

Solomon and Jamšīd: Transformation of Biblical and Talmudic Figures based on Iranian Literature

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Received: 27 December 2022 / Accepted: 08 September 2023

Abstract

This article is focused on the influence of Iranian motifs and themes on Biblical characters in the Babylonian Talmud (Bavli). Through a comparison of the Bavli's account of Solomon with Iranian accounts of the mythical figure of Jamšīd, it will be demonstrated that the latter figure helps us understand the differences between Biblical and Talmudic accounts of the former. This approach suggests that studying the impact of the Talmud and Midrash on Islamic *tafsīr* or exegesis—and consequently, Persian literature—may be a fruitful avenue for Iranists to explore. The main goal in this paper is to depict how Babylonian Jewish sages, who were familiar with Iran's literature and culture, used this knowledge to create transformed versions of well-known biblical figures, such as King Solomon, and furthermore, show that these Sasanian rabbis as composers of the Bavli played a significant role in the long and complicated transformation process that occurred from the Avesta to classical Persian literature.

Keywords: Talmud, Middle Persian, Sasanian, Judaism, Babylonian Talmud, Zoroastrianism, Pahlavi, Avesta.

Introduction

The present article largely aims to demonstrate how Biblical figures that appear in the Talmud, such as Solomon or Moses, have been transformed based on Iranian ideas and myths. By adopting this approach, we learn, among other things, that the differences between the Biblical and the Talmudic Solomon figures can be explained through the influence of Iranian literature. Hence, this article will offer an analysis of how Biblical figures have altered in the Bavli (the Babylonian Talmud), drawing on the influence of Iranian mythical figures like Jamšīd, Garšāsp, and Ganderawa.

King Solomon's famous seal-ring, which stolen by a demon (known as Ashmedai² in the Talmud and as Sakhr in *tafsīr*), is a recurring theme often used by classical

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2. Ashmedai is a famous demon in the Iranian lore that entered into the Babylonian Talmud.

Persian poets. This story, narrated in Gittin 68a, appears to have first made its way into *tafsīr* (Quranic exegesis) before emerging in Iranian literature. There are two verses in the Quran asserting that Solomon was tested by God, probably as a consequence of committing a certain sin, and subsequently atoned. The verses are as follows: "And We [God] certainly tried Solomon and placed on his throne a body [corpse]; then he returned. He said, 'My Lord, forgive me and grant me a kingdom such as will not belong to anyone after me'" (Quran 38:34-35). These verses are somewhat puzzling for interpreters, leading many to consult rabbinical literature in search of explanations. An ongoing dilemma for interpreters is the quality of Solomon's trial. What could the corpse on Solomon's throne mean? Why would Solomon ask for God's forgiveness after God tried him by placing a corpse on his throne? Upon consulting Jewish sources, several interpreters came to understand the corpse as a demon (Ashmedai) who took over Solomon's throne for a while as a result of Solomon's negligence towards idol worshiping in his house and his failure to safeguard his ring-seal and kingdom.³

The aforementioned *tafsīrs* were probably the main source for what later appeared in Persian literature as the famous theme of the lost seal-ring:

As naught, I take Sulaiman's [Solomon] seal-ring
On which, sometimes, Ahriman's [Satan] hand shall be

Or,

That hearth, that is the hidden-displayer; and that the cup of Jamshid [Jamšīd] hath
For a seal ring, that awhile became lost, what grief it hath? (Clarke 2001)

Interpreters have long held the belief that Persian poets equated Solomon and Jamšīd in their works due to the undeniable resemblances between the two kings, but this position does not answer the present question of whether or not Sasanian Talmudic sages saw those resemblances when they were composing Git. 68a, and whether or not Touraj Daryae's Yima [Jamšīd] paradigm is applicable in this case.⁴ The first step to answering these questions is to elucidate the differences between the Talmudic and biblical portrayals of Solomon. Once this has been established, the Talmudic King Solomon must be further investigated and compared with some of the individuals mentioned in the Pahlavi sources (mainly Jamšīd).

