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Gentile Wisdom Side-by-Side with Rashi: An Example of a *Masora Figurata* that Conveys Much More than Masoretic Knowledge

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Summary

Moritz Steinschneider said of the 12th-century French-Ashkenazi scholar Berekhyah ben Natronai ha-Naqdan that he "proved the point that political and social exclusion in Christian countries couldn't prevent the excluded from benefiting from intellectual goods."[1] Like his father, Berekhyah's son Eliyya seems to have been interested in the transfer of Gentile knowledge, as one *masora figurata* (*mf*) in a bible codex that he copied, punctuated, and equipped with Masorah indicates: On fol. 33r of MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ebr. 14 (BAV_{14}),[2] Eliyya illustrated the text of Gen 30:14–24 with a depiction of two strange anthropomorphic beings and an animal. We show that this composition represents an ancient myth about mandrakes which purports that the plant emits a deathly cry if its root is pulled out of the ground. Thus, the myth recommends tying a dog to the plant and getting him to uproot it, which leaves the animal dead but the human gatherer alive, and in possession of the precious root. Eliyya's depiction in BAV_{14}—a bible codex, of all things—appears to be the first known explicit reference to the mandrake myth in Jewish writings, if we do not count a story related by Flavius Josephus in his *Jewish War* about a plant called *Baaras* that displays most of the characteristics just described. Gentile sources from all over the world, on the other hand, refer to the mandrake and its strange properties hundreds of years earlier.

In this paper, we trace literary and pictorial references through time that relate (or might relate) to mandrakes, both in Gentile and Jewish works. We also discuss one 'specifically Jewish' explanation for how Reuben, the protagonist that deals with (and in) mandrakes in Gen 30:14–24, could end up with *duda'im* in his possession, an explanation that in all likelihood reflects widespread Jewish awareness of the mandrake myth. Interestingly, Eliyya did not depict this midrashic interpretation, but presented the mainstream culture's view in his *masora figurata*.

1 "Berachja [tritt] in den Kreis derjenigen, welche christliche Cultur und Literatur den Juden vermitteln und uns den Beweis liefern, dass die politische und sociale Ausschliessung in christlichen Ländern die Ausgeschlossenen nicht verhindern konnte, an den geistigen Gütern Theil zu nehmen." See Moritz Steinschneider, "Literarische Beilage: Berachja der Fabeldichter," *Hebræische Bibliographie: Blätter für neuere und ältere Literatur des Judenthums* 13 (1873), 80–85, here 85.

2 For a full list of abbreviations and sigla see page 181. I thank my reviewers for their helpful comments and suggestions; their advice helped me considerably.

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Fig. 1: *Masora figurata* on fol. 33r in BAV_{14}.[3] Photo courtesy of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

1 Masora figurata—masoretic information, exegesis and more

Masora figurata, the presentation of Masoretic annotations arranged as pictures, is a feature exclusive to a group of Ashkenazic bible codices produced from the 12th century onwards.[4] For a very long time, it was regarded as nothing more than decoration, and because of this, scientific studies were exclusively conducted in the context of art history.[5] Only in recent years has an understanding begun to emerge that exegetical links between the biblical text, the pictorial representations, and the philological content of the annotations do exist,[6] and that the figurative Masorah was used as a tool to establish an associative link be-

3 Cf. Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS ebr. 14 (BAV_{14}), fol. 33r. The manuscript is accessible online at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ebr.14 [accessed 04/2023], see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0069_fa_0033r.jp2/385,1821,665,409/full/0/default.jpg.

4 Cf. Kay J. Petzold and Hanna Liss, "Masorah, Masoretes," *Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception* (2019), 17: cols. 1267–1280, here 1275. Fig.1 shows all three elements of the *masora figurata* discussed in this paper.

5 According to Élodie Attia, this was still the case in 2015. Cf. Élodie Attia, *The Masorah of Elijah ha-Naqdan. An Edition of Ashkenazic Micrographical Notes*, Materiale Textkulturen: Schriftenreihe des Sonderforschungsbereichs 933 11 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015a), 9.

6 The philological peculiarities found in regular *masora parva* (*mp*) as well as in *masora figurata* have historically given rise to midrashic exegesis. One example, which is remarkable because the *masora parva* includes both philological information and an explicit exegetical interpretation of the same, can be found in the so-called Regensburg Pentateuch (MS Jerusalem IM 180-52), written ca. 1300 CE in Regensburg. On fol. 58r, the *mp*-note connected to the verb form תֵּיעָשֶׂה in Exod 25:31 says: "ז' ו' חס' ודין מל' ורמז שעתיד שלמה י' מנורו'" = "[the *nif ʿal* form עשה(י)ת occurs] seven times, six times defectively but *plene* here, and [this is] a hint that [King] Solomon was destined [to place] ten menorot [in his temple]." Cf. Hanna Liss, "Ein Pentateuch wie andere auch? Die Lese-Geheimnisse des Regensburg Pentateuchs," in *Metatexte. Erzählungen von schrifttragenden Artefakten in der alttestamentlichen und mittelalterlichen Literatur*, ed. Friedrich-Emanuel Focken and Michael R. Ott, Materiale Textkulturen: Schriftenreihe des Sonderforschungsbereichs 933 15 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 299–334, here 320–21. For an in-depth discussion of this exegesis, which was put forward by R. Abraham Ibn Ezra in his first (short) commentary on the book of Exodus (written ca. 1145 CE), cf. Hanna Liss, "'Like a Camel Carrying Silk.' Initial Considerations on the Use of the Masorah in Medieval Hebrew Commentaries," in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday*, ed. Ra'anan S. Boustan et al., vol. 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1121–37, here 1127–30.

tween biblical commentaries, or midrashim, and the biblical text.[7] Moreover, it can plausibly be argued that in a time when Jewish manuscripts were subject to Christian censorship and only bible codices were not threatened with immediate destruction,[8] *masora figurata* was used as a means of conveying subliminal messages to Jewish readers. A Christian reader, on the other hand, might miss such messages, since—due to a lack of knowledge of the Jewish traditions—he would assume that a specific choice of pictorial detail was arbitrary.[9]

An example of this phenomenon is a *masora figurata* in an Ashkenazic bible from the second half of the 13th century CE (British Library Or. 2091, fol. 203r). On one folio, the human-looking 'living being' from Ezekiel's vision is portrayed as a knight instead of as a winged, angel-like figure, as was common in both Christian and Jewish bibles of that time.[10] Sara Offenberg argues that a Jewish reader would have recognized this as a representation of the patriarch Jacob;[11] a Christian would merely have seen a high-status contemporary. The critical conceptual link is, on the one hand, to a Jewish tradition that envisions Jacob's image as inscribed on the throne of Ezekiel's vision, and, on the other hand, to the interpretation of the term אביר יעקב (e.g. in Gen 49:24) as 'Jacob the Knight'[12]—a term commonly translated today as 'the Mighty One of Jacob.'[13] Following Offenberg's argument, this *masora figurata* is an example of a broader self-identification of medieval Ashkenazic Jews with knights.[14] Ivan G. Marcus, who has studied this phenomenon in detail, concludes that Jewish figures were

7 Cf. Petzold and Liss 2019, col. 1278–79.

8 However, since the codex with which this paper is concerned was written in 1239 but "the first instance of Jews being forced to eliminate supposed blasphemies against Christianity dates from the mid-13th century," this motivation might not have come into play here. See Moshe Carmilly-Weinberger, "Censorship," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 4:539–41, here 540.

9 Visual clues meant to recall a certain exegesis are not unique to figurative Masorah; even unconventionally placed *tagin* could serve such a purpose. A Torah commentary attributed to R. Eleazar ben Judah of Worms mentions just such a case in its discussion of Exod 25:8. It explains that special *tagin* placed on letters in the word בתוכם "among them" were put there to remind the reader of a connection between the *mishkan* and the later First and Second Temple. Cf. Liss 2016, 326–27.

10 "Most portrayals of the four creatures in Jewish art follow the Christian convention of displaying the creatures with wings, making the human figure usually appears [sic] like an angel." See Sara Offenberg, "A Jewish Knight in Shining Armour: Messianic Narrative and Imagination in Ashkenazic Illuminated Manuscripts," *University of Toronto Journal of Jewish Thought* 4 (2014), 1–14, here 2.

11 Cf. Sara Offenberg, "Jacob the Knight in Ezekiel's Chariot: Imagined Identity in a Micrography Decoration of an Ashkenazic Bible," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 40.1 (2016), 1–16, here 6.

12 Cf. *ibid*.

13 The JPS and the NIV choose this wording; the KJV provides a similar translation, "the mighty *God* of Jacob." See Adele Berlin, Marc Z. Brettler, and Michael Fishbane, eds., *The Jewish Study Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), ad loc.; Kenneth L. Baker, ed., *New International Version. Quest Study Bible*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), ad loc., and Robert Carroll and Stephen Prickett, eds., *The Bible. Authorized King James Version*, Oxford World's Classics, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), ad loc.

14 Cf. Offenberg 2016, 15–16. In contrast to Offenberg's interpretation, Hanna Liss concluded, after an in-depth investigation of the list material that provides the text of the *masora figurata* in question: "The fact that the knight is made from verses of Ezek 1 shows that this figure represents God's glory as described in Ezek 1, rather than a human being or Jacob embodying the Verus Israel." See Hanna Liss, "Masorah as Counter-Crusade? The Use of Masoretic List Material in MS London, British Library Or. 2091," in *Philology and Aesthetics. Figurative Masorah in Western European Manuscripts*, ed. Hanna Liss, Judentum und Umwelt / Realms of Judaism 85 (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021), 131–75, here 162.

depicted as knights of the God of Israel in contrast with Christian knights, who pursued unworthy goals, and that the depiction of a Jew as a knight should be understood as a "polemical riposte" to the Christian concept of armed pilgrimage.[15] But there is an additional layer of meaning, as Hanna Liss points out: The Masoretic list material that makes up the knight's helmet and staff quotes lemmata from Ezek 47:18, i.e. the boundaries of Eretz Israel as presented in Ezekiel's final vision, thereby establishing that, the political reality of the crusades notwithstanding, the God of Israel still stands firmly on the side of his people.[16]
Thus, it is necessary to pay close attention to all aspects of a *masora figurata* if one does not want to miss any layers of its meaning. It is also advisable to call to mind a variety of traditions, not only from religious but also from secular backgrounds.

The codex and its scribe

The codex MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ebr. 14 (BAV_{14})[17] which was produced for a certain R. Asher,[18] contains the Torah, the Five Megillot and the *haftarot* according to the Ashkenazic rite; the text is vocalized and equipped with Masoretic notes. The individual Hebrew verses are followed by the Aramaic targum.[19] There is a total of 64 figurative micrographies in this book.[20] The writer of the codex,[21] Eliyya ben Berekhyah ben Natronai ha-Naqdan, reveals his name in a colophon and declares himself to be a specialist in punctuation and Masorah.[22] In another colophon on the last page of the codex, Eliyya also mentions the day of completion of his work; this sentence is somewhat hard to read but the year of completion is in all likelihood 1239 CE, and the day might be July 19 (= Tuesday, Av 16, 4999 *anno mundi*).[23]

15 See Ivan G. Marcus, "Why Is this Knight Different? A Jewish Self-Representation in Medieval Europe," in *Tov Elem: Memory, Community and Gender in Medieval and Early Modern Jewish Societies. Essays in Honor of Robert Bonfil*, ed. Elisheva Baumgarten, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, and Roni Weinstein (Jerusalem: Mosad Byaliḳ, 2011), 139*–52*, here 148*.

16 Cf. Hanna Liss, "Aschkenasische Bibelcodices als Träger exegetischer und theologischer Geheimnisse," in *700 Jahre jüdische Präsenz in Tirol. Geschichte der Fragmente, Fragmente der Geschichte*, ed. Ursula Schattner-Rieser and Josef M. Oesch, Edited Volume Series (Innsbruck: Innsbruck University Press, 2018), 203–23, here 211–212.

17 See BAV_{14}, accessible online at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ebr.14 [accessed 04/2023].

18 According to the colophons on fols. 239r–240v and on fol. 292r (DigiVatLib calls this folio "291r. [02.fx.0000]"), ll. 24–34 (of 40). Cf. BAV_{14}, fols. 239r–240v and fol. 292r. For an English translation of the colophons, cf. Norman Golb, *The Jews in Medieval Normandy. A Social and Intellectual History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 329–32.

19 For a detailed codicological and paleographical description, see Malachi Beit-Arié and Nurit Pasternak, *Hebrew Manuscripts in the Vatican Library. Catalogue*, Studi e testi 438 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 2008), 9–11.

20 Cf. Attia 2015a, 122–25.

21 It should be mentioned that the first folios of this codex (1r–3v) were replaced in the 15th century, probably by a scribe from the Italo-Ashkenazi area. Cf. *ibid*., 119.

22 This colophon extends over fols. 234r–241v. Cf. *ibid*., 126–27.

23 For an in-depth discussion of the dating of BAV_{14}, cf. Bettina Burghardt, "Taking the Scribe Seriously: The Dating of Vat ebr. 14 Reconsidered," *Corpus Masoreticum Working Papers* 4 (2022), 112–30, doi.org/10.48628/cmwp.2022.1.91776.

There is no information about Eliyya apart from what he reports in the colophons of the two manuscripts written by him that are still extant.[24] In MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz or. quart. 9 (SBB_9), Eliyya mentions that he completed this manuscript in Rouen (on October 26, 1233 CE = Wednesday, Marcheshvan 21, 4994 *anno mundi*),[25] so it's possible that his family lived there at this time. Whether Eliyya lived there also when he worked on BAV_{14} is not sure, since he does not mention the place of completion in the colophons in this codex.[26]

Eliyya, who was obviously very proud of his father's achievements, claims to be the son of Berekhyah ben Natronai, a scholar who wrote commentaries on all books of the bible.[27] A blessing that Eliyya included in the micrographies in BAV_{14} (fol. 236v) suggests that his father was already deceased when the son wrote this codex.[28] Unfortunately, only one of Berekhyah's exegetical works, a commentary on Job, has survived.[29] Berekhyah seems to have had quite a wide range of interests: In addition to religious texts, he also wrote a work entitled *Fox Fables* (משלי שועלים), in which he presented his own version of Æsop's fables, enriched with additional compositions.[30] Furthermore, Berekhyah composed a treatise based on the *Quaestiones Naturales* by Adelard of Bath, commonly called *My Uncle and My Nephew* (דודי ונכדי),[31] a lapidary (ספר כוח האבנים),[32] and two philosophical writings (ספר המצרף and מוסר השכל; second title reconstructed).[33] Eliyya thus obviously came from

24 Cf. Golb 1998, 436. The second manuscript is held in Berlin, and its colophon extends from fols. 197r to 197v. See Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz, MS or. quart. 9, (SPK_9). The manuscript is accessible online at http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/receive/SBBMSBook_islamhs_00004323 [accessed 04/2022]. For an English translation of this colophon, cf. Golb 1998, 325.

25 Cf. SBB_9, 197r. Elija writes רדום, which stands for Rouen: "The ancient Latin name Rothomagus was shortened in the Middle Ages to Rothoma or Rodom and the latter name was then variously transcribed as רודם, רודום and רוטום." See Bernhard Blumenkranz et al., "Rouen," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 17:497–98, here 497. Cf. also Moritz Steinschneider, *Verzeichniss der hebræischen Handschriften*, vol. 2 of *Die Handschriften-Verzeichnisse der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin* (Berlin: G. Vogt, 1878), 22–23.

26 There are possible indications that BAV_{14} was produced elsewhere. Cf. Burghardt 2022, 125–27.

27 Cf. BAV_{14}, fol. 292r, ll. 15–16 (of 40), and Golb 1998, 333. For detailed information about Berekhyah, cf. also *ibid*., 324–47, and Abraham M. Habermann, "Berechiah Ben Natronai ha-Nakdan," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 3:406–07.

28 See BAV_{14}, fol. 236v; the edition is accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/Vat.ebr.14/236v [accessed 04/2023], and cf. Burghardt 2022, 115.

29 Cf. Golb 1998, 335–37.

30 Cf. *ibid*., 339–41.

31 Cf. Berekhyah Ben Natronai ha-Naqdan, *Dodi Ve-Nechdi (Uncle & Nephew). The Work of Berachya Hanakdan, Now Edited from MSS. at Munich and Oxford, with an English Translation, Introduction etc. to which is Added the First English Translation from the Latin of Adelard of Bath's Quaestiones Naturales*, ed. and trans. Hermann Gollancz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1920).

32 Cf. Berekhyah Ben Natronai ha-Naqdan, *Berakhyah Ben Natronai ha-Nakdan, Sefer Ko'aḥ ha-Avanim (On the Virtue of the Stones). Hebrew Text and English Translation. With a Lexicological Analysis of the Romance Terminology and Source Study*, ed. and trans. Gerrit Bos and Julia Zwink, Études sur le Judaïsme Médiéval 40 (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

33 Cf. Golb 1998, 344–47. Whether Berekhyah could read Latin is unclear. While Ephraim Kanarfogel attests to his "familiarity with Latin" and Haim Schwarzbaum calls him "an Interpreter or Translator (mainly from Latin and French into Hebrew)," Cyril Aslanov thinks that Latin was "a language that the Jewish author probably did not know." In addition, Gad Freudenthal and Jean-Marc Mandosio, when investigating

a family in which traditional Jewish texts as well as works from non-Jewish antiquity and the Christian environment were valued. It must be emphasized that medieval Ashkenazic Jews did not live in isolation from their Christian surroundings, but took part in mainstream society.[34] Rashbam (who might have lived in Rouen, too, for some time[35]), for one, seems to have had "a thorough knowledge—both oral and written—of the nascent Old French literary tradition."[36] However, the degree to which Berekhyah immersed himself in non-Jewish knowledge in order to adapt it for a Jewish audience[37] seems extraordinary, and it would not be surprising if Eliyya had shared some of his father's interests.

The biblical text and the corresponding Masorah

The precise text that Eliyya knew was taken from BAV_{14} and compared to the BHS text, as was its Aramaic translation to Targum Onkelos, as edited by Abraham Berliner.[38] The differences between the Hebrew texts do not result in any changes in content. Apart from differences in the *plene*/*defective* spelling, there seem to be just one case of *aberratio oculi*, one of dittography, and one missing tetragrammaton, surely a copying mistake.

The term *duda'im* is a problematic one, since, to start with, it could relate to two homonymous lexemes—some kind of plant material on the one hand, as in Gen 30:14–16 and Cant 7:14, and some kind of container on the other, as in Jer 24:1.[39] Then there is the issue of the exact translation. Gesenius extrapolates the singular דּוּדִי from the plural form דּוּדָאִים and translates the first lexeme as "love apple (fruit of the mandrake, *atropa mandragora l.*, prob.

two Hebrew lapidaries which they relate to Berekhyah's ספר כוח האבנים, were able to show that these did "not [derive] from Marbode's Latin original but from medieval French versions"—which does cast doubt on Berekhyah's Latin prowess. See Ephraim Kanarfogel, *The Intellectual History and Rabbinic Culture of Medieval Ashkenaz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 86; Haim Schwarzbaum, *The Mishle Shu'alim (Fox Fables) of Rabbi Berechiah ha-Nakdan. A Study in Comparative Folklore and Fable Lore* (Kiron: Institute for Jewish and Arab Folklore Research, 1979), xxv; Cyril Aslanov, "Can the Language of Mishlei Shu'alim Give Us a Clue About Berechiah ha-Naqdan's Geographical Origin?" in *Berechiah Ben Natronai ha-Naqdan's Works and Their Reception*, ed. Tamás Visi, Tovi Bibring, and Daniel Soukup, Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études Sciences Religieuses 182 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 75–84, here 75; and Gad Freudenthal and Jean-Marc Mandosio, "Old French into Hebrew in Twelfth-Century Tsarfat: Medieval Hebrew Versions of Marbode's Lapidary," *Aleph* 14.1 (2014), 11–187, here 14.

