

THE MULTICULTURAL IMPACT OF AESOP'S FABLES

History and African American Studies professor Dr. Selfa Chew-Melendez leads an exploration of how Aesop's Fables have impacted the ethical teachings of Mexican, Jewish, Middle Eastern, and other cultures.

Opera UTEP students will perform excerpts from THE FOX & THE COOKIE, and Dr. Larry Lesser will perform one of his original songs.

Panelists include professors Larry Lesser (Math), Alireza Vaziri (Graphic Design), Cristina Morales (Sociology).

TUESDAY, MARCH 21, 12-1:30 P.M.
UTEP Fox Fine Arts Recital Hall
Free and open to the public

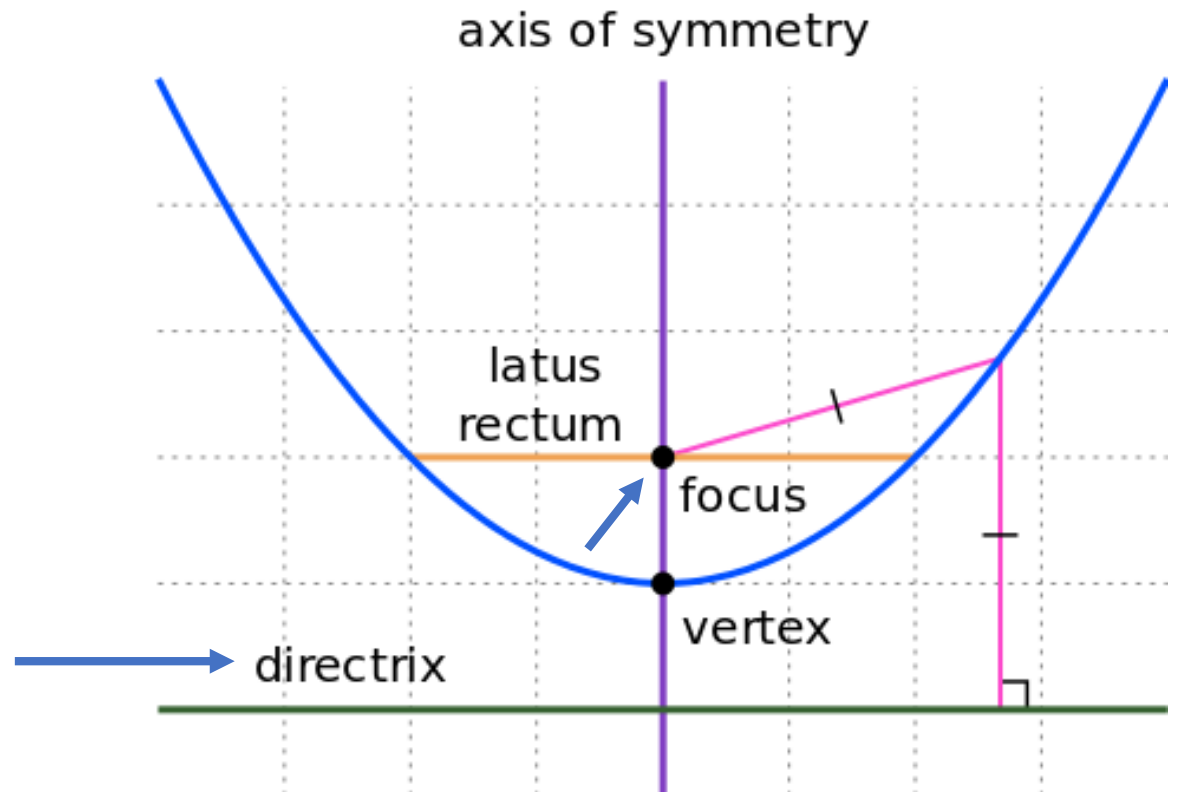


Scan for
more information



This event is part of a series of Enrichment Events surrounding Opera UTEP's world-premiere production of Maria Thompson Corley's chamber opera for children, **THE FOX AND THE COOKIE** on March 27 & 28. Visit utep.edu/opera for more information.