In the Old Testament, the sources for the history of the reign of Solomon are II Sam. xi.-xx. and the corresponding portions of I Chronicles, as well as I Kings i.-xi. 43 and I Chron. xxviii. According to these Biblical sources, Solomon was a glorious king,

3. Many older Quranic *tafsīrs* contain the term "Isra'īliyyāt." See, for instance, *Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī*, the oldest Quranic commentary (ninth to tenth century), and *Tafsīr al-Kashshāf* by al-Zamakhshārī written in the twelfth century. *Kashf al-asrār wa-'uddat al-abrār* by Rashīd-al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Maybudī is also full of Midrashic narratives when it comes to Solomon. In the latter book, regarding verse 34 of Sura Sād, where the corpse is mentioned in the Solomon story, Maybudī relates a narrative similar to Git. 68a-b. This will be discussed in the next pages.

4. For Yima paradigm, see Touraj Daryae 2016, 4-9.

known for his wisdom. Furthermore, the Biblical Solomon was not some magical character who communicated with demons. Instead, he is the builder of the Temple that took seven years to complete, and the king who also built a palace for himself.⁵

Additionally, according to I Kings 11, the Biblical Solomon had "seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines" (I Kings 11:3 NRSV) from various nationalities (such as Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites), who caused Solomon to lay open his heart to other gods. As the same passage further indicates, "And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel..." (I Kings 11:4 NRSV). Ultimately, God decides to punish Solomon by eliminating ten of the twelve tribes of Israel, and by tearing Solomon's kingdom out of the hands of his son (I Kings 11:30-34 NRSV).

The depiction of King Solomon as a magical character who had relations with demons does not seem to have taken form until at least the first century onwards, although the exact dates cannot be definitely established. It is most likely that the Testament of Solomon, a Pseudo-epigraphical work of the Old Testament dated between the first and third centuries CE, is the oldest text in which King Solomon's magical character and his contact with demons are mentioned. While the writings of Josephus demonstrate that the conception of Solomon as a magical character who engaged with demons was already prevalent among the Jews of the first century CE, they do not appear in the Talmud until the third century (McCown 1922, 108).

When comparing the Biblical Solomon with Jamšīd, it is clear that they do bear general resemblances. For instance, both are glorious kings who ruled over prosperous, vast, and powerful kingdoms. Moreover, Solomon and Jamšīd both possess a quasi-prophetic character, both ultimately commit sins, because of which they lose their kingdoms to their enemies.⁶ The similarity between Solomon and Jamšīd is particularly strong in the depiction of Solomon during the first century CE.

Solomon and Jamšīd in the Talmud, Midrash, and Middle Persian Sources

The narrative concerning the construction of the Temple in Git. 68a-b begins with a discussion of the words *Shidah* and *shidoth*. The sages assert that these words were translated differently in Babylon and Palestine. In Babylon, these words referred to male and female demons, while in Palestine, they meant carriages. Consequently, the main story begins by explaining why King Solomon needed demons for building the Temple.

5. For further reading regarding Solomon's Biblical character and its difference from his character in Rabbinical literature see, Hirsch et al., 2018.

6. In the *Vīdvēdāt* (fragard 2:3), God bestows a prophesy to Jamšīd before Zoroaster, but Jamšīd resisted and remained a glorious king. However, in the *Shāh-nāma* it is claimed that he is both a king and a Mobed (priest): "He said it is I with the glory of god, I own both priesthood and kingdom." Solomon's communication with God in a dream and also God's assertion that he had showed himself to Solomon twice (I Kings 3:5, 9:2) gives Solomon a divine character as well. Moreover, splitting the kingdom of Solomon into two kingdoms due to his sins might remind us of Jamšīd being sawn in half after he sins.