34 "Ashkenazic rabbinic culture was not as isolated or as insulated as has been thought, although the areas in which other influences may have permeated must be carefully drawn." See Kanarfogel 2013, 534.

35 Cf. Golb 1998, 230–31.

36 Cf. Hanna Liss, *Creating Fictional Worlds: Peshaṭ Exegesis and Narrativity in Rashbam's Commentary on the Torah*, Studies in Jewish History and Culture 25 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 243.

37 Berekhyah explains his motivations: "When I saw such splendid wisdom placed in an ugly vessel, pearls in front of swine, I cleansed it from the hand of the Gentile, and wrote it out in the Holy Language, which is superior to any other languages." See Tamás Visi, "Berechiah ben Naṭronai ha-Naqdan's Dodi ve-Neḳdi and the Transfer of Scientific Knowledge from Latin to Hebrew in the Twelfth Century," *Aleph* 14.2 (2014), 9–73, here 46, and cf. 45 for the Hebrew text.

38 Cf. BAV_{14}, fols. 33r–33v, and Abraham Berliner, ed., *Targum Onkelos*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Gorzelanczyk, 1884), 32.

39 Cf. 'דּוּדִי*$_1$' and 'דּוּדִי*$_2$' in: Wilhelm Gesenius et al., *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament*, ed. Herbert Donner, 18th ed. (Berlin: Springer, 2013), 244.

rather *m. officinarum*, an aphrodisiac."[40] That this translation is not undisputed becomes obvious when we consult Matthew G. Easton's Bible Dictionary: "Many interpretations have been given to this word *dudâîm*. It has been rendered 'violets,' 'lilies,' 'jasmines,' 'truffles or mushrooms,' 'flowers,' the 'citron,' etc. The weight of authority is in favour of its being regarded as the *Mandragora officinalis* of botanists."[41]

BAV_{14} provides one additional piece of information, as the Aramaic Targum is given alongside the Hebrew text: *duda'im* are regarded as identical to יַבְרוֹחִין (*yavroḥin*).[42] In our context, it is less important to figure out what the original authors of the text meant by *duda'im*. It is more important to narrow down what historical readers up to the time when our codex came into being understood the word to mean, and what traditions developed.

The *masora parva* (*mp*) note that provides the philological content of the *masora figurata* (*mf*) on fol. 33r is attached to the verb form וַיָּבֹא in Gen 30:14 (see fig. 2).

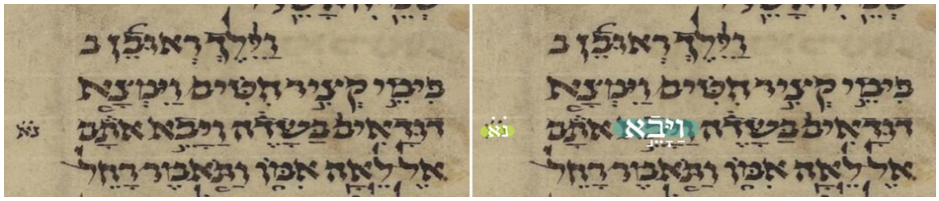

Fig. 2: *Masora parva* note and catch word for the *masora figurata* under investigation.[43] Photo of the manuscript courtesy of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

The corresponding *masora magna* (*mm*) note that is shaped into the *masora figurata* begins at the far right in the upper open part of the circle ornament with the statement "ויבא; one of 51 [instances] and [the/their] signs are" (see fig. 3), followed by a list of short but significant quotes (*simanim*) from 26 verses in which this verb form is used.[44]

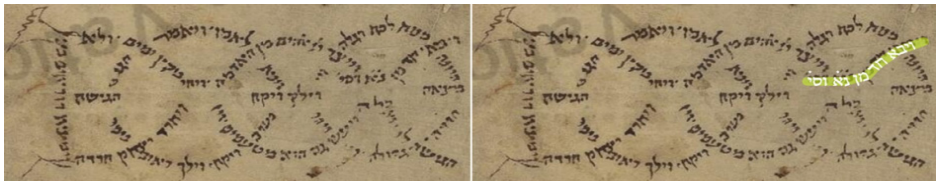

Fig. 3: Beginning of the *mm* note to אביו(Gen 30:14) in the *masora figurata*.[45] Photo of the manuscript courtesy of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

40 "Liebesapfel (Frucht der Alraune, *Atropa Mandragora L.*, wahrsch. eher *M. officinarum*, ein Aphrodisiacum)." See 'דּוּדָאִים' and 'דּוּדַי*$_1$' in: Gesenius et al. 2013, 244.

41 See Matthew G. Easton, "Mandrakes," *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (1893), 442–43.

42 Cf. BAV_{14}, fol. 33r.

43 Cf. BAV_{14}, fol. 33r; the edition is accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/Vat.ebr.14/33r [accessed 04/2023], see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0069_fa_0033r.jp2/858,639,445,215/full/0/default.jpg

44 ויבא חד מן נא וסי; see BAV_{14}, fol. 33r; the edition is accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/Vat.ebr.14/33r [accessed 04/2023].

45 Cf. BAV_{14}, fol. 33r; the edition is accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/Vat.ebr.14/33r [accessed 04/2023], see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0069_fa_0033r.jp2/1287,1958,452,209/full/0/default.jpg.

All occurrences of ויבא from the beginning of the Tanakh up to and including 1Kings are considered.[46] Whether the list continues somewhere else in this codex, and, if so, where, has not been determined so far.[47]

Interestingly, the term וַיָּבֵא appears only 50 times in the biblical text according to the BHS; the same verb form is used again in Ezek 40:3, but here is written with *tsere male* (וַיָּבֵיא) for the first and only time in the bible. However, the same *mp* note (נא׳) as for Gen 30:14 is attached to this singular verb form: "51 [times]."[48] This mirrors Gérard Weil's treatment in *Massorah Gedolah*, where list n° 639 informs us that וַיָּבֵא is used 51 times in the Tanakh and names Ezek 40:3 as one of these instances.[49] Unfortunately, this biblical passage does not belong to the *haftarot* and is therefore not part of our codex, and thus we don't know Eliyya's position vis-à-vis this particular verb form.

The Masoretic list extends over the whole circle ornament, the arch, and the circles of the figurative representation (see fig. 4). Gen 30:14 is referred to a total of three times: וילך ראובן בימי וימצא דודאים, "and Reuben went out in the days [of the wheat harvest] and found *duda'im*" in the circle ornament; חטים [...] בימי קציר, "in the days of the wheat harvest" in the arch; and finally דודאים בשדה, "*duda'im* in the field" on the lower line in the middle between the anthropomorphic figures.[50]

Fig. 4: Quotes from Gen 30:14 appear three times in the *mf*: in the circle ornament, in the arch, and between the anthropomorphic figures.[51] Photo of the manuscript courtesy of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

46 However, at one point in the arch (right column, below and inside), it is not completely clear to which verse Eliyya refers; he first quotes ויבא את הבדים, which happens to be the beginning of both Exod 37:5 and Exod 38:7, followed by ויבא א, which could have been taken from Exod 40:21, but also from Exod 37:5 and Exod 38:7. This is also the only quote in this *masora figurata* that matches Exod 40:21. Cf. *ibid*.

47 It is one of the goals of the *Corpus Masoreticum* project to edit all of the *masorae figuratae* in MS Vat. ebr. 14. Cf. Hanna Liss, "Introduction: Editorial State of the Art of the Masoretic Corpus and Research Desiderata," in *Philology and Aesthetics. Figurative Masorah in Western European Manuscripts*, ed. Hanna Liss, Judentum und Umwelt / Realms of Judaism 85 (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021), 7–33, here 21.

48 Cf. Rudolf Kittel et al., eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 5th ed., (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1997), ad loc.

49 Cf. Gérard E. Weil, ed., *Catalogi*, vol. 1 of *Massorah Gedolah. Iuxta codicem Leningradensem B 19 a*, (Rome: Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1971), 77.

50 Cf. BAV_{14}, fol. 33r; the edition is accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/Vat.ebr.14/33r [accessed 04/2023].

51 Cf. *ibid*, https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0069_fa_0033r.jp2/470,1898,1288,340/full/0/default.jpg

To find out whether there are any indications of the *duda'im* episode being of special importance for Eliyya ben Berekhyah, the corresponding folio in the other extant bible manuscript he wrote (SBB_9, fol. 20v[48]) was checked. However, this doesn't seem to be the case, since he refers to *duda'im* only very curtly in the linear *mm* on the top of the folio.[52]

The picture

The pictorial representation of the *masora figurata* on fol. 33r of BAV_{14} consists of three components (from right to left): a circle ornament, an architectural arch, and a third element in which two anthropomorphic beings are enclosed in circles surmounted with an animal.[53] It is unlikely that Eliyya wanted to make a special exegetical statement with the circle ornament itself; however, he added flowery embellishments at the left end, which are possibly intended to remind the educated reader of Rashi's bible commentary (which, as we will see, equates *duda'im* with jasmine). The arch is a motif that Eliyya uses several times in BAV_{14} in different contexts and with only slight variations (see fig. 5). The arches represent, e.g., an altar (fol. 9r) or the columns of the *mishkan's* outer court (fol. 93r), or they illustrate Oholiab's skills as a craftsman (fol. 109v); at other times they seem to be nothing but generic architectural elements (fols. 16v, 149r).[54]

Fig. 5: Side-by-side view of the arches Eliyya depicted in BAV_{14} on fols. 33r, 9r, 16v, and 93r, 109v and 149r (left to right).[55] Pictures are not to scale. Photos of the manuscript courtesy of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

52 For an in-depth discussion see Bettina Burghardt, "How Did the Vegetable Get into the Bible? Elija ha-Nakdan's *Duda'im* as a Tracer for Cultural Transfer" (Unpublished MA thesis, Heidelberg Center for Jewish Studies, 2021), 12. An edition of the Masorah on this folio is accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/edit/24bc162e-019a-4c75-8684-363d70240dd4 [accessed 04/2023].

53 Cf. fig. 4 on page 128.

54 Cf. BAV_{14}, fols. 9r, 16v, 93r, 109v and 149r; the editions are accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/6b51d3f1-639f-485d-a68b-1b05ee401b15 [accessed 04/2023].

55 See BAV_{14}, fols. 33r (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0069_fa_0033r.jp2/919,1909,365,322/full/0/default.jpg), 9r (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0021_fa_0009r.jp2/528,1976,310,279/full/0/default.jpg), 16v (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0036_fa_0016v.jp2/431,1923,355,297/full/0/default.jpg), 93r (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0181_fa_0093r.jp2/1322,1978,247,225/full/0/default.jpg), 109v (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0212_fa_0109v.jp2/472,1963,151,147/

It is possible that Eliyya envisioned the arch on fol. 33r as a trellis for a jasmine vine, which could be another allusion to Rashi's bible commentary. But since not all of Eliyya's arches seem to have a specific meaning, it might also be just a design element in this case, especially since no flowers are added to the arch. Keeping these possibilities in mind, the focus of the investigation will henceforth be on the third design element.

The picture: Duda'im: roots—two—male/female

Considering that the word *duda'im* is the object of the sentence to which the masoretic note is linked, that Eliyya quotes Gen 30:14 three times in his micrography (once in each of the three components of the *masora figurata*), and that he writes the word דודאים twice, it stands to reason that the term *duda'im* is associated with the central motif of his drawing. Since it is also possible—as has already been shown—to identify *duda'im* with mandrakes, and since the roots of mandrakes are in fact often shaped like human figures (see fig. 6), it makes sense to identify the anthropomorphic beings as mandrakes, as Golb does.[56] This is not the only way to look at it; Attia, for example, understands them as two newborn children, namely Judah and Levi.[57]

Fig. 6: Mandrake roots can look somewhat like a human. Photo of the plant courtesy of Richo Cech. Photo of the manuscript courtesy of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.[58]

full/0/default.jpg), and 149r (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0297_fa_0149r.jp2/1299,1935,374,324/full/0/default.jpg).

56 "The representations [in Vat ebr. 14] include the ark of Noah, the bird sent by him to dry land, his sacrifice, Abraham on his camel, the oaks and the cave of Mamre, the cave of Machpelah, Eliezer on a camel, Rebeccah by the well, Esau the huntsman, Reuben and the mandrakes, the ox and ass of Jacob, and numerous other themes extending throughout the Pentateuch." See Golb 1998, 438.

57 Cf. Élodie Attia, "Editing Medieval Ashkenazi Masorah and Masora Figurata: Observations on the Functions of the Micrography in Hebrew Manuscripts," *Sefarad* 75.1 (2015b), 7–33, here 12 and 28.

58 See BAV_{14}, fol. 33r, https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0069_fa_0033r.jp2/504,1997,379,186/full/0/default.jpg.

Each of the creatures in Eliyya's picture has a head with long hair, shaped like sidelocks (*pe'ot*), and a body, but no extremities. Long thin lines emerge from the lower end of the torso; these could represent fine roots. The two creatures are very similar in design; the patterning of the torsos is different, the head shapes deviate slightly, and the body of the left figure is triangular, while that of the right figure is more like an hourglass. Since a triangular body shape (broad shoulders, narrow hips) is generally associated with men and an hourglass shape (broader shoulders, narrow waist, broad hips) with women, it is possible that Eliyya wanted to represent a 'female' and 'male' mandrake here. The idea that these exist is based on the fact that there are actually two slightly different plant species within the genus *mandragora*; the classification as 'male' and 'female' is, however, arbitrary.

> From early times, a "male" form (*Mandragora officinalis*) and a female [sic] form (*M. autumnalis*) were distinguished. The "male" was characterized by a whitish root, large, smooth, broad whitish smooth leaves, and globular yellow to saffron colored berries with a pleasant, heady, fragrance. The less common "female" had externally blackish and smaller roots, narrow, dark green leaves, and smaller pale berries ripening later than those of the "male" form and having a strong and unpleasant odor.[59]

If, on the other hand, one wanted to follow Attia's suggestion and understand these beings as newborns, one could explain the lack of visible extremities as Eliyya having drawn swaddled babies. The long hair could be explained as anticipating the *pe'ot* that Judah and Levi would wear later in life, even if they appear exceedingly long here. Even so, the long thin lines emanating from the lower end of the bodies would still need to be explained. All in all, the assumption that the anthropomorphic figures represent two mandrake roots, possibly a 'male' and a 'female,' seems more convincing.

The picture: the animal

Eliyya's abilities as an illustrator are limited. At first glance, it is difficult to decide which animal he wanted to draw on fol. 33r, and one needs to consult his other animal depictions to figure this out (see fig. 7).

Eliyya has helpfully added the name of the animal in question to some of his drawings: Fol. 155r [01.xy.0002] shows a billygoat (עתוד), fol. 77v a "first-born male" donkey (פטר חמר זכר), fol. 36v a bovine (שור), and fol. 216v [02.fs.0000] a camel (גמלא).[60] On fol. 12r, a short-eared animal on which Abraham rides can be identified as a horse.[61] Fol. 27r presents an animal hunted by Esau, which is recognizable as a stag because of its exaggerated antlers.[62]

59 See Marie-Christine Daunay, Henri Laterrot, and Jules Janick, "Iconography and History of Solanacee ae: Antiquity to the 17th Century," in *Horticultural Reviews*, ed. Jules Janick, vol. 34 (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2008), 1–111, here 5.

60 Cf. BAV_{14}, fols. 155r [01.xy.0002], 77v, 36v and 216v [02.fs.0000].

61 Cf. BAV_{14}, fol. 12r.

62 Cf. BAV_{14}, fol. 27r.

Fig. 7: Six animals Eliyya depicted in BAV_{14}: billygoat, stag, and horse; donkey, bovine; and camel.[63] The pictures are not to scale. Photos of the manuscript courtesy of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican City.

From this sample of Eliyya's animal drawings, we learn that body, leg, foot, and head shapes are not useful for identification. Rather, he seems to rely completely on distinctive details such as horns, antlers, ear length, or humps to indicate the species. And it is precisely here that a distinctive difference between the animal on fol. 33r and the others jumps out: while the tails of all the other animals hang down, the tail of our animal points upward and seems to curl slightly at the end. A comparison with drawings of dogs in Jewish manuscripts from the 13th century, as well as with the drawing of a *canis familiaris linnaeus* in a 19th-century natural-history book (see fig. 8), indicates that this feature was considered typical for dogs (before modern day dog breeding took over), which strongly suggests that Eliyya wanted to depict a dog on this folio.[64]

63 Cf. BAV_{14}, fols. 155r [01.xy.0002] (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0307_fa_0155r.[01.xy.0002].jp2/532,1954,388,380/full/0/default.jpg), 27r (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0057_fa_0027r.jp2/486,1924,327,352/full/0/default.jpg), 12r (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0027_fa_0012r.jp2/461,1925,459,452/full/0/default.jpg), 77v (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0152_fa_0077v.jp2/414,1962,324,338/full/0/default.jpg), 36v (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0076_fa_0036v.jp2/893,1935,345,347/full/0/default.jpg), and 216v [02.fs.0000] (see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0416_fa_0216v.[02.fs.0000].jp2/463,1943,499,343/full/0/default.jpg).

64 In all fairness: We know of one depiction of a dog in the so-called *Leipzig Maḥzor* (Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Vollers 1102/I–II, produced around 1310 CE in Southern Germany), on fol. 31v, that shows the animal with a tail that is hanging down. But this is surely an exceptional case because the illustration is showing a "heavy, tired hound standing, rather than running, desperately sniffing the ground as if he had lost his ability to smell and to hunt" (according to Katrin Kogman-Appel)—an animal with the

Fig. 8: Eliyya's animal and various drawings of dogs.[65] The pictures are not to scale. Photos courtesy of: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana; SUB Hamburg, public domain (PDM 1.0); Johann C. Schreber (book in the public domain); Bodlean Library, Oxford (CC BY-NC 4.0); British Library, public domain (PDM 1.0); The National Library of Israel, "Ktiv" Project (public domain).

The outgrowths on our animal's head are surely ears, not horns, as a comparison with the picture of Eliyya's stag shows, between whose antlers one ear similar to our animal's ears can just barely be made out.[66] Another detail in Eliyya's drawing on fol. 33r that should not be overlooked are two parallel lines that run between the neck of the animal and the mandrake on the left. It seems that the dog is tied to the mandrake.

proverbial 'hangdog expression.' See Katrin Kogman-Appel, "The Scales in the Leipzig Mahzor: Penance and Eschatology in Early Fourteenth-Century Germany," in *Between Judaism and Christianity: Art Historical Essays in Honor of Elisheva (Elisabeth) Revel-Neher*, ed. Katrin Kogman-Appel and Mati Meyer, The Medieval Mediterranean 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 307–18, here 310.