Dr. Larry Lesser “Parables & Parabolas: Jewish Connections to Aesop’s Fables”



LarryLesser.com/**math**

LarryLesser.com/**Judaism**

teach UTEP
math/stats

papers,
speaker
series

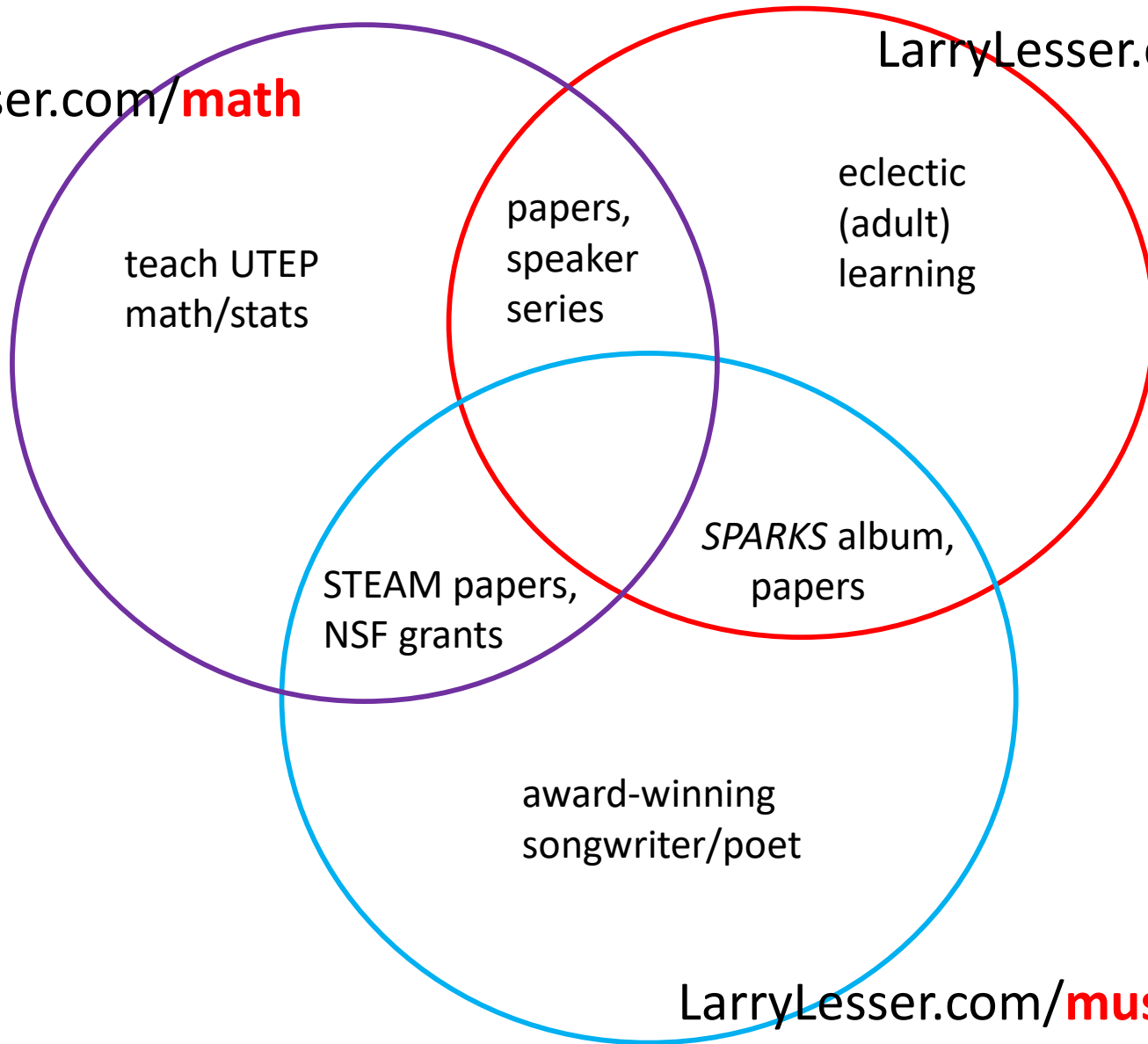
eclectic
(adult)
learning

STEAM papers,
NSF grants

SPARKS album,
papers

award-winning
songwriter/poet

LarryLesser.com/**music**



Cultures merge at UTEP student concert

By Victoria G. Molinar / Editor Feb 12, 2018

where I premiered my
Arab-Israeli peace song!

photo in Feb. 2018 writeup in
El Paso Inc. Business Journal



Jewish-American songwriter and UTEP math professor Larry Lesser premiered his song, "Break," at the Perspectives in Counterpoint concert.