The story relates that Solomon needed to cut the Temple stones without iron tools, and in order to do this, he needed to find a certain *Shamir* (a kind of worm that Solomon used to cut stone for building the First Temple). To find a Shamir, he was instructed to "Bring a male and a female demon and tie them together; perhaps they know and will tell you" (b. Git. 68a). Solomon does as instructed, but the demons say: "We do not know, but perhaps Ashmedai the prince of the demons knows" (b. Git. 68a). They then tell Solomon where to find Ashmedai, and so Solomon sends Bnaiahu, along with a chain and a ring graven with the divine name, to find Ashmedai and take him to Solomon. Bnaiahu accomplishes this through a certain trick, and when Ashmedai and Solomon finally meet, Ashmedai says: "Now, however, you have subdued the whole world, yet you are not satisfied till you subdue me too" (b. Git. 68a). To this, Solomon replies: "I want nothing of you. What I want is to build the Temple and I require the shamir." Ashmedai states that he does not have Shamir, adding that it is the Prince of the Sea who has it, but he would only give the Shamir to the woodpecker.⁷ Despite this, Benaiahu finally finds Shamir and takes it to Solomon, allowing him to build the Temple.

Solomon, however, did not release Ashmedai after the temple was built, and one day when they were conversing, Solomon asked Ashmedai: "What is your superiority over us?" To which Ashmedai replied, "Take the chain off me and give me your ring, and I will show you" (b. Git. 68b). Solomon complied with this request, and the story goes:

So he [Solomon] took the chain off him and gave him the ring. He then swallowed him [or 'it' according to another manuscript], and placing one wing on the earth and one on the sky he hurled him four hundred parasangs.⁸ In reference to that incident Solomon said, what profit is there to a man in all his labour wherein he laboureth under the sun, and this was my portion from all my labour. What is referred to by "this"?—Rab and Samuel gave different answers, one saying that it meant his staff and the other that it meant his apron [or platter]. He used to go round begging, saying wherever he went, I Koheleth was king over Israel in Jerusalem. When he came to the Sanhedrin, the Rabbis said: Let us see, a madman does not stick to one thing only. What is the meaning of this? They asked Benaiahu, Does the king send for you? He replied, No. They sent to the

7. A specific bird is, in some tales, associated with Solomon and Jamšīd. For instance, in Yašt 9 the glory of God leaves Jamšīd three times in the shape of a bird of prey. In Šāh-nāma, demons, birds and fairies are at Jamšīd's service, while in the Targum Sheni it is the hoopoe who is sent to the queen of Sheba. See Hirsch et al., 2018, 443.

8. The very idea of Ashmedai devouring King Solomon and hurling him 400 parasangs (which sets off the wandering of the king) itself has a counterpart in Pahlavi literature. Tahmuras, Jamšīd's brother, had imprisoned demons and tamed Ahriman, whom he turned into a horse. However according to Rivāyat Darāb Hormaziyār vol. 1, p. 312, Ahriman eats Tahmuras and Jamšīd takes him out of Ahriman's belly.

queens saying, Does the king visit you? They sent back word, Yes, he does. [demon replacing Solomon having sex with his queens and mother]. They then sent to them to say, Examine his leg. They sent back to say, He comes in stockings, and he visits them in the time of their separation and he also calls for Bathsheba his mother. They then sent for Solomon and gave him the chain and the ring on which the Name was engraved. When he went in, Ashmedai on catching sight of him flew away, but he remained in fear of him, therefore is it written, Behold it is the litter of Solomon, threescore mighty met, are about it of the mighty men of Israel. They all handle the sword and are expert in war, every man hath his sword upon his thigh because of fear in the night.

Rab and Samuel differed [about Solomon]. One said that Solomon was first a king and then a commoner, and the other that he was first a king and then a commoner and then a king again. (b.Giṭ. 68a-b)

There is an emphasis on the demon's gender in this narrative, as in the Testament of Solomon. This emphasis is reminiscent of the male and female demons in Iranian myths generally. For instance in *Bundahišn*, chapter 27, Ardā-Wirāz Nāmag, and also Manichaean literature, an emphasis on female demons and coupled demons can be seen commonly, though the notion of male and female demons is a universal mythological notion that is present worldwide.

