Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture

ELIEZER DIAMOND

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Holy Men and Hunger Artists

This page intentionally left blank

Holy Men and Hunger Artists

Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture

ELIEZER DIAMOND

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

2004

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford New York
Auckland Bangkok Buenos Aires Cape Town Chennai
Dar es Salaam Delhi Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi Kolkata
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi
São Paulo Shanghai Taipei Tokyo Toronto

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016

www.oup.com

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Diamond, Eliezer.
Holy men and hunger artists: fasting and asceticism
in rabbinic culture / Eliezer Diamond.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-19-513750-7
1. Asceticism in rabbinical literature. 2. Fasting (Judaism)
3. Rabbinical literature—History and criticism. I. Title.
BM496.9.A82 D53 2003
296.7—dc21 2002010395

9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

To my father; I hope it was worth the wait

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

There are three groups of people to whom thanks are due in connection with this book. The first are the people and institutions that aided me directly in the process of research and writing. On this list I include the Jewish Theological Seminary and its chancellor, Dr. Ismar Schorsch, who have been supportive and encouraging throughout. I am particularly grateful for the Stroock Fellowship that was granted me by the Seminary in the spring of 1994. Many colleagues read all or parts of the manuscript and made helpful comments, criticisms, and suggestions. They include Benjy Gampel, Bob Goldenberg, Richard Kalmin, David Kraemer, Seth Schwartz, and Devora Steinmetz. I would particularly like to thank Carol Bakhos for taking the time to read and critique my manuscript. Joanne Ginsberg was a major force in getting me to focus and organize my ideas, and she has my deep gratitude for her help. In 1997 I presented the thesis of this book at the conference of the Association for Jewish Studies; I am grateful for the reactions that I received from colleagues at that time. I also had the opportunity, in the fall of 1999, to read chapter 3 to a group of colleagues at a colloqium sponsored by the Talmud Department of the Jewish Theological Seminary; I heard much there that was helpful to me. The Fellows of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem heard me present part of the book's thesis in the spring of 2000, and I gained much from their remarks.

I wish also to thank a second group of individuals, including Harvey Greenberg and Gladys Halvorsen as well as many others who wish to remain anonymous, who helped me decipher and, when necessary, edit the text of my daily life.

Finally, I am grateful for those I love and by whom I am loved: my parents; my brother Menahem, my sister-in-law Gina, and their children: Chaim Leib, Aliza, Dassie, Ozzie, Rachel, Eliyahu, Avigail, Rivkah, and Channah; and my children: Aviva, David, Tova, Yoni, and Matan. I am particularly grateful to David for helping me prepare the bibliography and to Tova for helping me to organize my papers.

There is one person whom I have saved for last: my wife, Shelley. I waited a long time to meet someone as warm, caring, and generous—not to mention bright, highly organized, and outstanding as a teacher—as Shelley is. I am very lucky to be her husband.

Contents

This page intentionally left blank

Holy Men and Hunger Artists

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

[I fasted] because I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else.

—The eponymous protagonist of Kafka's *The Hunger Artist*

The person who lives as a worldly ascetic is a rationalist, not only in the sense that he rationally systematizes his own personal patterning of life, but also in his rejection of everything that is ethically irrational, esthetic, or dependent upon his own reactions to the world and its institutions. The distinctive goal always remains the alert, methodical control of one's own pattern of life and behavior.

—Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*

This book is part of a lifelong effort to make sense of two of the strangest and most difficult, and yet most formative and inspirational, years of my life. At the end of ninth grade my parents, primarily my father, decided that for high school I would attend a relatively new local institution that he had helped found, a *mesivta* or yeshiva high school. I knew that this yeshiva's ideology was different from that of my previous school, but nothing could have prepared me for the experience that lay ahead.

I spent the next two years of my life in what was in effect a Jewish monastery. The *mesivta* was a males-only boarding school; it required a totally controlled—one might say hermetic—environment in order to achieve its goals. Outside culture was kept out; we were forbidden to have radios. (One of the Talmud instructors or *rebbeim* who wanted to keep up with the news would go out to his car each day to listen to the broadcasts there; this practice made him "mod-

ern" in the eyes of some, not necessarily a compliment in the world of the *mesivta*.) All reading matter, including books, newspapers, and magazines, was strictly supervised and censored by the administration. The English teacher who wanted us to read *Catcher in the Rye* was told that the book was unacceptable; some of us read it on our own anyway. Every other weekend and many Jewish holidays had to be spent on the school grounds. Our activities during our rather limited free time were heavily restricted. A primary concern was that we not engage in any activity that might in any way result in our meeting and fraternizing with members of the opposite sex. Going bowling was forbidden for this reason.

The institution's commitment to keeping out American culture was so thorough that when one of the *rebbeim* heard me playing a Beatles tune on a piano left behind by the building's previous owners, he rushed in, horrified. "Eliezer," he said, "what are you doing?!"—to which I answered, reasonably enough, "I'm playing the piano." Two days later the piano was gone.

There were also restrictions in connection with clothing and grooming. Haircuts or hairstyles that were considered too modern had to be "corrected"; certain styles of suits (double-breasted, for example, a style coming back into vogue at that time) and eyeglass frames (such as metal frames, which were then a relative novelty) were forbidden. We were required to wear brimmed hats during prayers and were encouraged to do so at other times as well; the preferred mode of dress, from the administration's perspective, was a not particularly stylish dark suit, white shirt (tie optional), and black, not overly shiny, shoes. In short, it was hoped that we would dress like our *rebbeim*.

In any case, the rigorous schedule of study and classes left little time for bowling, clothes shopping, or anything else. Morning prayers began the day; those who did not arrive on time were assessed a nominal fine. The prayers were followed by a twenty-minute period of independent study of *Mishnah Berurah*, a compendium of the laws governing a Jew's daily religious responsibilities. Breakfast followed, after which we paired off in groups to prepare for that day's Talmud class. Our Jewish studies curriculum consisted entirely of Talmud. Hebrew language and literature were not taught at all, nor were the Nevi'im and Ketubim (the prophetic works and the hagiographa); we were expected to review the weekly Torah portion with Rashi's commentary on our own. After preparing for two hours we would attend the daily Talmud lesson, which involved review of the material we had prepared and presentation of new material from Talmudic commentaries we had not previously seen.

At about 12:30 we had lunch, followed by afternoon services and another twenty-minute study period, during which we studied an ethical tract of our choice, usually with a study partner. This was followed by the only break of the day: for an hour and a quarter we played basketball, did homework, or, in a few cases, voluntarily studied another tractate of the Talmud. The next three and a half hours were devoted to general studies; this was followed by a two-hour period in which we were expected to study a chapter of the Talmud other than the one we were studying in the morning. At about 9:30 P.M. we were free to return to the dormitory to do homework and then to engage in any form of relaxation that was not forbidden.

