, while the all-too stenographic catalogs of Kilayim are organized by the drive to define and classify species (Kilayim), we find assemblages of animal life in Avodah Zarah that carve out spaces of commercial and cultural interaction with polytheists.

151. This is different from the approaches of Immanuel Löw and Yehuda Feliks, whose impressive works were dedicated to the explication of rabbinic flora and fauna in the light of material culture, Greek and Roman sources, and modern biology. See, e.g., Löw, *Die Flora der Juden*; *Fauna und Mineralien der Juden*; Feliks, *Mixed Sowing, Breeding, and Grafting*; *Plants, Animals, and Agricultural Tools; Visualizing the Mishnah*. See also Shemesh, "Biology in Rabbinic Literature: Fact and Folklore."

152. On the genre scholars call paradoxography, see Geus and King, "Paradoxography."

153. Conversations about realia and literary sources in ancient Jewish studies can founder on the assumption that so-called "realia" provide a kind of unmediated check or empirical baseline as opposed to the fantastical or imaginative literary sources, as if the former aren't also heavily mediated and shaped by ancient human and nonhuman actors and modern scholars. At the same time, I recognize the ways that the rabbis and their literary productions were profoundly shaped and impacted by *both* human *and* nonhuman (so-called "nature") cohabitants. However, just as I resist a priori assumptions of unilateral "influence" or "resistance" in one direction or another in the realm of human actors (though I admit that the brutalities of empire meant unequal distributions of power and access and the subjugation of provincials), so too, do I try to resist the idea of nonhuman actors as *either* passive background *or* deterministic unmitigated forces. Instead, humans and nonhumans live in the same world, mutually entangled in different ways across time and space and shaping and impacting each other. A corollary to this approach is a dissolution of an assumed human/nonhuman or culture/nature binary (that often hovers silently behind inquiries that consider only imperial versus provincial impacts in terms of cultural influence/resistance).

154. See mKiddushin 1:10. On "*derekh erets*," see Schofer, "Rabbinic Ethical Formulation"; Safrai, "Derekh Erets."

155. Murphy, *Pliny the Elder's Natural History*, 47.

4. HYBRID

1. For Leviticus 19:19, see Tg. Onq. *'iruvin*, Tg. Ps.-J. *'irvuvin*, Sam. Tg. *'irvruv;* Peshita *helta* (Leiden ed., *hwltn* for *heterozugountes*; "being unevenly yoked together" of 2 Cor 6:14).

2. This picks up on various other obligations toward oxen and donkeys, as well as birds, in the same chapter.

3. One might include in the latter the prohibition against weaving together different fibers.

4. On the extension of kilayim to things outside Palestine, see also mOr. 3:9 and mQidd. 1:9. On the enforcement of agricultural kilayim, see mSheqal. 1:1–2.

5. Even-Shoshan (*Milon Even-Shoshan*) translates this as "pair or couple a male with a female" (*tarbiya*—the *hiphil* or causative of copulate or inseminate). The same action (where *r.b.'* in a roundabout active/*qal* usage) describes a woman who engineers an animal to mate with her (Lev 18:23).

6. Sifre Deut Piska 119 (Finkelstein ed., 178): “they excluded mules, because they do not give birth (*yoldot*).”

7. See mBekh 1:2, tBekh. 1:9, and Sifra Qedoshim parashah 2, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 89b), which reads Leviticus 19:19—“my statutes you shall observe; your animals (*behemtekha*) you shall not mate with different kinds”—as follows: “This tells me only of a domesticated animal (*behemah*) with a domesticated animal (*behemah*). How do I know that [it is also forbidden to set] a domesticated animal on a wild animal, a wild animal on a domesticated animal, impure on pure, pure on impure? From ‘my statutes you shall observe.’”

8. Arist., *Gen. an*. 746a30–36, ed. and trans. Peck, 243 (with minor modifications).

9. See Hasan-Rokem, “Odysseus and the Sirens,” 173n39. Hasan-Rokem notes Rashi’s reading of bBekhorot 8a: “dolphins (*dolfanin*) reproduce and multiply like humans. What are dolphins? Said Rav Yehudah: children of the sea.” Rashi not only emends the first statement (a baraita; cf. tBekh 1:9) to “dolphins reproduce and multiply from humans” going on to claim that if humans (*adam*) have intercourse with them they will get pregnant, but also that “children of the sea” are “half-human form (*tsurat adam*), half-fish form” and are known as “*sirene*.” He has to emend the text in order to postulate them as hybrids (narrowly defined by the rabbis).

10. Lieberman, *Tosefta*, 221: “a horse that delivered a donkey kind, but its father was also a horse, it is permitted to mate it with a horse.” Note that Lieberman (*Tosefta Kifshuta*, 647) emends *sus sheyaldah min hahamor* to *miyn* (with a *yud*).

11. MS Vienna omits (MS Erfurt has it, and Lieberman supplies it in his edition).

12. According to MS Vienna, but MS Erfurt has “disqualified (*pasul*) for being on the altar” (or less literally: “disqualified with respect to the altar).

13. Lieberman (*Tosefta Kifshuta* 2, 647) refers to this latter entity as a *nidmeh* (one that appears or seems). This term is attested only in post-tannaitic sources.

14. This differs rather radically from their views on the possible hybridization and grafting of seeds, plants, and trees. In later, post-tannaitic sources, the rabbis envision a wider range of possible hybrids: the snake-lizard (*arvad* in bHul. 127a or *ḥavarbar* in GenRab 82:4 and yBer. 8:5, 12b). See, further, bPesah. 54a (who created mule and when); bSanh. 108a (different species mated with each other before flood).

15. Cf. tKil. 5:5, in which the sages declare that all mules (*haperadot*) are a single kind (*min ehad*) and that, therefore, mules that are the results of differently gendered unions of horse/donkey parents (i.e., female parent horse and male parent donkey versus female parent donkey and male parent horse) can mate with each other. Rabbi Judah disagrees, viewing mules of differing parentage as prohibited to one another. Though as discussed, in tKil. 1:8 he allows a female mule to mate with a mule but without specifying the parentage of either. Therefore, matrilineality is not the key factor for Rabbi Judah, at least in the Tosefta’s version of his views. In the Mishnah (mKil 8:4), Rabbi Judah does seem to espouse a version of the matrilineal principle for species designation (contradicting tKil 5:3). See Amar, “Onager and the Donkey.”

16. Cf. Cohen, *Beginnings*, 299–302.

17. Contra Cohen, mBekh. 1:2 does not refer to products of cross-species unions. The Mishnah and Tosefta expressly and separately forbid the results of kilayim as firstborn offerings. Second, in tBekh. 1:6 (MS Vienna), R. Yosa requires that the one bearing (*hayoled*, m.) and the one born (*hanolad*) are of the same kind. In the case of species variation, “if it has some of the signs resembling its father,” it still qualifies for the firstborn offering

(implicitly in bB. Qam. 78a). See the reference to breeding wild African rams with local ewes in Columella, *Rust.* 7.2.4–5, which states that the offspring kept "whatever appearance" (*qualiscunque species*) of the rams.

18. See mKil. 8:5–6, where *adne ha-sadeh* are treated as *hayah* and/or *adam* (wild animals or humans or perhaps both, depending on the situation). Similarly, the *huldat hasnaim* (or marten), the *na'amit*, and the *yeror* straddle or embody classes thought of as mutually exclusive: the first case is between the *sherets* (the reptile) and the *hayah*, whereas the latter two are "like birds" for all purposes.

19. Cf. editio princeps, tBik. 2:1, which has "resembles" (*domeh*) instead of "equivalent" (*shaveh*) in this first clause.

20. The Mishnah enumerates these contrasts, similarities, and distinctions. See mBikk 2:8–11, par. tBikk 2:2–1.

21. Romney Wegner, "Tragelaphos Revisited," 160; see Strassfeld, "Translating the Human," esp. 593.

22. See mBekh. 1:5 (par tBekh 1:13). See also tB. Qama 7:15; tHullin 6:1 and11.

23. Given the ways that the Tosefta does not follow the order of the Mishnah faithfully, but rather resequences elements, there is no reason not to align this statement with mKil. 8:5's deliberations (pace Lieberman). We may even go so far as to suggest that this short statement amounts to a reading of the supposed dispute between Rabbi Yose and the anonymous view of the Mishnah with respect to both the *adne ha-sadeh* and the *huldat hasnaim*. Specifically, the Tosefta seems to propose that Rabbi Yose's offerings are additive rather than that they negate the anonymous Mishnah's determination. This means that in the case of the *adne hasadaeh*, for instance, it is a *hayah* for some purposes but a human for others, being classificatorily multiple. This is different from forcing it into one category or another or positing that it has one even if we do not know what it is.

24. "How is it like neither the wild animal nor the domesticated animal? It is forbidden on account of kilayim with the wild animal and with the domesticated animal. One who writes over his wild animal or domesticated animal to his son has not deeded him the koy" (mBikkurim 2:11; cf. a similar argument about the dog in tKil. 5:8).

25. Cf. mNazir 5:7.

26. This is in marked contradistinction to the mule, which is referred to as a distinct species (*min*) rather than a *briyah*. This, as we will see, is in contradistinction to the humanly instigated mule, which the tannaim attempt to parse in terms of its relation to its progenitor species, which they consider, whether taken together, as separate species or "one species" (*min ehad*). Although, as we shall see below, the mule or kilayim in general is taken as queerly inserted on the very edge of creation's time. That is, it exists per se as a species, not as a one-off hybrid offspring.

27. See yBikk 2:8, 65b; cf. bYoma 74a-b and bHull 79b. The fact that the koy and the androginus (or intersex human or nonhuman) are both termed a "creature unto itself" should also alert us to their shared nonhybridity. The koy is potentially no more a "hybrid" of two kinds than the androginus is. That is, there is no particular cross-kind mating involved in either.

28. See Strassfeld ("Translating the Human," esp. 593), who asks why it is discussed in tractate Bikkurim and not in Kilayim; I would aver that this is because it is not an instance of kilayim. For Homi Bhabha's influential theoretical and metaphorical usages of hybridity, see Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, 85–92; see also Young, *Colonial Desire*.

29. Romney Wegner, "Tragelaphos Revisited," 160.

30. She does not extend this claim to the *androginus* person.

31. See mBik. 2:10 stipulates that one of the ways that the koy is like a domesticated animal is that if it is sacrificed, its cheek, shoulder, and maw are owed to the priest.

32. Lévi-Strauss, *Le Totémisme Aujourd'hui.*

33. The koy is fascinating in particular for the way that it embodies classificatory multiplicity, thus eluding or at least challenging monothetic species assignments.