The Talmudic narrative and the Testament of Solomon both relate that Solomon needed demons in order to construct the temple. Both Solomon and Jamšīd are kings who are famous for employing demons to make their famous constructions.⁹ Solomon built the Temple (and also a palace), while Jamšīd built his famous underground fortress that was supposed to protect humans, animals, and plants from the severe winter.¹⁰ However, according to Vendīdād, Jamšīd did not employ demons in his construction (except for in the Shāhnāma narrative where *dīws* [demons] helped Jamšīd), but rather built by means of two special instruments that god sent him, namely *ashtra* (whip) and golden *suwra/sufra* (Tafazzoli 1975, 48-50).

The meaning of *suwra* is still not clear. However, in "Jamšīd's Souvra and Ḍaḥḥāk's Souvra," Ahmad Taffazoli provides a summary of all the suggested interpretations, and, drawing on the Pahlavi equivalent of the Avestan word, he concludes that it was a holed instrument, which according to Dēnkard 9, had a magical power as well. In

9. In the Shāhnāma, demons make clay and bricks, and then construct buildings for men during Jamšīd's era. The Shāhnāma states: "He (Jamšīd) ordered the evil-minded *dīws* [demons] to mix water and soil. When they discovered everything that was made of mud, they made molds for bricks. Then the *dīws* constructed a wall using stone and plaster; initially he (the *dīw*) did it geometrically."

10. Iranian Muslim authors compared Jamšīd to Noah as well, in terms of saving God's creation from a severe winter by building a fortress called "War i Jamkard." In *Bundahišn*, section 17, Persepolis is considered to be the War i Jamkard, which is Jamšīd's major construction made with the aid of demons. See Daryaei 2017, 1-5.

the Vendīdād (Fargard 2:6), it seems that the two instruments are symbols of Jamšīd's sovereignty. One of the first meanings suggested by scholars concerning Suwra is ring or seal/ring, which is no longer a commonly accepted theory. Interestingly, in Dēnkard 9, Զափհակ has this instrument as well, and Taffazoli believes that Զափհակ (a monster-king based on the demon Aži Dahāka) must have inherited Jamšīd's instrument after Jamšīd was overthrown by him¹¹ (Taffazoli 1975, 48-50).

King Solomon's magical instruments, sent by God from the heaven and representative of his dominion, are famous as well. The Testament of Solomon states: "Take, O Solomon, king, son of David, the gift which the Lord God has sent thee, the highest Sabaoth. With it thou shalt lock up all demons of the earth, male and female; and with their help thou shalt build up Jerusalem. [But] thou [must] wear this seal of God" (Conybeare 1898,16). Based on the Vendīdād, Jamšīd also used his heavenly instruments in building the underground fortress, but there is no trace of demons in Vendīdād. However in Yasna 9, Jamšīd is introduced as the king of all the creatures including demons: "(The Glory,) which accompanied shining Yima of good herds for a long time, so that he ruled over the earth of seven parts, over demons, and mortals, over wizards and witches, over commanders, seers and ritualists. 'Who brought up from the demons both prosperity and reputation, both flocks and herds, both contentment and honour'" (Hintze 1994, 6:31-34)

However, Jamšīd as depicted in the Pahlavi literature, e.g., in the Dēnkard or the Jāmāsp Nāmag, has a more complicated relationship with demons.¹² The Jāmāsp Nāmag portrays Jamšīd as a king who ruled demons and benefitted from them: "[Jamšīd ruled] over men and demons seven hundred and seventeen years and seven months and five days. Cloud[s], wind, [and] rain were under his instruction. He gave the devils and the Druzes [fiends] in the complete service of man. The demons made food for men."¹³ Jamšīd as depicted here not only ruled over men and demons, but also natural phenomena such as wind, clouds, and rain, and in his time, demons were at the service of humans. According to Jewish folklore, King Solomon was also able

11. Apparently, a demon stealing a heavenly seal-ring/instrument belonging to a pious king was an ancient motif in Iranian lore.