One might think, given this description, that I detested the institution and that I abhor it still today. However, the truth is much more complicated. I did dislike the *mesivta*, but I was also enthralled by it. In the day school I had previously attended my teachers had often spoken about *mesiras nefesh*, dedicating one's life to the service of God. I had the sense, though, that they weren't too fond of practicing it in their own lives. At the *mesivta*, we lived *mesiras nefesh*. Everything about the *mesivta* declared in no uncertain terms that there was only one thing that made life worth living: *lernen* (Yiddish for the study of Torah). No apology for the bad food and the endless restrictions was given or needed; if you wanted to become a Torah scholar, you had to lead a life of rigorous self-discipline and relative hardship. To my *rebbeim*, the rabbinic dictum "This is the way of Torah: you shall eat bread with salt, drink water by measure, sleep on the ground, and live a life of discomfort while you toil in the Torah" was not poetic hyperbole but an actual blueprint for the life of Torah.

I was also intrigued by my *rebbeim*. Their lives were every bit as demanding as ours. Before coming to the *mesivta*, each of them had spent at least ten years studying in the Lakewood, New Jersey, *kollel*, an institution that gives each of its students, all of them married, a rather minimal stipend in exchange for their devoting all day and part of the evening to Talmud study. This pattern of life continued for them at the *mesivta*. While we were preparing the Talmud, they studied. We studied late into the night; at least one of the *rebbeim* studied with us each evening and the others were no doubt studying at home. Every event in their lives was connected somehow to Torah. I remember a conversation in which one of my *rebbeim* was having trouble recalling what year he had gotten married; he finally shrugged his shoulders and said, "Well, I do remember that we were studying [the Talmudic tractate] *Kesubes* that year."

The asceticism and self-denial in the pursuit of *lernen* advocated by my *rebbeim* was absolute; it even applied to denying oneself the spiritual delights of the next world, if necessary. One of the songs we used to sing began, "Oylom haboh iz a gute zach, ober lernen Toyre iz di beste zach"—"The world to come is a good thing; but learning Torah is the best thing."

And so for all that I hated the *mesivta* for its Orwellian environment, its indifference to aesthetics and hygiene, and its contemptuously superior attitude to the world outside, I was irresistibly drawn to its single-minded clarity of purpose. Some part of me has always felt that a life lived with anything less than absolute devotion to a sole objective is a life squandered on the small-mindedness of daily survival or the pointless pursuit of evanescent pleasure. The legacy I received from the *mesivta* and its *rebbeim* has blessed and cursed my life ever since. To this day I can hear in my head the cadences of my *rebbeim* and fellow students chanting the Talmud and debating its meaning, praying as only those who are both abjectly humble before God and supremely confident of their importance in his world can do, and discussing every aspect of life as though it were a difficult passage in the Talmud. And to this day, if I am doing anything other than studying the Talmud, there is a voice in my head that says, "Nu, what about *lernen*?"

It is the desire to understand that voice and its power that has inspired my study of rabbinic asceticism. Though I have heard over and over again that Ju-

daism is not an ascetic faith, experience teaches me otherwise. Thus the question is: How could the stark self-denial of the *mesivta* be an expression of a faith viewed by so many as the antithesis of asceticism? This question cannot be addressed without one's revisiting an old and much-debated question, namely whether, and to what extent, rabbinic Judaism, the Judaism that came into being in Palestine and Persia between the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. and the Islamic invasion of Persia in 640 C.E.,[1] is ascetic. It is to this latter question that the following study is devoted.

I am aware that in acknowledging a personal motivation for this inquiry I open myself to the accusation of having an axe to grind and the charge that this will inevitably influence my work and its conclusions. These claims are, of course, true. No one can claim honestly to be a totally objective scholar (whatever that means). The best that one can hope for is to be aware of one's biases and to strive not to let them play an inordinate role in one's research. Note that I do not discount my presumptions out of hand; discounting one's suppositions without examination is no better scholarship than affirming them unreflectively. It is not impossible, after all, for one to be predisposed to a point of view that one later concludes is logically and historically sound. Obviously, though, one must be especially skeptical of the arguments that seem to persuade one of the correctness of a position toward which one is instinctively hospitable.[2] In any case, I suppose that it is particularly appropriate to preface a study of asceticism by acknowledging my frailties and shortcomings while dedicating myself to wrestling with them.

Almost from the moment of Christianity's inception, there was, as Daniel Boyarin puts it, "a difference between Christians and Jews that had to do with the body."[3] Paul distinguished between Israel according to the flesh (κατὰ σάρκα) and Israel according to the spirit (κατὰ πνεῦμα),[4] and between law (νόμος) and faith (πίστις), thus repudiating the traditional Jewish link between identity on the one hand and physical and social separation through circumcision and the laws of *kašrût* on the other. Moreover, by discarding the tribal, biological definition of Israel and by reading the Torah allegorically[5]—two moves that were intimately connected, as Boyarin has argued so convincingly[6]—Paul laid the groundwork for subsequent Christian glorification of virginity and sexual continence and the rejection of the Jewish view of biological propagation as a divine commandment.[7] From the perspective of celibate Christians and their communities, the ongoing Jewish commitment to the observance of *miṣwôt* (commandments) including marriage and propagation were seen as symptomatic of their rejection of Christ's *kerygma*. The "commandments in the flesh"—the Torah's obligations and prohibitions in their literal sense—were meant only to be symbolic precursors to Jesus's (read Paul's) gospel of the spirit; the Jews, however, had tragically mistaken symbol for substance.

Jews, on the other hand, saw Christian celibacy as a betrayal of the biblical blessing and command to be fruitful and multiply. The third- and fourth-century bishop and church historian Eusebius of Caesarea cited the following

objection of a Jewish contemporary: "If we [Christians] claim that the Gospel teaching of our Savior Christ bids us worship God as did the men of old and the pre-Mosaic men of God [i.e., those before the advent of the Law], and that our religion is the same as theirs, and our knowledge of God the same, why were they keenly concerned with marriage and reproduction while we to some extent disregard it?"[8] The fourth-century Syrian churchman Aphrahat recounts the following Jewish anti-Christian polemic: "But you [Christians] do something not commanded by God for you have received a curse and have received barrenness. You hinder generation, the blessing of righteous men. You do not take wives, and you are not wives for husbands. You hate procreation, a blessing given by God."[9] This critique was especially appropriate in the context of Syrian Christianity, where celibacy played a more dominant role than it did elsewhere in the Christian world.[10]