34. On extending kilayim beyond Palestine, see mOr. 3:9 and mQidd. 1:9. On enforcement of kilayim, see mSheqal. 1:1–2.

35. See tKil. 1:1.

36. See mKil 8:1 allows for consumption and use of products of hybridized seeds (but not those mixed into vineyards). Garments can't be worn but are otherwise permitted; offspring can be maintained, and are, for the most part, not prohibited from usage (mKil. 8:1). Even the banned (or "sanctified") vineyard kilayim are permitted if they come into being by an "act of God."

37. See tKil. 5:6.

38. See tB. Metz. 7:9; tShabb. 4:1; Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael Beshallah, Masekhet Veyahi, Parshah 5; Sifre Deuteronomy Piska 119 (Finkelstein ed., 178); Midrash tannaim s.v. Deut 22:10. It may be useful to compare the rabbis on kilayim offspring to their approaches to the raising of sheep and goats (*behemah daqah*). Admittedly, one is viewed as a biblical stricture while the latter seems to be rabbinic. For restrictions against raising sheep and goats, see mB. Qam. 7.7 (forbidden in Israel, allowed in wilderness or Syria); cf. tB. Qam. 8:10, tSukkah 2:5 (permits trading and consumption). Reasons for the prohibition are unclear: remarks cast aspersions on shepherds and animal herders. bB. Qam. 79b reasons that prohibition is owing to the damage small cattle wreak. Sperber ("Trends in Third Century Palestinian Agriculture," 238) states that despite these restrictions, "a good deal of such breeding carried on, especially in view of the fact that the textile industry (wool) was highly developed in Palestine. In the third century small cattle breeding was particularly lucrative." See mAvod. Zar. 1:6 for trade in small animals (see also mPesahim 4:3); Sifra Qedoshim parashah 2, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 89b) implies breeding is permitted. Aminoah ("Enactments of Joshua b. Nun") suggests that economic devastation after the revolts explains the prohibition, and that improving economic conditions and pressures explain eventual exceptions.

39. See tKilayim 2:15–16; see also tKilayim 1:1. On unplanned kilayim, see mKilayim 5:7 and tKilayim 3:12. The Tosefta declares that products of vineyard kilayim are not subject to penalties of theft or obligation to tithe (though products of other sowing are: tKilayim 5:1–2).

40. See mShekalim 1:2. Goodman claims that kilayim "was generally disregarded" (*State and Society*, 103). Conversely, Schremer ("Second-Century Palestine," 335) affirms that "tannaitic sources presuppose that ordinary Jews observe the biblical prohibition of mixed kinds, kilayim" and Shamir ("Rarity of Mixing Wool and Linen," 297) finds little evidence of mixed fibers finds in Jewish settlements. Lev-Tov ("A Dietary Perspective") presents zooarchaeological evidence that indicates small cattle consumption was much higher than supposed; see his cautionary words on assuming circular reasoning that pig bones point to non-Jewish inhabitants.

41. See mOr. 3:9; parallels in mQidd. 1:9 and Sifra Emor 10:1 (Weiss ed., 100d); cf. mSanh. 11:3, which attributes greater stringency to "the words of the scribes" than to "the words of the Torah."

42. According to MS Vienna, or Eliezer, in MS Erfurt.

43. See tAvod. Zar. 8:8. See yKil. 1:7, 27b, bPesah. 49a–b and bYevam. 63a.

44. See yKil. 1:7, 27b: Scripture teaches, "my statutes (*huqotai*) you shall observe" (Lev 19:19). Rabbi Jonah, Rabbi Eleazar, in the name of Kahana, from Rabbi Eleazar: "because of the statutes (*huqim*) that I etched (*shehaqaqti*) into my world. So it was forbidden for the first human (or primal *adam*)."

45. Sifra Qedoshim parashah 2, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 89b). That the "others" here refer to non-Jews is evident by the exegesis shortly before this one: "You shall not take revenge and you shall not bear a grudge against the children of *your* people." You may take revenge and bear a grudge against others (*aherim*—people who are not Jewish). "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Rabbi Akiva says: "This is a supervening principle in the Torah." Ben Azzai says: (Gen 5:1) "These are the generations of Adam."

46. On Jewish distinctiveness, see Beth Berkowitz, *Jewish Difference*. On kilayim and tax evasion, see mKil. 9:2.

47. Sifra Aharei Mot parashah 8, pereq 3 (Weiss ed., 86a).

48. Ibid.

49. Berkowitz, *Jewish Difference*, 191.

50. Sifra Aharei Mot parashah 8, pereq 3 (Weiss ed., 86a–86b).

51. Sifra Aharei Mot parashah 8, pereq 3 (86b).

52. For this formulation for Leviticus 19:19 on kilayim, see Tg. Onq. *ʿiruvin*, Tg. Ps.-J. *ʿirvuvin*, Sam. Tg. *ʿirvru*.

53. 4Q269 9 (= 4Q270 5; 4Q271 3). 4Q418 103 ii 6–9 = 4QInstruction re: mixing property. See also Testament of Qahat, 4Q542 1 i 4–9, at 6 "strangers and *kilayin*," and at 9 "be free from mingling;" *kilayay*: 4Q542 1 i 12–13. The wisdom text 4QInstruction extends the interpretation to forbid the mixing of wealth, as noted by Kister, "Jewish Dimensions," 107–13.

54. Ibid., 113.

55. The Torah (Pentateuch) was likely translated in the third century BCE.

56. Kister ("Jewish Dimensions," esp. 113) persuasively argues that the expression in 2 Corinthians refers to social mingling rather than "intermarriage."

57. Sifra Qedoshim parashah 5, pereq 2 (Weiss ed., 93d).

58. Philo, *Spec*. 3.45–48, trans. Colson, 503–5 (with minor modifications).

59. Curiously, while Philo is keen to establish that creatures such as hippocentaurs and chimeras have "no existence outside of mythology" (*Spec*. 3.45, *trans*. Colson, 503)—describing these creatures as "unreal" (*anuparktōn*) and "spoken of in stories" (*memutheumenōn*)—he believes that human/animal unions can, as with Pasiphae, Queen of Crete, "produce unnatural monsters" like the minotaur (*Spec*. 45). Philo *distinguishes* kilayim from bestiality, making the former a "reminder" of the latter.

60. Philo, *Spec*. 3.49 *palimphēmon* (*palim-fēmos*), treated by *LSJ* as equivalent to *kakophēmos* and *dusphēmos*, lit., "ominous pronouncement" (bad news). In Philo (*Spec*. 45), the word is paired with *terata* ("monsters").

61. Indeed, directly before the passage just cited above, Philo faults Greco-Roman narratives, such as the human-animal coupling that produces the minotaur, as beset with depravity and sexual transgression (*Spec*. 43–45).

62. Notably among them, Cohen (*Beginnings*, esp. 302–3) effectively makes a Pauline argument for the tannaim.

63. See mBer. 8:5.

64. See tBer. 5:31. Cf. bPesah. 54a, which explains that fire was created at the close of the Sabbath; cf. also yBer. 8:5, 60a–b, which also does this.

65. See tBer. 5:31

66. Theophr., *De igne* (ed. and trans. Coutant, 36).

67. Ibid., 1.1–4.

68. On this problem and failure, see Van Raalte, "Nature of Fire." See also Ierodiakonou, "Theophrastus": "Theophrastus distinguished heavenly fire from terrestrial fire, which is always mixed with other elements, and pointed out that, in contrast to the other three elements, terrestrial fire can be generated artificially and constantly requires refuelling."

69. This debate about the creation of fire is potentially emblematic of all blessings that signal creation (i.e., that use the formula "blessed are you God, Lord, sovereign of the universe who creates"). See yBer. 8:5, 12b, which could be read as negating this possibility: it argues that fire is renewed constantly while entities like grape wine are not.

70. Sifre Deut piska 355 (Finkelstein ed., 418), according to Ms. London British Library 341 (also according to Mss Oxford, Berlin, and Editio Princeps); par. mAvot 5:6, which does not include the mule or fire; cf. bPesah. 54a.

71. Sifre 119 (Finkelstein, 178): "Rabbi Eliezer b. Jacob says: excluding female-mules who do not reproduce."

72. See mAvot 5:6 and Mekhilta *Beshalah-Vayissa* 5 to Exodus 16:32 (Horovitz-Rabin ed., 171); note that tSotah 15:1 describes the *shamir* as "a creature from the six days of creation," unlike mAvot 5:6 and Sifre 355, which relegate its creation to Friday at twilight.

73. See mShabb. 19:5, which teaches that a baby may be circumcised from the eighth to the twelfth day after birth but no earlier, so that one born at twilight is circumcised on the ninth day; see Kaye, *Time in the Babylonian Talmud*, 33.

74. Lieberman (*Tosefta kifshuta*) reads the Tosefta and other tannaitic sources as a deliberate repudiation of other etiologies for fire, such as in the Prometheus myth. However, this ambivalence is not in fact registered in tannaitic sources, though it is in the later Palestinian Amoraic texts. Lieberman cites these later sources to support his argument, including yBer. 8:5, 12b and bPesah. 54a, relying on their formulations that these entities arose as thoughts in God's mind to be created (*'alu be-mahshava*); although it is a bit of a stretch, I do wonder whether in these contexts the rabbis are playing with the name Prometheus as "he who thinks in advance" (*promēthēs*, forethinking).

75. Ael., *NA* 12.16, citing Democritus; cf. Isidore, *Orig*. 12.1.58, who similarly assigns human agency in initiating hybridization, describing how thereby humans "invented another species through adulterous mixture" (*adulterine commixtione genus aliud repperit*).

76. GenRab 7 (Theodor-Albeck ed., 53) and yKil. 1:6, 27a: for the debate between Resh Laqish and Rav Kahana about whether fish are included in the prohibition of kilayim. Resh Laqish argues that they are on the basis of *lemineihu* ("according to their kinds"). Boyarin ("'History of Sexuality,'" 343) adduces this as evidence for a thoroughgoing notion of categories of species written into creation that includes gender. However, this is not Resh Laqish's argument: he specifically notes the biblical usage of *min* for certain species and not for others (and there is no usage of *min* for humans); moreover, his view is then disputed. (Incidentally, the tannaim did not understand humans or creeping things to be subject to kilayim: see Sifra Tsav 10:1 and mKil. 8:6.)

77. GenRab 28:8 (Theodor-Albeck ed., 266). See bSanh. 108a, where flood generation mixed kilayim of animals with humans. (Cf. GenRab 34:8 for the derivation of the Noahide ban on kilayim.)