12. See Peshotanji Behramji Sanjana 1876. Also, see West 1897. The Jamšīd of Dēnkard has even more communications with demons, in Dēnkard (vol. 6 Sanjana) we read: "Jamshed, in order to destroy the deceitful influence from men, invited the demon-men and demoness, and put the demons the following questions: - 'Who created this world?' 'Who destroys it?' The demons clamored out their reply thus:- We who are demons created it, and we destroy it." Here Jamšīd invites demons and defeats them in a debate, and proves that demons are not sources of creation, and by proving that "creative and destructive powers do not emanate from one source" crushes the deceitfulness of demons, and as a consequence, the immortal existence is created. Also in Dēnkard 7 paragraph 60, Jamšīd communicates with demons: "... Jam said to the Dēws: 'here will be born pure and virtuous Zardōšt whose deeds will bring you that are dēws 'axwāhišnīh'. 'axwāhišnīh' is that you can neither care about yourselves nor about others. The translation is based on Rashed-Mohassel's edition, 372 and 35.

13. I have translated this from Pāzand based on Jivanji Jamshedji Modi, trans., Jāmāsp Nāmag (1903) Chapter 4.

to control natural phenomena, such as the wind.

Apart from the aforementioned trivial similarities between the narratives surrounding Solomon and Jamšīd, there is a key fact that both Talmudic and Iranian narratives share: the fact that it is Solomon and Jamšīd's sin that causes their lifetime and rule to be divided into two major periods, namely before and after the sin. The essence of the sin or sins committed by the two kings is not clear and consistent across texts. While the Bible clearly states that Solomon's sin was his marriage to many foreign princesses who brought their gods to his kingdom and his promotion of idol-worshipping among Israelites, the Testament of Solomon states that his sin was falling in love with a maiden who was a worshiper of Raphan and Moloch. The love of the maiden causes him to offer some type of sacrifice to Moloch, causing the spirit of God to leave him. Addressing Solomon, the maiden asks, "Take these grasshoppers, and crush them together in the name of the god Moloch." King Solomon complies with this request, exclaiming afterwards, "and the glory of God quite departed from me; and my spirit was darkened, and I became the sport of idols and demons" (Conybeare 1898, 129-30). As will be explained later, the glory of God (*farr/xwarrah*) leaves Jamšīd as well, after he sins.

Significantly, the nature of King Solomon's sin is completely different in Talmudic narratives. In Git. 68a-b, although the King's sin is not specified, it can be inferred that the sin is immodesty. When Ashmedai says, "Now, however, you have subdued the whole world, yet you are not satisfied till you subdue me too," he is referring to king's haughtiness. This notion of immodesty recurs when Solomon asks Ashmedai, "What is your superiority over us?" which, again, speaks to the notion of the king's arrogance. Furthermore, the Bavli features another tractate that clearly refers to Solomon's arrogance:

When Solomon built the Temple, he desired to take the Ark into the Holy of Holies, whereupon the gates clave to each other. Solomon uttered twenty-four prayers, yet he was not answered. He opened [his mouth] and exclaimed, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors: And the King of glory shall come in." They rushed upon him to swallow him up, crying, "Who is the king of glory?" "The Lord, strong and mighty," answered he. (b. Šabb. 30a.)

According to this narrative, the gates thought that Solomon, filled with arrogance, was addressing himself as the king of glory. Solomon repeats the verse, but the doors refuse to open until he prays: "O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed remember the good deeds of David thy servant" (b. Šabb. 30a). Following this, the doors open, but for David's sake. Thus, one major transformation of Solomon's narrative in the Bavli is the nature of his sin. The reason that Solomon's sin shifts from womanizing and idol-worshipping in the Bible and Testament of Solomon, to arrogance and hubris in the Talmud, could be due to the impact of the Iranian narratives of Jamšīd. As can be seen in the following paragraphs, Jamšīd, just like Solomon who circuitously called himself the king of glory, exclaims that he is the

creator of the world.