65 Cf. BAV_{14}, fol. 33r (picture, see https://digi.vatlib.it/iiifimage/MSS_Vat.ebr.14/Vat.ebr.14_0069_fa_0033r.jp2/605,1902,230,160/full/0/default.jpg) and page 124 of this paper (date); Irina Wandrey, "Codex Levy 19," *Manuscript Cultures* 6 (2014), 29–34, here 29 (date) and 33 (picture); Johann C. Schreber, *Tafelband 1: Theil 1 – 3 und Supplement 1 u. 2: Taf. I – CLXV*, vol. 8 of *Die Säugthiere in Abbildungen nach der Natur mit Beschreibungen* (Erlangen: Wolfgang Walther, 1841), plate 87; Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Michael 617 [Michael Mahzor], fol. 4v; the manuscript is accessible online at https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/b6ab5bab-6930-4982-abac-50efa08f161a [accessed 04/2023] (picture), and Sara Offenberg, "Animal Attraction. Hidden Polemics in Biblical Animal Illuminations of the Michael Mahzor," *Interfaces: A Journal of Medieval European Literatures* 5 (2018), 129–53, here 129 (date); London, British Library, MS Additional 21160, folio 187v. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/ILLUMIN.ASP?Size=mid&IllID=44747 [accessed 04/2023] (picture) and https://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=19237&CollID=27&NStart=21160 [accessed 02/2024] (date); and Jerusalem, Israel National Library, MS Heb. 4° 781 [Mahzor of Worms], vol. 1, fol. 130r. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH000044560/NLI#$FL21041786 [accessed 04/2023] (picture) and https://www.nli.org.il/en/manuscripts/NNL_ALEPH000044560/NLI#$FL21041771 [accessed 04/2023] (date).

66 Cf. fig. 7 on page 132.

Traditions that could have influenced Eliyya's drawing

Apart from the biblical *duda'im*, the earliest references to mandrakes and their properties can be found in works of Greco-Roman antiquity, among others.[67] These are summarized here, taking into account not only plants identified by name as mandrakes, but also those to which properties were attributed that were later associated with mandrakes.

Antique writings

Theophrastus of Eresos (ca. 372–ca. 287 BCE)[68] mentions the mandrake (μανδραγόρας) in his *Enquiry into Plants* (Περὶ φυτῶν ἱστορία) and describes its roots as useful not only for treating various diseases, but also for making love potions.[69] He also draws attention to the special measures that must be taken when harvesting the roots: "It is said that one should draw three circles round mandrake with a sword, and cut it with one's face towards the west; and at the cutting of the second piece one should dance round the plant and say as many things as possible about the mysteries of love."[70]

Pliny the Elder (23–79 CE),[71] in his *Natural History* (*Naturalis Historia*), discusses a magical[72] plant called *cynocephalia* (dog's head) that kills whomever uproots it: "As a youth I saw Apion the grammarian, who told me that the herb cynocephalia, called in Egypt osiritis, was an instrument of divination and a protection from all kinds of sorcery, but if it were uprooted altogether the digger would die at once."[73] We note that Apion, who was born at the end of the first century BCE or the beginning of the first century CE,[74] is given as the authority on whom Pliny relies, and that a connection between a plant that kills the one that uproots it and a dog—if only in the plant's name—is already established here.

Pedanius Dioscorides, a Greek pharmacologist of the 1st century CE,[75] wrote a very influential work on medical substances, known as *De Materia Medica* (Περὶ ὕλης ἰατρικῆς), in which he talked about mandrakes:

> Some call it *antimimon*, others *bombochylon*, and others *Circaia* because its root seems to be good for making love-potions. One kind of this plant is female, the black one, called *thridacias*, having leaves narrower and smaller than the leaves of lettuce, fetid and heavy in scent, streaming on the ground, and among them fruit resembling sorb apples, pale-green in color, sweet-smelling, containing seed like the seed of the pear.

67 In Egypt, mandrakes were already discussed in a medical work from ca. 1530 BCE and depicted on various artifacts. Cf. Daunay, Laterrot, and Janick 2008, 5.

68 Cf. Michael L. Satlow, "Theophrastus's Jewish Philosophers," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 59.1 (2008), 1–20, here 1.

69 Cf. Theophrastus, *Hist. plant*. 9.9.1 (Hort, Loeb Classical Library).

70 See Theophrastus, *Hist. plant*. 9.8.8 (Hort, Loeb Classical Library).

71 Cf. Jehuda Feliks, "Etrog," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 6:540–41, here 540.

72 In this paper, a distinction is made between 'magical' and 'medical' properties. This distinction is a modern one—it would not have been recognized in ancient or medieval times.

73 See Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 30.6 (Jones, Loeb Classical Library).

74 Cf. Abraham Schalit, "Apion," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007a), 2:256.

75 Cf. Dioscorides, *Pedanius Dioscorides of Anazarbus. De materia medica*, trans. Lily Y. Beck, 3rd ed. Altertumswissenschaftliche Texte und Studien 38, (Hildesheim: Olms – Weidmann, 2017), xxii.

> The roots are sizable, two or three entwined with each other, black on the surface but white inside, having thick skin. It has no stem. [...] The leaves of the male and the on [sic] that is white, which some called *morion*, are white, large, broad, and smooth like the leaves of beet; its fruit is twice as large, saffron in color, and somewhat oppressively fragrant; shepherds eat it and are reduced to a state of stupor; the root is like that of the former, but bigger and whiter. It, too, is stemless.[76]

Dioscorides lists additional names that were used for mandrakes[77] and goes on to describe various medical applications of mandrake roots, fruits, and leaves, including as a remedy for pain and insomnia and as an anesthetic during surgery.[78] As we have seen, he connects mandrake roots with love potions, but does not report any benefit in inducing or supporting pregnancies.[79] The distinction between 'male' and 'female' plants is obviously familiar to him; however, apart from the name *anthropomorphon* that he associates with Pythagoras, nothing in his text indicates that the roots can look like humans. There is no mention of difficulties during the harvesting of mandrakes; there is, however, a loose link to dogs in the Roman name *mala canina*.[80]

In the 1st century CE, **Flavius Josephus** (ca. 37–after 100 CE)[81] published works in the Greek language, intended to introduce the Roman world to Jewish history and culture. However, "in the introduction to *The Jewish War*, Josephus clearly mentions that he wrote two versions of 'the war of the Jews against the Romans,' first 'in my vernacular,' that is, in Aramaic [...] which unfortunately has not been preserved."[82] In *The Jewish War* (Ἰουδαϊκοῦ πολέμου πρὸς Ῥωμαίους), Josephus included a story about a strange plant:

> In the ravine which encloses the town on the north, there is a place called Baaras, which produces a root bearing the same name. Flame-coloured and towards evening emitting a brilliant light, it eludes the grasp of persons who approach with the intention of plucking it, as it shrinks up and can only be made to stand still by pouring upon it certain secretions of the human body. Yet even then to touch it is fatal, unless one succeeds in carrying off the root itself, suspended from the hand.[83] Another innocuous mode of capturing it is as follows. They dig all round it, leaving but a minute portion of the root covered; they then tie a dog to it, and the animal rushing to follow the person who tied him easily pulls it up, but instantly dies—a vicarious victim, as it were, for him

76 See Dioscorides 2017, 278–79. Beck's translation is based on the Greek text edited by Max Wellmann. Cf. ibid., xx–xxi. Cf. also Dioscorides, *Pedanii Dioscuridis Anazarbei De materia medica libri quinque*, ed. Max Wellmann, 2 vols. (Berlin: Weimann, 1906).

77 Cf. Dioscorides, *Mat. med*. 4:75. The list of names is not part of Beck's translation.

78 Cf. Dioscorides 2017, 279–80. Mandrakes contain tropane alkaloids (atropine, hyoscyamine, scopolamine), which have these effects. Cf. Yasuyuki Yamada and Mamoru Tabata, "Plant Biotechnology of Tropane Alkaloids," *Plant Biotechnology* 14.1 (1997), 1–10, here 1 and 3.

79 On the contrary: The juice extracted from a mandrake's roots could, Dioscorides believed, induce an abortion. Cf. Dioscorides 2017, 279.

80 Cf. Dioscorides, *Mat. med*. 4:75.

81 Cf. Abraham Schalit, "Josephus Flavius," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007b), 11:435–42, here 435.

82 See *ibid*., 436.

83 Commentary by Henry St. J. Thackeray: "Meaning doubtful: perhaps 'unless one happens *to bring with one* the self-same root.'" See Josephus, *J.W.* 7:182 (Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library).

> who intended to remove the plant, since after this none need fear to handle it. With all these attendant risks, it possesses one virtue for which it is prized; for the so-called demons—in other words, the spirits of wicked men which enter the living and kill them unless aid is forthcoming—are promptly expelled by this root, if merely applied to the patients.[84]

A large part of Flavius Josephus' work *Antiquities of the Jews* (Ἰουδαϊκὴ ἀρχαιολογία) consists of a kind of retelling of the biblical stories, including the episode under consideration here. In this work, Josephus talks about μανδραγόρου μῆλα, "apples of *mandragora*," which Reuben brought to his mother,[85] and also gives a reason why Rachel wanted some; she felt "a desire for this food."[86] Josephus thus clearly equated *duda'im* with the fruits of mandrakes, whose Greek/Latin and botanical name is *mandragora*.

Claudius Aelianus (Aelian; ca. 170–235 CE),[87] included a very similar story in his work *On the Characteristics of Animals* (Περὶ ζῴων ἰδιότητος).[88] There, the strange plant is called *cynospastos* (κυνόσπαστος; from κύων "dog" and σπάω "to pull out," i.e.: "pulled out by a dog"), but it is also called *aglaophotis* (ἀγλαόφωτις; from ἀγλαός "bright, shining" and φωτίζω "to shine," i.e.: "brightly shining [one]."[89] James G. Frazer points out that there could be a connection between the plant *aglaophotis* and the mandrake.[90] This observation was occasioned by a remark by John Richardson in his Persian-Arabic dictionary: "The Arabians call [...] [the mandrake t]he devil's candle, on account of its shining appearance in the night, from the number of glow-worms which cover the leaves."[91] This, in turn, could be based on a statement by Ibn al-Baitar (ca. 1190/97–1248)[92] in his article on *Sirâdsch el-kuthrub* (= *Lucerna daemonis* ('demon's lamp') = *Atropa Mandragora*), in which he states that the Andalusians call this medical substance *sirâdsch elkuthrub*, where *elkuthrub* is a little demon that shines by night like a flame.[93] It is possible that in Aelian's time, *cynospas-*

84 See Josephus, *J.W.* 7:180–85 (Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library).

85 See Josephus, *Ant*. 1:307 (Thackeray, Loeb Classical Library).

86 "Δι' ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ βρώματος"; see *ibid*.

87 Cf. N.N., "Aelian," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007a), 1:429.

88 Cf. Aelian, *Nat. an*. 14:27 (Scholfield, Loeb Classical Library).

89 Alwyn Scholfield translates ἀγλαόφωτις as "peony," the way Charles du Fresne recommends in his glossary. This translation might have been influenced by Dioscorides' article on peonies, where he states that some people call this plant *aglaophotis*. Whether these two names are indeed synonyms, i.e. whether each peony is an *aglaophotis* and vice versa, doesn't seem sure. Hence, this name is only transcribed here with an eye to its meaning 'brightly shining one.' Cf. *ibid*.; Charles du Fresne, *Glossarium ad Scriptores Mediæ & Infimæ Græcitatis*, vol. 1 (Lyon: Charles Osmont, 1688), col. 16; and Dioscorides, *Mat. med*. 3:140.

90 Cf. James G. Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament. Studies in Comparative Religion Legend and Law*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1919), 390.

91 See John Richardson, "استرنگ istarang," in *Dictionary. Persian, Arabic, and English. With a Dissertation on the Languages, Literature, and Manners of Eastern Nations*, rev. ed. (London: J. L. Cox, 1829), 79.

92 Cf. Ana M. Cabo Gonzalez, "Ibn al-Bayṭār et ses apports à la botanique et à la pharmacologie dans le Kitāb al-Ğāmi'," *Médiévales* 33 (1997), 23–39, here 23 and 26.

93 "Die Andalusier nennen dieses Arzneimittel Sirâdsch elkuthrub, weil elkuthrub ein kleiner Dämon ist, welcher bei Nacht wie eine Feuerflamme leuchtet." See Ibn al-Baitar, *Grosse Zusammenstellung über die Kräfte der bekannten einfachen Heil- und Nahrungsmitt*el, trans. Joseph von Sontheimer, vol. 2 (Stuttgart: Hallberger'sche Verlagshandlung , 1842), 17 and cf. *ibid*. 14–17 and 36.

tos, *aglaophotis*, and *mandragora* already referred to one and the same plant. According to Aelian, however, it is not used to fight demons, but diseases.[94]

For the Jewish world, *duda'im* were of interest first and foremost in connection with Gen 30:14–24, so that statements about them are most readily found in commentaries on the bible. However, information is also available from bible translations and other writings.

The **Septuagint** (LXX) is a work that includes Greek translations of the books of the Hebrew Bible as well as versions of some non-canonical Jewish writings. "There is firm consensus that the LXX Pentateuch does originate in Alexandria and from a period prior to the mid-third century B.C.E."[95] The term *duda'im* is translated here as μῆλα μανδραγόρου "apples of *mandragora*."[96]

Targum **Onkelos**, with which the Aramaic text of our story is almost identical, was written in "Jewish Literary Aramaic (JLA), a dialect used in and around Judea from approximately 200 BCE to about 200 CE."[97] At that time and in this area, *duda'im* seem to have been understood as *yavruḥin*.

For a long time, the Greek-language **Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs** were considered to belong to the Christian world, but the assessment that the work had Jewish origins has since been widely accepted.[98] The oldest parts may have been written as early as in the 2nd century BCE; additions and revisions probably changed the text until the 2nd century CE.[99] A place of origin is difficult to determine: "The author does not seem to be well acquainted with the geography of Palestine. The interest in Joseph and the emphasis on his virtues [...], and the fact that the Testaments are situated in Egypt [...] may offer some indication for an Egyptian origin, but certainty cannot be reached."[100] In the fifth chapter of the work, the 'testator,' in this case Issachar, summarizes the *duda'im* episode "for his sons."[101] He uses the word *mandragora* for the *duda'im* and calls them "fragrant apples" (μῆλα εὔοσμα).[102] This work therefore also equates *duda'im* with the fruits of the mandrake. T. Iss. proceeds to state precisely how many fruits Reuben brought with him: "Now there were two apples" (δύο οὖν ἦσαν τὰ μῆλα).[103]

94 Cf. Aelian, *Nat. an*. 14:27 (Scholfield, Loeb Classical Library).

95 See Leonard J. Greenspoon, "Bible. Greek: The Septuagint," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 3:595–98, here 595.

96 See e.g. Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart, eds., *Septuaginta. Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006), ad loc.

97 See Paul V. Flesher and Bruce D. Chilton, *The Targums. A Critical Introduction*, Studies in Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture 12 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 9.

98 See Harm W. Hollander and Marinus de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. A Commentary*, Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1985), 3.

99 Cf. Jürgen Becker, *Untersuchungen zur Entstehungsgeschichte der Testamente der zwölf Patriarchen*, Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums 8 (Leiden: Brill 1970), 376.

100 See Hollander and de Jonge 1985, 5–6, who paraphrase Becker 1970, 374.

101 See e.g. Robert H. Charles, ed., *The Greek Versions of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs. Edited from Nine MSS. Together with the Variants of the Armenian and Slavonic Versions and Some Hebrew Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), 105.

102 See *ibid*., 106.

103 See *ibid*.

The **Babylonian Talmud** mentions *duda'im*, for example, in b. Sanh. 99b. There, the following discussion is reported in the Gemara: "What are *duda'im*? Rav said: '*yavruḥei*.' Levi said: '*siglei*.' Rabbi Jonathan said, '*sivsukh*/*sviskei*.'"[104] There's obviously some disagreement here. As a translation for *yavruḥin*, Jastrow offers "mandrakes,"[105] for *siglei* "(bunch of) violets" or possibly "root of the Cyperus rotundus,"[106] and for *sviskei*/*sivsukh* "mandrake flowers."[107] None of these translations are completely reliable, as they are based on interpretation of the contexts in which these words were used, and, unfortunately, all of these terms are very rare. We can attempt to date these traditions by identifying the rabbis whose names are mentioned, which leads us to the assessment that they could have lived and worked in the 2nd–3rd century CE.[108]

Talmud Yerushalmi also refers to *yavruḥin*. In y. Šabb. 6:2, 36a we are told: "Then: It is forbidden to read over a *yavruḥa*."[109] And y. ʿErub. 10:11, 63b says much the same: "This: It is forbidden to read over a *yavruḥa*."[110] Jastrow comments on this statement in his dictionary: "To read a Bible verse over mandrake is forbidden (as a superstitious practice)."[111] Jastrow's explanation is quite convincing: It is easy to imagine that anyone who happened to have heard about any dangers surrounding the harvesting of *yavruḥin* would recite a bible verse when pulling out the roots, just to be on the safe side. This suggests that in Palestine at the time of the Talmud's inception (probably redacted around 400 CE),[112] magical powers were attributed to mandrake roots—at least by certain people.

Midrash Bereshit Rabbah was "edited in Ereẓ Israel, probably in the beginning of the fifth century C.E."[113] *Duda'im* are discussed in BerR 72:2: "R. Ḥiyya bar Abba said: '*Yavruḥin*.'

104 "מאי דודאים אמר רב יברוחי לוי אמר סיגלי ר' יונתן אמר (סיבסוך) סביסקי." See Hersh Goldwurm et al., eds., *Talmud Bavli. Tractate Sanhedrin*, vol. 3, The ArtScroll Series (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1995), 99b[3].

105 See Marcus Jastrow, "יַבְרוּחָה, יַבְרוּחָא," *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1903c), 1:562 and Marcus Jastrow, "יַבְרוּחַ," *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1903c), 1:562.

106 See Marcus Jastrow, "סִיגְלָא," *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1903f), 2:975.

107 See Marcus Jastrow, "סְבִיסְקֵי," *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1903e), 2:949.

108 Rav was a Babylonian amora (3rd century CE), "also called Abba Arikha ('Abba the Tall')." See Moshe Beer, "Rav," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 17:116–18, here 116. Levi was a Palestinian amora who flourished in the 3rd quarter of the 3rd century CE. Cf. Harry Freedman, "Levi," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 12:684–85, here 684. R. Jonathan was a tanna of the 2nd century CE. Cf. N.N., "Jonathan," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007b), 11:396.

109 "והדין דקרי על יברוחה אסור." See e.g. Chaim Malinowitz et al., eds., *Talmud Yerushalmi. Tractate Shabbos*, vol. 2, The ArtScroll Series (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 2013), 44b[1].

110 "וההן דקרא על יברוחא אסור." See e.g. Chaim Malinowitz et al., eds. 2014. *Talmud Yerushalmi. Tractate Eruvin*, vol. 2, The ArtScroll Series (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 2014), 69a[2].

111 See Jastrow 1903c, 1:562.

112 Cf. Louis I. Rabinowitz and Stephen G. Wald, "Talmud, Jerusalem (תַּלְמוּד יְרוּשַׁלְמִי)," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 19:483–87, here 484.

113 See Moshe D. Herr and Stephen G. Wald, "Genesis Rabbah," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 7:448–49, here 449.