78. On *zunin* (often translated as "tares"), see GenRab 59:8 (Theodor-Albeck ed., 636) on Abraham's instruction to Eliezer in Genesis 24:4 "go to my land and to my birthplace and take a wife for my son," about which Rabbi Isaac says, "the wheat of your land (Canaan) is *zunin*, sow (or beget) from them (from my land)." In other words, for marriage purposes Canaanites are tares rather than wheat, so get seed from my land. See tQiddushin 1:4 on Lev 19:29 (par Sifra Emor parasha 1, pereq 2, [Weiss ed., 94b]). For one rabbi this means people having multiple partners such that the "whole world becomes full of *mamzerim*"— offspring from forbidden unions. Another considers that "the fruits become ruined" (or weeds; cf. also yKilayim 1:1, 26d). Note that these sources do not use the term "kilayim." See also Hareubeni and Hareubeni, "Zonin and Their Varieties." Pliny (*HN* 18.155), Dioscorides (*De materia medica* 2.100), and Theophrastus (*Hist. Pl.* 8.7.1) also understood that wheat could change into tares.

79. See ySotah 1:8, 17a–b. The passage goes on to describe the biblical ban on marrying seven peoples (including, implicitly, Philistines). Rabbi Eleazar: "In seven places, it is written, 'you should not marry them.' R. Abun said, 'This is to prohibit seven peoples.'"

80. See Lev. Rab. 23:12 on how God, who while painting "the form of the fetus (*valad*)," becomes flustered when a pregnant woman has extramarital sex, thus "ruining" the image.

81. See yKil. 1:7, 27b: "'Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in your house; your sons, like olive saplings around your table' (Ps 128:3). Just as there is no grafting with olives, so may there not be any unfitness (*pesolet*) among your children." Grafting is used in bYevam. 63a to describe marriages of Ruth of Moab and Naamah of Ammon to David and Solomon respectively. See also bPesah. 49a–b on marriages across noble, scholarly, and nonrabbinic (*am ha'arets*) families are described as grafting across differing grapes, but also on sleeping with their daughters being like sleeping with a *behemah*, and other animalizing insults. On the disdain for *ammei ha'arets* in the Bavli see Pomeranz, "Ammei-ha'Aretz as Subhuman?."

82. See yKil. 8:1, 31c.

83. See yKil. 1:7, 27b. Initially, this grounds the rabbinic inclusion of tree grafting "of a kind that is not its kind (*min beshe'eno mino*)" in a tannaitic midrash on Leviticus 19:19:"my statues you shall observe." Amoraim then associate this with the tanna Rabbi Eleazar, who subjects gentiles to kilayim as an additional Noahide rule. They do so with a wordplay on statute (*hoq*): "because of statutes that I engraved (*haquq*) in my world." This echoes the Sifra but to somewhat different effect.

84. yBer 8:5, 12b, JTS ENA 2594, 5; cf JTS ENA NS 23, 6 and GenRab 82:15: *lehibar'ot* these entities were not created, they arose in thought "to be created."

85. See yBer. 8:5, 12b: Adam, frightened of the dark at the close of Sabbath, is divinely enabled to find two flintstones, which he rubs to produce fire, and over which he recites "who creates the illumination of fire." The Talmud concludes with a teaching by the Amora Samuel: "therefore we bless over fire at the close of Sabbaths, for this was the beginning of its creation (*tehilat biryata*)."

86. Both play on the Hebrew for "the *yemim*," or *hayemim*, to allude to either *hemionos* or *hemis*.

87. GenRab 82:15 has "and coupled with her."

88. GenRab also has, “I did not create to cause harm and you created something to cause harm. By your life, I will create you something to cause harm.”

89. GenRab has “and coupled.”

90. Translated as “lizard” by many (e.g., Jastrow, *Dictionary*, “large Libyan lizard”); “a name for a reptile” (Ma’agarim). Cf. *hardona* in yBer 1:5, 17d (Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic*, “large lizard or crocodile.”)

91. The Sifra s.v. Lev 11:29 enumerates the “kinds” of the *tsav* (“great lizard” per New JPS trans.) as the *havarvar* along with the *ben hanefilim* and the salamander; Sifra (Weiss ed., 52); cf. bHullin 127a, which transmits a parallel tannaitic teaching that substitutes *arvad* for *havarvar;* it also incorporates a first-hand account (that is a partial parallel to yBer 8:5, 12b) of a tanna who witnessed people engineering an *arvad*. See also tBer 3:2 and yBer 5:1, 9a on R. Hanina ben Dosa and the *arvad/havarvar*.

92. See yBer. 8:5, 12b (par GenRab 82:15). Cf. par bPesah. 54a for two tannaitic-ascribed etiologies for mule. Rabbi Yose declares, “the thoughts of two phenomena arose in God’s mind on Shabbat eve but were not actually created until the conclusion of Shabbat.” Yose then has Adam receiving divine knowledge and mating a female horse and male donkey to produce a mule. Rabbi Simon b. Gamliel pins the first mule on Anah (Gen 36:24 as in yBer. 8:5, 12b). The Talmud reasons that just as “Anah as unfit (*pasul*), so he brought unfitness to the world,” going on to clarify that Anah was the product of incest. On white mules, Rabbi Judah the patriarch, and Rabbi Pinhas b. Yair see bHul 7b.

93. Thanks to Gilah Kletenik for thinking through this with me and for this formulation of the “middle path.” The solution in this case, the conceit of prethought, echoes Neoplatonic and related late ancient ideas of the forms, divine intellect, and so on, by which philosophers and Christian thinkers sought to resolve the broader problems of divine creation, transcendence, and infinite power and the finite creation (especially as expressed in the biblical account thereof).

94. See yKil. 8:4, 31c; cf. Sifra Qedoshim 1:1 (Weiss ed., 86d) on an analogy between the capital sins of cursing God and cursing a person’s mother and father, explaining as follows: “the three of them are partners in him (*shutafim bo*).” See Kiperwasser, “Three Partners, 3–5”; Kessler, *Conceiving Israel*, 67; Baskin, *Midrashic Women*, 19–22. The statement, “the three of them are partners in him,” is paralleled in yPeah 1:1, 15c, par. yQidd. 1:7, 61b; bQidd. 30b; bNid. 31a.

95. There is every reason to think that this is the “original” location, first because it is on point, and second because its inclusion in yBerakhot interrupts an otherwise flowing discussion about Anah’s “discovery” of mules; pace Kiperwasser (“Three Partners”), who is mistaken in concluding that “the mule receives its ears from his sire” (30n13).

96. For the former, see mHullin 3:7, tHullin 3:25–26 and chapter 2. For the latter, see mBer 5:2 and tBekh 1:6 (some of the signs) and tBekh 1:5 (some signs resembling its father).

97. See yNid. 3:2, 50c: “R. Yosa said in the name of R. Yohanan: If his body is animal and his face is human, he is offspring . . . R. Yosa said in the name of R. Yohanan: Not all the signs together but even just one of the signs. And these are the signs: The forehead, the eyebrows, the eye, the ear, the jawbone, the nose, the beard, and the dimple . . . Rabbi Abba, Rav Jeremiah in the name of Rav, the words of Rabbi: only when all [features of the] face resemble[s] that of a human. But the words of the rabbis: even one of the signs. And the words of R. Simon bar Yohai: even its fingernails.” See also mBekh.7:4 regarding small ears

and other “blemishes” that nullify the priest from priesthood; tShabb. 15:7 on the eight-month delivery: “Rabbi says: its signs are recognizable, its hair and nails are unfinished.”

98. Gal., *De semine* 2.1.43–45: “In fact, if a mare should receive in its uterus the seed of an ass, the fetus does not only have the kind of the father, but a mixture from both parents . . . He says that the offspring has more from the mother than from the father, the mule more from the mare . . .” (ed. and trans. De Lacey, 157–58). Here Galen paraphrases Athenaeus approvingly.

99. Johnstone, “Role of Equids.” On the Roman interest in transport and hybridization of animal and plant life, see Secord, “Overcoming Environmental Determinism.”

100. Adams, “Generic Use of ‘Mula.’”

101. Varro, *Rust*. 2.8.6 (trans. Hooper and Ash, 395). This opposes the Yerushalmi, according to which the ears tend to resemble that of the mother (in this case a donkey). Varro distinguishes the hinny and the mule in *Rust*. 2.8.1–2. Curiously, in discussing the rare exceptions of mules that give birth, Varro’s interlocutor points to how place can affect such matters given that we know that “the date-palms of Syria bear fruit in Judea but cannot in Italy” (*Rust*. 2.1.27–28, trans. Hooper and Ash, 331). Philo (*Spec*. 3.47–48) gives the mule as an example of a creature that is highly considered but reminds his readers that they are forbidden under the kilayim prohibition.

102. Columella, *Rust*. 6.37.5 (trans. Forster and Heffner, 219).

103. Ibid., 6.37.7 (trans. Forster and Heffner, 220–21).

104. Even if this too could be read in light of a desire to avoid mixing mules and hinnies, the point seems to be that the mule is more desirable if one must choose.

105. Galen, *De semine* 2.1 (trans. and ed. de Lacey, 144–65).

106. We see something like a hybrid- (as opposed to a trihybrid-) inflected conception of human generation in bNid. 31a, where God is contrasted to “flesh and blood: if a human puts different seeds in a bed each grows in the manner of its own particular species (*min*), whereas the holy one, blessed is he, shapes the embryo in the woman’s innards in such a way that all [seed] grow into one and the same species (*min*). Another interpretation: if a dyer puts different ingredients into a boiler they all blend into one color, whereas the holy one, blessed is he, shapes the embryo in a woman’s innards so that each develops in its own way.” See also yBer. 9:1, 12d–13a; GenRab 8:9, 2:22.

107. Boyarin, “‘History of Sexuality,’” 342. See also 343: “Thus when one man “uses” another man as a female, he causes a transgression of the borders between male and female, much as by planting two species together he causes a transgression of the borders of species.”

108. Halperin, *Homosexuality*.

109. The last phrase is from Romney Wegner, “Tragelaphos Revisited,” 160. While this is doubtless unintentional, the reasoning bears an eerie resemblance to the moves made in many conservative Christian and Jewish arguments about “homosexuality” being similar to kilayim because it is a violation of the natural order. See, e.g., Bauer, “Homosexuality According to the Bible,” and Dresner, “Homosexuality and the Order of Creation.” For kilayim specifically, see Dresner, 311–14 (interspecies coupling and kilayim) and 309 (“Homosexuality is a violation of the order of creation”), as well as 312 (“What may have begun as a pagan cultic cross breeding to encourage fertility, exploded into a fury of sexual license”). Boyarin (“‘History of Sexuality’”) denies the existence of “homosexuality” or “sexuality” in antiquity, arguing that the prohibition in Leviticus 18:22 was about gender

deviance (specifically related to sex acts, i.e., anal sex). On Christianity and "homosexuality," see White, *Reforming Sodom*, and White, "Judeo-Christian Morality."

110. Boyarin, "'History of Sexuality,'" 343; compare Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 54: "Holiness requires that individuals shall conform to the class to which they belong. And holiness requires that different classes of things shall not be confused . . . Holiness means keeping distinct the categories of creation. It therefore involves correct definition, discrimination and order. Under this head all the rules of sexual morality exemplify the holy." Contrast Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22*, 3A:1660: "mixtures belong to the sacred sphere, namely, the sanctuary."