There are several Pahlavi books referring to Jamšīd's sin, but not every text illustrates the nature of his sin. There are a few texts that clearly specify that Jamšīd was proud of his power and glorious kingdom, just like King Solomon. For instance, in a Pahlavi text titled *Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, Jamšīd's sin is characterized as "eager for supreme sovereignty instead of the service of Ohrmazd" (*Dādestān ī Dēnīg*, 39:16). Or in one Persian narrative, Jamšīd's hubris is attributed to Ahremen, who managed to exit from the hell after being confined for seventy years. Ahremen went to Jamšīd, and somehow made him demented, causing him to proclaim himself creator of the world. Having lost his divine fortune, Jamšīd was deposed by Ɖahhāk and took to the mountains and deserts (Skjærø 1998, 501-22). In another Pahlavi narrative, Jamšīd claims: "I created water, I created earth, I created plants, I created sun, I created the moon ... I created man, I created the whole creation, and thus he lied... ." However, when he is asked the means by which he accomplished creation, he cannot answer, so "... because of that untruth words his glory and kingship ran away from him and his body was demolished by demons" (Williams 1990, 31a:9-10). The sin of hubris is also attributed to Jamšīd in the *Shāhnāma*, where again Jamšīd proclaims that he is god, the creator of the world: "Now that you know I [Jamšīd] am who has done everything [in the world], I should be called the creator of the world" (Khaleghi-Motlagh 1997, 45).

The *Jāmāsp Nāmag* also refers to Jamšīd's sin, although it also a reference to a woman in the second phase of Jamšīd's life, which is reminiscent of King Solomon's relationships with women in his dark days. In *Jāmāsp Nāmag* we read:

From him the world was more thriving. From the beginning [up to] 717 years and 7 months he was thankful to God. For 100 years he secretly went away with a woman [called] Jamai to the sea in despair. Then, after being both grateful and well-asked for, when he became a speaker of untruth, when his splendor and glory were displeased with him, he faced hardship. The accursed Aži-Dahāka [kešānī?]¹⁴, whom they call Bēvarasp, with the prince Spediver and with many demons caught him, slew him, and took up one thousand rays from him. (They took Jamšīd's Glory)."¹⁵

Although the above narrative also mentions Jamšīd's untrue words, it states that before speaking this untruth, he was wandering in the sea for one hundred years with a woman called Jamai, who according to the same text, was his twin sister: "From *Vivangha* [Jamšīd's father] were born a man and woman ... Jama [Jamšīd] and Jamai" (Modi 1903, chapter 4).

Obviously, Jamšīd and Solomon both were degraded after they sinned. In the

14. This word is unclear to me.

15. Translation based on Pāzand *Jāmāsp Nāmag*, Chapter 4.

Bible, however, God decides not to punish Solomon directly for his sins, and instead rebukes his son and kingdom. Solomon as portrayed in the Bavli, however, is directly punished for his crime, and according to one tradition, becomes a commoner who never regained his power again:

Resh Lakish said: At first, Solomon reigned over the higher beings, as it is written, Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king; afterwards, [having sinned,] he reigned [only] over the lower, as it is written, For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tifsah even to Gaza... Did he regain his first power, or not? Rab and Samuel [differ]: One maintains that he did; the other, that he did not. (b.Sanh. 20b.)

Tractate Git. 68a concludes in the same way. In this narrative, Rav and Shmuel again disagree over Solomon's fate after his sin, and one tradition even states that following his sin, Solomon became a commoner. It is likely that the impact of Jamšīd's tale is what caused a Talmudic tradition to state that Solomon remained a commoner after he sinned. Like King Solomon of the Bavli, Jamšīd never regained his power. He wandered for a while and then was murdered (sawn into two pieces) by Aži Dahāka and Spitura.

The Gittin story has two main parts, before and after Solomon's wandering. The second part of the Gittin story depicts Solomon's court under Ashmedai's rule in absence of the real King. Ashmedai has changed his appearance to resemble Solomon and no one knows that it is he and not Solomon in the palace. Following a meeting with the actual King, however, the supreme council attempts to investigate. After questioning Bnaiahu and King Solomon's wives, the Sanhedrin realizes that the beggar who claims that he is the King is right. One significant issue in the second part of the story is the demon's sexual relationships with Solomon's wives and mother, an aspect of the story which was not acceptable to Palestinian rabbies, and thus in the Yerushalmi, Sanh. 2.6 the role of Solomon's double, Ashmedai, is given to an angel (Davis 2016, 582).