R. Isaac said: '*Sa'arin*.' R. Judah bar R. Simon said: '*Mayishin*.'"[114] Jastrow reads ad loc. סעדין instead of סערין and translates "root of the Cyperus Rotundus"[115]—which, as we have seen above, he also gives as a possible translation for *siglei*.[116] Regarding *mayishin*, Jastrow refers to Immanuel Löw and translates "*Celtis* [...] '*a tall tree with fruits like myrtle-berries*.'"[117]

Medieval writings

Saadiah Gaon (R. Saadiah ben Joseph; 882–942 CE), a leader of the Babylonian academy of Sura and the "greatest scholar and author of the geonic period,"[118] composed an Arabic translation of the Tanakh called *Tafsīr*, "explanation" or "interpretation,"[119] that acquired "an authoritative and almost canonical status in all Arabic-speaking Rabbanite communities."[120] He "supplemented this work with a profuse and lucid running commentary covering the books of Genesis (until *Vayetze*), Exodus, and Leviticus,"[121] which, unfortunately, means that there is no extended commentary available for the *duda'im* episode. In his *Tafsīr*, Saadiah translates *duda'im* as *luffāḥ* (لفاح; Judeo-Arabic לפאח),[122] an expression also used by Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl (fl. in the 9th century)[123] when translating Dioscorides' *Materia Medica* into Arabic—a translation directly from the Greek original, not from the Syriac version.[124] In his section about *mandragora*, Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl "did in fact refer to the fruit of *yabrūḥ* as *luffāḥ*,"[125] which could lead us to assume that Saadiah too understood Reuben's *duda'im* to be the fruits of mandrakes. As has already been pointed out, no additional discussion of *duda'im* on the part of Saadiah is available to us today, either because it was lost or because he had nothing more to say on this topic.

114 "ר׳ חייא ברווה אמ יברוחין ר׳ יצחק אמ [...] סערין ר׳ יודה בי׳ר סימון אמ מיישין." See Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, MS ebr. 30, fol. 125v. The manuscript is accessible online at https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Vat.ebr.30 [accessed 04/2023].

115 See Marcus Jastrow, "סְעֲדָא, סְעַד," *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1903g), 2:1009.

116 Cf. Jastrow 1903f, 2:975.

117 See Marcus Jastrow, "מַיֵּישׁ," *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1903d), 2:772.

118 See Abraham S. Halkin et al., "Saadiah (Ben Joseph) Gaon," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 17:606–14, here 606, and cf. 606–07.

119 Cf. David M. Freidenreich, "The Use of Islamic Sources in Saadiah Gaon's Tafsīr of the Torah," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 93.3/4 (2003), 353–95, here 354.

120 See Ronny Vollandt, *Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch. A Comparative Study of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Sources*, Biblia Arabica 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 80.

121 See Michael Linetsky, introduction to *Rabbi Saadiah Gaon's Commentary on the Book of Creation*, by Rabbi Saadiah Gaon, trans. Michael Linetsky (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2002), vii–viii, here vii.

122 Cf. Rabbi Saadiah Gaon, *Version arabe du Pentateuque,* vol. 1 of *Œuvres complètes de R. Saadia ben Iosef al-Fayyoûmî* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1893), 46. There doesn't seem to be a consensus regarding the question of whether Saadiah used Arabic or Hebrew script to write the *Tafsīr*: Cf. Freidenreich 2003, 358.

123 Cf. Jonah ibn Janāḥ, *Marwān ibn Janāḥ: On the Nomenclature of Medicinal Drugs (Kitāb al-Talkhīṣ). Edition, Translation and Commentary, with Special Reference to the Ibero-Romance Terminology*, ed. Gerrit Bos et al., 2 vols., Islamic History and Civilization. Studies and Texts 170.1–2 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 1:91.

124 Cf. *ibid*., 1:67.

125 See *ibid*., 2:689.

Rashi (R. Solomon ben Isaac; 1040–1105 CE), who lived mostly in Troyes but also spent some years studying in Mainz and Worms,[126] was "the first exegete to pride himself on having written a *peshat* commentary."[127] He explains in his commentary on Gen 30:14 that *duda'im* are plants called *siglei* and that their Arabic name is "jasmine."[128] Surprisingly, this is not in line with his statements in the commentaries on b. Ber. 43b and b. Šabb. 50b, where he translates *siglei* as "violets."[129] It is possible that Rashi was a bit botanically challenged, but it also need not be the case that both explanations originated with Rashi himself; a pupil of his or some other person might have amended one of his commentaries.[130] What seems certain, however, is that he assumed that Reuben brought flowers to his mother.

Ibn Ezra (Abraham Ibn Ezra; 1089–1164 CE), who was born in Spain, traveled extensively, and lived in Italy, Provence, and England,[131] among other places, quotes Onkelos in his bible commentary and identifies *duda'im* with *yavruḥin*, which he says is their Arabic name. He points to Cant 7:14, where their pleasant scent is spoken of, and adds that they appear in the form of human beings, since they develop something similar to a head and hands. He declares, however, that he does not understand why they are considered useful for pregnancies, since they are "of a cold kind" (within the framework of humoral theory).[132] Thus, Ibn Ezra seems to understand *duda'im* as the roots of mandrakes and knows the tradition

126 Cf. Aaron Rothkoff et al., "Rashi (Solomon ben Isaac)," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 17:101–06, here 101.

127 See Martin I. Lockshin, introduction *to Rabbi Samuel Ben Meir's Commentary on Genesis. An Annotated Translation*, by R. Samuel Ben Meir, trans. Martin I. Lockshin, Jewish Studies 5 (Lewiston: Mellen, 1989), 9–24, here 21.

128 "דודאים – סיגלי, ועשב הוא, ובלשון ישמעאל: 'יסמין'." See Menachem Cohen, ed., ויחי – תולדות, vol. 2 of מקראות גדולות הכתר. ספר בראשית (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1999), 38.

129 "סיגלי. ויול"ש בלעז." See Hersh Goldwurm et al., eds., *Talmud Bavli. Tractate Berachos*, vol. 2, 3rd ed., The ArtScroll Series (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 2000), 43b[1]; "סגלי. עשב שקורין ויאו"ל ויש בו שלשה עלין"; cf. Hersh Goldwurm et al., eds., *Talmud Bavli. Tractate Shabbos*, vol. 2, The ArtScroll Series (Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Publications, 1996), 50b[1].

130 Hanna Liss observes that the differences between the extant Rashi commentaries are in part so marked that an attribution to a single author is more than doubtful. Cf. Hanna Liss, *Jüdische Bibelauslegung*, Uni-Taschenbücher 5135; Jüdische Studien 4 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 54. There is also a possibility that Rashi opted for both translations, intending something different each time. He could have chosen "jasmine" at one point because he thought it was the most literal translation, but "violets" another time because he felt that his Northern French readers were not as familiar with jasmine as with violets and he wanted to evoke a similar feeling in his readership to the one he envisioned the original biblical audience as having had when thinking of *duda'im*. So he chose the term for 'a beautiful purplish flower giving off a pleasant fragrance' known in his region. Within the framework of translation theory, the terms 'formal correspondence' and 'dynamic equivalence' ("defined in terms of the degree to which the receptors of the message in the receptor language respond to it in substantially the same manner as the receptors in the source language") are used for these two different approaches to translating. See Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 2nd ed., Helps for Translators 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1982), 30 and 24.

131 Cf. Uriel Simon and Raphael Jospe, "Ibn Ezra, Abraham ben Meir," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 9:665–72, here 665–66.

132 "אמר המתרגם יברוחין, וכן יקראו בלשון ישמעאל ויש להם ריח טוב, וכן כתוב הדודאים נתנו ריח, והם על צורת בן אדם, כי יש להם דמות ראש וידים. ואנכי לא ידעתי למה יועילו להריון בעבור שתולדתם קרה." See Aharon Samet and Daniel Bitton, eds., מקראות גדולות המאור. חמשה חומשי תורה. חומש בראשית, rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Mekhon ha-Ma'or, 1990), 554.

according to which they are supposed to facilitate pregnancy. He tries to think this tradition through in a medico-logical way and seems to rule out purely magical properties of the roots.

It seems that Eliyya was quite familiar with Ibn Ezra's writings: "On trouve parfois dans le manuscrit du Vatican des extraits des commentaires d'Ibn Ezra, dont le contenu montre que dans l'entourage du copiste il y avait encore une tradition vivante des expressions et des idées de celui-ci (*TYR,* p. 143, note 409)."[133]

Rashbam (R. Shmuel ben Meir; c. 1080/85–c. 1174 CE), who was Rashi's grandson and spent his life in northern France,[134] expresses himself very succinctly: "*Duda'im—duda'ei* of figs; as it is written: The *duda'im* give off scent."[135] He seems to refer in the first part of his statement to the only biblical passage in which the construct combination דודאי תאנים appears, namely Jer 24:1. Here, the prophet Jeremiah sees "two *duda'ei* of figs," which were set down in front of the temple. The context of Jer 24:2 makes it clear that דודאי does not refer to objects that grow on fig trees, but rather to a quantity or a container. For this verse, Gesenius derives דּוּדָאֵי from דּוּד, and translates this as "pot" or "basket."[136] However, it hardly seems possible that Rashbam wants to claim that Reuben happened to see baskets at the edge of the field and simply 'made off' with them. In addition, the second part of Rashbam's comment, "the *duda'im* give off scent" (Cant 7:14), would make little sense in this context, since baskets by themselves do not emit any scent. If, however, we reject the idea that Rashbam wants to refer to Jer 24:1—after all, in the second part of his statement, he does state explicitly that he is referring to a scriptural passage (כדכתיב; "as it is written")—it would appear possible that he understood *duda'im* as simply referring to fruit (of the fig tree); flowers are out of the question, since there are no outwardly visible flowers to be found on fig trees,[137] which, one hopes, was known to Rashbam.

But if someone were to think of Jer 24:1 when he read דודאי תאנים, this might establish a connection with the number 'two,' since Jeremiah was talking about two baskets of figs sitting in front of the temple. It cannot be ruled out that, through this association, the number of *duda'im* that Reuben brought to his mother 'canonically' became two.

Radak (R. David Kimḥi; c. 1160–c. 1235 CE), an exegete from Provence,[138] describes *duda'im* as plants whose roots naturally take the form of human figures. He mentions that

133 See Norman Golb, "Chapitre VIII. Les disciples des maîtres : érudits rouennais sous le règne d'Henri II Plantagenêt," in *Les Juifs de Rouen au Moyen Âge. Portrait d'une culture oubliée* (Mont-Saint-Aignan: Presses universitaires de Rouen et du Havre, 1985), 211–57, doi.org/10.4000/books.purh.8473, paragraph 69–71.

134 Cf. Avraham Grossman and Israel M. Ta-Shma, "Samuel ben Meir (Rashbam)," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 17:771–73, here 771 and 772.

135 "'דודאי תאנים' – 'דודאים' כדכתיב; 'הדודאים נתנו ריח'." See Cohen 1999, 2:38 and 2:40.

136 Cf. 'דּוּדָי*$_1$' and 'דּוּדַי*$_2$' in: Gesenius et al. 2013, 244.

137 "The Chinese name for the fig signifies 'a fruit without a flower.' Apparently, Theophrastus also regarded the fig as a flowerless plant, as did Albertus Magnus in the 13th century. This impression is gained from the fact that the flowers are borne inside the receptacle." See Ira J. Condit, *The Fig*, A New Series of Plant Science Books 19 (Waltham, MA: Chronica Botanica Co., 1947), 37.

138 Cf. Frank Talmage, "Kimḥi, David," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 12:155–56, here 155.

it is often assumed that they are "useful for pregnancy," which he declares to be incorrect.[139] Although he does not mention the plant by name, the description suggests that he identifies *duda'im* with mandrakes, but rejects any magical properties.

Ralbag (R. Levi ben Gershom; 1288–1344 CE), who also hailed from Provence,[140] lived much later than Eliyya, so of course he cannot have influenced our scribe's views on *duda'im*. Ralbag's commentary is nevertheless included here, as he not only states that *duda'im* are allegedly useful in childbirth, but also reports that their roots occur "in male and female form,"[141] which gives us a *terminus ante quem*: One hundred years at the latest after Eliyya's work on MS Vat. ebr. 14, this idea had firmly established itself in rabbinical circles.[142]

Medical Writings

Another class of books that deal with *duda'im* is medical treatises. ***Sefer Refuot***, also called ***Sefer Asaf***,[143] is known to us from several manuscripts extant today; there is no scientific edition available as of now.[144] The most complete version is MS Cod.hebr. 231 in the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek; on the basis of a preliminary paleographical examination, Judith Olszowy-Schlanger assigned this manuscript to the Italy of the thirteenth or fourteenth century.[145] A shorter text of the same work is provided by MS Opp. 687 in the Bodleian Library; the Hebrew script of this manuscript has been analyzed by Malachi Beit-Arié (using a microfilm reproduction), who determined that it "must have been written around the year 1150, or not much later than that date."[146] Adolf Neubauer already ascertained that

139 "והדודאים הם עשב ששרשם הוא מצוייר ציור טבעי כדמות אדם, אולי שמע ראובן מה שאומרים ההמון כי הם מועילים להריון האשה, [...] אבל הדבר הזה אינו אמת." See Rabbi David Kimḥi, *Comentar zur Genesis, von Rabbi David Kimchi*, ed. Abraham Ginzburg (Preßburg: Anton Edlen von Schmid, 1842), (יד) ל ויצא.

140 Cf. Charles Touati and Bernard R. Goldstein, "Levi ben Gershom," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 12:698–702, here 698.

141 "אמרו שהוא שרש עשב, ימצא בדמות זכר ונקבה, ויש לו סגלה, לפי מה שסופר, בהולדה." "They say that this is the root of a plant, it can be found in male and female form, and it has a unique property, according to what is related, in childbirth." See Cohen 1999, 2:39 and 2:41.

142 Two more exegetes, Joseph ben Isaac Bekhor Shor and Eliezer of Beaugency, who were probably pupils of Rashbam and may have lived in Rouen for a while during the 12th century, might have had an influence on Eliyya. However, in his commentary on Genesis, Bekhor Shor doesn't mention *duda'im*, and of Eliezer of Beaugency's commentaries, only those on Isaiah and Ezekiel and on the 12 minor prophets are extant. Therefore, we do not know what they thought about Reuben's *duda'im*. Regarding Joseph Bekhor Shor, cf. Golb 1998, 308–14, and, e.g., Cohen 1999, 2:39 and 2:41. Re. Eliezer of Beaugency, cf. Golb 1998, 319–24.

143 This name derives from the fact that "most of the work claims to represent the medical teachings of Asaf [the Jew] as based […] on the *Book of Medicines*," "which was written down by Noah after the Flood from the words of Raphael, God's healing angel." See Elinor Lieber, "Asaf's Book of Medicines: A Hebrew Encyclopedia of Greek and Jewish Medicine, Possibly Compiled in Byzantium on an Indian Model," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 38 (1984), 233–49, here 237.

144 Cf. Ronit Yoeli-Tlalim, "Exploring Persian Lore in the Hebrew Book of Asaf," *Aleph* 18.1 (2018), 123–46, here 126.

145 Cf. *ibid*., 125.

146 See Joseph Shatzmiller, "Doctors and Medical Practices in Germany Around the Year 1200: The Evidence of Sefer Asaph," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 50 (1983), 149–64,

this manuscript was written in Germany.[147] The oldest fragments of *Sefer Asaf* might have come from the Cairo Genizah and are dated to the tenth to twelfth century.[148] *Sefer Asaf* is explicitly mentioned in the book *Even ha'Ezer*, by R. Eliezer ben Nathan of Mainz (c. 1090–c. 1170 CE),[149] who concludes an explanation with "and so Asaf the Jew explained it in *Sefer Refuot*."[150] Ludwig Venetianer argues that Rashi also knew *Sefer Asaf*,[151] since he writes in his commentary to Judg 15:15: "And I saw in *Sefer Refuot* that they call the secretion that comes out of a wound *ṭry*."[152] Radak, too, might have known the book; in his commentary to Hos 14:8, he segues into a statement on the best wines: "and I saw in the book of Asaf the medic [...]"[153] These quotes indicate that *Sefer Asaf* was already known in Ashkenazi rabbinic circles by the 12th century; however, some version of the work could have been in circulation in the Jewish medical community for substantially longer. Scholars have proposed the tenth, ninth, seventh, and even the third century CE as a time of origin.[154] Opinions on *Sefer Asaf's* place of origin also differ widely, with the Fertile Crescent and Jundishapur contending with Byzantine Italy.[155]

MS BSB Cod.hebr. 231 declares, in paragraph 100 of its list of medical substances: "*Duda'im* are called *yavruḥin* in Aramaic and in all [other] languages *mandragora*"[156] and proceeds to discuss their medical applications. One treatment, fumigation, is supposed to help fight

here 150–51.

147 Cf. Adolf Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the College Libraries of Oxford*, Catalogi Codd. Mss. Bibliothecae Bodleianae 12 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886), col. 737–38.

148 Cf. Yoeli-Tlalim 2018, 125.

149 Cf. Israel M. Ta-Shma, "Eliezer ben Nathan of Mainz," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007a), 6:327–28, here 327.

150 "וכן פי' אסף היהודי בספר רפואות." See Rabbi Eliezer ben Nathan, אבן העזר, ed. Moshe ben Betsalel Kats (Prague: Moshe ben Betsalel Kats, 1610), 52a.

151 Cf. Ludwig Venetianer, Asaf Judaeus. *Der aelteste medizinische Schriftsteller in hebraeischer Sprache*, vol. 1 (Strasbourg: Karl J. Trübner, 1916), 32.

152 "וראיתי בספר רפואות שקורין ללחה היוצא מן המכה 'טרי'." See Menachem Cohen, ed., מקראות גדולות הכתר ספר יהושע· ספר שפטים, 2nd ed. (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1995), 155.

153 "[...] וראיתי בספר אסף הרופא" See Rabbi David Kimḥi, T*he Commentary of Rabbi David Kimhi on Hosea*, ed. Harry A. Cohen, Columbia University Oriental Studies 20 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929), 113.

154 Immanuel Löw assigns *Sefer Asaf* to the tenth century, Elinor Lieber opts for the ninth or tenth century, Ludwig Venetianer prefers the seventh century, and Aviv Melzer thinks that it was written in the third century CE. Cf. Immanuel Löw, Z*usammenfassung Nachträge Berichtigungen Indizes Abkürzungen*, vol. 4 of *Die Flora der Juden*, Veröffentlichungen der Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation 6 (Vienna: Verlag der Kohut-Foundation, 1934),167; Lieber 1984, 247; Venetianer 1916, 1:39; and Aviv Melzer, "Asaph the Physician—The Man and His Book. A Historical-Philological Study of the Medical Treatise, The Book of Drugs (ספר רפואות)", (Unpublished PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972), 68.

155 Melzer, for example, thinks that "it is not unlikely […] that Asaph lived in one of the countries of the Fertile Crescent or in a neighboring region" and concludes "that no other place in the East is more likely to be Asaph's locale than Jundishapur." See Melzer 1972, 60 and 63. Lieber, on the other hand, opines that "the work may well be a product of Italy, and probably of Byzantine Italy." See Lieber 1984, 247.