Photo by Victoria G. Molinar

Jewish connections with the opera's specific fables

AESOP FABLE (and moral)	JEWISH TEXT
Farmer & Stork: "You are judged by the company you keep"	"Do not associate with a wicked person...[It's like] entering a spice shop. Even if he takes nothing, he absorbs the aroma and it leaves with him" (Pirkei Avot 1:7)
Fox & Goat: "Look before you leap"	"Be deliberate in judgment" (Pirkei Avot 1:1)
Fox & Stork: "Do not play tricks on your neighbors unless you can stand the same treatment yourself"	"Love your fellow as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18) "Do not do to your neighbor what is hateful to you" (Shabbat 31a:6)
Fox & Grapes: "There are many who pretend to despise and belittle that which is beyond their reach"	Knowing this tendency, Moses encouraged Israelites that commandments are NOT beyond their reach. (Deuteronomy 30:11-14)



Judaism has....

- Tradition of kindness (*chesed; gemilut hasidim*)
- Tradition of parables (*midrash*)
- Similarity to Aesop's fables....?

timing

- Aesop lived 6th century BCE
- Talmud written down much later:
 around 189 (Mishnah) and 500 (Gemara)

Some terms

- **Written Torah** (Hebrew Bible ~~Old Testament~~):

Torah (scroll with Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy),

Nevi'im (“Prophets”, 8 books such as Joshua & Isaiah), &

Ketuvim (“Writings”, 11 books such as Psalms, Proverbs, & Ruth)

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- **Oral Torah** (Talmud): 63 tractates (2711 double-sided pages) includes

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- **Midrash**: Judaic biblical interpretation, the method, or a collection;
some written during period of Mishna, some later;
can relate to *halacha* (law) or *aggadah* (interpretive narrative/**parable**)

a page of Talmud

<https://lifeisasacredtext.substack.com/p/jews-for-exegesis>



Ein Mishpat /
Ner Mitzvah
Compiled cross-
references
to the major
halakhic
codes and
texts.

OTHER COMMENTARIES

"The printers of the Vilna Talmud printed several newly discovered commentaries in the outer margins of their edition. These included some of the most important of the early medieval works. Towards this end, scholars were sent to European libraries (including that of the Vatican in Rome) in order to copy out these lost treasures of Jewish religious literature. Since none of these commentaries covered the full text of the Talmud, different ones were printed with the individual tractates."

R. AQIVA EGER

ANONYMOUS COMMENTARY & PRINTER'S ADDITIONS

Page #

Sedarim (Order): Masekhtot (Tractate)

THE TOSAFISTS

12th-13th century CE commentaries. Tosafists translates roughly to "additions" or "supplements." Likely meaning they saw themselves as supplements to Rashi's commentary. These commentators include scholars such as Rabbi Jacob Ben Meir, the Rashbam, R. Isaac of Dampierre, R. Samson of Sens, and R. Meir of Rothenburg. Unlike Rashi's style, which often commentates and summarizes in an attempt to explain the Talmudic texts, the Tosafists tend to focus on specific issues within the Talmud and Rashi and elaborate upon them or attempt to reconcile their contradictions.

The Tosafists emphasize French and German traditions. "The dialectical give-and-take of a Tosafot discussion has a typical structure: The objections and difficulties are introduced with the formula "Ve'im tomar" ["=And if you should say..."], and the solution with "Yesh lomar" ["=It can be said..."]"

"The additional commentaries include the following: Rabbenu Hananel, Sefer Ha-Mafteah (R. Nissim Ben Jacob, Tosafot Yeshanim, Rabbenu Gershom (Mainz Commentary), Tosefot RI"D, Shittah Mequbbetzet"

RASHI'S COMMENTARY

Rashi's commentary is dated to about 1040-1105 CE. Typically Rashi's commentary is placed on the inside of a page, against the binding. Rashi's commentary covers almost all of the tractates of the Babylonian Talmud. It is printed in "Rashi's script" a form of Hebrew font style which is traditionally used for commentaries.

HEADING

KEY

MISHNAH

Compiled ~200-220 CE by R. Judah Ha-Nasi codifying the Halakha (law) up until his time. It is written in Mishnaic Hebrew - a collection of legal rulings & opinions of biblical law by scholars known as Tannaim. It is divided into six sedarim (orders), with each order having 7-12 subsections known as masekhtot/tractates.