However, this issue of the demon owning the King's harem can be elucidated through Iranian narratives, specifically the ones pertaining to Jamšīd. It should first be kept in mind that the most important demon that Jamšīd encounters in Iranian mythology is Aži Dahāka, who according to Yašts, is "... the three-mouthed, the three-headed, the six-eyed, who has a thousand senses, that most powerful, fiendish Drūz, that demon baleful to the world, the strongest Drūz that Angra Mainyu [Ahriman] created..." (Yašt 15:24). This powerful demon defeated Jamšīd and seized his kingdom and his two sisters. Therefore, Thraetaona's [Ferēdūn's] regular request to the deities to whom he sacrificed was to overcome Aži Dahāka and to carry off the two most beautiful women in the world who were Aži Dahāka's wives (Yašt 15:24).

According to the *Bundahišn*, Aži Dahāka, the demon who held Jamšīd's two

sisters, is said to have had the habit of watching humans and demons copulate: "... Azdahāg [Aži Dahāka], during his reign, let loose a dēw on a young woman, and let loose a young man on a parīg [female demon]. They copulated under his sight ..." (Bundahišn 9:158). The *Bundahišn* further states that Jamšīd himself wedded a *parīg* (female demon)¹⁶ and also gave his sister (whom according to the tradition, was his wife as well) to a demon: "It [scripture] also states that, 'Jam, when [his] *xwarrah* [glory] had departed from him, out of the fear of demons, took a she-dēw to wife, and gave his sister Jamag to a dēw to wife'" (Bundahišn 9:158).¹⁷ In addition, Ashmedai, the very demon who fornicated with Solomon's wives and mother in Giṭ. 68a-b, has a record of having relations with humans in the Pahlavi text *Vizīdagīhā ī Zādspram*. According to the latter, "the devastators of the Iranians (Ērānān) were from Koxared [a kind of female demon or sorcerer], and Koxared was born from Ēšm [Ashmedai] and Manušak, the sister of Manuš-Čīhr."

Solomon and Yima's Paradigm

As previously mentioned, Solomon and Jamšīd are interchangeable figures in Persian literature, especially in Persian poetry. However, as the examination of the Talmudic narratives in light of Iranian accounts has demonstrated, there is reason to assume that Solomon and Jamšīd were comparable even during the time of the Sasanian Zoroastrian and Talmudic sages. According to Isac Kalimi, Solomon's portrayal in the Chronicles was created by the historians who resided in Yehud province of Achaeminid Empire. Kalimi believes that the overall picture of Solomon, his mother Bathsheba, and Nathan presented a negative picture in Kings because Solomon was not the legitimate heir to the throne, but a usurper of the throne. However, in the chronological history, all the features that cast a negative light on David, Nathan, Bathsheba, and Solomon are omitted (Kalimi 2013, 40).

It can thus be argued that Solomon's depiction in the Jewish (post-Chronicle) accounts was influenced by Iranian mythologies surrounding Jamšīd (Yima), especially Solomon's depiction in the Babylonian Talmud. Joseph Davis in this regard states that the demon story in Gittin "like so many details of so many midrashim ... gave the biblical text contemporary relevance for a sixth- or seventh-century audience" (Davis 2016, 585). If rabbis and their sixth-seventh century audience were

16. Jamšīd's marriage with a *Parīg* that resulted in creation of noxious creatures somewhat resembles Solomon's marriage to Pharo's daughter, which according to the Bavli, resulted in the creation of the hostile state of Rome as a punishment. See Babylonian Talmud, Sanh. 21b.

17. Regarding the relationship between Jamšīd, his sister, and the demons, Skjærvø states: "The Pahlavi *Rivāyat* goes on to tell the story of how, one time Jam and the dēw were on a drinking spree, Jamag switched clothes with the *parīg* and took her drunken brother to bed, thus performing *xwēdōdah* (next-of-kin marriage), by the virtue of which the two demons fell back into Hell. The *Bundahišn* also reports that Jam and Jamag had twins, a man named Āspī(g)ān and a woman named *Zrēšom, who married and so continued the lineage (Bundahišn 20:228-229). The story is reminiscent of the story of Lot and his daughters, who had intercourse with him when he was drunk, in order to continue the family (Genesis 19:31-38). See Skjærvø 1998.

familiar with the common myths regarding Jamšīd, according to Touraj Daryae, R.N. Frye is therefore correct in his belief that in Iranian historiography, "the reporter of events seizes upon past accepted patterns to tell us of an event."