156 "דודאים ניקראים בלשון ארם יברוחין ובכל לשון מנדרגורא." See München, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek, MS Cod.hebr. 231, fol. 82r, pic. n° 167. The manuscript is accessible online at http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/bsb00103813/image_167 [accessed 04/2023].

"spirits that will harm a human being."[157] Medical problems concerning pregnancies or fertility are not mentioned, nor are any problems relating to harvesting.

Kitāb al-Talkhīṣ[158] ("book of the explanation"), a work on the nomenclature of medicinal drugs, is known to us from one manuscript (MS Ayasofya 3603) kept in the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul.[159] This work can be dated much more easily, since it was mentioned in medieval writings[160] and its author is well known to us. *Kitāb al-Talkhīṣ* was written in Arabic by Jonah ibn Janāḥ (Marwān ibn Janāḥ), who (probably) "was born at the beginning of the last quarter of the tenth century, presumably in Córdoba, and died towards the end of the second quarter of the eleventh century, apparently in Zaragoza."[161] In all likelihood, he composed *Talkhīṣ* in the last decades of his life.[162] Ibn Janāḥ wrote a fair number of highly regarded books on Hebrew grammar and philology,[163] and it seems that he was also a practicing physician.[164] For *Talkhīṣ*, ibn Janāḥ relied heavily[165] on Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl's translation of Dioscorides' *Materia medica*,[166] who translated *mandragora* as *yabrūḥ*.[167] Therefore, we can be confident that ibn Janāḥ's *yabrūḥ* and the Greek *mandragora* refer to the same plant—even though ibn Janāḥ provides neither Greek nor Hebrew synonyms in his book. *Talkhīṣ* proceeds to discuss the mandrake in six paragraphs (nos. 426, 508, 511, 663, 974, and 1014) and gives a total of five Arabic synonyms: *yabrūḥ* (يبروح "mandrake"), *luffāḥ* (لفاح "mandrake," specifically "fruit of the mandrake"), *al-ʿarūsa* ("the bride"), *al-laʿba* ("the doll") and *tuffāḥ al-jinn* ("apple of the demon"), as well as a Persian expression, *sābīzak*/*shābīshak* (no. 663 and no. 974), and one vernacular Ibero-Romance term (no. 426)[168] which could be "a variant or a Romance derivation of the Lat. plant name Orci beta, literally 'Orcus's beet' [...] composed of [...] the Latin orcus ('demon of the underworld') and bēta ('beet')."[169] The two expressions literally meaning "the doll" / "the bride" in all likelihood came into use due to the anthropomorphic appearance of the mandrake root. It is also noteworthy that some names for mandrakes are connected with demons, something we have encountered before.

157 "רוחות שיזיקו לאדם"; see *ibid*.

158 The transcription of Arabic words and names follows Jonah ibn Janāḥ 2020.

159 Cf. Jonah ibn Janāḥ 2020, 1:31. "The year 1512 is […] the absolute *terminus ante quem* of the manuscript of the *Talkhīṣ* being written"; however, one owner's mark on the title page suggests that it might be much older, and that "in the 14th or 15th century the manuscript may have belonged to a person who—or whose ancestors—originated from Ḥamāh/Syria." See *ibid*., 1:33 and 1:35.

160 Cf. *ibid*., 1:16–17.

161 See *ibid*., 1:2.

162 Cf. *ibid*., 1:4.

163 Cf. *ibid*., 1:3 and 1:5.

164 Cf. *ibid*., 1:3.

165 "Dioscorides' book was one of the most important sources of Ibn Janāḥ's *Talkhīṣ*. He mentioned it 54 times explicitly. Many of these citations were borrowed verbatim from Iṣṭifān's text." See *ibid*., 1:68. Ibn Janāḥ also mentions Iṣṭifān ibn Basīl's name twice in Talkhīṣ, in no. 253 and no. 843. Cf. *ibid*., 1:91, 1:441, and 2:980.

166 Cf. *ibid*., 1:67.

167 And even used different words for the plant and its fruits: "Iṣṭifān [ibn Basīl] did in fact refer to the fruit of *yabrūḥ* as *luffāḥ*." See *ibid*., 2:689.

168 Cf. *ibid*., no. 426, 1:593–95; 508, 2:685–86; no. 511, 2:688–89; no. 663, 2:823–24; no. 974, 2:1092–93; and no. 1014, 2:1130.

169 See *ibid*., 1:595.

Taking into account that ibn Janāḥ was interested—and well versed—in Hebrew philology, we can speculate that he knew at least some Talmudic Rabbis identified the Aramaic *yavruḥa*, a word related to the Arabic *yabrūḥ*, with *duda'im*. It is therefore likely that ibn Janāḥ, and other Jews hailing from al-Andalus, too, thought of mandrakes when they contemplated the bible's *duda'im* episode.

Rambam (R. Moses ben Maimon, also called Maimonides; 1135–1204 CE)[170] was born in Cordoba, but his family had to leave Sepharad after the Almohad conquest. Later, he settled in Fez (Morocco).[171] Maimonides, who earned his living practicing medicine[172] and drew on ibn Janāḥ's *Talkhīṣ* for his medical writings,[173] mentions mandrakes in his *Explanation of the Names of Drugs* (in the paragraphs on *yabrūḥ* and *lā'ba*),[174] in his *Treatise on Poisons*, and in *The Guide of the Perplexed*. In his book on the names of drugs, he mostly summarizes what ibn Janāḥ has written. Maimonides does not refer to *duda'im*, nor does he give any Hebrew synonym; he does, however, add a Greek expression which, surprisingly, is not *mandragora*, but *khamaimelon* (χαμαίμηλον; literally: 'apple on the ground').[175] This makes some sense since the mandrake's fruits are, as we have seen, often referred to as 'apples,' but nevertheless looks like a mistake on Maimonides' part.[176] In his *Treatise on Poisons*, he reports on an application of mandrakes in medicine: "I have not found any cooling remedy which is beneficial against a [snake]bite except for the mandrake root."[177] In *The Guide of the Perplexed*, he talks about a book called "The Nabatean Agriculture" that includes "extraordinary ravings laughed at by the intelligent," like "the actions of talismans, practices with a view to causing spirits to descend, demons, and ghouls living in deserts."[178] Maimonides provides us with some more details by way of illustrating this assessment: "It is related there about *Adam*, *the first* man, that he recounts in his book that in India there is a tree [...] whose root has a human form; this root may be heard to growl and to emit isolated words."[179] A few lines later, Maimonides paraphrases a fable featured in the same book, about a quarrel between an althea bush and a mandrake where the question at issue is which of the two plants "was better for, and more frequently utilized in, their [the Chaldeans'] magic."[180] Obviously, Maimonides knew about both the mandrake's usefulness

170 Cf. e.g. Louis I. Rabinowitz et al., "Maimonides, Moses," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 13:381–97, here 381.

171 Cf. *ibid*.

172 Cf. *ibid*., 393–95.

173 Cf. Jonah ibn Janāḥ 2020, 1:182–85.

174 Cf. e.g. Moses Maimonides, *Šarḥ Asmā' al-'Uqqār (L'explication des noms de drogues). Un glossaire de matière médicale composé par Maïmonide* trans. Max Meyerhof Mémoires de l'Institut d'Égypte 41, (Cairo: L'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, 1940), *s.v.* '179. Yabrūḥ,' 88–89, and *s.v.* '216. Lā'ba,' 108.

175 See Maimonides 1940, 89.

176 Max Meyerhof comments: "Le nom grec *khamaïmélon* ('pomme terrestre') qui désigne la camomille est introduit ici par erreur." See *ibid*.

177 See Fred Rosner, *The Medical Legacy of Moses Maimonides* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV Publishing House, 1998), 37.

178 In part three, chap. 29, of this work, here quoted from Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, trans. Shlomo Pines, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 518 and 519.

179 See *ibid*., 519.

180 See *ibid*.

in medicine and its magical reputation. However, even though he had heard about a plant with anthropomorphic roots that is even able to emit sound (and we will see that this is the alleged mechanism by which the mandrake kills an attacker), he does not connect this with the mandrake. Either he never heard about the problems surrounding the mandrake's harvesting or he dismissed the connection out of hand.

Grimoires

One other genre in which one might expect to find information about mandrakes is that of grimoires. Scholars know of two Jewish magical writings, *Ḥarba de-Moshe* and *Sefer ha-Razim*, of which it seems certain that they were written before the end of the first millennium.[181] The earliest complete manuscript of ***Ḥarba de-Moshe*** still extant (included in MS Sassoon 290; now as MS Comites Latentes 145 in the Bibliothèque de Genève, 60–84) dates from the 15th century CE,[182] but fragments of a manuscript of the same work from the 11th–12th century have also been discovered in the Cairo Genizah.[183] Moses Gaster, who edited the grimoire in 1896 on the basis of a manuscript from the 13th–14th century, explains that "we are justified in assigning to the first four centuries of the Christian era the origin of our Hebrew text."[184] Yuval Harari, who published a new critical edition in 1997, judges this early dating as "hard to justify" and is only prepared to limit the time of writing of *Ḥarba de-Moshe* to the third quarter of the first millennium.[185] It is also difficult to determine the place of origin of the work; Harari, however, assumes that "the compiler [...] probably lived in Palestine."[186] However, mandrakes are not explicitly mentioned in *Ḥarba de-Moshe*, and all roots that occur in the text do not bear any resemblance to the mandrake.[187]

Although no complete manuscript of ***Sefer ha-Razim*** has survived, Mordecai Margalioth succeeded in reconstructing it in 1966 using fragments from the Cairo Genizah.[188] Margalioth sees the date of origin as the 3rd to 4th century CE;[189] Gideon Bohak, however, is only willing to date it to "no later than the seventh century CE."[190] With regard to the place

181 Cf. Yuval Harari, "The Sword of Moses (Ḥarba de-Moshe): A New Translation and Introduction," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 7.1 (2012), 58–98, here 58.

182 Cf., also for additional information about the manuscript, Yael Okun, "Genève, Bibliothèque de Genève, Comites Latentes 145," *e-codices*, 2011, http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/description/bge/cl0145/ [accessed 04/2023].

183 Cf. Harari 2012, 64.

184 See Moses Gaster, *The Sword of Moses*, Cosimo Classics (1896; repr., New York: Cosimo, 2005), 26.

185 Cf. Harari 2012, 66–67.

186 Cf. *ibid*., 67.

187 For an in-depth discussion see Burghardt 2021, 30–31.

188 See Mordecai Margalioth, *Sepher ha-Razim. A Newly Recovered Book of Magic from the Talmudic Period. Collected from Genizah Fragments and Other Sources* (Jerusalem: American Academy of Jewish Research, 1966). A new scientific edition with a German translation was published in 2009. See Bill Rebiger and Peter Schäfer, eds., *Sefer ha-Razim I und II. Das Buch der Geheimnisse I und II*, 2 vols., Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 125; 132 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

189 Cf. Margalioth 1966, 26.

190 See Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic. A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 174.

of origin, Bohak concludes: "This late-antique Jewish book of magic [...] may have been composed in Palestine, Egypt, Syria, or any other region where Hebrew-writing Jews came into contact with Greco-Roman culture and Greco-Egyptian magic."[191] In *Sefer ha-Razim*, too, mandrakes are not explicitly mentioned. In the 'third firmament' of the work, however, a strange root is discussed which Margalioth calls עגר אגריאופוריס.[192] Bill Rebiger and Peter Schäfer almost always find אגרויופיטום, except for עגר אגריאופוריס in one fragment.[193] They translate this as "wild plant" or "root of a wild plant."[194] This is based on the assumption that אגריאופוריס is a Hebrew spelling for ἀγρίοφορος, which contains the words ἄγριος (wild, uncultivated, malicious) and φόρος (from φέρω; bring, bear, carry). Also, suspecting a corruption, Rebiger and Schäfer contemplate עקר instead of עגר. Thus, עגר אגריאופוריס would be either the root of a wild plant or the root of a plant that causes wildness.

But perhaps the Hebrew name of the root could also be derived from ἀγλαόφωτις,[195] the 'brightly shining' plant that we already encountered in Claudius Aelianus' work. This would make a great deal of sense if the recipe described here was supposed to work in accordance with the principles of sympathetic magic—in this case, a demonstration of magical prowess that consisted of filling a house with fire without anything actually burning.[196] But even if this assumption were correct, a reader would have had to connect אגריאופוריס / אגרויופיטום via *aglaophotis* and *cynospastos* to *mandragora* in order to realize that the recipe was talking about a mandrake. This seems rather difficult for a magical 'layman.'

Another Jewish grimoire of which it is plausible that it was written before the end of the first millennium is a Greek work called ***Hygromanteia***.[197] The earliest extant manuscripts of this book date to the 15th century CE.[198] Pablo A. Torijano comes to the following assessment: "It seems that the work in its actual form originated at the end of late antiquity, very likely around the fifth or sixth centuries C.E., in an urbanized milieu and quite likely

191 See *ibid*., 175.

192 See Margalioth 1966, 95.

193 Cf. Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Cairo Genizah fragment Magical, T-S K1.145, Sefer ha-Razim, 2v. The fragment is accessible online at https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-TS-K-00001-00145/4 [accessed 04/2023].

194 "Wildwachsende Pflanze" or "Wurzel einer wildwachsenden Pflanze"; see Rebiger and Schäfer 2009, 2:162 and 2:250.

195 This would imply a consonant shift from 'l' to 'r,' which is quite common, and a change from '-tis' to '-ris'/'-tum' in the last syllable. This is also possible, given that a 't' is present in the word that Rebiger and Schäfer read in most of the texts, and since confusing *Yod* with *Vav* and *Samekh* with *Mem Sofit* is an easy mistake to make when dealing with hand-written Hebrew letters.

196 "[...] קח עגר אגריאופוריס, אם בקשתה להראות דוקמי לאוהבך או לרעך למלאת בית אש ולא ישרוף מאומה" See Margalioth 1966, 94–95.

197 The title *Hygromanteia* could refer either to water divination or to "the ancient practice of constraining demons in *hydriai*, that is to say urns, water jars or metallic water vessels." See Ioannis Marathakis, *The Magical Treatise of Solomon or Hygromanteia. Also Called the Apotelesmatikē Pragmateia, Epistle to Rehoboam, Solomōnikē*, Sourceworks of Ceremonial Magic Series 8 (Singapore: Golden Hoard Press, 2011), 35, and cf. Stephen Skinner and David Rankine, *The Veritable Key of Solomon*, Sourceworks of Ceremonial Magic Series 4 (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn, 2008), 56–57.

198 Cf. Pablo A.Torijano, "The Hygromancy of Solomon. A New Translation and Introduction," in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha. More Noncanonical Scripture*, ed. Richard Bauckham, James Davila, and Alexander Panayotov, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2013), 276–95, here 276–78.

within a Jewish environment, which was highly syncretized and whose main language was Greek."[199] Ioannis Marathakis admits that this is plausible, but suggests the alternative that "it could have been composed later in Crete, during the 13th or 14th century, that is to say under Venetian rule."[200]

Regarding the availability of magical books—at least in the Babylonian area—Bohak sees a "wide diffusion of Jewish magical texts in the Geonic period, and their circulation among the masses and the rabbinic elite alike; apparently, there was nothing esoteric about such texts, and they were not the hidden possessions of a secretive guild of magicians, but available for all to see."[201] The question arises, however, whether this assessment would also apply to medieval Ashkenaz. That here, too, at least some rabbis perused magical works is hinted at by Harari: "In two medieval Ashkenazi manuscripts (New York, JTSL 8128, and Oxford, BL 1531) are fragments of what I call 'magical sword literature.' I believe that they are late representations of an early textual layer of which the redactor of *The Sword of Moses* made use."[202] And Margalioth notes that Eleazar ben Judah of Worms (c. 1165–c. 1230 CE)[203] copied numerous passages from *Sefer ha-Razim* for his book *Sodei Razayya*.[204] Eleazar of Worms, however, belonged to the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* movement[205] and was therefore probably much more interested in esoteric subjects than were other Ashkenazi rabbis. In short, it is at least possible that Eliyya ben Berekhyah knew (of) works similar to *Ḥarba de-Moshe* and *Sefer ha-Razim*, but this seems less likely for a book like *Hygromanteia*, which was written in Greek. In the *Hygromanteia*, the mandrake is explicitly called by its Greek name:[206]

> The plant of Cancer is the mandrake; gather it when the same zodiac sign—the Crab—rules. The flowers, when the ears are anointed, heal all kinds of headache. Give its root to a barren woman to eat, two wheat grains from the first day of the purification till the fourteenth day and she will conceive, she also has to wear some of the plant.[207]

At this point, the statement that the mandrake is effective against infertility is also in evidence in a Jewish text. As a result of our investigation, however, it seems that it is not very likely that Jewish grimoires in which mandrakes were praised as a magical ingredient circulated in Eliyya's environment. Furthermore, there is no reason to suppose that Eliyya was made aware of possible dangers in the harvesting of mandrakes, or even of the method of uprooting the plant with the 'help' of a dog, by having read works of this kind.

199 See *ibid.*, 279.

200 Cf. Marathakis 2011, 75.

201 See Bohak 2011, 224–25.

202 See Harari 2012, 65.

203 Cf. Joseph Dan, "Eleazar ben Judah of Worms," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 6:303–05, here 303.

204 Cf. Margalioth 1966, 42.

205 Cf. Dan 2007, 6:303.

206 E.g. in Codex Monacensis Graecus 70: "Τὸ βότανον τοῦ Καρκίνου ἐστὶν ἡ μανδραγούραν·" See Charles-Émile Ruelle, "Excerptum ex Codice Monacensi Graeco 70. Hygromantia Salomonis," in *Codicum Parisinorum*, vol. 8.2 of *Catalogus Codicum Astrologorum Graecorum*, ed. Joseph Heeg (Brussels: Henri Lamertin, 1911), 139–65, here 160.

207 See Torijano 2013, 292.

Old French Glossaries

A small number of *sifre pitronot*, medieval glossaries listing biblical Hebrew lemmata together with Old French translations in Hebrew script, and sometimes with additional explanations, are extant today. They might give us an idea of the vernacular word—or words—that would have come to the mind of a Northern French rabbi contemplating *duda'im*.[208]

MS Bibliothèque nationale de France Hébreu 302 (BnF_{302}), which was probably written in the northeastern part of France,[209] contains a colophon on folio 113v that states that the manuscript was completed in Kislev 5001, which corresponds to November/December 1240.[210] The manuscript explains, in the context of Gen 30:14: "the *duda'im*: *les madregols* [mandrakes] in the vernacular; alternatively: *les violets* in the vernacular."[211] When dealing with the lemmata of Jer 24:1, the manuscript tells us: "*duda'ei*: *pots* in the vernacular" and even adds a Hebrew synonym: "like *kedarot*."[212] In the context of Cant 7:14, we are informed: "the *duda'im*: *les madregols* [mandrakes] in the vernacular; alternatively: *pos de fies* [pots with figs] in the vernacular."[213]

MS Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig 1099 (UBL_{1099}), the so-called *Glossaire de Leipzig*, was compiled in Rouen and has been dated to the end of the 13th century.[214] Regarding Gen 30:14, it explains: "*duda'im*: *violets*, *siglei*, that is a plant, in the Arabic language *jasmin*; alternatively *madregoles* [mandrakes]."[215] In the context of Jer 24:1, this manuscript, too, gives the vernacular translation plus a Hebrew synonym: "*duda'ei*: *pots*, *kedarot*,"[216] and

208 I am grateful to Dr. Stephen Dörr (Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften) for his help with idene tifying and translating the Old French words.