Christian asceticism took other forms besides celibacy, including fasting and renouncing one's possessions; these latter forms of asceticism, particularly fasting, are present in rabbinic Judaism as well. Nonetheless, when the study of asceticism began in earnest in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, little notice was taken of rabbinic asceticism. This inattention was due largely to the almost exclusive interest of most scholars in Christianity. Even those who considered the possibility of Jewish asceticism generally had little or no access to rabbinic sources and therefore limited their discussion to Philo and the Essenes. With the notable exception of James Montgomery,[11] most scholars of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, both Jewish and Christian, characterized Christianity as ascetic and Judaism as non- or anti-ascetic.[12] More recent scholarship, while sometimes acknowledging the existence of Jewish asceticism, often does so only with significant qualifications. David Halivni is willing to consider the possibility that early Judaism contained some ascetic strains but says that if "the claim that normative Judaism is anti-ascetic is confined to the talmudic period there [is] little to quarrel with."[13] Salo Baron acknowledges that "ascetics were not lacking in ancient Judaism, even among the rabbis. But," he continues, "the majority believed in the legitimacy of pursuit of this-worldly happiness, including the enjoyment of material goods bestowed upon one by grace divine."[14] However, there have been some important exceptions to the general consensus that asceticism is a marginal Jewish phenomenon. Studies by Allan Lazaroff,[15] Steven Fraade,[16] and Moshe Sokol[17] have examined the nature of Jewish asceticism. As will be made clear later, Fraade's thinking has been particularly helpful in my own analysis of the problem.

The assumption that Judaism is non- or anti-ascetic has often served as the handmaiden of a theological agenda; the terms "ascetic" and "nonascetic" serve roughly the same function in the nineteenth and twentieth century that "spirit" and "flesh" do in late antiquity. For Jews viewing asceticism as a physically and spiritually injurious practice contrary to human nature, its purported absence in Judaism has been evidence of spiritual health—and of the superiority of Judaism's worldliness to the "pathological"[18] ascetic withdrawal of Christian-

ity. For Christians, on the other hand, Christianity's rejection of the flesh in favor of the spirit has been a sign of the transcendent superiority of the new Israel.[19] Even those Christian scholars who acknowledge the presence of asceticism within Judaism often see it as an imperfect precursor of Chrisitanity's more fully developed spirituality.[20]

This assumption has become a self-fulfilling prophecy; most scholars, whenever they encounter Jewish behavior that smacks of asceticism, attribute it to nonascetic motives and origins or ascribe it to influence from other religions. Naziritism is not ascetic, argues T. C. Hall, because Nazirite vows are merely "survivals of primitive Semitic religious customs"; the attendant abstinence from wine "is a survival of nomad morality protesting against the agricultural stage."[21] Arthur Vööbus is so certain that "Judaism was not interested in asceticism"[22] that he attributes all of the asceticism he finds in the Qumran scrolls and in rabbinic sources to foreign influences, which, he says, affected Judaism only marginally.[23]

The entire question of the degree of asceticism within Judaism is further complicated by the profound lack of agreement about what the term "asceticism" means. Among historians of religion of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century there was vast disagreement about how to define ascetic behavior and ideology. In the introduction to their recent collection of studies on asceticism, Vincent Wimbush and Richard Valantasis[24] enumerate three comprehensive definitions of asceticism that have been proposed in this century.[25] The first, Hall's,[26] posits two major forms of asceticism: "disciplinary," which has as its goal the training of the body, spirit, and will, and "dualistic," which functions as a means of escaping the inherently evil body and the functions associated with it. The second definition, that of Oscar Hardman,[27] speaks of three types of asceticism. "The mystical ideal—fellowship," has as its goal both *unio mystica* and *communitas* with fellow mystics. "The disciplinary ideal—righteousness," seeks obedience to divine laws and order. "Sacrificial asceticism" regards certain ethical behaviors as offerings that serve to remove pollution and evil. Finally, Max Weber[28] speaks of four types of asceticism: "innerworldly asceticism,"[29] innerworldly mysticism,"[30] otherworldly asceticism,"[31] and "otherworldly mysticism."[32] I shall have more to say about Weber's conceptual scheme.

In the face of the plethora of definitions that have been offered for asceticism, contemporary students of asceticism are reluctant to offer definitions altogether.[33] Moreover, one can (and scholars of rabbinic Judaism do) pick particular definitions of asceticism and thereby "prove" that rabbinic Judaism is, or is not, ascetic. The debate between Yitzhak Baer[34] and E. E. Urbach[35] as to whether or not rabbinic Judaism is ascetic can be explained in this way. Baer defines asceticism as התעמלות רוחנית, "moral striving,"[36] which takes the forms of self-education, character development, service to God, and boundless generosity toward others, all of which can be found in Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism. Urbach, on the other hand, associates asceticism with dualism, mortification of the flesh, and the creation of an elite class of ascetics.[37] He finds none of these elements in rabbinic Judaism—though the first is arguably present in

rabbinic Judaism[38] and the latter two show up among the medieval German Jewish pietists and the sixteenth-century Safed mystics.[39]

In truth, Baer and Urbach are talking past each other, and not simply because they are working with different definitions of asceticism. Baer is trying to locate rabbinic Judaism within the historical and ideological context of the Graeco-Roman world. He therefore isolates what he believes to be the essential elements of *askesis* for Greek thinkers and shows that they are present in rabbinic thought as well. (In fairness to Baer it should be noted that he is also careful to identify those aspects of the rabbinic religious regimen, such as *gemîlût ḥasādîm*, acts of lovingkindness, which distinguish it from the practices of the Greek philosophical schools.)[40]

Urbach, on the other hand, seems intent on using asceticism as a means of distinguishing Judaism from Christianity. Thus the definition of asceticism that he adopts is taken straight from early Christian practice. Self-imposed suffering, including self-mutilation, was common among some early Christians (but not, it should be noted, among the Neoplatonists and Pythagoreans, who most would grant were ascetics nonetheless);[41] there were numerous early Christians who actively sought martyrdom[42] and those, most notably the desert fathers, who practiced varying degrees of self-denial. Urbach clearly thinks Judaism the better for eschewing such ascetic practices.[43] In this regard his study is part of the aforementioned long-standing tradition of scholars of Christianity and Judaism using the comparative method as a way of proving the relative superiority of one faith or the other.[44]

The most balanced and insightful discussion of asceticism within Judaism is that of Steven Fraade.[45] He urges that we change the terms of the conversation concerning rabbinic asceticism in at least two important respects. First, given the multiplicity of available definitions of "asceticism," he suggests that a definition be found that is broad enough to encompass the varied forms of ascetic practice but not so inclusive as to be meaningless. The two components he sees as basic to asceticism are: "(1) the exercise of disciplined effort toward the goal of spiritual perfection (however understood), which requires (2) abstention (whether total or partial, permanent or temporary, individualistic or communalistic) from the satisfaction of otherwise permitted earthly, creaturely desires."[46] Second, given the complex interplay of history, external influences, and the human psyche, "ancient Jewish 'asceticism' . . . cannot be interpreted simply as a reflex of specific historical events or foreign influences . . . but as a perennial side of Judaism as it struggles with the tension between the realization of transcendent ideals and the confronting of this-worldly obstacles to that realization."[47] Or, as Fraade puts it elsewhere, "The question is not: Is ancient Judaism ascetic or non-ascetic? but: How is asceticism . . . manifested and responded to in the ancient varieties of Judaism, including that of the rabbis?"[48]