111. Boyarin, "'History of Sexuality,'" 342.

112. See n23 above.

113. For example, trans. as "half-breed": Drawnel, "Admonitions (Testament) of Qahat," esp. 65; Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, 1083; trans. as "crossbreeding": Li Causi, "Hybridization as Speciation?"; trans. as assimilationists: Ben-Dov, "Scientific Writings," 398.

114. Cohen (*Beginnings*, 9–10, 18, 300, 303) deploys derogatory terms to refer to multiracial people in premodern sources, moving to such usages in the modern Americas. At the same time, he mostly refers to Jews in terms of ethnicity. Arcari ("Illicit Unions") interprets the various Second Temple sources on the offspring of the Watchers and women as a "hybrid" and "impure race" (5 and 41). This argument leans on Li Causi ("Livestock Breeding"), who argues a long-standing distaste for the mule as a product of "equine miscegenation." Hayes (*Gentile Impurities*) avers that her concept of "genealogical purity" is not "racial ideology" because it is "biological descent from full Israelite parents" that motivates the notion of "holy seed" rather than "purity of blood" (27). She insists that "genealogical purity" is "not racially based but religiously based" (230n30). Anderson ("Interethnic/Racial Marriage in Ezra") points to problems in this reasoning, including its artificial distinction between "blood" and "seed," particularly since the link between race and "blood" has long been discredited. She points out that the distinction is uninformed by critical race theory's demonstrations that the distinction of race and ethnicity (particularly between biology and culture) often fails to hold. It is even harder to maintain if the distinction is between two biologized materials (i.e., blood versus seed/genealogy). Heger ("Genealogy and Holiness"), on the other hand, argues that racialized readings of these Qumran sources are themselves tendentious impositions. See also Heger, "Patrilineal or Matrilineal Genealogy." On race as a category of analysis in premodern history see Heng, *Invention of Race*; Bahrani, "Race and Ethnicity"; Painter, *History of White People*, 1–33; Bethencourt, *Racisms*; Junior, *Blackness and Bible*. See also Fields and Fields, *Racecraft*. On race and disciplinary practices in classics see Chae, "White People Explain Classics"; Padilla Peralta, "Classics Beyond the Pale"; Umachandran, "One White Classics."

115. See above pp. X–X above for Kister's reading.

116. Cohen, *Beginnings*, 303. Conversely, Hayes contrasts Palestinian rabbis with their second temple predecessors in "overcoming" biological exclusivism by allowing conversion (188–89). Arcari links the cited Qumran texts with Enoch's giants' offspring as hybrids, even though they are not labelled as kilayim per se (3–5). He draws on Li Causi, "Cultural Construction of the Mule," for an unchanging history of how the "ancients (both Greeks and Romans) considered the mule to be an 'adulterated' horse, whose generation potentially threatened the order of nature" (384).

117. Cohen, *Beginnings*, 300.

118. The rabbis follow the cue of Leviticus 20's organization of sexual sins (*arayot*), including bestiality, adultery, incest, and "lying with a man, the layings of a woman" (Lev 20:22), which do not include *kilayim* among them.

119. Cohen (*Beginnings*, 299–302; "Matrilineal Principle") fails to address the variety of tannaitic views on kilayim offspring and is mistaken about a so-called matrilineal principle for animals (including the mule): see Neis, "Interspecies." In a future venue, I will demonstrate that a synthetic reading of a tannaitic matrilineal principle for humans is not necessary.

120. GenRab 56:1 (Theodor-Albeck, 595–96) identifies the "lads" as Eliezer (an enslaved Canaanite) and Ishmael.

121. All MSS except the Spanish printed edition have Rav Huna (the latter has Rav). This exegesis also features in bYevam. 62a, where Rav argues that the Canaanite enslaved person (*'eved*) does not have lineage; bNid. 17a on having sex in front of enslaved Canaanite men and women; bB. Qam. 49a a comparison of the fetus of a Canaanite enslaved woman to that of a donkey.

122. GenRab 56:2 (Theodor-Albeck ed. and MS Vat. 30) derives instead the notion that "enslaved people are like the donkey" (*'avadim ke-hamor*); cf. Lev. Rab. 20:2 (Margulies ed 448) has "the people who resemble the donkey" and which identifies Eliezer and Ishmael as the "lads."

123. Cohen, "Matrilineal Principle," 46.

124. It derives that "the offspring is like her" (i.e., enslaved Canaanite) from "the wife and her children shall be her master's" (Exod 21:4).

125. Par tBekh. 1:6 and 1:9.

126. Neis, "Interspecies."

127. For example, mBekh. 1:5 forbids using kilayim offspring to redeem a firstborn donkey (R. Eliezer disagrees), but mBekh. 2:5 rules that spontaneously species-variant offspring are only exempt from firstborn donation if they don't have "some of its features (*miktsat simanim*)." We also see a distinction between spontaneous variation and kilayim offspring in tBek. 1:6 (MS Vienna). R. Yosa requires that the one bearing (*hayoled*, masc.) and the one born (*hanolad*) are the same kind. In the case of species nonconformity, "if it has some of the signs resembling its father," it still qualifies for the firstborn offering (and implicitly in bB. Qam. 78a). Further, note the contrast in tKil. 5:3 of a spontaneously occurring variant offspring of two same-species parents with the offspring of two different species (i.e., kilayim offspring).

128. Cf. Cohen (*Beginnings*, 299–302; "Matrilineal Principle").

129. Not all agree(d) with Cohen's assessment of the matrilineal principle, e.g., Sigal, "Halakhic Perspectives"; Heger, "Patrilineal or Matrilineal Genealogy."

130. Thus Linnaeus, *Systema Naturae*, and, at the end of the eighteenth century, ranked hierarchically by Blumenbach, *Handbuch*. See Dewbury, "Scientific Racism in Early American Anthropology" and Jahoda, "Towards Scientific Racism."

131. Mitchell, *Righteous Propagation*.

132. Reichler, *Jewish Eugenics*.

133. Blau, *The Defective in Jewish Law and Literature*; See Berman, "Sociology, Jews, and Intermarriage"; and Wenger, "Mitzvah and Medicine." Wenger observes the "tenor of anxiety

about Jewish continuity" during the 1920s and 1940s. Wenger argues that "the popular rhetoric about Jewish assimilation, men (and sometimes women as well) inscribed their fears about Jewish continuity on the role of women. Jewish women were expected to ensure the Jewish future through the education and moral rearing of their children" (191). See also Doron, "Zionism and Race."

134. See Stern, *Eugenic Nation*. On eugenics and demographics, see Ramsden, "Carving up Population Science," and Wilde, *Birth Control Battles*.

135. Ordover, *American Eugenics*, esp. ch. 2; Daar, *The New Eugenics*. See also Allen, "Genetic Determinism."

136. Cullen, "Back to the Future" (quotation from 163); Carter, "Genes, Genomes and Genealogies"; Bolnick et al., "Science and Business of Genetic Ancestry Testing"; Marks, "Origins of Anthropological Genetics" on why human genetics and geneticists do not have access to "racialized" difference: "Race is not so much difference (because all populations and all individuals are biologically/genetically different); rather, it is meaningful difference (a subjective judgment that certain differences or patterns of difference are more important for classificatory purposes than other kinds and patterns of difference)" (S169).

137. Falk, "Eugenics and the Jews," 473.

138. Kahn, *Reproducing Jews*; Raucher, *Conceiving Agency*; Falk, "Zionism and the Biology of the Jews," and *Zionism and the Biology of Jews*; Sufian, "Disability in the Zionist Project."

139. Berman, Rosenblatt, and Stahl, "Continuity Crisis" and "Jewish Academia."

140. Kletenik and Neis, "What's the Matter With Jewish Studies?" and "Decolonizing Jewish Studies."

141. Schindler, "Facing the Realities," 85.

142. Both the long and shorter pieces were published the same year (Cohen, "Origins of Matrilineal Principle" and "Matrilineal Principle in Historical Perspective"). Twenty responses were included alongside the shorter piece published in *Judaism* (all but two by men).

143. See Cohen, *Beginnings*, 9–10, 18, for the use of terminology to describe biracial people (used in earlier American contexts) that would in other contexts be considered offensive; cf. Keel, *Divine Variations*, which argues that modern scientific theories of race draw on premodern Christian thought.

144. This is so much so that postcolonial theorists have critiqued the notion of hybridity as unintentionally carrying over these problematic resonances. See Young, *Colonial Desire*; Bahri, "Hybridity, Redux"; Kuortti and Nyman, *Reconstructing Hybridity*.

145. For this argument, see also Neis, *Sense of Sight*.

5. GENERATION

1. Lettow, "Population, Race and Gender"; Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm"; Roberts, "Reproduction and Cultural Anthropology."

2. Roberts, *Killing the Black Body*; Spade, *Normal Life*.

3. Meskus, "*Agential Multiplicity*"; Roberts, "Gods, Germs"; Roberts, "When Nature/Culture"; Strathern, *Reproducing the Future;* Hird, "Biologically Queer"; Neis, "Rabbinic Bestiary," 1–5, 30n24; Neis, "Life."

4. See Hird, "Transex": "Thus, in so far as most plants are intersex, most fungi have multiple sexes, many species transsex, and bacteria completely defy notions of sexual difference. This means that most living organisms on this planet would make little sense of the human classification of two sexes, and certainly less sense of a critique of transsex based upon a conceptual separation of nature and culture."

5. Ancient generation was "a larger, looser framework," including "not just animals and plants, but minerals too." See Hopwood, Flemming, and Kassel, *Reproduction*, 4. The inclusion of plants and minerals reminds us that coming into being, or life itself as it is related to all kinds of matter, was often scalar rather than binary for ancient thinkers. For this recognition in modern and contemporary ideas of animacy, see Chen, *Animacies*; Bennet, *Vibrant Matter*.

6. See bHullin 58a and bBeitsah 7a. For additional cases of generation beyond a heterosexual dyad, see the ideas of the hyena, which were attributed to Heradorus of Heraclea but rejected by Aristotle *De gen. anim*. III 6; 757a3–4; the phoenix (Plin. *HN* 10.2.3), the ichneumon (Aelian *NA* 10.47), and other various creatures in yShabbat 1:3, 3b. Cf. also Aelian, *NA* 1:24 on the hyena.

7. For decomposing matter such as excrement or corpses generating insects or worms, see Leviticus Rabbah 19:1 (Margulies ed., 415–16); GenRab 23:6 (Theodor Albeck, 227); and (implicitly) bBava Metsia 84b (worm emerges from corpse).