209 "L'écriture [du glossaire de Paris, n° 302 du fonds hébreu] est celle du nord-est de la France." See Arsène Darmesteter, "Glosses et glossaires hébreux-français du moyen age," in *Reliques scientifiques. Recueillies par son frère*, ed. James Darmesteter, vol. 1 (Paris: Léopold Cerf, 1890), 165–95, here 182.

210 Cf. Mayer Lambert and Louis Brandin, eds., *Glossaire hébreu-français du XIII^e siècle. Recueil de mots hébreux bibliques avec traduction française. Manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Nationale, fonds hébreu, n° 302* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1905), ii, and Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS hébreu 302 (BnF_{302}), fol. 113v. The manuscript is accessible online at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10540891g/f231.item [accessed 04/2023].

211 "הדודאים לַיִש מַדְרָגוֹלְש בל לֹאֹ וִיאוֹלִיטש בל." See BnF_{302}, fol. 5v; accessible online at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10540891g/f15.item [accessed 04/2023].

212 "דודאי פּוֹנְץ בל כקדרות." The letter "נ" in the Old French word appears to have been crossed out in the manuscript, or, alternatively, replaced with the letter "ו," leaving us with "*pous*" for pots. See BnF_{302}, fol. 66v; accessible online at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10540891g/f137.item [accessed 04/2023].

213 "הדודאים לַיִש מדרגולְש בל לֹאֹ פוץ דְפַיאְש בל." See BnF_{302}, fol. 33v; accessible online at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10540891g/f71.item [accessed 04/2023].

214 Cf. Marc Kiwitt and Stephen Dörr, "Judeo-French," in *Handbook of Jewish Languages*, ed. Lily Kahn and Aaron D. Rubin, rev. ed., (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 138–77, here 143–44.

215 "דודאים – וויאוֹלִיטִיש סגלי עשב הוא בל ישמעאל יסמין לֹאֹ מַדְרָגוֹלִיש." See Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig, MS 1099 (UBL_{1099}), folio 8v; accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/edit/fb36cb0b-2f0c-4cbb-8d21-e5533529cf46 [accessed 04/2023].

216 "דודאי פּוֹץ קדירות." See UBL_{1099}, folio 73r; accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/edit/f3be1822-743d-4ee4-ac32-9a4de63ad8d8 [accessed 04/2023].

when dealing with Cant 7:14, we learn: "the *duda'im*: *les olets* [the pots; Old French word derived from the Latin *olla*]."[217]

A third glossary, ***Parma Biblioteca Palatina Codex 2924*** (PBP_{2924}), tells us in a colophon on folio 217r that it was completed on Av 16, 5039 (1279 CE) in the town of Delsberg (now Delémont).[218] The manuscript is missing its first part, so that we cannot know what this section of the work used to impart about Reuben's *duda'im*. In the context of Jer 24:1 we are given, as in the other glossaries, an Old French translation together with a Hebrew synonym: "*duda'ei*: *pots, kedarot*."[219] Concerning Cant 7:14, the manuscript explains: "the *duda'im*: *les pots*; alternatively *les violets*."[220] The second alternative is then cross-referenced with Gen 30:14: "like: 'from your son's *duda'im*,'"[221] which might indicate that this glossary understands Reuben as bringing violets to his mother.

The glossaries are thus in agreement that there are two very different meanings for the word *duda'im* (which is the accepted viewpoint today, too):[222] In Jer 24:1, it designates pots, but in other contexts it could also refer to plant parts, possibly flowers, or, according to *MS BnF. Hébreu 302* and *MS Leipzig UBL 1099*, mandrakes as well. The latter manuscripts do not make a decision about what Reuben brought to his mother; instead, they offer up mandrakes and flowers side by side and leave it to the reader to choose one or the other.

The animal in the story: dog or donkey?

As discussed above, Josephus equates *duda'im* with the fruits of mandrakes in the *Jewish Antiquities*. But in the *Jewish War*, he speaks of a *baaras* root. The question must therefore be asked: Did Josephus actually consider this plant to be a mandrake? For Immanuel Löw, there seems to be no doubt that mandrake and *baaras* root are one and the same: "The oldest Jewish source for the fable of the mandrake is Josephus [...], whose plant called baaras is a distortion of *jabrūḥa*."[223] However, since Josephus not only uses different names, but also speaks once of fruits and once of roots, it seems more likely that he had differ-

217 "הדודאים לֵיש אוֹלֵיש." See UBL_{1099}, folio 217r; accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/edit/f1e34d53-4522-4e0d-b567-ac884e46f775 [accessed 04/2023].

218 The town's name is given as "טלאשברק," which Colette Sirat identifies as Delémont in the Swiss Jura. Cf. Parma, Biblioteca Palatina, Codex 2924 (PBP_{2924}), folio 217r; accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/edit/ba8ec095-63d5-4d06-887d-4f2e5445c0a2 [accessed 04/2023], and Colette Sirat, *Hebrew Manuscripts of the Middle Ages*, ed. and trans. Nicholas de Lange (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 5.

219 "דוּדָאֵי פּוֹץ קדירות." See PBP_{2924}, folio 77r; accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/edit/dd6f027d-b46e-4f58-8b99-688adb62e912 [accessed 04/2023].

220 "הַדוּדָאִים לֵיש פּוֹץ לֹא לֵיש וְיאוֹלֵיטְש." See PBP_{2924}, folio 37r; accessible online at http://bima2.corpusmasoreticum.de/manuscript/edit/b61d001e-120e-48dc-b90b-489fa1b78a09 [accessed 04/2023].

221 "כמ מדודאי בנך." See *ibid*.

222 Cf. 'דּוּדַי*1' and 'דּוּדַי*2' in: Gesenius et al. 2013, 244.

223 "Die älteste jüdische Quelle für die Fabel von der Mandragora ist Josephus […], dessen baaras genannte Pflanze aus *jabrūḥa* entstellt ist." See Immanuel Löw, *Pedaliaceae – Zygophyllaceae*, vol. 3 of *Die Flora der Juden*, Veröffentlichungen der Alexander Kohut Memorial Foundation 3 (Vienna: R. Löwit 1924), 364. As we have seen, the words יברוחה and יברוחא in all likelihood refer to a mandrake in Aramaic. See Jastrow, 1903c, 1:562.

ent plants in mind.[224] This could be an indication that in the 1st century CE, the biblical *duda'im* story was not yet connected with mortal risk for the person harvesting them or the necessity of using a dog.

A tradition that seems to have been completely unknown in the Gentile world associates Reuben's uprooting of *duda'im* with a donkey.

In the Torah itself, in Gen 49:14, a connection is made between a donkey and one of the supporting characters in the *duda'im* episode, Issachar (whose birth was the result of the night Jacob and Leah spent together). However, the verse is extremely cryptic, which has resulted in widely diverging translations. Gen 49:14:[225] יִשָּׂשכָר חֲמֹר גָּרֶם רֹבֵץ בֵּין הַמִּשְׁפְּתָיִם.

The first part of this verse can be understood as an equational sentence, where ישׂשכר is the subject, חמר is the predicate noun, and גרם is regarded as a *genitivus epexegeticus* of the noun גָּרֶם.[226] JPS thus translates: "Issachar is a strong-boned ass, crouching among the sheepfolds."[227] And the New International Version proposes: "Issachar is a rawboned donkey lying down between two saddlebags."[228]

Naftali H. Tur-Sinai, however, seems to regard גרם—going against the Masorah—as a *pa'al* participle of the root ג"ר"ם with the meaning 'to gnaw off,' which would have to be vocalized as גֹּרֵם. He translates: "Issachar—a donkey, eating, laying at his trough."[229] The Septuagint probably reads ס instead of ם at the end of the word, which results in the *pa'al* past-tense verb form גָּרַס of the root ג"ר"ס, in the sense of 'to languish for,'[230] and presents the translation: "Issachar has longed for the good/beautiful and dwelled in the middle of the inheritance."[231]

But there is also another option, namely to read the *pa'al* past-tense verb form גָּרַם of the root ג"ר"ם but then to assume the meaning 'to cause,'[232] and thus to arrive at the statement: "A donkey caused Issachar." Exactly this understanding seems to be the basis of explanations in two extant aggadic midrashim (*Midrash ha-Galui* and *Midrash Aggadah*) which contribute an interesting viewpoint to the *duda'im* discussion.

Not much of ***Midrash ha-Galui*** has been preserved; R. Abraham Saba (died approx. 1508 CE)[233] quotes passages from this work in his book *Tsror ha-Mor*, which is, according to Michael A. Fishbane, "otherwise unknown."[234] The following quote has been passed down to us thanks to its inclusion in Saba's book:

> And in *Midrash ha-Galui* [it is said]: "Reuben went out to let his father's donkey graze,

224 For a discussion of this problem, cf. Frazer 1919, 391–93.

225 See Kittel 1997, ad loc.

226 Cf. *s.v.* 'גֶּרֶם' in: Gesenius et al. 2013, 229.

227 See Berlin, Brettler, and Fishbane 2014, ad loc.

228 See Baker 2007, ad loc.

229 "Jissachar—ein Esel, fressend, gelagert bei der Anrichte." See Hänssler, ed., *Die Heilige Schrift*, trans. Naftali Herz Tur-Sinai, Hänssler-Bibeln (Neuhausen-Stuttgart: Hänssler, 1993), ad loc., and cf. *s.v.* 'גרם' in: Gesenius et al. 2013, 229.

230 Cf. *s.v.* 'גרס' in: Gesenius et al. 2013, 230.

231 "Ἰσσαχαρ τὸ καλὸν ἐπεθύμησεν ἀναπαυόμενος ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν κλήρων·" See Rahlfs and Hanhart 2006, ad loc.

232 Cf. *s.v.* 'גרם' in: Gesenius et al. 2013, 229.

233 Cf. Shmuel Ashkenazi, "Saba, Abraham ben Jacob," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007), 17:614–15, here 614.

234 Cf. Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 343.

> and he tied it to a root of *duda'im* and walked away. And when he came back, he found the donkey dead because it had torn out the root of the *duda'im*, which [have the peculiarity that] whoever tears them out dies. And he took the *duda'im* and brought them to his mother. And this is [the explanation for Gen 49:14] 'Issachar: A donkey caused [him].'"[235]

There is no information on when *Midrash ha-Galui* was written; however, since even "the very latest Midrashim" belong "to the period of the 11th and 12th centuries,"[236] there is at least a chance that this tradition was also known in Eliyya's circle.

Midrash Aggadah is known today from a single manuscript, bought in Aleppo by "Abraham Bick from Pressburg" (Bratislava) and published by Salomon Buber in 1894.[237] At that time, several pages were already missing and no colophon, nor any information about the scribe or the time the manuscript was written, was included in the remainder.[238] However, the midrash is in all likelihood derived from the works of Moses ha-Darshan, who lived in the 11th century in Narbonne.[239] Moshe D. Herr explains:

> This is evident from the many parallel passages between, on the one hand, *Midrash Aggadah* and, on the other, *Genesis Rabbati*, *Numbers Rabbah I*, and the quotations from Moses ha-Darshan's work cited in Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch. It is further evident from the extensive use both of *Midrash Tadshe* [...] and of apocryphal and pseudepigraphical works of the Second Temple period (in particular, the Book of Jubilees).[240]

Therefore, per Herr's assessment, *Midrash Aggadah* was "compiled apparently in the 12th century,"[241] and Israel M. Ta-Shma believes that "there is ground for the suggestion that [...] the midrashic anthology called *Midrash Aggadah* [...] largely emanate[s] from the *bet-midrash* of Moses ha-Darshan,"[242] which would suggest that southern France was the midrash's place of origin.

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235 "ובמדרש הגלוי ראובן יצא לרעות חמורו של אביו וקשרו בשרש אחד של דודאים והלך לו, וכשחזר מצא החמור מת מפני שעקר שרש הדודאים, שהעוקרם מת, ולקח הדודאים והביאם לאמו, וזהו יששכר חמור גרם." See Jehuda D. Eisenstein, ed., *Ozar Midrashim. A Library of Two Hundred Minor Midrashim*, vol. 1 (New York: J. D. Eisenstein, 1915), 82.

236 Cf. Moshe D. Herr, "Midrash," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007a), 14:182–85, here 185.

237 See Salomon Buber, ed., מדרש אגדה על חמשה חומשי תורה. יצא עתה פעם ראשונה לאור עולם, על פי כתב יד ישן נושן יחיד בעולם, המובא מארם צובה, vol. 1 (Vienna: Abraham Fanta, 1894), 5. The manuscript "is now Oxford, Bodleiana, MS c. 22 (Cat. 2641)." See Benjamin Richler, *Guide to Hebrew Manuscript Collections*, Publications of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities: Section of Humanities (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1994), 27.

238 Cf. Buber 1894, 1:5–6.

239 Cf. Israel M. Ta-Shma, "Moses ha-Darshan," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007b), 14:556–57, here 556.

240 See Moshe D. Herr, "Midrashim, Smaller," *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (2007b), 14:187–90, here 189. Martha Himmelfarb and Israel M. Ta-Shma agree with him. Cf. Martha Himmelfarb, "Some Echoes of Jubilees in Medieval Hebrew Literature," in Martha Himmelfarb, *Between Temple and Torah. Essays on Priests, Scribes, and Visionaries in the Second Temple Period and Beyond*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 151 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 351–70, here 351, and Ta-Shma 2007b, 557.

241 Cf. Herr 2007b, 14:189.

242 See Ta-Shma 2007b, 14:557.

Midrash Aggadah refers twice to the story of Reuben and the *duda'im*; as in *Midrash ha-Galui*, the actual uprooting of the plant is done by a donkey. In the commentary to Gen 30:14, the author states: "And Reuben tied the *duda'im* to his donkey and he pulled him out / they pulled out" (וקשר ראובן הדודאים בחמורו והוציאו).[243] As the sentence is printed in Buber's edition, either *duda'im* are represented as a suffix to the verb form, but in the singular, or 'they,' i.e. probably Reuben and the donkey together, pulled [the *duda'im*] out. However, it is possible that instead of הוציאו (active), הוצאו (passive) could be meant here, i.e.: 'And Reuben tied the *duda'im* to his donkey and they were pulled out.'
A few pages later, the author of *Midrash Aggadah* explains the whole affair quite plainly in his commentary to Gen 49:14:

> *Jissachar chamor garam*.* Do not read גרם, but גרם.** When Reuben went into the field and found *duda'im*, he did not know what they were, and he went and tied the donkey to the *duda'im* and went on his way. What did the donkey do? He wanted to escape, and the *duda'im* were uprooted, and they cried out a mighty cry, and the donkey died, because this is the way of the *duda'im*. And when Reuben came to his donkey and saw that he was dead, he understood that they [the plants] were *duda'im*. And he took them, and he gave them to his mother Leah, and Issachar was born. And exactly this donkey that pulled out the *duda'im* caused Issachar to be born, and because of this it is said: Issachar would not have come into existence without the donkey.[244]

To this, Buber added the following footnotes:

> *: Do not read גרם, but גרם: Meaning to say: Do not read גֶּרֶם but גָּרֶם. Plus, in *Bereshit Rabbah*, section 98, paragraph 12 [it is stated]: ישששכר חמור גרם ישששכר חמור לגרמיה, which should read חמור גרמיה, meaning to say: He caused him [to exist].[245] And *Bereshit Rabbah*, section 99, paragraph 8, contemplates: חמור גרם: a donkey caused him [to exist].
>
> **: When Reuben went into the field etc. and he went and tied the donkey to the *duda'im* etc.: I couldn't find this in any place and it is a wondrous thing.[246]

243 See Buber 1894, 1:78.

244 "ישששכר חמר גרם.* אל תיקרי גרם אלא גרם,** שהלך ראובן בשדה ומצא דודאים, ולא היה יודע מה הם, והלך ואסר חמור בדודאים והלך לו, מה עשה החמור רצה לברוח ונעקרו הדודאים וצעקו צעקה גדולה ומת החמור, כי כן דרך הדודאים, וכשבא ראובן אצל חמורו וראהו מת, הבין שהיו דודאים, ולקחם ונתנם לאמו לאה ונולד ישששכר ואותו החמור שהוציא הדודאים גרם לישששכר שנולד ועל כן אמר, ישששכר לא גרם לו שיבא כי אם החמור." See Buber 1894, 1:112.

245 Jastrow remarks on this, too: "Gen. R. s. 98 (read:) ישששכר חמור גֶּרֶמיה (play on גרם […])." See Marcus Jastrow, "גֶּרֶם I.," *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature* (1903a), 1:269.

246 *: "אל תקרי גרם אלא גרם. ר"ל [רצה לומר] אל תקרי גֶּרֶם אלא גָּרֶם וכן בב"ר [בבראשית רבה] פצ"ח [פרשה צ"ח] אות י"ב ישששכר חמור גרם ישששכר חמור לגרמיה, צ"ל [צריך להיות] חמור גרמיה, ר"ל [רצה לומר] היה גורם לו, ועיין ב"ר [בראשית רבה] פצ"ט [פרשה צ"ט] אות ח' חמור גרם חמור גרם אותו."
**: "שהלך ראובן בשדה כו' [כולה] והלך ואסר חמור בדודאים כו' [כולה]. זה לא מצאתי בשום מקום ודבר מפליא הוא." See Buber 1894, 1:112.

In this passage, for the first time, we explicitly encounter the method that the mandrake allegedly uses to kill an attacker: It emits a "mighty cry" that is so bloodcurdling or ear-splitting that whoever hears it drops dead.

The sentences quoted by Buber from *Bereshit Rabbah* are not specific enough to conclude that this work, too, intends to imply that a donkey pulled out Reuben's *duda'im*, as a remark from Marcus Jastrow shows, who also prefers the meaning 'a donkey caused him' but explains this in a very different way: "The braying of an ass caused him to be begotten (by announcing Jacob's arrival upon which Leah went forth to meet him [...])."[247]

The explanations in *Midrash ha-Galui* and *Midrash Aggadah* suggest that they were created as a reaction to the tradition according to which *duda'im* were magic plants—in fact, *Midrash Aggadah* has Reuben recognize the *duda'im* only because of the effect they had on his donkey, so even he must have known (within the framework of the *midrash*) about their deadly properties. Anyone who believes that a living being that pulls a mandrake root from the ground is instantly killed will struggle to explain how Reuben managed to escape this fate. Enriching the story with a donkey (maybe borrowed from Gen 49:14) provides a very elegant solution to this problem: Reuben (at first) did not recognize the *duda'im* for what they were and tied up his donkey without an ulterior motive. Everything else happened by chance, without the boy playing any active role in a magical ritual—which would certainly have been reassuring for those readers of the biblical story who knew of the magical reputation of the plant but felt uneasy about it.

Thus, if in fact there was a connection between *Midrash Aggadah* and Moses ha-Darshan, it would be quite likely that the tradition which sees *duda'im* as magic plants and has a donkey do the 'dirty work' of the uprooting was known to Jews in southern France in the 11th–12th century CE.