The vagueness of a phrase within the second half of his proposed definition for asceticism—an intentional vagueness, Fraade tells us—deserves elucidation. He speaks of abstention from "otherwise permitted earthly, creaturely desires."[49] Fraade alludes here to the elitist nature of asceticism, or at least the asceticism he and I are interested in studying. If one were to omit the two words "other-

wise permitted" from Fraade's definition, it would include all of rabbinic Judaism, and for that matter any religious system that places constraints upon its adherents. Is not *kaŝrût*, for example, a case of abstaining from "creaturely desires" as part of a "disciplined effort toward the goal of spiritual perfection"?[50] If the answer is yes—and it is—then Fraade's definition has become useless, because we have identified asceticism with religious discipline in general.[51] Thus, for asceticism to be something other than a synonym for religious praxis, it must involve the voluntary acceptance of a spiritual discipline that is not binding on one's larger religious community. If one thinks of almost any major group that we speak of as being ascetic—be it the desert fathers, Buddhist monks, or Hindu renouncers—we will see that they have existed against the background of, and in complex relationship to, a larger community of fellow believers that is not ascetic, at least not to the same degree. Even those, like the Essenes and the Encratites, who saw themselves as the only true believers found it necessary to engage and proselytize unbelievers; the *Miqṣat Maʿasē Tôrâ*[52] *of the Qumranites* and the Encratite *Acts of Thomas*[53] come to mind as examples. The athletic imagery used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 captures both the elitism and the sense of communal responsibility that informs Paul's ascetic practice:

> Do you not realize that, though all the runners in the stadium take part in the race, only one of them gets the prize? Run like that—to win. Every athlete concentrates completely on training, and this is to win a wreath that will wither, whereas ours will never wither. So that is how I run, not without a clear goal; and how I box, not wasting blows on air. I punish my body and bring it under control, to avoid risk that, having acted as herald [κηρύξας] for others, I myself may be disqualified.

On the one hand Paul speaks of religious praxis, and its self-denying aspects in particular, as being a form of competition (with the evil within one's self?) in which few are victorious. On the other hand, as the "herald" to the Christian community, he urges all its members to strive for the prize of spiritual achievement.

Similarly, the sages saw themselves as Israel's vanguard, but they neither separated themselves completely from the *ʿamē hā-ʾārṣ* ("the people of the land," rabbinic parlance for the nonrabbinic Jewish populace)[54] nor did they see any Jewish male as being barred from joining their ranks; on the contrary, they saw them all as equally obliged to do so, as the following passage suggests:

> Our rabbis taught: The poor, the rich and the evildoer are [all] brought to judgment [in the world to come]. They ask the poor man, "Why did you not engage in Torah study?" If he replies, "I was poor and burdened with sustaining myself," they say to him, "Were you any poorer than Hillel?" . . . They ask the rich man, "Why did you not engage in Torah study?" If he replies, "I was wealthy and burdened by [the responsibilities of] wealth," they say, "Were you any richer than R. Eliezer [b. Harsom]?" . . . They ask the evildoer, "Why did you not engage in Torah study?" If he replies, "I was handsome

> and [therefore] burdened by my sexual impulses," they say, "Were you handsomer[55] than Joseph?" . . . (bYoma 35b)

Fraade has pointed us in the right direction. In order to move his approach to rabbinic asceticism forward, we must identify the manifestations of asceticism peculiar to rabbinic Judaism. To do so, we must refine still further our understanding of asceticism by making four observations, the last of which I shall dwell upon at length.

First, I understand asceticism as being as much a dynamic—or, in Geoffrey Galt Harpham's phrasing, an imperative[56]—as it is a particular group of behaviors. To put it differently, asceticism can be present in attitude as it is in action (or restraint). This is particularly true of what Weber calls "worldly asceticism" (about which see later); such ascetics operate within the larger world of commerce and have families as do their nonascetic neighbors, but enjoyment of wealth and excesses of affection and erotic feeling are forbidden to them.[57] Thus even a religious culture that allows or even demands gainful employment and family life of its members may still hold an ascetic perspective on work and love. We therefore encounter sages who, while fulfilling the obligation to be fruitful and multiply, reduce physical intimacy and pleasure during intercourse to a minimum.[58]

Second, as a religion that, more than most, requires detailed and extensive self-restriction of all its adherents in matters of sex and diet, Judaism, and particularly rabbinic Judaism, might be said to have an inherently ascetic temperament. That is, Judaism teaches again and again that the path to spiritual excellence goes through self-denial. The following rabbinic teaching embodies this notion: "The commandments were given only in order to refine humanity. Does God care whether one slaughters from the throat or the neck?! [Rather], it must be that the commandments were given only in order to refine humanity."[59] This does not mean that the attitude of rabbinic Judaism toward physical and material is negative. However, it does open Judaism to two ascetically oriented moves: the further minimizing of pleasure in the pursuit of greater spirituality, and the instrumentalization of this-worldly behavior, which deemphasizes its pleasurable components. The Talmudic phrase "the commandments were not given as sources of pleasure,"[60] though it has the specific legal meaning that fulfillment of a commandment is not considered a this-worldly benefit, serves nicely to encapsulate this latter notion as well.

Third, it is important to state that two of asceticism's faces are withdrawal from the body and withdrawal from society.[61] In the first case one gives up eating, sex, or some other bodily pleasure in an attempt to reach a spiritual goal; in the second, one withdraws from communal meals, conversing, engaging in commerce, or other interpersonal activities because they are seen as inherently sinful or at least an obstacle to one's spiritual growth. In Christian asceticism the flight from the world usually functions as a necessary means for practicing bodily self-denial.[62] It is not surprising, therefore, that Christian asceticism in the Egyptian and Palestinian deserts begins with the solitary eremeticism of Anthony and only later develops into Pachomius's coenobitic monasticism.

On the other hand, among the sages, as among the Essenes, and perhaps the Pharisees, of the Second Temple period, asceticism seems to begin with and sometimes focuses on the formation of a fellowship within or apart from society at large. Thus at least some of the Essenes go out to the desert to form a community of strict purity, celibacy, and communal property. Possibly the Pharisees, and certainly the early sages, established *ḥabûrôt* or table fellowships that abided by meticulous norms of tithing and purity and thereby excluded most Israelites from breaking bread with them.[63] At least some sages imagined a world in which they would engage solely in Torah study, having little or no contact with women, children, and nonrabbinic Jews,[64] while being supported by the work of others.