8. Mekhilta deRabbi Ishmael, Shira, 8 (cf. Mekhilta deRabbi Shimon bar Yohai 19 and 20).

9. Ibid.

10. Leviticus Rabbah 23:12 (Margulies ed., 545). While "paternal anxiety" might be one way to understand this midrash, the idea itself relies on understanding paternity as something knowable and determined at conception, i.e., coitus. But the midrash could very well throw such naturalized notions into question: cf. Kueny, "Marking the Body."

11. GenRab 8:9 (Theodor Albeck 62–63); par y. Berakhot 9:1, 12d; GenRab 14:3, s.v. "vayitser." Two *yods* mean two formations, one of celestial, one of bestial beings: Gen Rab 8:5, T–A, par GenRab 12.2. See Shick, "Gestation."

12. GenRab 26:7 (Theodor Albeck ed., 1:254)—consulting Vat. 30. Cf. "serving her house" as wives having sex with husbands in Tannaitic literature (Baker, *House*, 53–55 and 191–92). Cf. Baker's claim that "serving his bed" is reserved for the Bavli as a distinctive description for men having sex with their wives.

13. The latter more properly describes the susceptibility of the gestating fetus to the gestating person's sensory experiences.

14. GenRab 73:10 (Theodor Albeck ed., 2:854).

15. Raʿanan Boustan, "Miraculous Conception"; Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 131–35, 153–56 and references.

16. See bNedarim 20b in which the pious tanna Rabbi Eliezer tells his wife, Imma Shalom, that he refrains from looking even at her while having sex, "so that I may not set my eyes on another woman and my children come to be like *mamzerim* (progeny from forbidden unions)."

17. Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 151–58; bGittin 58a.

18. GenRab 24:6 (Theodor Albeck ed., 235–36), par. GenRab 20:11 (Theodor Albeck ed., 195–96). In GenRab 24:6 the implication is that Cain was begotten of spirits, i.e., that the only progeny who were *toldot* (generations) of Adam (human, in the image of God, Gen.

5:1) were those listed in Genesis 5. GenRab 20:11 focuses on Eve's title "mother of all living" to expand to these quasi human, quasi demonic offspring. See also GenRab 23:6. For a warming of Ahab's sexual "chill" via visual stimulation, see bSanhedrin 39b.

19. See bEruvin 18b.

20. GenRab 23:6 (Theodor Albeck ed., 227). Further, the text enumerates four transformations that occurred during this era, all of which seem relate to generation and decomposition: mountains become rocky and barren, human corpses rot and become worms, their faces turn monkeylike (*ke-kofot*), and they become susceptible to demons (per MS Vat 60). Cf. bSanhedrin 109a, where a proportion of those who set to build the tower of Babel became "monkeys, spirits, demons and liliths" (*kofim, ve-ruhot, ve-shedim, ve-lilin*). See Lieberman, *Hellenism*, 113.

21. Bundahišn 14:27–29 (Thorpe trans., 78; Anklesaria ed., 133–35). See Secunda, "Female Body"; Shick, "Gestation"; Kohut, "Parsic and Jewish Legends," and "Talmudisch-midraschische Adamssage."

22. Bundahišn 14B (Thorpe trans., 80; Anklesaria ed., 137–38). On this and the previous source, see Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 123, 156; Skjærvo, *Spirit of Zoroastrianism* and "Jamšid." For the Zoroastrian context for Babylonian rabbinic sexual practices, including eugenic concerns coupled with demonology, see Elman, "He in His Cloak."

23. Shai Secunda presents a broad diffusionist model for reading the Bundahišn together with Genesis Rabbah. See Secunda, "Female Body."

24. Two lucid introductions to scholarship and references on the editing and the redaction of Bavli are Berkowitz, *Animals and Animality in the Babylonian Talmud*, 31–35, and Watts Belser, *Power, Ethics, and Ecology*, 24–33.

25. Rubenstein, "Stammaitic Criteria," 423–424; Rubenstein, "Thematization of Dialectics in Bavli Aggada"; Rubenstein, *Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, 39–53; Friedman, "Further Adventures of Rav Kahana."

26. They do so in a suggestive anecdote in which a Roman matron encounters Rabbi Eleazar and his companion Rabbi Ishmael and their children's legitimacy is called into question, because of their size: "a herd of oxen could pass between them without touching them." Rabbi Yoḥanan declares the measure of Rabbi Ishmael's penis, Babylonian amora Rav Papa then declares the measure of Yoḥanan's penis (less, but not inconsiderable). And the editorial voice then assesses Rav Papa's penis. But, significantly for my approach to this sugya, the scrutiny of Yoḥanan's penis is missing in MS Florence. Hamburg 165 has Yoḥanan report on Rabbi Eleazar's penis as well (also Escorial and Vatican 117).

27. This narrative may have circulated independently prior to the editorial insertion into this passage. Both the teachings in Rabbi Yoḥanan's name and editorial insertion are absent in bBerakhot 20a which only has the anecdote. I follow MS Florence 8–9 and cite pertinent variants. Haim Weiss dubs it "the most compact and reliable of the manuscript witnesses of the story." See Weiss, "Four Sages Who Were in Our Town," 517–30; Balberg and Weiss, "'Raise My Eyes,' Gazing at Old Age in a Talmudic Narrative," 40–81. I favor MS Florence 8–9 owing to its concision and fewer explanatory insertions.

28. MS Hamburg here and at bBerakhot 20a has "when they come up and come from the immersion for the *mitsvah*." MS Hamburg spells out that these women have just immersed themselves in order to attain ritual purity after their menstrual period and before having sex with their spouses. However, note that the added verb "and come from"

also places distance and perhaps an interval of time between the women's immersion and Rabbi Yoḥanan, whereas MS Florence makes it seem like Yoḥanan is visible at their actual immersion "when they come up," i.e., when they are emerging from the water. All other witnesses have "when they come up from the immersion for the *mitsvah*" but not the extra "and come."

29. Ms. Barth 107 adds "and learned in Torah as me."

30. It continues with this midrash on this verse: And Rabbi Abbahu says, do not read "by a fountain (*oley ayin*)," rather "those who rise above the (evil) eye." Rabbi Yose said: from here "and they shall grow (*veyigdu*) into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (Gen 48:16). Just as with fish in the sea, water covers them and so the (evil) eye does not rule over them, so with the seed of Joseph the eye does not rule over them.

31. On the dating the *Bundahišn*, see Thorpe, *Bundahišn*, xix-xxii. See *Bundahišn* (33:43–45, Thorpe trans., 176; 11C:4; compare *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* 7:2). See also *Bundahišn* 35 (Thorpe trans. 189); Mary Boyce, "Astvat-Ereta."

32. In the biblical narrative Joseph was both beautiful and, for some rabbis, genderqueer, and subject to the "evil eye" in the form of the rapacious gaze of Potiphar's spouse (Gen 39:6–7). For extensive discussion of Joseph and this passage, see Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 146–67.

33. See bBerakhot 55b; bPesahim 110a. Sokoloff (*Dictionary*) translates *ziqpa* as "straight arm" rather than "thumb." This is a relatively late prescription if we go by the attribution to Mar Zutra.

34. On this symbol, see Hoss, *UnRoman Sex*; on phalli penetrating the evil eye, see Bartsch, *Mirror of the Self*, 138–52. For *ziqpa* as thumb, see Kutcher, "Babylonian Talmudic," 62.

35. If this sounds like a forced read, bear in mind that even the translation of *ben porat Yosef* as fruitful vine is contested, with biblical scholars suggesting "Joseph is child of a cow" (maintaining the animal imagery of Jacob's blessings to his sons) or even "Joseph is a wild donkey." See *HALOT*, v. 3: 960–64 and Swensen-Mendez, *Genesis 49*, 31–34.

36. For the similar formulation, "one who wants to X, one should," joined with acts of ritual power or "magic," see, e.g., bKeritot 5a (par bHorayot 12b) and bBerakhot 6a. Earlier, I viewed this as an ekphrasis: see Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 165.

37. This challenge more properly follows Yoḥanan's original statement, but is placed after the ritual recipe. While in its final form the passage seems to make the challenge a response to the editorial voice that gives us the ritual directions to conjure Yoḥanan, it could have stood, without that intervention, as a direct challenge to the inaugurating amoraic statement (by Yoḥanan about himself).

38. MS Escorial adds: "and the beauty of Adam was like the Shekhina." See par. bBava Batra 58a: "And Adam's beauty was like God's."

39. The parallel to the tradition in bBer 20a mentions God explicitly.

40. See bShabbat 152a. Cf. Leviticus 19:32.

41. The Stam in bSanhedrin 21a echoes the move made in this passage: "'And your renown for beauty went out among the nations" (Ezek 16:14): because Israelite women do not have hair on their armpits or groin. Tamar is different because she was the daughter of a (captive gentile) beautiful woman." In discussing a prohibition for men to shave armpit and groin hair (because of Deut 22:5), the sages tell R. Shimon bar Abba, "we have seen that R. Yoḥanan does not [have hair]," which the latter puts down to age (bNazir 58b–59a).

42. On Yoḥanan's beauty, see bBer 5b; for Joseph's rose-colored face, see bSotah 36b.

43. See par. bBava Batra 58a.

44. GenRab 8:1 (Theodor-Albeck ed. I, 5); see the excellent Kessler, "Bodies in Motion."

45. Hird, "Transex" and "Biologically Queer"; Enke, "Cisgender"; Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body*; Menon-Vaid, *Beyond the Gender Binary*; Stryker, *Transgender History*; Power, "Erasure in Roman Archaeology."

46. Boyarin, "Why is Rabbi Yoḥanan a Woman?"; Boyarin, "Are There Any Jews in 'The History of Sexuality,'" Boyarin, *Carnal Israel;* Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct;* Kalmin, *Sage in Jewish Society;* Kosman, "Johanan and Resh Lakish"; Satlow, *Tasting the Dish;* Neis, *Sense of Sight*.

47. This is not necessary per se. Queerness does not have to preclude trans readings; it in fact presages them. See Enke, "Transgender History."

48. Mel Chen, *Animacies*.

49. McConnell-Ginet, "Gender and Its Relation to Sex." See the discussion in Curzan, *Gender Shifts in the History of English*, as well as that book's bibliography on the variability of gender in English.

50. Ibid. See Whorf, "Grammatical Categories"; Ibrahim, "Grammatical Gender."

51. Strassfeld, "Translating the Human"; Strassfeld, "Transing Religious Studies"; Chen, *Animacies*.

52. On ancient discussions of grammatical gender for nouns, see Ibrahim, "Grammatical Gender."

53. On critical fabulation and speculative History in the writing of silent, as well as erased voices in the archive, see Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts" and *Wayward Lives*. I was not able to integrate the recent Betancourt, *Byzantine Intersectionality* and Devun, *Shape of Sex*, but see this book in conversation with these works.