The writings of Berekhyah ben Natronai ha-Naqdan

Eliyya's father Berekhyah was, as we already mentioned, a prolific writer who intended to enrich Ashkenazi culture with works from the Gentile environment. It seemed worthwhile to investigate whether Berekhyah mentioned mandrakes, or even just reported any strange stories about dogs or donkeys (for example, in his *Fox Fables*[248] or in *My Uncle and My Nephew*). However, this is not the case. But we can at least infer from his lapidary that magical practices were not distasteful to him. Thus, he says of one stone, called *pantera*, the 'panther stone,' that it has to be worn and looked at before sunrise, and that this 'activation ritual' will make the wearer invincible in battle for a day.[249] Another example is *topace*, which is 'activated' by washing it in wine three times a day, whereupon the wine has to be drunk. In addition, strange (probably magical) words have to be written on a piece of parchment, which must be washed off in wine which also has to be drunk. This procedure

247 Cf. Jastrow, 1903a, 1:269.

248 English translations of the fables are found in Schwarzbaum 1979.

249 Cf. Berekhyah Ben Natronai ha-Naqdan 2010, 48–49.

promises the wearer of the stone to "remove fear from his heart" and if "he loses something, it will be returned to him."[250]

Iconographic witnesses

Pictures often say more than a thousand words, so it is not surprising that mandrake illustrations were created quite early on. They are mainly found in herbal books, in which the medico-magical properties of many plants were described.[251] Dioscorides' work was of particular importance in this genre:

> The earliest surviving records of illustrated Greek Herbals indicate *De Materia Medica* was widely read and reproduced during the Middle Ages in Latin, Arabic and Greek. For fifteen hundred years it was the standard authority both in botany and *materia medica*, assuming considerable significance in the development of western and Islamic cultures.[252]

A very early, richly illustrated example of these herbal books is the so-called "***Wiener Dioskurides***" (MS Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Codex medicus Graecus 1) which was made in Constantinople around 512 CE.[253] It is a composite manuscript in which six treatises on natural science and two on fishing and bird-catching were bound together;[254] the first and largest part is based on the work of Dioscorides (fols. 12v–387r; the last page, which belonged to the original codex, is 485v).[255] The three sheets after fol. 226v, with texts about and drawings of the mandrake, are missing in this work; they were replaced in the 13th century CE, but then erroneously included as fols. 287r–289v.[256]
The replacement illustration is a "brown ink drawing, 'μανδραγόρα,' the root-man; from its little head sprouts the plant, arms and legs turn into roots."[257] The lower right corner of the folio is torn off, but a few leafy and fruit-like lines that can still be made out suggest that a second entity was once shown there.

250 Cf. *ibid.*, 42–43.

251 "There is evidence […] that illustrated Herbals existed in antiquity and continued to be produced in the Late Antique period. Illustrated Herbals are mentioned by Pliny and later by Cassiodorus […] and fragments of an illustrated papyrus roll and illustrated papyrus codex survive." Cf. Minta Collins, *Medieval Herbals. The Illustrative Traditions*, The British Library Studies in Medieval Culture (London: The British Library; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 37.

252 See Tess A. Osbaldeston, introduction to *Dioscorides. De Materia Medica. Being an Herbal with Many Other Medicinal Materials*, trans. Tess A. Osbaldeston (Johannesburg: Ibidis, 2000), xx–xxxviii, here xxvii.

253 Cf. Collins 2000, 39.

254 Cf. *ibid.*, 39 and 40.

255 Cf. Hans Gerstinger, *Dioscurides. Codex Vindobonensis Med. Gr. 1 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. Kommentarband zu der Faksimileausgabe*, Codices Selecti 12* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1970), 1.

256 Cf. *ibid.*, 20.

257 "Braune Federzeichnung, 'μανδραγόρα', das Wurzelmännchen; aus dem Köpfchen sprießt die Pflanze, Arme und Beine verlaufen in Wurzeln." See Gerstinger 1970, 23.

Fig. 9: Mandragora illustration on fol. 289r in the *Wiener Dioskurides*.[258]

It is possible that this was the female counterpart to the still-preserved male root-man.

In addition to the replacement folio from the 13th century, there are two other places in this codex where a mandrake is depicted. On fol. 5v, we see the so-called 'second author's picture.' The colored illustration shows Epinoia (ἐπίνοια), the personification of the power of thought, holding up a mandrake. Dioscorides is seated on her left, writing something in a book, and an artist making a drawing of the root can be seen on her right.[259] In this drawing, the arms and legs of the root-man are clearly visible. The mandrake must have been quite important to the makers of the codex; otherwise, it would not have been shown in such a prominent place, as a sort of representative of all the plants discussed in the work.

Fig. 10: Second and first 'author's picture' on fol. 5v and fol. 4v in the Wiener Dioscorides.[260] Photos courtesy of Österreichische Nationalbibliothek.

Even more revealing is the so-called 'first author's picture' on fol. 4v. Here, Dioscorides and Heuresis (εὕρεσις), the personification of discovery, are shown. Heuresis hands Dioscorides an anthropomorphic mandrake root with one hand and points downward with the oth-

258 See Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, ed., *Dioscurides. Codex Vindobonensis Med. Gr. 1 der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek. Facsimile*, Codices Selecti 12 (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1970), fol. 289r.

259 Cf. Gerstinger 1970, 32.

260 See Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Med. gr. 1, folio 5v [Vienna Dioscorides]. The picture is accessible online at https://onb.digital/result/10CD7B27 [accessed 02/2024]; and Wien, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Cod. Med. gr. 1, folio 4v [Vienna Dioscorides]. The picture is accessible online at https://onb.digital/result/10CD7B1E [accessed 02/2024].

er, where a dead dog is tied to the mandrake.[261] This seems to be the earliest extant depiction of a mandrake root that shows off both the association with mortal danger connected with uprooting the plant and the ingenious method of having the harvesting done by a dog. Another aspect of this codex could be of interest here: According to Uriel Heyd, the *Wiener Dioskurides* probably belonged to the Jew Moses Hamon some centuries later, who was the personal physician of Suleiman the Magnificent (reigned 1520–1566 CE).[262] While this period is clearly outside the time frame we are interested in here, the idea that such a splendid herbal would pass into the possession of a Jew could be taken as an indication that Jewish medics—given the chance—would have studied such illustrated herbal books even in the time of Eliyya.

Fig. 11: Mandragora illustration in *Dioscurides Neapolitanus*, fol. 90r.[263] Photo courtesy of Library of Congress.

Towards the end of the 6th or the beginning of the 7th century CE, a herbal very similar to the *Wiener Dioskurides* was produced, known as ***Dioscurides Neapolitanus*** (Biblioteca

261 Or a dog in the process of dying. Collins refers to "an agonising dog." See Collins 2000, 44. Gerstinger sees a dog "in its death throes" ("[einen] sich im Sterben aufbäumenden Hund"). See Gerstinger 1970, 30. One group of scholars put forward that the dog is jumping, but their argument is not convincing. For a detailed discussion of this explanation, see Burghardt 2021, 40 and 64.

262 Cf. Uriel Heyd, "Moses Hamon, Chief Jewish Physician to Sultan Süleymān the Magnificent," *Oriens* 16 (1963), 152–70, here 166–168, and 156.

263 See Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, MS Dioscurides Neapolitanus, folio 90r. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl_10690/?sp=181&r=-0.558,0.011,2.116,1.023,0 [accessed 04/2023].

Nazionale di Napoli, Codex ex Vindobonensis Graecus 1). As a place of production, Constantinople and Byzantine Italy, among others, are under discussion.[264]

In this codex, the section on the *mandragora*, which was equipped with illustrations of two mandrakes, has been preserved.[265] The illustrations on fol. 90r are inscribed, so that we know the larger one is supposed to represent a male mandrake (ΜΑΝΔΡΑΓΟΡΑ ΑΡΡΕ; abbreviation for μανδραγόρα ἀρρενικός), and the smaller one, a female (ΜΑΝΔΡΑΓΟΡΑ ΘΗΛΥ; abbreviation for μανδραγόρα θηλυκός). The roots are roughly shaped like humans, but they have no faces nor any sexual characteristics—except that in the male mandrake, an additional root strand grows where the penis would be in a man. The differences are otherwise in size and in the fact that the leaves and fruits are larger in the male version—which we already know from Dioscorides' text—and that the female version has flowers. The roots are equally dark in color; the difference in color described by Dioscorides is not shown here.

In addition to the herbals based on Dioscorides' work, which were copied and distributed in the Greco-Arabic world, there was also a second class of such books written in Latin. The underlying work is called *Herbarius* and the author is known as Apuleius Platonicus ("Pseudo-Apuleius"); it is assumed to have been written between the 2nd and 4th century.[266]

Fig. 12: Mandrake illustrations in Kassel University's *2° Ms. phys. et hist. nat. 10* and in *Cotton MS Vitellius C III*.[267] Pictures are not to scale. Photos courtesy of Universität Kassel and British Library, public domain (PDM 1.0).

264 Cf., also concerning the dating, Collins 2000, 58–59.

265 See Naples, Biblioteca Nazionale di Napoli, MS Dioscurides Neapolitanus, folio 90r. The manuscript is accessible online at https://www.loc.gov/resource/gdcwdl.wdl_10690/?sp=181&r=-0.558,0.011,2.116,1.023,0 [accessed 04/2023].

266 Cf. Collins 2000, 25.

267 See Kassel, Universität Kassel, 2° MS phys. et hist. nat. 10, folio 34v. The manuscript is accessible online at https://orka.bibliothek.uni-kassel.de/viewer/image/1357143974502/69/ [accessed 04/2023],

Kassel University possesses a manuscript, ***2° Ms. phys. et hist. nat. 10***, that contains i.a. a version of Pseudo-Apuleius' *De herbarum medicaminibus*, and two folios of this work (fols. 34v and 35r) were devoted to a short tractate on the *mandragora*.[268] The manuscript was written in the second half of the 9th century in the Loire region.[269] A drawing of a mandrake can be seen on folio 34v.[270] The root is shaped like the body of a human; fine roots extend from its hands and feet. The plant does not have a human head, but instead leaves and fruits sprouting from its neck. Since its arms are crossed in front of its body, the lack of visible breasts might lead one to conclude that this is a male mandrake; the accompanying text explains: "There are two kinds of mandrakes: male and female. The female is reddish, the male more whitish. Both have the same effective power."[271] A dog that seems to be in pursuit of some tasty morsel is tied to the mandrake's ankles. This manuscript indicates that (at least part of) the populace of the Franco-Provençal-speaking region (slightly south east of the area of the *langue d'oïl*)[272] knew of the strange harvesting procedure necessary to procure mandrake roots by the second half of the 9th century.

Cotton MS Vitellius C III[273] contains an Old English translation of Pseudo-Apuleius and was possibly made in Canterbury in the early 11th century.[274] On fol. 57v, we see a mandrake with a dog chained to its root leg. The mandrake has no face, but well-defined upper-body and arm muscles. The harvesting procedure is described in the accompanying text[275] and is similar to what we have already seen: The root is to be partially dug up, then a hungry dog should be tied to it, etc. The text also gives the reason for this: "Of this wort it is said, that it hath so mickle might, that what thing soever tuggeth it up, that it shall soon in the same manner be deceived."[276] Although it is not explicitly stated here that the one who uproots the mandrake will be killed, the circumlocution is quite clear: What is done to the root is

and London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius C III, folio 57v. The manuscript is accessible online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_vitellius_c_iii_f057v [accessed 04/2023].

268 Cf. Hartmut Broszinski, *Kasseler Handschriftenschätze* (Kassel: Johannes Stauda, 1985), 82.

269 Cf. *ibid*., 84. The "earliest of all the surviving Latin Herbals, Leiden Voss. lat. Q. 9," written in the sixth century and part of the Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit in Leiden today, was unfortunately not available for investigation. However, we probably didn't miss anything important: Minta Collins remarks that "there are four carefully painted illustrations of serpents in Leiden Voss. lat. Q. 9," but that "there are no other animals or figures in this manuscript," so that it stands to reason that it contains no anthropomorphic mandrakes or dogs. See Collins 2000, 166–67, and 177–78.

270 See Kassel, Universität Kassel, 2° MS phys. et hist. nat. 10, folio 34v. The manuscript is accessible online at https://orka.bibliothek.uni-kassel.de/viewer/image/1357143974502/69/ [accessed 04/2023].

271 "Mandragorae […] genera duo sunt masculus et femina. Femina rubea est masculus albidior, utrisque una vis est." See *ibid*. I am grateful to Gianfranco Miletto for transcribing and translating the Latin text for me.

272 For a map of the area where Franco-Provençal was spoken, cf. Gaston Tuaillon, "Le francoprovençal: progrès d'une définition," *Travaux de Linguistique et de littérature* 10.1 (1972), 293–339, here 337.

273 Cf. London, British Library, MS Cotton Vitellius C III, folio 57v. The manuscript is accessible online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=cotton_ms_vitellius_c_iii_f057v [accessed 04/2023].

274 Cf. Collins 2000, 196.

275 Oswald Cockayne, *Leechdoms, Wortcunning, and Starcraft of Early England. Being a Collection of Documents, for the Most Part Never Before Printed, Illustrating the History of Science in this Country Before the Norman Conquest,* vol. 1, The Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland During the Middle Ages 35 (London: Longman, Green, Longman, Roberts, and Green, 1864), 245 and 247.

276 See *ibid*., 247.

also going to happen to the one who pulls it out—and the root will not go on living. The text also mentions other details that we already know from Josephus' description of the *baaras* plant, notably that the *mandragora* "shineth at night altogether like a lamp."[277] So here, too, the peculiarities of *mandragora* and *aglaophotis* are combined.

Fig. 13: Mandrake illustrations in *MS Ashmole 1431*, fol. 31r and fol. 34r.[278]Photos courtesy of Bodleian Library (CC-BY-NC 4.0).

Also from England is ***MS Ashmole 1431***,[279] which was probably produced in Canterbury in the 11th century CE.[280] This manuscript contains, among other things, a Latin version of Pseudo-Apuleius. Here, fol. 31r shows a male mandrake with a dog tied to its belly, and fol. 34r presents a female mandrake. The roots are shown as fully realized human beings, complete with primary and secondary sexual characteristics.

Harley MS 1585[281] was written around the middle of the 12th century CE;[282] Minta Collins considers Stavelot to be a likely candidate for its place of production.[283] Different pharmacological texts are bound together in this codex. In the Pseudo-Apuleius segment, on fol. 57r, a mandrake is shown whose legs are tied to a dog. The figure has a face and a rather human appearance; however, the musculature is drawn in a very stylized manner and the being overall appears rather androgynous.

277 See *ibid*., 245.

278 See Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Ashmole 1431, folio 31r. The manuscript is accessible online at https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/422f817f-4fb6-4bed-bb0d-44ba03eaca92 [accessed 04/2023]; and folio 34r, accessible online at https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/inquire/p/82433040-6b1e-42b5-90af-73b8287dc61c [accessed 04/2023].

279 Cf. *ibid*., fol. 31r and fol. 34r.

280 Cf. Collins 2000, 196.

281 Cf. London, British Library, MS Harley 1585, folio 57r. The manuscript is accessible online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_1585_f057r [accessed 04/2023].

282 Cf. Collins 2000, 205.

283 Cf. *ibid*., 207.

Fig. 14: Mandrake illustrations in *Harley MS 1585*, fol. 57r, and *Harley MS 5294*, fol.43r.[284] Pictures are not to scale.

Harley MS 5294[285] was probably produced in southern Italy, perhaps in the second half of the 12th century,[286] and also contains the Pseudo-Apuleius. It presents a mandrake on fol. 43r, whose arm is tied to a dog. The colored line drawing shows an androgynous human figure with long root threads instead of fingers and toes.

Another herbal, this one written in Hebrew, was produced around 1500 CE.[287] Although its time of production lies well outside Eliyya's era, it is nevertheless of interest as the second surviving depiction (after Eliyya's) of the mandrake myth in a Jewish context. The writing style of ***MS Hébreu 1199*** indicates that this manuscript originated in northern Italy.[288] Here, drawings of plants are occasionally accompanied by short descriptions and medical or even magical recipes. The Hebrew terms are sometimes supplemented with Latin-Italian ones.[289] On fol. 22v, an image of a mandrake is provided[290] which has a human shape; however, its body is largely hidden because its arms are crossed in front of its torso and it

284 See London, British Library, MS Harley 1585, folio 57r. The manuscript is accessible online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_1585_f057r [accessed 04/2023], and London, British Library, MS Harley 5294, folio 43r. The manuscript is accessible online at http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/Viewer.aspx?ref=harley_ms_5294_f043r [accessed 04/2023].

285 Cf. *ibid*.

286 Cf. Collins 2000, 199.

287 Cf. Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ed. "Hébreu 1199. Liber de plantis (hébreu)," *BnF Archives et manuscrits*, n.d., https://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc8082r [accessed 04/2023].

288 Cf. *ibid*.

289 Cf. *ibid*.

290 Cf. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS Hébreu 1199, Liber Plantis (hébreu), folio 22v. The manuscript is accessible online at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10545274f/f111.image [accessed 04/2023].

is covered with long root-hairs and a root-beard. A dog is tied to the mandrake's feet; the animal can just about be made out in the lower left corner of the picture. On the right side of the illustration, a kneeling person with a hoe is visible who is covering his ears—one assumes, to escape the lethal effect of the plant's cry. The labels "לוצא מנדרגא" and "Luza Mandraga"[291] appear beside the mandrake.

Fig. 15: Mandrake illustration in *MS Hébreu 1199*.[292] Photo courtesy of Bibliothèque nationale de France.

In her investigation of illuminated Hebrew medical manuscripts from the late Middle Ages, Sivan Gottlieb located the written information about the mandrake given in this codex.[293] On folio 70v, we read, i.a., that the plant can be used to cure barrenness in women, and there are also the usual instructions given about harvesting the root. Interestingly, the text recommends "a dog or other [domesticated] animal" as a stand-in for the human gatherer.[294] This formulation could be a reflection of the donkey that appeared in the Midrashim.

It seems that around 1500 at the latest, the mandrake was 'known' in (at least some) Jewish circles to emit a murderous scream when someone tried to uproot it, as was the harvesting method that uses a dog as a stand-in for a human.

291 It looks like the 'n' in *mandraga* has been replaced with a scribal abbreviation. However, if this were the case, the curved macron would be somewhat overlarge. *Luza* seems to be part of the plant's name and could derive from the Latin 'lucere' (to shine), from the Latin 'luteus' (one meaning is 'flame-colored'), or even from the Greek 'λιγύς' (clear, shrill, loud). A slight variation of this name for a mandrake (in that case *luza mandragola*) is used in an Italian herbal from the 15th century. Cf. Stefania Ragazzini, *Un erbario del XV secolo. Il ms. 106 della Biblioteca di botanica dell'Università di Firenze*, Accademia Toscana di Scienze e Lettere 'La Colombaria'. Studi 63 (Florence: L. S. Olschki, 1983), 96 and plate 40.

292 Cf. Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS hébreu 1199, Liber Plantis (hébreu), folio 22v. The manuscript is accessible online at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10545274f/f111.item.r=1199%20h%C3%A9breu [accessed 02/2024].

293 Cf. Sivan Gottlieb, "אמנות הריפוי: כתבי יד עבריים רפואיים מאוירים מימי הביניים המאוחרים," (Unpublished PhD diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2021), 84.