Finally we must recognize the existence of what I shall call an "instrumental" asceticism alongside the "essential" asceticism which is usually discussed. Essential asceticism entails explicit renunciation of some aspect of conventional existence because the self-denial itself is seen as inherently spiritually salutary. Instrumental asceticism involves the passionate commitment to a spiritual quest so consuming that one feels it necessary to minimize or eliminate worldly pursuits and pleasures because they detract from or distract one from one's godly objectives. The widespread characterization of rabbinic Judaism as nonascetic or even anti-ascetic is usually based on the absence of essential asceticism in the form of celibacy or other forms of stipulated self-denial. Thus, for example, Urbach says concerning the sages of the Mishnah and Talmud: "We find sages possessing great spiritual powers [בעלי הנפש] who imposed various restraints upon themselves; however, the denial of physical needs was merely a means and not an end unto itself etc."[65] However, extreme devotion to the study and practice of Torah on the part of some of the rabbis results in self-denial indistinguishable behaviorally, if not motivationally, from that of the classic ascetic.[66] Thus, rabbis marry and father children, but some delay marriage for many years in order to study without the "millstone" of family responsibility around their necks while others marry and then spend years away from home engaged in scholarship. Furthermore, an examination of rabbinic sources makes clear that for many of the rabbis dedication to Torah study meant that it took precedence over fulfilling other commandments, engaging in a profession or occupation, conjugal and familial obligations, general physical comfort, and even, in times of persecution, life itself. We therefore have an interesting situation in which economic, social, and familial life, while acknowledged as an integral part of the life of a rabbinic Jew, are subject to significant neglect without being renounced outright. Moreover, we shall see that this hierarchy is affirmed by, and enshrined in, rabbinic *halakhah* which, with some important exceptions, codifies the primacy of Torah study over all other obligations.

The idea of instrumental asceticism is not a new one, nor is it limited to the sages. Eusebius of Caesarea, in a previously cited passage, offers a number of responses to the Jewish claim that Christian celibacy is not in accordance with behavior of the biblical patriarchs. His second reply is as follows: "The men of old days lived a easier and freer life, and their care of home and family did not compete with their leisure for religion . . . , but in our days there are many external interests that draw us away, and involve us in incongenial thoughts, and

seduce us from our zeal for the things which please God."[67] In this view the major good of celibacy is that it frees one from the distractions and responsibilities of family life, and from the threats to one's spiritual vocation that accompany them, and allows for the single-minded pursuit of godliness.

A conception of instrumental asceticism also informs some of Friedrich Nietzsche's reflections on the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche distinguishes between the Christian ascetic ideal, which he denounces as being directed against life and the self, and that of the philosophers:

> What does the ascetic ideal mean to the philosopher? My answer is . . . on seeing an ascetic ideal, the philosopher smiles because he sees an optimum condition of the highest and boldest intellectuality [*Geistigkeit*],—he does not *deny* existence by doing so, but rather affirms *his* existence and *only* his existence, and possibly does so to the point where he is not far from making the outrageous wish: *pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, fiam!* ["Let the world perish, (but) let philosophy exist, let the philosopher exist, let me exist."][68]

Change the word "philosopher" to "rabbinic sage" and you have a succinct summation of the rabbinic ascetic ideal, at least in its most extreme form. The philosopher, says Nietzsche, wishes to avoid marriage and children not because he is opposed to sexuality and procreation in principle, but because they are a hindrance to his philosophical vocation. As we shall see, although the rabbis could not forgo creating families, because they saw themselves as being religiously obligated to do so, a good number of them minimized their involvement—physical, financial, and emotional—with these families. For them the perpetuation of Torah scholarship was paramount. There are numerous rabbinic statements that make the world's existence depend upon the Torah and those who study it, as in the following rabbinic *chreia*:

> Rabbi Judah the Patriarch sent R. Hiyya, R. Assi, and R. Ammi to pass through the towns of Israel and establish scribes [i.e., Bible teachers] and reciters [of oral law] in each. They went to a place in which they found neither a scribe nor a reciter. They said to [the townspeople], "bring us the guardians of the town." They brought them the town's *senatores*. [The rabbis] said to them, "These are the town's guardians!? These are nothing but the town's destroyers!" [The townspeople] asked, "And who are the town's guardians?" They replied, "The scribes and the reciters. This is what scripture states: 'Unless the Lord builds the house [its builders labor in vain on it] (Psalms 127:1).'" (yHagiga 1.7, 76c)

Because rabbinic ascetics do not forswear family life but rather allow the demands of Torah to take precedence over their involvement in worldly matters, their objectives are often represented as being in conflict with those of their families. Rabbinic sources reflect a range of reactions to this tension, from condemnation of the absent husband and father to an affirmation of the commit-

ment to study even at the cost of one's family's privation. Plainly, rabbinic asceticism is not as clear-cut as the self-denial of the Christian anchorite or the Hindu renouncer; this difference accounts, in part, for its rarely having been recognized as asceticism.

A useful comparison can be made between rabbinic asceticism and the worldly asceticism of seventeenth-century Protestantism described by Max Weber. One of Weber's great contributions to our understanding of asceticism is the insight that *askesis* need not involve a rejection of the mundane but instead may consist of its transformation. The Protestants identified by Weber as ascetics do not forswear a life of commerce, family, and society; rather, they refashion its significance. In their industrious pursuit of wealth they seek not to gain the material pleasures that wealth can yield but rather to magnify God's glory and to obtain certainty of their salvation:

> [Puritan] ascetic conduct meant a rational planning of the whole of one's life in accordance with God's will. . . . The religious life of the saints, as distinguished from the natural life, was . . . no longer lived outside the world in monastic communities, but within the world and its institutions. This rationalization of conduct within this world, but for the sake of the world beyond, was the consequence of the concept of calling of ascetic Protestantism.[69]

Every aspect of life had to be evaluated in terms of God's will and dedicated to God's greater glory. Believers were expected to make an ongoing accounting of their actions, using the same scrupulous accounting methods for their spiritual life as they used in their businesses. "The process of sanctifying life," concludes Weber, "could thus take on the character of a business enterprise."[70]

As was noted earlier, one aspect of this emphasis on constant self-discipline was "the continually repeated, almost passionate preaching of hard, continuous bodily or mental labour"[71] among the Puritans. Weber attributes this to two causes, the first being that constant labor was seen as a means of avoiding the various temptations that beset the believer. The second is "that labour came to be considered in itself the end of life, ordained as such by God."[72]

This near-sanctification of labor had far-reaching consequences for the Puritan community. It meant, first of all, that any form of idleness, including any activity that was not seen as adding to God's glory, was not tolerated. This included overeating, oversleeping, ostentatious dress, "frivolous" engagement in the fine arts—in short, anything other than work, worship, and the carrying out of one's familial and social duties.[73] Second, because work was seen as one's calling, people were seen as the stewards of the profits that accrued from their work, and every penny had to be used in accordance with God's will. This meant both refraining from spending money on "useless" pleasures and investing funds with an eye to receiving the greatest possible return. Consequently, many Puritans were placed in the paradoxical position of having a great deal of wealth and being forbidden to spend it.[74]

If one stops to compare the picture painted by Weber with the one that emerges, as will be seen, from rabbinic sources, one is struck by the similarity

between these two communities. The rabbis, like the Puritans, insist on constant labor and they abhor idleness; sex is permitted but significantly regulated. For the rabbis, as for the Puritans, these requirements and limitations are formulated in great part in deference to a vocation that is supposed to occupy the vast majority of their time and energy. The major difference between these two communities is that while for Protestants one's calling is one's work, and the result is a self-denying but financially and therefore familially and socially secure community, for the rabbis one's "work" is Torah study, and so a tension is created between one's religious calling and one's familial obligations.