54. Ahuvia and Kattan Gribetz, "Daughters of Israel."

55. See bYoma 9b: Resh Laqish was bathing in the Jordan; Rabbah bar Hannah came and gave him a hand.

56. All witnesses except MS Florence have "Resh Laqish saw them (R. Yoḥanan)" instead of "came by." MS Hamburg has "Resh Laqish saw them (*hazyey*) and thought they were a woman (*savar ke'ittetah*)," as does MS Escorial. MSS Florence, Munich, Vatican 115a, 117, and Frankfurt have variations of "Resh Laqish saw them and they appeared to him as a woman (*idme ke'ittetah*)." MSS Vilna, Soncino, and Venice simply omit the "woman" reference altogether.

57. MSS Vilna, Soncino, Venice, Munich 95, Vatican 115, Frankfurt, and Oxford just have versions of "and he leapt after it/them into the Jordan," whereas MS Escorial has "he stuck his lance into the ground and jumped across the Jordan after him (or it)" and MS Hamburg has "he stuck his lance in the Jordan and vaulted to the other side of the Jordan."

58. MS Barth 107 skips Rabbi Yoḥanan's remarks, but there is a faded but visible addition on the right margin that the Lieberman database reads "to your Torah." To my eye, looking at the photograph provided by the University of Frankfurt (https://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/mshebr/content/titleinfo/7692811), the final letter of the second word, which the transcription gives as *heh*, is difficult to discern; note the seeming Hebraicism of this correction (*torah* not *orayta*). For the preposition *le* used in this way, see Sokoloff

(*Dictionary*, 611), who cites bBava Metsia 28b ("a lost object [belongs] to the King") as an example of this usage.

59. MS Hamburg, printed editions, and other MSS all have "he (Resh Laqish) accepted upon himself."

60. The next line reads: They (Yoḥanan) taught him scripture and tannaitic traditions (or Mishnah) and turned him into a great man (*gavra rabbah*). See Sokoloff, *JBA*: "especially a virile male," citing bSanhedrin 37a. I would argue that this next line is better read as the first line of the next scene in the *bet midrash*, but that it obviously links to the themes in the preceding episode.

61. As does MS Escorial.

62. Rubenstein, *Culture*, 58–59: "R. Yoḥanan in fact recruits Resh Laqish with the exhortation, 'Your strength for Torah,' after seeing him display great physical prowess by vaulting over the Jordan River." This reading makes the most of the details in MS Hamburg. Friedman ("Further Adventures of Rav Kahana") shows the elements used to construct "the lengthy, late saga at bBava Mesia 84a" (267).

63. Boyarin, "Yoḥanan a Woman," 55. For "mistaken identity," see Kosman, "Johanan and Resh Lakish," 139. In those manuscript traditions in which the "mistake" is unmentioned, Boyarin sees evidence of homoeroticism. I, on the other hand, view the use of "they appeared as a woman" as indicating the promotion of something other than a homoerotic account.

64. The literature is vast: see Whitmore, "Flaccid Phallus Pendants"; Noy, "Evil Eye"; Bohak, "Amulets"; Nuño, "From Domestic Apotropaic Magic"; Kiyanrad, "Sasanian Amulet Practices"; Naveh and Shaked, "Amulets and Magic Bowls."

65. On MS Florence 8–9 as one of the more important Ashkenazi MSS, see Krupp, *Talmud*, 348–49, 352.

66. The literary parallelism also makes more sense when both pithy declarations are similes, i.e., your × (strength or beauty) is of *y* (ox or women). Otherwise, we end up with "your strength is better directed to Torah" and then "your beauty, of women." Or, according to some scholars, we end up with a symmetrical reading that reinforces heterosexuality: "your strength is better directed to Torah" and "your beauty should go to get you women."

67. GenRab 87:3 (Theodor Albeck ed. ii:1063). See also MS Vatican 30: Joseph after putting on makeup, curling their hair, and lifting their heel, is told to prove their heroism (*g.b.r*) concerning a bear and to "get up and jump [on] her (*koftsah*)." See Lehman, "Redemptive Readings." Lehman considers "homosexuality" and "homophobia," rather than "queer" and focuses on "male-male homosexuality." She acknowledges critiques of the latter as anachronistic for antiquity but commits to it "because of the bridge I want to build between the rabbis and the lives of students in today's society." Despite this praiseworthy goal, I respectfully suggest that the term "homosexuality" is anachronistic even for today's readers, being associated with stigmatizing contexts. The same increasingly goes for binary understandings of sexgender that underpin binary understandings of sexuality, i.e., heterosexuality versus "homosexuality" that then undergird cisheteronormative ideas of "sexual confusion."

68. GenRab 86:3 (Theodor-Albeck ed., 2:1054–55).

69. See MS Florence: *halfa benayhu baqra detura vela nega behu*. Compare bNazir 4b: "perhaps he (Samson) thrust [a jawbone of a donkey] at them but he did not touch them (*vela nega behu*)" and bBava Batra 74a: "and the knee of one of them was raised and the traveler entered under this knee while riding a camel with an upright lance and he did not touch him (*vela naga beyh*)."

70. On oxen as violent, see bBerakhot 33a and bPesahim 112b: even the so-called innocuous ox (*shor tam*) is dangerous; see bKetubot 50a on teaching a young child Torah: "feed him like an ox (*ke-tura*)."

71. On this motif, see Friedman, "Literary Development and Historicity in the Aggadic Narrative."

72. Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 131–32.

73. A queer, femme Yoḥanan is not incompatible with a nonbinary reading, and vice versa. The dialogue alludes to Proverbs 31:3: "do not give your strength (*helekha*) to women (*le-nashim*)." The storyteller seems to wink at the reader. This, combined with Yoḥanan's immediate proposal of their sister as a wife, recalls Yoḥanan's position on marriage vs. Torah study (which to do first): "a millstone round his neck and he should engage in Torah!" (bQiddushin 29b).

74. There is a coherence to MS Florence's brevity in which Resh Laqish simply acts and retracts (unlike MS Hamburg and other MSS, in which he first agrees—*qabil aleh*). This makes sense if the meaning of "*hadrat bakh*" is literal rather than a euphemism for repentance. See Weissberg, "Desirable but Dangerous."

75. This is especially in light of the same language in bBava Metsia 85a about R. Tarfon's grandson.

76. See yHorayot 2:4, 46d; par. GenRab 87:7 (Theodor-Albeck ed. 1072) citing Genesis 49: 24 (*vateshev be'eitan kashto*): *nimtehah hakeshet vehazrah*; cf. par. bSotah 36b: *shavah kashto*. Both Palestinian and Babylonian midrashim interpret the verse's remainder to mean that Joseph's seed them issued from his fingernails. This abundance of seed is perhaps also alluded to in Yoḥanan's invocation of Joseph's blessing earlier in the sugya.

77. *Maneh* can mean gear or equipment, but it can also mean ploughshare or coulter used by oxen: see bBava Metsia 80a.

78. MSS Florence 8–9, Hamburg 165, and Oxford: Heb. c. 17/69–78 make. No mention of Yoḥanan wishing to spawn children learned in Torah like them (all the other witnesses do contain this).

79. Unlike other witnesses.

80. This reading does not assume that this initial encounter between the two prefigures the second part—in which Yoḥanan becomes Resh Laqish's instructor and study partner—in quite the same way. In a future venue I consider the implications for the later parts of the extended narrative.

81. To paraphrase tBikkurim 2:4.

82. Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 166n226.

83. See mNiddah 5:8–9; 6:1, 11 and tYevamot 10:6. See also tNiddah 6:2. In discussing the interval between the start of puberty and its completion for a boy, the sages describe it as "from when he produces two hairs until his beard encircles: the lower and not the upper." Can it be that, after having raised the topic of rabbinic members (*evarim*), the Bavli's "facial glory" (*hiddur panim*) and Yoḥanan's lack thereof may also encompass pubic regions? See bNazir 58b–59a and Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 161.

84. On a beardless Sasanian courtier-eunuch's seal, and on beardlessness in Sasanian iconography, see Lerner, "Seal of a Eunuch." For Persian and early Islamic motifs regarding beardless youths, see Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 161–62.

85. Lev, "How the 'Aylonit,'" rightly points out that this is even more plausible, given tYevamot 10:7 (MS Erfurt) on the *aylonit*, in light of which it clearly distinguishes between the

aylonit as someone whose voice is heavy and who "is not distinguishable (*niqeret*) between a man or a woman." Cf. MS Vienna, which uses *niqar* for both seemingly applying it to the voice rather than the person. I depart from Lev in deliberately not gendering my translations (i.e., I preserve the "can't distinguish between man and woman" language in all formulations).

86. For the link between the Hebrew *saris* as a "group of non-female people" and the Akkadian ša rēši, which refers to a courtier who cannot procreate and who is represented as beardless in iconography, versus the *ša ziqni*, or "bearded courtiers," see Nissinen, "Relative Masculinities." For an excellent introduction to the methodological problematics of essentialist cisgender assumptions and ancient gender variation and multiplicity, see the insightful piece by Helle, "Non-binary Gender."

87. Lev, "How the 'Aylonit'"; Kessler ("Rabbinic Gender") presents a synthetic picture of the andrygonus individual in early rabbinic literature, demonstrating that the ways the rabbis include and exclude them in rituals. Kessler shows, for instance, a more "lenient" treatment of their menstrual period than women: see tNiddah 1:2; mNiddah 1:1.

88. Fonrobert, "Gender Identity." But she contrasts ambiguity and complexity of androginus persons with dualism in Roman law and in the rabbinic *aylonit* or *saris*. On this basis, Rosen-Zvi ("Rabbinic Masculinity") abstracts that rabbinic sex was the "product of a simple distinction between sexual organs," and insists that Boyarin's feminine masculinity wrongly "penetrates the very distinction between the sexes."

89. See tShabbat 15:9, par. GenRab 46:5 (Theodor Albeck ed. 461); cf. bShabbat 108a (*maqom shebo niqar ben zachrut lenaqvut*); bNiddah 25a–b.

90. Kessler, "Rabbinic Gender."

91. See tBikkurim 2:4.

92. See tYevamot 10:2.

93. Cf. bKiddushin 29b.

94. On the unstable grammatical gender of *biryah* and *beriyot* in rabbinic Hebrew, see Berggrün, *Lexical Issues*.

95. Strassfeld, "Translating the Human."

96. Crucially their likeness to "men *and* women" (tBikkurim 2:6) consist of all ways in which they are human: Strassfeld, "Translating the Human."

97. See tBikkurim 2:2.

98. I differ with Strassfeld who sees both koy and androginus people as exemplary hybrids. However, Amoraim do conceptualize the human itself as, or analogous to, hybrids. I have learned much from conversations with Max Strassfeld about these topics. While timing did not allow me to integrate the important insights of his recently published book *Transgender Talmud*, into this work, I plan to engage it in future work.