294 "ויש להוציאה עם א' כלב או בהמה אחרת." See Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, MS hébreu 1199, Liber Plantis (hébreu), folio 70v. The manuscript is accessible online at https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10545274f/f207.item.r=1199%20h%C3%A9breu [accessed 02/2024], ll. 14–15.

A hint for people in the know?

One more possible allusion that Eliyya might have had in mind when he drew the dog should be mentioned before we turn to the conclusion of this paper. In medieval Jewish manuscripts, hunting dogs were often depicted by way of allegorizing the persecution of Jews by Christians,[295] and, even more specifically, "white dogs with black spots often represent the Dominican friars, who are also known as 'dogs of the Lord' (*domini canes*)."[296] One non-pictorial example for a similar identification from Eliyya's own time can be found in the 13th century *piyyut* מעוז צור, which refers to 'the barking foe' from which the Lord is expected to deliver his people in the future. It might just be that with his depiction of a dog that is on the brink of dying, Eliyya wanted to remind the people in the know that God would surely 'put to death' the persecution of the Jewish people, hopefully rather sooner than later.

Conclusions

In his figurative Masorah on folio 33r, Eliyya ben Berekhyah depicts a circle ornament embellished with flowers; an arch that could represent a trellis for a flowery vine; and two anthropomorphic mandrake roots, possibly one 'female' and one 'male.' A dog is tied to one of the two roots.

While the first two elements of the drawing might well hint at Rashi's commentary on Gen 30:14, which equates *duda'im* with flowers (jasmine or violets), Eliyya reveals himself in the third—and most spectacular—element as preferring to think of *duda'im* as the roots of mandrakes (not the fruits and not the flowers). This is the first known depiction in a Jewish work of an ancient myth that purports that mandrakes are magical plants which kill any living being that uproots them—in the full-fledged version of the myth, by way of a deadly cry the plant emits. As a solution to the problem that the harvesting of the root thus presents, the myth recommends tying a dog to it and enticing the animal to rip the plant out, which will leave the dog dead but the human gatherer alive.

If Eliyya had indeed wanted to offer both interpretations—Rashi's flowers and mandrakes—side by side, he would be in agreement with the Old French glossaries investigated here, which also present mandrakes as one translation of *duda'im* and flowers (jasmine or violets) as an alternative.

When tracing the meaning of *duda'im* through (Jewish) time and space, we notice that the Septuagint (in the third century BCE) translates the term as "apples of the mandrake." Targum Onkelos equates them with *yavruḥin*, which was probably the Aramaic word for mandrakes. In the eyes of the Talmudic rabbis, too, *duda'im* could mean *yavruḥin*, but maybe also flowers or even other plants altogether. Flavius Josephus translates *duda'im* into Greek

295 Katrin Kogman-Appel, for example, identifies an illustration that shows a hare pursued by a dog in the so-called Leipzig Mahzor (Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, MS Vollers 1102/I–II, produced around 1310 in Southern Germany) as "a variation of the traditional hunting motif as an allegory of anti-Jewish persecution." See Kogman-Appel 2009, 310.

296 See Sara Offenberg, "Beauty and the Beast: On a Doe, a Devilish Hunter, and Jewish-Christian Polemics," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 44.2 (November 2020), 269–85, 270.

as "apples of the mandrake," and *Testament of Issachar* also uses this term, so that one must consider the possibility that they both drew from the Septuagint. Saadiah Gaon seems to have had no doubts when translating *duda'im* into Arabic as "fruits of mandrakes," and subsequent medical texts from the Sephardic world seem to have followed suit. There is, importantly, no implication of magical properties of mandrakes in the medical works reviewed here; these texts do, however, focus on the roots of the plant.

In the Christian world, rabbis appear to have been more reluctant to think of *duda'im* as mandrakes. Rashi doesn't even mention the possibility that they are identical, and nor does Rashbam, who seems to argue that they are figs. In all likelihood influenced by the Sephardic way of thinking, Ibn Ezra and later rabbis like Radak and Ralbag seem to have brought mandrakes back into consideration—now in particular the roots of the plant.

Even though most Jewish sources reject the alleged magical properties of the mandrake (medical ones are more likely to be conceded), the Talmud Yerushalmi seems to reflect that there were sections of the population who saw things differently. In *Midrash ha-Galui* and *Midrash Aggadah*, too, a classification of mandrakes as magic roots seems to have taken place; whether Gen 49:14 suggests something similar is not certain.

By drawing a dog tied to a mandrake—the first depiction of this kind in Jewish culture that we know of—Eliyya positions himself, in the discussion about *duda'im*, in the Gentile tradition, which freely attributed magic abilities to mandrakes and in which one was dependent on the (involuntary) help of a dog for the harvest.[297] Either Eliyya did not know the midrashic tale according to which Reuben's donkey pulled out the root, or he rejected it as an explanation of how the boy happened to come into possession of the magical mandrakes.

The assumption that there are two versions of mandrakes, 'male' and 'female,'[298] is already found in Dioscorides' writings (1st century CE) but seems to have been taken up only by Ralbag (1288–1344 CE) in Jewish biblical exegesis. If Eliyya did indeed want to depict a male and a female mandrake, his drawing would also represent the earliest known appearance of this concept in the Jewish tradition. The fact that Eliyya's mandrakes hardly differ in their appearance need not be a counterargument, since in the *Dioscurides Neapolitanus*, for example, only slight differences between the two versions can be discerned.

It is possible that Eliyya knew the tradition that appears in the *Testament of Issachar* and possibly resonates in Rashbam's commentary, according to which Reuben brought his mother two *duda'im*. However, it cannot be ruled out that Eliyya chose this number of roots by chance or for reasons of pictorial composition.

On the whole, it seems that Eliyya, like his father, not only appreciated scholarly knowledge from within the Jewish cultural circle, but extended his interest to the Christian environment as well and, albeit on a small scale, facilitated a sort of cultural transfer from popular Christian culture to the rabbinical world of the Ashkenazim.

297 For a graph depicting the geographic spread over time of this myth, see fig. 16.

298 For a graph depicting the geographic spread over time of this belief, see fig. 17.

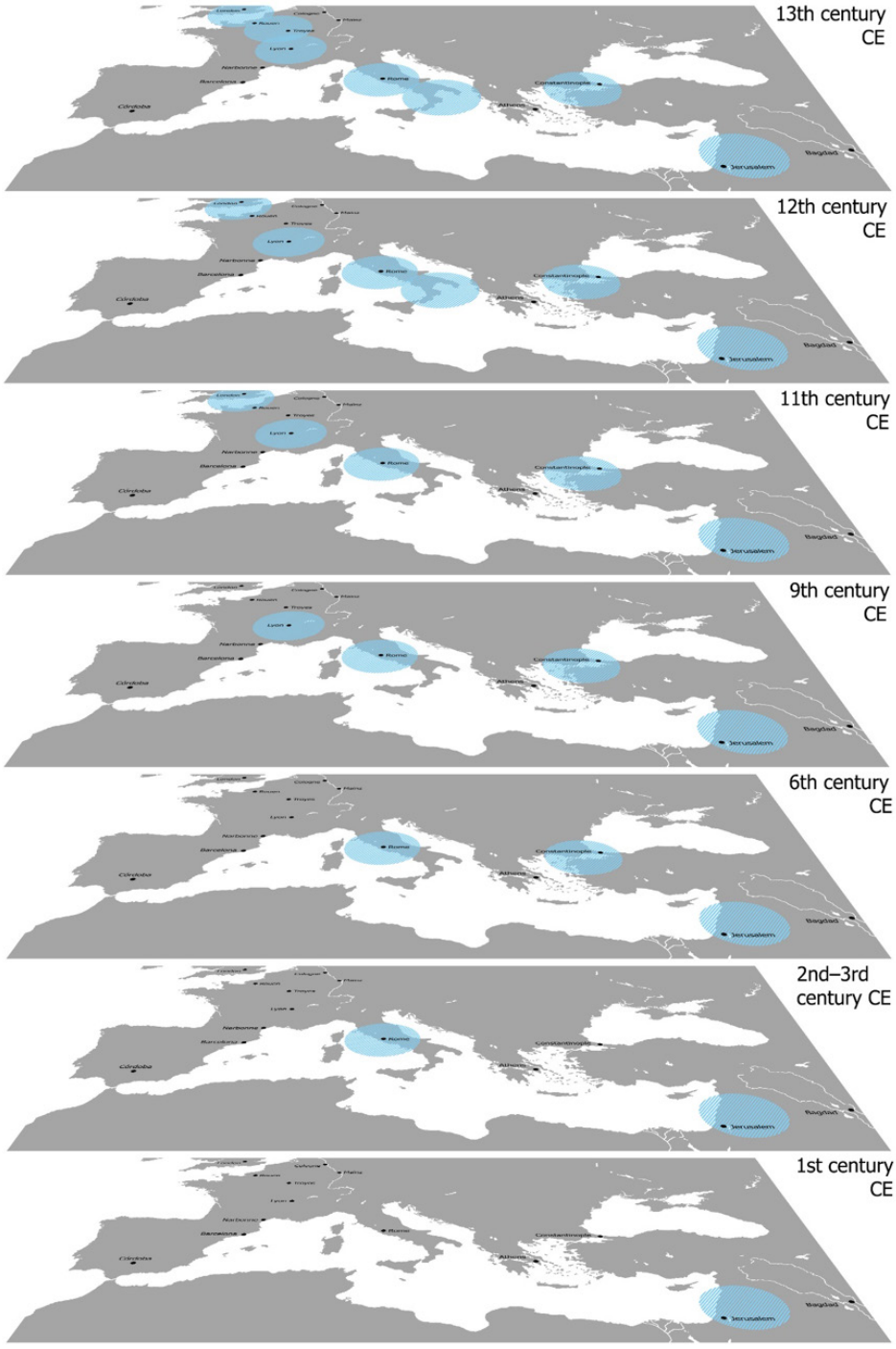

Fig. 16: Geographic spread over time of the myth that promotes the use of dogs in mandrake harvesting. Graph by Bettina Burghardt (licensed as Creative Commons CC-BY-SA 4.0).

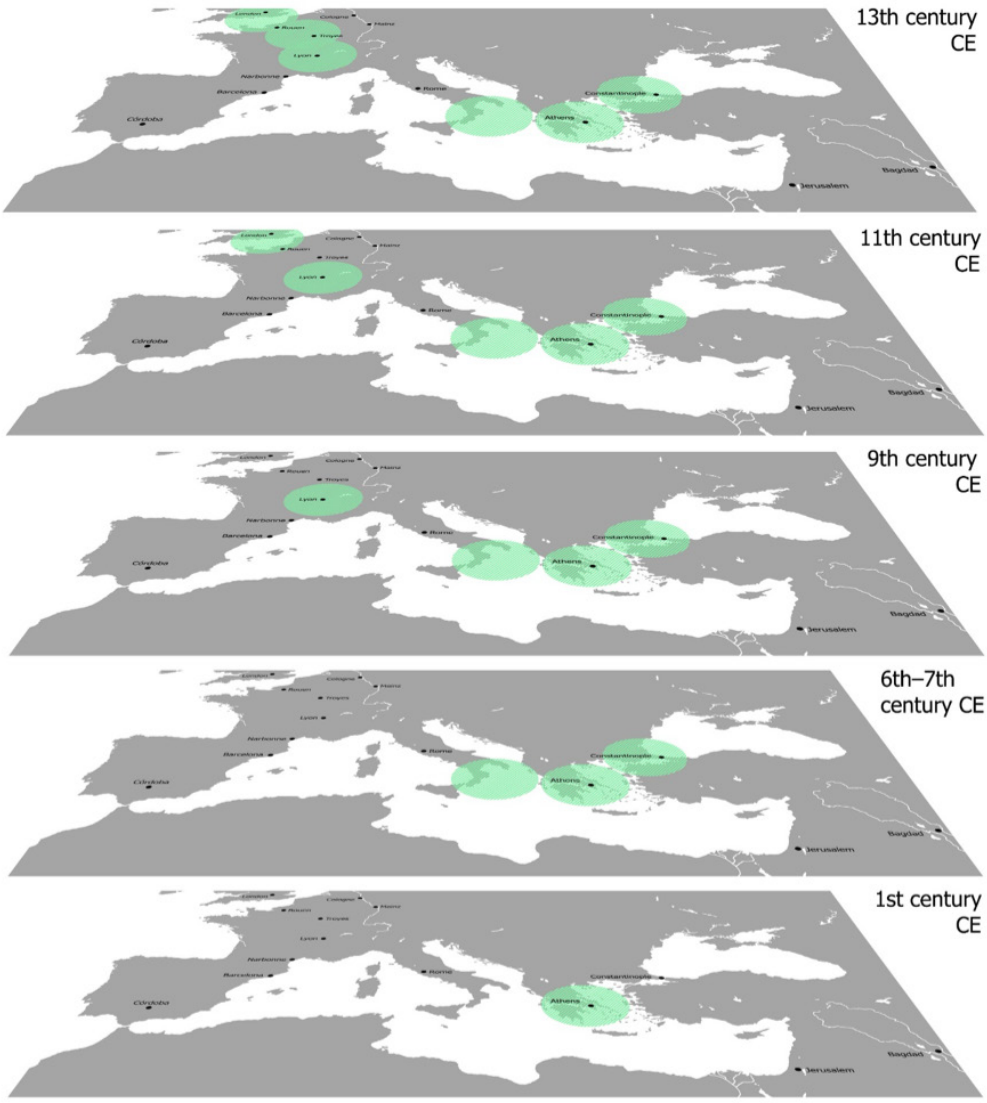

Fig. 17: Geographic spread over time of the belief that male and female mandrakes exist. Graph by Bettina Burghardt (licensed as Creative Commons CC-BY-SA 4.0).

Overview of the results in tabular form

source	time / location	name	which part?	♂ + ♀	animal	magic / demons
Theophrastus	4th–3rd century BCE / Greece	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root	–	–	magic
Septuagint	3rd century BCE / Egypt	*mandragora*	fruits	–	–	neither
Pliny the Elder	1st century CE / Rome	*cynocephalia* (= dog's head)	root	–	(dog)	magic
Dioscorides	1st century CE / Greece, Rome	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root	yes		(magic)
Josephus' *Antiquities*	1st century CE / Palestine, Rome	*mandragora* (mandrakes)	fruits	–	–	neither
Josephus' *War*	1st century CE / Palestine, Rome	*baaras*	root	–	dog	both
Onkelos	200 BCE–200 CE / Judea	*yavruḥin* (mandrakes?)	?	–	–	neither
Testament of Issachar	200 BCE–200 CE / Egypt?	*mandragora* (mandrakes)	fruits (2)	–	–	neither
Talmud Bavli	2nd–3rd century CE / Babylonia	*yavruḥei* (mandrakes?) *siglei* (violets?) *sivsukh*/ *sviskei* (mandrake flowers?)	? flowers flowers	–	–	neither
Claudius Aelianus	2nd–3rd century CE / Rome	*cynospastos* (= pulled out by a dog) *aglaophotis* (= brightly shining one	root	–	dog	magic
Midrash Bereshit Rabbah	beginning of the 5th century CE / Palestine	*yavruḥin* (mandrakes?) *sa'arin* (*cyperus rotundus*) *mayishin* (*celtis*)	? roots fruits?	–	–	neither
Hygromanteia	5th–6th century CE? / Greek-speaking area	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root, flowers	–	–	both
Talmud Yerushalmi	5th century CE / Palestine	*yavruḥin* (?) (mandrakes?)	?	–	–	?
Wiener Dioskurides	ca. 512 CE / Constantinople	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root	yes?	dog	magic

source	time / location	name	which part?	♂+♀	animal	magic / demons
Sefer ha-Razim	before 700 CE / ?	*agriophoris* (= *aglaophotis* of Claudius Aelianus?)	root	–	–	both
Dioscurides Neapolitanus	6th–7th century CE / Constantinople or Byzantine Italy	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root	yes	–	–
2° Ms. phys. et hist. nat. 10	2nd half 9th century / Loire region	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root	yes	dog	magic
Saadiah Gaon	882–942 CE / Babylonia	*luffāḥ* (לפאח; لفاح) mandrakes?	fruits?	–	–	neither
Ibn Janāḥ	10th–11th century / Sepharad	mandrakes?	–	–	–	–
Cotton MS Vitellius C III	early 11th century CE / Canterbury	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root	–	dog	magic
Rashi	1040–1105 CE / Troyes	*siglei* (jasmin or violets)	flowers	–	–	neither
MS Ashmole 1431	11th century CE / England (Canterbury)	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root	yes	dog	magic
Rashbam	1080/85–ca. 1174 CE / northern France	figs	fruits (2)	–	–	neither
Ibn Ezra	1089–1164 CE / Sepharad, Tzarfat, Ashkenaz	*yavruḥin* (mandrakes?)	roots	–	–	neither
Sefer Asaf	11th–12th century or before / ?	*mandragora* (mandrakes)	–	–	–	fights 'harmful spirits'
Midrash ha-Galui	11th–12th century CE (?) / ?	mandrakes?	roots	–	donkey	magic?
Midrash Aggadah	12th century CE (?) / southern France?	mandrakes	roots	–	donkey	magic
Rambam	1135–1204 / Sepharad	?	–	–	–	neither

source	time / location	name	which part?	♂ + ♀	animal	magic / demons
Harley MS 1585	2nd half 12th century CE / Stavelot (Belgium)	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root	–	dog	magic
Harley MS 5294	2nd half 12th century CE / southern Italy	*mandragora* (mandrake)	root	–	dog	magic
Radak	c. 1160–c. 1235 CE / Provence	mandrakes?	roots (?)	–	–	neither
Glossary MS BnF. Hebréu 302	1240 CE / north eastern France	*madregols* (mandrakes) or violets	? flowers	–	–	–
Glossary MS Parma 2926	1279 CE / Delémont, Swiss Jura	violets?	flowers	–	–	–
Glossary MS Leipzig UB 1099	end of the 13th century / Rouen	violets, jasmine or *madregoles (mandrakes)*	flowers ?	–	–	–
Ralbag	1288–1344 / Provence	mandrakes?	roots	yes	–	neither
BnF. MS Hébreu 1199	ca. 1500 CE / northern Italy	"*luza mandraga*" (mandrake)	root	–	dog	magic

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Abbreviations

BAV_{14}	MS Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana ebr. 14
BerR	Midrash Bereshit Rabbah
BHS	Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia
BnF	Bibliothèque nationale de France
BnF_{302}	MS Bibliothèque nationale de France hébreu 302
BSB	Bayerische Staatsbibliothek
CMWP	Corpus Masoreticum Working Papers
DigiVatLib	Digital Vatican Library
Hist. plant.	*Historia plantarum*
JLA	Jewish Literary Aramaic
JPS	Jewish Publication Society
JTSL	Jewish Theological Seminary Library
J.W.	*The Jewish War*
KJV	King James Version [of the bible]
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LXX	Septuagint
Mat. med.	*De materia medica*
mm	*masora magna*
mp	*masora parva*
Nat. an.	*De natura animalium*
Nat.	*Naturalis Historia*
n.d.	no date available for this resource
NIV	New International Version [of the bible]
N.N.	*nomen nescio*
PBP_{2924}	Parma Biblioteca Palatina Codex 2924
SPK_{9}	MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz or. quart. 9
SUB	Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg
T. Iss.	Testament of Issachar
TYR	תולדות היהודים בעיר רואן בימי-הביניים
UBL_{1099}	MS Universitätsbibliothek Leipzig 1099