Weber is aware of this distinction. Thus he notes that while the Puritan demonstrated his piety through the scrupulousness of his business practices, "the pious Jew never gauged his inner ethical standards by what he regarded as permissible in the economic context."[75] Rather, "the Jew set up as his ethical ideal the scholar learned in law and casuistry, the intellectual who continuously immersed himself in the sacred writings and commentaries *at the expense of his business* [emphasis mine], which he very frequently left to the management of his wife."[76] In fact, as a consequence, Weber concludes, the rational organization of the rabbinic Jew's life in order to allow immersion in the study of the law and the fulfillment of its dictates "is not 'asceticism' in our sense."[77]

On the one hand one cannot take issue with Weber; for him true asceticism must be an organizing principle for all of life. Because he does not find such a principle in Judaism, particularly with regard to economic life, he classifies Judaism as a nonascetic religion. Nonetheless, one can wonder whether Weber's definitions of asceticism are overdetermined by his intense concern with the economic aspects of religious life and, perhaps, by the stereotypical assumptions about Christianity, Judaism, and asceticism that prevailed in his time.[78]

Moreover, Weber's conclusion is based on faulty evidence. Weber seems unaware of the strain of Talmudic thought that connects piety with scrupulousness in money matters, and he does not mention the medieval Jewish conception of one's possessions as a *piqqādôn*, an object temporarily vouchsafed by the owner—in this case, God—to the holder for safekeeping.[79] Neither is there mention of the thoroughgoing critiques of wealth and the wealthy by the ascetic German-Jewish pietists in thirteenth-century[80] Germany and sixteenth-century Poland.[81] These caveats notwithstanding, one can avail oneself of Weber's analysis without sharing his conclusions about Judaism and asceticism.

One might object that if instrumental self-restraint is included in the definition of asceticism then the category of asceticism becomes so broad as to be meaningless. A boxer who refrains from sex during his training period because he believes that "women weaken legs" would then be an ascetic as well—a perhaps not inapt conclusion given the athletic origins of the term "asceticism." Some contemporary thinkers, especially those drawn to what they see as the aesthetic dimension of asceticism, happily accept this notion;[82] I do not. The term ἄσκησις as used by Christian writers, although borrowed from the gladiatorial arena, refers specifically to self-discipline in pursuit of spiritual redemption. As Susanna Elm puts it in her discussion of Christian askesis, "Asceticism is in essence a statement about the relationship between the body, the soul, and

the human potential for salvation."[83] The rabbis, in turn, sought through their acceptance of ascetic self-restraint the blessing of the world to come. The asceticism that is the focus of the present work is self-denial in the pursuit of a spiritual ideal that transcends all forms of earthly self-gratification.

In chapter 1, I will make in detail the case that I have outlined: that rabbinic Judaism does in fact contain ascetic elements, but that the asceticism of rabbinic Judaism is significantly different from that of Christianity in that it is largely incidental and instrumental rather than essential and that this asceticism could co-exist—though uneasily at times—with involvement in the social, economic, and familial spheres. The key to this asceticism is a single-minded focus on the study of Torah, a commitment—dare I say obsession?—that leaves little time, energy, or desire for life's other pursuits. The rabbis themselves acknowledge this point with regard to sex and commerce in particular, but we shall see that it applies as well to other aspects of life—and even death.

Furthermore, two elements of rabbinic theology encourage an ambivalent attitude, at best, toward the pleasures of this world. The first is the rabbinic reaction to the problem of theodicy. One of their responses is that God front-loads, as it were, the reward due the wicked, paying them off in this-worldly coin so that they will have no claim to the pleasures of the next world. Underlying this rejoinder is the belief that the pleasures and rewards of the next world far surpass those of this one. The original intent of this theology presumably was to comfort the suffering righteous, who had to suffer the added indignity of seeing the wicked prosper, and to argue the justice of God's ways in the face of evidence to the contrary. However, its implication is that one who is enjoying this world overly much ought to be concerned that he is being bought off with the base coin of this world and will thereby be barred from the pleasures of the next. One way to ensure that this is not the case, of course, is to minimize one's this-worldly pleasures. A second, closely related notion, is the belief in the finitude of one's reward. This means that whatever is consumed now will not be available later. Even aside from the theological principle just mentioned, therefore, rabbis are wary about depleting their spiritual capital by withdrawing from their account in this world and thereby having little left in the world to come. Chapter 2 examines these beliefs and their implications for the rabbinic pursuit or avoidance of pleasure.

Until now I have inferred an ascetic stance from the behaviors and attitudes described in rabbinic texts and limited the discussion almost entirely to instrumental asceticism. In fact, there are two terms, פרישות (abstinence) and קדושה (holiness) and their variants, with which the rabbis describe explicitly an ascetic ethos which encompasses essential asceticism as well. In chapter 3 I survey the use of these terms in the rabbinic corpus and evaluate what this usage tells us about rabbinic asceticism. It emerges that these terms are often used with regard to the types of voluntary self-denial characteristic of essential asceticism.

Essential asceticism figures most prominently in rabbinic Judaism in the form of fasting. Once again, however, arises the problem of defining asceticism in rabbinic Judaism. Numerous scholars are aware of the centrality of fasting to

rabbinic Judaism but do not consider it asceticism because they do not consider the motives for rabbinic fasting to be ascetic. I reject this view both because of my behavioral approach to asceticism and because I understand at least some of the rabbinic motives for fasting to be consistent with an ascetic mind-set. This becomes clear from a survey of prerabbinic sources that mention fasting.

One can ask how fasting became an accepted and, for some, an encouraged form of asceticism within rabbinic Judaism. In chapter 4 I suggest that fasting is the post-destruction substitute for its biblical predecessor, the Nazirite. Although the Nazirite did not fast, food and drink restrictions were a primary part of the Nazirite's regimen, and the rabbis' discussions of whether naziriteship is positive or negative seem a means of approving or criticizing asceticism in general and fasting in particular. However, the original significance of the Nazir's practices is far from certain. After explaining what I believe to have been the original significance of biblical naziriteship, I will suggest how and why the Nazir came to be understood somewhat differently by the rabbis. Finally, a link will be suggested between the virtual cessation of naziriteship and the institutions of sacrifice and the *ma'amadot* (groups of non-officiant Priests and Levites as well as Israelites who would fast, pray, and read from the Torah while the daily sacrifices were being offered) as a result of the destruction of the Temple, as well as mourning for the destruction itself, and the rise of fasting.