99. For differing views on whether or not the saris or androginus depend upon or shore up a sexgender binary for the rabbis, see Fonrobert, "Semiotics of the Sexed Body"; Fonrobert, "Regulating the Human Body"; Kessler, "Rabbinic Gender"; Kessler, "Gendered Bodies"; Strassfeld, "Translating the Human."

100. Balberg, "Nega'im"; Fonrobert, "Semiotics of the Sex Body" points to the gendered dimensions of whose bodies were subjected to the rabbinic gaze.

101. See Neis, "Eyeing Idols" on the rabbinic forensic gaze.

102. While the rabbis discuss the *androginus* person, they never speak of particular examples of such people, even in one of their brief case type anecdotes (like the Sidonian woman who expels a raven).

103. The concept of "normate" names the veiled subject position of cultural self, the figure outlined by the array of deviant others whose marked bodies shore up the normate's boundaries. It usefully designates the social figure through which people can represent themselves as definitive human beings (Garland-Thomson, *Extraordinary Bodies*, 8).

104. Friedman, "Woman with Two Husbands." Cf. bNedarim 20b in which the visual ascetic, Rabbi Eliezer, will not look at his wife during intercourse lest "I set my eyes (*etten et ʿenay*) on another woman and my children come to be like *mamzerim* (illegitmate offspring)." There are at least two ways to understand this. If the other woman summoned visually by Eliezer is married, for him to see her while having sex with his wife is to somehow involve her in the formation of offspring (and if he impregnated a married woman directly, the resultant offspring would be a *mamzer*). This implies that his visual insertion of the other woman into the mix has generative force—she is a third party. The other possiblity is that Eliezer has taken on the kind of sexual usually associate with married woman.

105. On immaculate conception of a virgin via seed in a bath, see bHagigah 14b-15a. On this passage's links to Bundahišn 14:27–29 (Zoroaster's seed stored in a lake and impregnating three virgins with successive Saošyants), see Levey, "Best Kept Secret." The Bundahišn's understanding of the conceptions is that the seed of men and women mix. The Bavli has a similar understanding of men and women's seed. See, e.g., bNiddah 31a (par. yKilayim 8:4, 31c) and Kiperwasser, "Three Partners." A vivid example of Babylonian views on women's seed involves Chaldean women (!) gazing at Judean captives who are unable to stop "emitting flows" (bSanhedrin 92b).

106. Rohy, "Homosexual," 109–10. Cf. the broader narrative from which Israelite women and Yoḥanan detours, in which Rabbi Judah, the patriarch, decries Ishmael's wife with: "how much reproduction and multiplication (*periyah u-revviyah*) did that evil one destroy among Israelites!"

107. See b. Shabbat 53b in which a widower unable to afford a wet nurse, "developed breasts like the two breasts of a woman and nursed his child." Amoraim dispute whether he was a great person to merit this "miracle" or whether he was dishonorable "because the orders of creation were transformed for him (*shenishtanu lo sidrei bereishit*)." This rarely used phrase may imply something like the potential for "unnatural." Cf. b. Sanhedrin 108b.

108. On demonology more generally, see Yoshiko Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing*.

109. See bBerakhot 6a.

110. See bHagigaH16a. Humans, on the other hand, share three features with angels: mind (*daʿat*), upright gait, and Hebrew. They share three features with animals: eating and drinking, generation (*parin ve-rabin*), excretion.

111. Ahuvia, *Angels in Ancient Jewish Culture*; Bamberger, "An Akkadian Demon"; Bamberger, "Jewish Legal Formulae"; Bamberger, "Vow-Curse in Ancient Jewish Texts"; Ronis, "Intermediate Beings"; Elman, "Middle Persian Culture and Babylonian Sages"; Secunda, *Iranian Talmud*; Gross, "Irano-Talmudica and Beyond"; Mokhtarian, *Talmud in Ancient Iran*. Cf. Brody, "Irano-Talmudica: The New Parallelomania?"

112. GenRab 24:6 (Theodor Albeck ed., 235–36).

113. See mGittin 9:3 and bGittin 85b.

114. Translated variously as "lilith of the open field," (Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*) and "desert lilith" (Bohak and Levene, "Divorcing Lilith").

115. Epstein (*Commentaries*, 336) reads "I stripped you naked," correcting Montgomery's "you are sent forth naked." See also Lieberman, *Tosefta Kifshuta* 8, 618n18. I read it

in parallel with other invocations of the phrase, which all read "you are stripped naked" (cf. Epstein, *Commentaries*, 336). See Shaked's "I sent you away naked and unclad" ("Dramatis, Personae," 383), versus "stripped and naked" (Shaked et al., *Jewish Aramaic Bowls*, 137).

116. Sokoloff (*Dictionary*, s.v. "*hvh*") translates this phrase: "do not be friendly with." See Juusola's (*Linguistic Peculiarities*, 195) "do not accompany," which is based on Epstein, "Commentary," 345 (contra Montgomery and Isbell).

117. Sokoloff (*Dictionary*, s.v. "*ko*") cites and translates this phrase as: "so go away you!"

118. Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, 190–92, Bowl 17 and Plate 18; Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 13; CBS 2922; following Epstein ("Commentary," 345; "Gloses babylo-araméennes") and consulting the image in Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, 190. For all quoted bowls, the transcriptions at the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* (https://cal.huc.edu) were consulted. For identifications and original publications, see Sokoloff, *Dictionary*, 62ff. See also Folmer, "Divorcing a Demon."

119. See Manekin-Bamberger (*Between Law and Magic* and "Jewish Legal Formulae") contra Lesses, "Exe(o)rcising Power" on the authorship of this incantation (given the first person "I, Komiš"), which is a logically separable question from whether some the incantation scribes were women. Manekin-Bamberger attributes the first person formula not to a woman-client as writer or author but rather the effort to use divorce formulae. See also Friedman, "Contracts," 451n120.

120. Lesses, "Lilith."

121. Tropper, "Children and Childhood."

122. On the valorization of celibacy (versus marriage) in Syriac-speaking Christian communities of Mesopotamia, see Koltun-Fromm, *Hermeneutics of Holiness* and Naeh, "Freedom and Celibacy." See also Siegal, *Christian Monastic Literature*.

123. Ibid.; Koltun-Fromm, "Yokes of the Holy Ones."

124. See bBava Batra 38b–39a on what constitutes the properly recited formula for protest against someone unlawfully occupying one's property. My warm thanks to Gilah Kletenik for thinking through Lilith, the incantations' usage of divorce, and rabbinic marriage and divorce ritual with me.

125. See *Alphabet of Ben Sira* 78 (Yassif, *Pseudo Ben Sira*, 64–65); *HALOT* s.v. *lilit* (Isaiah 31:14) for references and Alexander, "Demonology"; Müller-Kessler, "Lilit"; Blair, *De-demonizing*; Kosior, "Portrayal of Lilith"; Hunter, "Who are the demons?"

126. See bShabbat 151b, in the name of Rabbi Hanin in MS Munich. Note that the text does not explicitly gender but uses the default masculine singular.

127. See bNiddah 25b.

128. For example, Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, Bowl 8; Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 12; Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 150, Bowl 9, 150, 8; Naveh-Shaked, *Aramaic Incantations*, 198, Bowl 13; Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, Bowl 20; Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 27.

129. Shaked, "Dramatis Personae," 383; Lesses, "Exe(o)rcising," 358.

130. Genesis 2:25; Numbers 5:11–31 (the adulterous woman whose body and hair are exposed and unraveled); mSotah; bSotah 9a; Hosea 2:3–5 (on which, see Gordon, "Hosea 2:4–5"); Ezekiel 16:35. Cf. bSotah 8b: "shaliah artil."

131. See bEruvin 100b. Cf. GenRab 98:15 (Theodor-Albeck ed. 1266) in which Israelites sons and fathers "grow hair" (*megadlin se'ar*) becoming indistinguishable from Ishmaelites.

132. Lesses, "Exe(o)rcising," 358–59.

133. Similarly, with respect to descriptions of demons in Pahlavi, see Harper et al. (“Seal-Amulet,” 48n15), who state that *wizard-wars* is usually translated as “disheveled hair” but in fact means “parted hair.” Harper discusses the iconography of a Sasanian seal amulet that represents a demon (which is compared to the images on Aramaic incantation bowls). Cf. Elman, “Interreligious Polemic,” 189–90.

134. The *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* gives two idiomatic meanings and usages of *r.m.y*: “to have hair loosened” or “to have one’s clothing loose around the shoulders.” Cf. Sokoloff, *Syriac Lexicon*, 1472, “to have hair loosened.”

135. See Brock and Harvey, trans., *Holy Women*.

136. Frankfurter, *Prurient Gaze*.

137. Gonosová, “Sasanian Art”; Canepa, “Two Eyes”; Roussea and Northover, “Sasanian Royal Woman”; Meinecke, “Circulating Images.” See also Guidetti and Meinecke, eds., *Geography of Late Antique Art*.

138. See recently, for instance, Tawil, “Purim panel in Dura”; Fowlkes-Childs and Seymour, *between Empires*; Stern, “Syro-Mesopotamian Dura-Europos.”

139. Goodenough, “Dura-Europos”; Moon, “Nudity and Narrative.” For an example of a Sasanian vessel assumed to be depicting Anahita, see the fifth-/sixth-century dish at the Cleveland Museum of Art, https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1962.295; Neils, “Twain Shall Meet.” See also Boyce “Anāhīd.”

140. See, e.g., Lee, “Female Viewers.”

141. For example, see Hazan, “Les femmes salvatrices”; Xeravits, “Goddesses.”

142. Shaked, “Dramatis Personae,” 383.

143. See Ahuvia, “Jewish Towns and Neighborhoods.” For just some examples of scholarship the burgeoning subfield of late ancient Mesopotamia, see Gross, “Rabbinic Acculturation”; Han and Reed, “Reorienting Ancient Judaism”; Secunda, *Iranian Talmud*; Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 1–7.

144. Lesses, “Exe(or)cising”; 357–58. See also Lesses, “Image and Word”; Vilozny, “Lilith’s Hair.”

145. Bohak, “Attracting Demons,” 181: my emphasis.

146. Ibid.

147. For the first relatively clear images published, see Billiet, *Gazette des Beaux Artes*, 332, https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k976817on/f358.item.

148. On naturalism, see Elsner, *Art of the Roman Empire*, 13–20 and 127–30. For decentering the “Western” art historical category of “naturalism” and the progressivist evolutionary notions that underpin it, see Pasztory, “Pre-Columbian Art” and Abadia et al., “‘Naturalism.’”

149. Canepa, “Two Eyes” and “Cross-cultural Interaction”; Daryaee, *Sasanian Persia*; Tomber, “Rome and Mesopotamia”; Chang, “East-West Exchange”; Palermo, *North Mesopotamia*; Fowlkes-Childs and Seymour, *Between Empires*. See also Rezakhani, *Reorienting the Sasanians*.