Touraj Daryae also introduces an expression called the "Yima [Jamšīd] Paradigm," for which he provides a number of examples, stating, "... I have come to see the primordial Iranian king, Yima (Persian Jamšīd), as the model for describing the rise and fall and the glory and majesty of kings and rulers in the Iranian world" (Daryae 2016, 4-9). It can be proposed that the Sasanian rabbis were influenced by this paradigm, and applied Jamšīd's characteristics, such as his engagement with demons, his sin, and his loss of glory, to King Solomon who already had some general similarities with Jamšīd.¹⁸

Conclusion

The main goal of this article was to depict how Babylonian Jewish sages, who were familiar with Iran's literature and culture, drew on this knowledge to create transformed versions of well-known biblical figures such as King Solomon. Furthermore, it aimed to show that these Sasanian rabbis as composers of the Bavli played a significant role in the long and complicated transformation process that occurred from the Avesta to classical Persian literature.

I suggest that it was not incidental that the Babylonian rabbis chose to include the notion of king Solomon's hubris in the Talmud. This inclusion is in line with a longstanding tradition of narrative transmission between the Avesta (and later Middle Persian texts) and Talmudic narratives. Evidently, some sections of the *Zamyād-Yašt* (Yašt 19) contained mythical motifs that were widespread among Iranians, and consequently, the Middle Persian/Pahlavi texts elaborated on those myths and created more detailed narratives, such as Jamšīd's life and deeds that in turn inspired the Talmudic Solomon.

Studying the transmission of mythical figures and motifs from the Avesta (or older Mesopotamian myths) to Middle Persian, from Middle Persian to the Bavli, from the Bavli to *tafsīr/Isra'īliyyat*, and from here into classical Persian literature is thus

18. Regarding Jamšīd's connection with Jewish ideas in Pahlavi texts, see Dēnkard 3, 286-289. In Dēnkard the ten commandments of Judaism are a model for the notion of "Jamšīd's ten precepts." In this regard, Dēnkard states: "Be it known that the following ten precepts were given to men by their well-wisher Jamšīd, as originating divine wisdom, doing good to men, ..." and Dahāk (Aži Dahāka of the Avesta who defeated Jamšīd) is a Hebrew priest who wrote the Jewish ten commandments: "The ten precepts of the priest Dahāk of the Hebrew religion who is an injurer of God's world, a diminisher of his Creation, and who is wickedly inclined against the above tell universally beneficial precepts of Jamšīd of the good faith. And as being consonant to religion and the will of God.... These ten universally noxious precepts of Dahāk given against Jamšīd's ten beneficial precepts were ordered by him to be well written out and preserved in Jerusalem as a religious work. The Jewish Patriarch Abraham who came after him followed his precepts. And people came to look upon these precepts of the religion of Dahāk as the work of the Prophet Abraham who was to come at the end of the world. The words received from Dahāk were ordered to become current among the people. Thus every one of the Jewish race and faith came to look upon Dahāk's religious words as meant for himself and to believe in them."

clearly a fruitful subject for both Talmudists and Iranists to focus on. What I have demonstrated in this article can pave the way for Irano-Talmudica scholars to pursue this transmission process when relevant. Put differently, this paper demonstrates that Irano-Talmudica scholars can broaden their area of research by examining the role of Babylonian Jewish sages in this long transmission process. My own research suggests that the role of Jewish sages in the transmission and transmutation of Iranian mythical figures from Middle to Classical Persian could be as important as the transmission currently under investigation (the transmission of these figures from Middle Persian to the Talmud Bavli).

Acknowledgements

This article is a section of my PhD thesis entitled "Historical, Mythical and Religious Narratives of the Babylonian Talmud in their Middle Persian Context."¹⁹ Hence, I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Richard Foltz from the Department of Religions and Cultures at Concordia University.

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