Chapter 5 explores the differences in attitude toward fasting, and perhaps toward active ascetic behavior in general, between the rabbis of the Land of Israel and those of Babylonia. The Babylonian rabbis seem negatively disposed toward fasting, while their counterparts in the Land of Israel favor it. I suggest that these differences are due both to the different historical experiences of each community and to the differences in the cultural and religious values in the surrounding societies. Jews in the Land of Israel were heirs to a legacy of destruction and oppression; the rabbinic movement itself was born and began to flourish in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple and the brutal suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt. Babylonian Jewry, on the other hand, was under the relatively benign rule of the Parthian and Sassanian dynasties and was subject only to sporadic persecution. Furthermore, the Graeco-Roman culture surrounding the Jews of Palestine recognized and valued fasting, and asceticism generally, as useful instruments for attaining visions of the gods and, in the view of the Stoics in particular, as a key to a life of *apatheia*. On the other hand, Babylonian Jewry's Zoroastrian neighbors abhorred fasting as a sin against the divinely created human body. While it is not certain to what degrees Palestinian and Babylonian Jews were affected in their attitudes towards fasting by their surrounding culture, it is clear that the parallels between rabbinic and general cultural attitudes deserve further consideration.

There are a number of important questions related to rabbinic asceticism that are not addressed by this study. Numerous individuals are given the appellation *hasid*, "pious one," in rabbinic literature. The nature of their piety, and whether or not they constituted a definable group, have long been the subject

of scholarly debate. To what extent do the Hasidim represent an ascetic stream with the rabbinic community? This question still awaits a full study.

Medieval Judaism includes groups of Jews, such as the Haside Ashkenaz, the German-Jewish pietists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, who engaged in self-flagellation as a form of penance. Are these practices solely the result of Christian influence, or are they also the consequence of a turn to the ascetic voices within rabbinic tradition? The answer to this question also lies beyond the parameters of my investigation.

Whatever errors of omission and commission I may have made, I feel grateful to have the opportunity to draw the interest of the scholarly and general community to an important but heretofore neglected aspect of rabbinic culture. It is my hope that scholars of rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity, as well as students of religion both amateur and professional, will find much in my work that is both interesting and useful.

Before presenting the fruits of my labor, it is important that I address three methodological issues that are central to my work. First, I have been speaking of rabbinic Judaism here in an undifferentiated fashion. Rabbinic Judaism of late antiquity was not, however, monolithic. One of its outstanding characteristics, in fact, in contradistinction to its predecessors, was its legitimation and institutionalization of intramural dissent.[84] Further, rabbinic Judaism developed in two different geographical locations, Palestine and Babylonia, with different traditions and cultural influences.[85] It would seem impossible, then, to represent any particular viewpoint as that of rabbinic Judaism as a whole.

In fact, I am not claiming that all rabbis of late antiquity were in perfect agreement on matters of asceticism. On the contrary, my contention is that Palestinian and Babylonian sages differed in their attitudes toward fasting and other forms of ascesis. My assertion is only that the types of asceticism outlined earlier and to be presented in detail were widespread among the sages. With regard to each ascetic behavior and attitude I will indicate whether the sage citing or exhibiting it is tannaitic or amoraic, Babylonian or Palestinian. In a number of cases I will also discuss whether a tradition quoted in the name of a Palestinian sage in the Babylonian Talmud, or in the name of a Babylonian in the Palestinian Talmud, should be regarded as Palestinian or Babylonian in origin.

A second issue is the problem of attributions in rabbinic literature and their reliability. It is by now a truism among most contemporary scholars of rabbinic history and literature that the attributions found in rabbinic sources are to treated with great caution. It has been shown that they are often inaccurate or even knowingly fictitious[86] and that the rabbis themselves are aware of this fact.[87] This problem has raised questions about whether or not rabbinic biography is possible and, more germane to the work at hand, whether it is possible to write a history of rabbinic thought. Richard Kalmin[88] and Christine Hayes[89] have delineated three schools of thought on the question of the reliability of rabbinic attributions. The so-called traditional school, which includes many Israeli scholars such as Ephraim Elimelech Urbach,[90] assumes that attributions are essentially reliable as they stand. A second group, which includes Jacob Neusner[91] and his disciples in America and Arnold Goldberg[92] in Europe, sees rabbinic

attributions as essentially useless for historical purposes. Neusner does concede, however, that one can speak of ideologies of rabbinic documents, which can be dated, however, no earlier than their date of publication, despite the fact that they contain material attributed to an earlier period. This view assumes that each of the major rabbinic documents—the Mishnah, Tosefta, halakhic (legal) midrashim, Yerushalmi, Bavli, and aggadic (exegetical and homiletical) midrashim—is the product of a thoroughgoing final redaction the date of which can be determined; in fact, however, with the exception of the Mishnah,[93] there is considerable debate as to when each of these texts was edited.[94]

My own approach is closest to that characterized by Christine Hayes as the source-critical approach.[95] This approach notes that in its presentation of traditions of particular sages, rabbinic documents appear to follow a consistent chronological order. That is, later rabbis know of the views attributed to earlier ones and elucidate or question them. Rarely if ever do we find an entirely new set of views attributed to earlier sages by later ones. Furthermore, the use of specialized citation terminology and temporal markers indicates that rabbinic texts consist of teachings from different sources and periods. Consequently, I endorse Hayes's statement that "with proper attention to the distinctive features of [rabbinic] texts and the use of literary and source criticism, some *relatively reliable* diachronic and cultural-historical analyses of rabbinic texts *beyond the level of redaction* become possible."[96] In other words, although one cannot attest to the specific historicity of the vast majority of rabbinic traditions—we do not know if a particular sage actually said or did what rabbinic sources attribute to him—we can reasonably assume that in most cases the dicta and actions attributed to sages of a particular time and place accurately reflect the views during that period and at that locale.[97]

Let us now consider the relevance of this position for the study that follows. On the one hand, I treat each rabbinic source as a unit apart from the document in which it is found and I assume, absent evidence to the contrary, that it dates from the locale and period indicated in the citation. On the other hand, I do not claim that each *tanna* (sage from the period circa 70 C.E. to circa 220 C.E.) and *amora* (sage from the period 220 C.E. to circa 500 C.E.) to whom a statement is attributed actually made that statement. When I say, therefore, that Rabbi X said thus and such, I actually mean that such a statement is attributed to Rabbi X in the rabbinic corpus. However, because I am not writing rabbinic biography but merely establishing whether, where, when, and to what extent certain ideas and practices were current in rabbinic circles, the issue of the historical reliability of the attributions of the sources cited is mainly moot. When I attribute a view to the rabbis or sages without further qualification, I mean that this view is cited in several sources and that to my knowledge no dissenting view appears in rabbinic literature. This does not mean that every sage agreed with this view, only that such opposition has not been recorded. In those cases in which issues of history or attribution are important, they will be addressed in the body of the study.