150. See Malekān and Mohammadifar, “Sigillographic Evidence;” Vilozny, *Lilith’s Hair;* Alram, “Sasanian Persia,” esp. figs 1 and 12–14; Rousseau and Northover, “Sasanian Royal Woman”; Schindel, “Sasanian Coinage.” See the engraved seal «Sceau avec buste de femme” (Seyrig.1974.1080, Bibliotheque Nationale de la France, http://medaillesetantiques.bnf.fr/ws/catalogue/app/collection/record/ark:/12148/c33gb1v1s6). It represents a named woman

called “beloved of Shapur” whose coiffure and headdress are more elaborate than our image. Note the braided tresses, including one along each side. For a reproduction, see Gyselen, “Sasanian Seals,” 86, figs. 3, 88.

151. See the Sasanian seal of the right hand with similarly elongated fingers, each ending with a creature’s head and a bird on top: “Médailles et Antiques,” BNF, http://medaillesetantiques.bnf.fr/ws/catalogue/app/collection/record/19784?vc=ePkH4LF7w6yelGA1iKGxEkrKgqbo4sTi4sS8TGAihVaLRCYgfTxhCAA2aC74.

152. Furthermore, my examination of the bowl in person and in photographs showed that the genitalia are more protuberant than indicated in Na’ama Vilozny’s sketch (upon which Bohak relies: Vilozny, *Lilith’s Hair*, 293). For emphasized genitalia, see sixth-/seventh-century CE Iranian ewer, with two identical pairs of two dancing figures (emphasized genitalia of left figure, note bolded V-shaped outline of the genitals with a centrally located dividing line indicating labia, above, lightly incised vertical line representing pubic hair: Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art, https://asia.si.edu/object/S1987.117/). See also the fifth-seventh century Sasanian plate portraying Dionysos (depicted with rounded breasts). The smaller figure to Dionysos’s right has thickly outlined labia with small incisions for pubic hair and the small figure playing the lute, on the left of the lowest register, showcases a phallus and testicles (Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art, https://asia.si.edu/object/F1964.10/). For reproductions of these pieces, see Gunter and Jett, *Iranian Metalwork*, 121–27 and more generally Kouhpar and Mehdi, “Female Figure”; Daems, “Pre-Islamic Women.” On the representation of Anahid (linked to the planet Venus; *Bundahišn* 5:4) in Sasanian art, see Gonosová, “Sasanian Persia,” 40; cf. Compareti, “Zoroastrian Divinities.” Compareti argues against the identifications of Anahita at Taq-I Bustan because one has a beard but also points to Sasanian conventions representing men with muscles akin to breasts and as beardless. On the ruler Azarmigduxt’s coinage of 631 CE, which represents her (?) with a beard, see Emrani, “Like Father, Like Daughter.” See also Lerner, “Seal of a Eunuch.”

153. Were the chief viewers even human? Ortal-Paz Saar suggests not. See “Conceptual Parallels.”

154. Saar, “Conceptual Parallels,” 50; Lesses, “Image and Word,” 383; and foremost, Vilozny, *Lilith’s Hair* (extensively) refer to the difficulty of discerning gender in some (and in Vilozny’s case, many) drawings.

155. Vilozny, *Lilith’s Hair*, 36–63 and 111–234.

156. Ibid., 54, 55 (*tishtush*, *bilbul*, *ambivalenti, a-miniyim*); 145 (*iyvadaut*), 150 (*ambivalent*i); 179 (*ambivalenti* and particularly ambiguous representations of Lilith). Vilozny discerns that chest/breast markers are unreliable indicators of demonic sexgender in the bowl’s iconography. Genitalia are not always clear either. She points to criteria like clothing, only for those to not necessarily fit the other sexgender markers in various cases. She concludes, rightly, that this is deliberate (323).

157. Ibid., 303.

158. Ibid., 146.

159. Ibid., 324.

160. For example, ibid., 54: “Even when the chest is marked, it does not present as clearly rounded and feminine, but like two circles. Sometimes a depiction with such a chest also has a long hair, which makes it easier to identify her as a female image. However there are drawings where a clearly marked female breast is the only evidence of the character’s femininity.”

161. Ibid., 146: "Androgynous characteristics are often associated with those goddesses in charge of fertility and serving in the role of 'the Great Mother.'" Scholars have revised or critiqued the essentialist underpinnings of late nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century ideas that ascribed fertility and Great Mother cults to female assigned figures: see, e.g., Morris, "Ideologies of Motherhood."

162. Stryker, Currah, and Moore, 12.

163. Vilozny, *Lilith's Hair*, 150–51.

164. Ibid., 54, 57. On 161 Vilozny explains the "crudeness" of drawings across the corpus on grounds of a lack of artistic skill, of haste, of expediency, and of the fact that the bowls were going to be buried.

165. For example, Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, Bowl 10; Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 16; Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, Bowl 11a; Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 17: "and do not lie with her"—divorce text; Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 53; Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, Bowl 1; Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 1. See Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 41 in which enjoins "evil spirit (masc.) who been served in the house (*de-ishtamesh beveteh*) of "the client (masc.)" to leave. Isbell (*Corpus*, 127–27) translates "officiated in the house" but in a footnote adds "or, made use of." The phrase to serve the house can also refer to intercourse. See Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 81, Bowl 9: "purify the evil spirit . . . that oppose[s] this Minrahanid and uses [her in all the sinews of] her body." They suggest that "wymšmšh: 'and uses'; this could mean something sexual" (ibid.).

166. Bowl Moussaieff 3, published in Shaked,"Dramatis Personae," 381. Cf. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 140–42 (JBA 25).

167. Neis, *Sense of Sight*, 41–81; Elsner, *Roman Eyes*, 23–24.

168. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 18.

169. Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 85–106.

170. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 18.

171. Brooten, *Love Between Women*, 93.

172. Ibid., 96.

173. Shaked et al, *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 140–42 (JBA 25,).

174. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 79 (JBA 9); Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, Bowl 8; Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 12.

175. Ibid.

176. See the *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* s.v. *h.v.y*, which cites Ephrem, *Commentary* 2:25 (Leloir ed., 3): "there are those who dare to say that Mary had intercourse (*dhwt*) with Joseph after she bore the savior." Cf. bMoed Qatan 7b and bAvodah Zarah 51a.

177. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 79 (JBA 9). Isbell (*Corpus*, 127) translates "officiated in the house" but in a footnote (*Corpus*, 128) adds "or, made use of." The phrase "to serve the house" can also refer to intercourse.

178. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 178 (JBA 34).

179. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 211–13 (JBA 47). The child striking and smiting Lilith "takes children away from women and roasts them." She "drinks their milk" from these women, including the milk of Mahdukh who is divorcing her.

180. See bKetubot 10a; doors and hinges: bBekhorot 45a. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 211–13 (JBA 47), Lilith is twice told to retreat from the "entrance" of Mahdukh and not to appear to the couple while asleep or awake, while lying down or getting up. On

architecture and/as women's bodies, see Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity;* Baker, *House of Israel;* and Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*.

181. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 111–12 (JBA 15) and 200 (JBA 43) similarly, "from her opening, from her children, and from her house, and from her opening,

182. The architectural mapping mirrors the occasional use of body mapping (more often but not always when specific physical ailments are named).

183. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 273–74 (JBA 64).

184. See bNedarim 20a (*maqon hatinofet* in a generative context) bShabbat 64b (in which *maqom haturpah* and *ervah* are equivalent); cf. mNiddah 8:1 (*bet turpa*). See *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon* on *s.ʾ.b*, which can refer to ritual impurity or even menstruation, e.g., Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis 18:11 "menstrual impurity like women" as well as but sexual "defilement" (examples include Pseudo-Jonathan Genesis 20:3, "and Avimelekh did not draw near to her to violate her"). See *Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon*, s.v. "š.g.r.." This can mean to inflame with passion.

185. Shaked, "Dramatis Personae," 380, 382.

186. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, 217 (JBA 63)—the seed of four named men; and 193 (JBA 40) couple, refers to "seed of night and fruit of day."

187. Anatol, *Things That Fly*, 125. For infertility (*aqarta*) see, e.g., Montgomery, *Incantation Texts*, Bowl 11a; Isbell, *Corpus*, Bowl 17; Naveh/Shaked, *Magic Bowls*, Bowl 15. Cf. Sokoloff, *Dictionary*, 1208: "spirit of barrenness."

188. Anatol, *Things That Fly*, 126.

189. Shaked, "Dramatis Personae," 381.

190. Amulets from the Cairo Geniza introduce the Lilith reproductive connection even more explicitly, e.g., "that she not abort the fruit of her womb" (TS K1.18 lines 15–17, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-TS-K-00001-00018/1). See also TS K1.30 lines 8–10, https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-TS-K-00001-00030/1. This was published with translation and commentary in Schiffman and Swartz, *Incantation Texts*, 70–81.

191. See bNid. 24b.

192. Haraway, *Simians*, 181.

193. See Elman, "Marriage"; Lieber, "Jewish Women"; Payne, "Sex, Death."

194. Thanks to Gilah Kletenik for this vital nuance. On shifts over time and complex distributions of agency, see Hoffman Libson, "Grounds for Divorce."

195. Similarly, divorce was frowned on in Christian communities, though see Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells* 137–38 (JBA 24) for divorce formula, including "according to the law of Moses and Israel" for Mat-Yisu, daughter of Bat-Sahde, who may have been Christian (another bowl for her, see 208–9, JBA 46).

196. Lieber, "Jewish Women."

197. See Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, on enslavement: 3, 23, 62–63, 68, 149; on lovesickness, see 43–88. For a questioning of conventional gendering and fixation on marriage in interpretation of love spells, see Dickie, "Love-Magic."

198. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Magic Bowls*, 54 refers to "two of the more prominent owners of bowls in the Schøyen Collection," Mihranahid daughter of Aḥat, known as Kuṭus and Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh (the latter has nine bowls with her name on it.) These individuals may have been related and the bowls "were all written in a style of handwriting that could have been carried out by the same person or by scribes who belonged to the same school or family."

199. Secunda, *Talmud's Red Fence*; Daryaee, "Sight, Semen and the Brain."

200. If Mesopotamian society was organized along the lines of anything like the kind of social organization envisaged in Zoroastrian and Sasanian sources and histories thereof, we would be looking at a highly stratified and hierarchical one. Cf. Canepa ("Parthian and Sasanian," 312) on the diversity and complexity of Sasanian society, as well as on the diversity of Iranian forms of Zoroastrianism: "Zoroastrianism known from the Pahlavi books did not form until well after the Islamic conquests, and a number of rival practices continued to persist through the fall of the dynasty." Cf. Shaki, "Class System." See also Gross, *Babylonian Rabbinic Acculturation*; Payne, *State of Mixtures*.

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