GEMARA

Written in Aramaic, not Hebrew. There are two versions of Gemara. Compiled by scholars known as the Amoraim: the first is composed in Western Aramaic in Palestine (400~ CE), the second is written in Eastern Aramaic in Babylonia (425-500~ CE). The smallest unit of Gemara is known as a "sugya" (pl. sugyot). Talmud is composed of Mishnah followed by sugyot analyzing it.

Mesoret Ha-Sha" S

Added in the 16th c. CE, a compilation of cross-references showing quotes are repeated in the Talmud and texts can be referenced.

GLOSSES

"Recent printings of the Talmud have incorporated additional short comments (glosses) by various Rabbis who lived during last few centuries. Most of these glosses are emendations to the text, while others contain useful (or cryptic) cross-references."

part of Brachot 60b that inspired my song “The Best”

The Gemara relates: Like this incident, when Rabbi Akiva was walking along the road and came to a certain city, he inquired about lodging and they did not give him any. He said: “Everything that God [the Merciful One] does is for the best.”

He went and slept in a field, and he had with him a rooster, a donkey and a candle. A gust of wind came and extinguished the candle; a cat came and ate the rooster; and a lion came and ate the donkey. He said: Everything that God does is for the best.

That night, an army came and took the city into captivity. It turned out that Rabbi Akiva alone, who was not in the city and had no lit candle, noisy rooster or donkey to give away his location, was saved. He said to them: “Didn’t I tell you? Everything that God does is for the best.”

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'I had to do it to save everyone': Man breaks into school and shelters more than 20 people from blizzard



By Sharif Paget and Elizabeth Wolfe, CNN

Updated 6:13 PM EST, Fri December 30, 2022



“Fox & Fishes” parable on very next page! (Berakhot 61b:7)

Rabbi Akiva answered him: I will relate a parable. To what can this be compared?

It is like a **fox** walking along a riverbank when he sees fish gathering and fleeing from place to place. The fox said to them: From what are you fleeing?

They said to him: We are fleeing from the nets that people cast upon us.

He said to them: Do you wish to come up onto dry land, and we will reside together just as my ancestors resided with your ancestors?

The fish said to him: You are the one of whom they say, he is the cleverest of animals? You are not clever; you are a fool. If we are afraid in the water, our natural habitat which gives us life, then in a habitat that causes our death, all the more so.

The **moral** is: So too, we Jews, now that we sit and engage in Torah study... we fear the empire to this extent; if we proceed to sit idle from its study, as its abandonment is the habitat that causes our death, all the more so will we fear the empire.

from <https://www.JewishVirtualLibrary.org/fable>

MISHLEI SHU'ALIM ("Fox Fables") written by R. Berechiah ben Natronai ha-Nakdan who lived during the creative period of Jewish fable literature (end of the 12th and beginning of the 13th century), and was printed in Mantua [Italy] in 1557.

The use of the name *Mishlei Shu'alim*, identical with a genre of fables mentioned in the Talmud (Sukkah 28a; Sanhedrin 38b), is explained on the title page by the statement that the fox is the most cunning of animals, and therefore the cleverest.

The [100+ fables] are written ... in a clear, lively style; structurally each has an *epimythium* [moral at the end], the first 2 lines of which comprise the *promythium* as well (i.e., a proverb-like statement at the opening of the narrative).

Fables of a Jewish Aesop: Translated from the Fox Fables of Berechiah Ha-Nakdan (Nonpareil Book)

Paperback – April 1, 2002

by [Berechiah Ben Natronai](#) (Author), [David Hadas](#) (Foreword)

★★★★★ ▾ 2 ratings

[See all formats and editions](#)

Hardcover
\$25.28

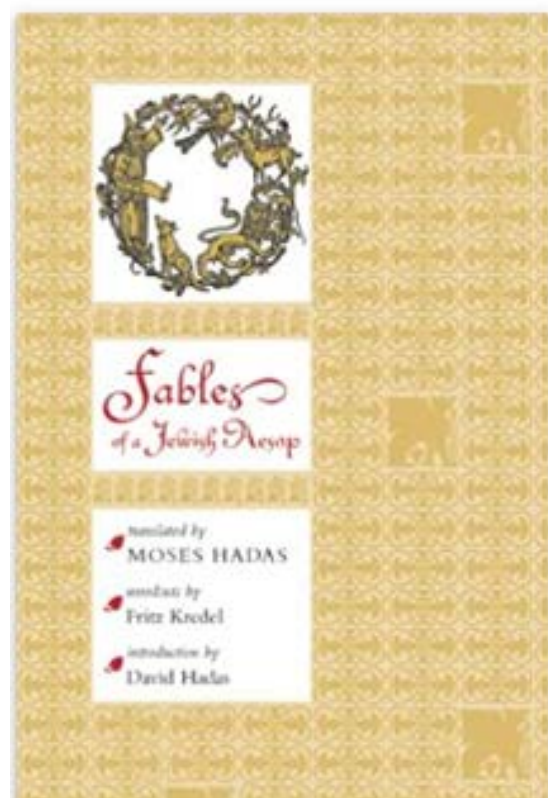
5 Used from \$21.30

Paperback
\$32.00

5 Used from \$10.26

2 New from \$27.14

1 Collectible from \$1,470.00



Title.	Talmudic Reference.	Indian Reference.	Classical Reference.
Oxen (Asses) and Pigs.	Esth. R. to iii. 1.	Jataka 30.	Avian 38. Halm 113. Phaedrus v. 4.
Proud Jackal.	B. Ḥ. 117a.	Virocana Jataka; Jataka 223.	Halm 41. Phaed. i. 11.
Oak and Reed.	Ta'anit, 20b.	Mahabharata xii. 4198.	Avian 19. Babrius 64.
Camel and Horns.	Sanh. 106a.	Mahabh. xii. 4175. Panchatantra 1. 302.	Halm 184. Avian vii. 8. Babr. 232.
Ass's Heart. Two Pots.	Yalk. Ex. § 182. Esth. R. on iii. 6 Dukes Rabb. Blumenlese 530	Pan. iv. 11. Pan. ii. 13, 14.	Babr. 95. Avian ix. 11. Babr. 184.
Lion (Wolf) and Crane. Lean Fox. Scorpion (Rat) and Frog.	Gen. R. lxiv. Ecd. R. to v. 14 Ned. 41a.	Javaskuna Jataka. Benfey § 19. Anvari Suhaili 133.	Phaed. i. 8. Babr. 94. Babr. 86c. Phaed. App. Burmann, 6. Babr. 182. Halm 298.
Man and Wood.	Ta'anit, 7a. Gen. R. v.	Raju, Ind. Fab. p. 47.	Phaed. App. Burm. 5. Halm 123. Babr. 2.
Man and Two Wives.	B. Ḥ. 60b.	Pan. 1. 602; ii. 552. Avadanas. ii. 138.	Phaed. ii. 2. Halm 56.
Fox and Lion.	R. Meir, in Rashi on Sanh 39a.	Pan. iii. 14.	Avian 24. Phaed. App. Burm. 30. Babr. 103. Plato, Alcib. 1. 503.

Bird and Waves.	Esth. R. to iii. 6	Kaka Jataka 146.	
Strife of Members.	Deut. R. v.	Pan. ii. 300.	Livy 1. 30.
Tongue and Members.	Midr. Teh. Ps. xxxix. 1.	Upanishads.	
Strong, Stronger, Strongest.	Gen. R. xxxviii; B. B. 10a.	Pan. iii. 12.	
Fox and Fishes. Reanimated Lion.	Ber. 61b. Lev. R. xxii.	Baka Jataka. Pan. v. 4. Sanjivaka Jataka.	
Man's Years.	Midr. Ecd. i. 2; Tan., Pekude 3.		Babr. 74.
Shepherd and Young Wolf. Crow (Serpent) and Pitcher.	Yalk. Deut. 923. 'Ab. Zarah, 30a.		Halm 374. Babr. lxii. Avian xx.
Fir and Bramble.	Ex. R. 97b.		Avian xv.
Daw in Peacock's Feathers.	Esth. R. 63b.		Phaed. i. 3. Babr. 72.
Scorpion and Camel.	Yalk. Ps. § 784.		Avian xxiii.
Chaff, Straw, and Wheat. Caged Bird.	Gen. R. lxxxiii. Midr. Teh. ii. Midr. Ecd. ii.		
Wolf and Two Hounds.	Sifre Num. 157.		
Wolf at the Well.	Esth. R. on v. 3.		
Cock and Bat. Fox as Singer.	Sanh. 98b. Esth. R. to iii. 1.		