Finally, an important component of my methodology in this study is to suggest conceptual and behavioral parallels between rabbinic and Christian asceticism. In particular, I will point out parallels between rabbinic materials

and the apophthegma of the desert fathers, a phenomenon already examined at some length by Catherine Hezser.[98] This approach invites a third methodological concern. At the 1997 conference of the Association for Jewish Studies, during the question and answer period following my paper on rabbinic asceticism, my friend and colleague Ya'akov Elman suggested that the asceticism I was describing was so different from that of the Christian variety that perhaps they ought not be compared or studied together. My response, then and now, is that given the Jewish predilection to see itself as nonascetic, it is necessary and important to establish a continuum between Christian behaviors commonly labeled as ascetic and rabbinic ascetic praxis, which, as I will demonstrate, share the same sensibility of self-denial in the pursuit of spiritual excellence. Thus my debate with Elman and those who share his point of view is not whether or not asceticism is present in rabbinic Judaism. Given the innumerable definitions of asceticism, as we shall see, this would be a pointless discussion. Rather, the question is whether one can find enough points of contact between rabbinic and Christian asceticism to conclude that they are conceptually similar and therefore capable of illuminating each other. My answer to this question is affirmative, based in part on the similarities between the asceticism of the rabbis and that of the desert fathers. With these caveats in mind, let us turn to the texts themselves.

I

"What Will Become of Torah?"

The Ascetic Discipline of Torah Study

Resh Laqish said: From where do we know that the Torah only endures through one who denies oneself for its sake? Scripture states, "This is the teaching [תורה]: When a person dies in a tent etc." (Num 19:14)

—bShabbat 83b

You must see yourselves as being dead to sin but alive for God in Jesus Christ.

—Romans 6:11

Rabbinic Judaism did not emerge suddenly and unexpectedly from the ashes of the Second Temple. It was a movement built on what Shaye Cohen calls "the democratization of Judaism,"[1] a process that began during the Second Temple period and that involved the shift from Temple to synagogue and the intensification of religious obligations of the individual Jew.[2] What distinguished rabbinic Judaism in part from its Second Temple antecedents was its insistence on the centrality of Torah study. Again, this is not to say that study was unimportant to the Pharisees, Essenes, and other Jews of the late Second Temple period. What was new in the rabbinic enterprise was the belief that "God can be found through the study of His laws, even those laws which cannot be observed in daily life."[3] This meant that study was not merely instrumental, a means of attaining practical knowledge or increasing one's piety; study was a—the—significant religious act in and of itself. The rabbinic goal was to study Torah *li-šmâ*, for its own sake.[4] In this chapter I intend to show how highly Torah study was valued in rabbinic culture and how, as a consequence, many of the rabbis

privileged it above work and family, thereby practicing a form of instrumental asceticism.

"But the Study of Torah Is Equal to Them All": The Supreme Importance of Torah Study

Rabbinic Judaism is nothing if not a religion of details, details that encompass all of human experience. According to one rabbinic tradition, 613 commandments were given at Sinai;[5] the rabbinic enterprise involves explicating and observing each of these commandments. As Solomon Schechter put it, "The [r]abbinic notion seems to have been, 'If religion is anything, it is everything.'"[6] Although the rabbis considered all of the commandments to be essential,[7] they developed a hierarchy among them. This was needed to determine how much time, effort, and money should be allotted to each commandment and in order to determine which commandment should give way to the other if more than one devolved upon an individual simultaneously. Thus the rabbis discussed what one should do if participation in a funeral came into conflict with one's liturgical obligations[8] and whether one could violate the sanctity of Rosh Hashanah in order to obtain a ram's horn needed to fulfill the commandment of sounding the *shofar*.[9]

Similar questions arose when Torah study clashed with other religious obligations, and it is clear that for the sages Torah was the primary *mizwâ*. Says the first-century sage Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai, "If you have studied much Torah, ascribe no merit to yourself, because you were created for this [purpose]."[10] Consequently we are not surprised to find that the Mishnah[11] lists Torah study among those commandments "that have no fixed measure."[12] This means both that every moment of study is infinitely valuable and that, on the other hand, there is no limit to how much one should study: the more the better.[13] In the same mishnah, moreover, Torah study is described as being equal in value to all the other commandments together.[14]

Not surprisingly, therefore, in rabbinic debate regarding the proper relation of Torah study to the fulfillment of the other commandments, the consensus was that Torah study takes precedence. The classic formulation of this dispute is the following:

> Once R. Tarfon, R. Aqiba and R. Jose the Galilean were convened in Bet 'Aris[15] in Lod and the following question came before them: Which is greater, study or action? R. Tarfon responded, saying, "Action is greater." R. Aqiba responded, "Study is greater." They all responded, saying, "Study is greater, for study brings one to action" (*Sifre Deuteronomy* Pisqa 41 [85])[16]

Apparently, the question being raised here is both theoretical and practical.[17] The theoretical question is whether God assigns greater religious value to study or to action. The practical question is how one should allot one's available time for religious endeavors. The conclusion is that Torah study is greater because it encompasses action as well. Basing himself on the above ruling, R. Abbahu

(Caesarea Maris, 3rd c.) scolded his son for attending to the burial of the dead rather than studying Torah.[18] Similarly, the *tanna* R. Jacob[19] is quoted as saying, "One who is walking along and studying and he stops studying to say: 'How lovely is this tree! How lovely is this field!'—Scripture accounts it as if he were liable to forfeit his life."[20] Joseph Heinemann has established that the phrase מה נאה, "how lovely," is probably an early benediction formula.[21] The Mishnah's point may be, therefore, that one should not be diverted from Torah study by the opportunity to fulfill another commandment, such as reciting a blessing.

The privileging of Torah study over other *mizwôt* is evident in the realm of prayer and public Torah reading as well. For example, from Deuteronomy 6:7 the rabbis derived an obligation to recite certain biblical verses, known as the *Shema'*, every morning and evening. The Mishnah stipulates that one must recite Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Deuteronomy 11:13–21, and Numbers 15:37–41 for the morning *Shema'* and the first two of these paragraphs in the evening.[22] Nonetheless, R. Yohanan (Tiberias, 3rd c.) reports in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai (Palestine, 2nd c.) that one who is engaged in Torah study need not stop in order to recite the *Shema'*.[23] Similarly, Rabbi Judah the Patriarch (Palestine, 2nd and early 3rd c.) is described as fulfilling the obligation while he was teaching by reciting only the first verse of the first section, and in so inconspicuous a fashion that one of his students wondered aloud why he did not recite the *Shema'*.[24] Although the recitation of the *Shema'* is a form of Torah study,[25] it is merely rote repetition, and it gives way before the complex analysis of the written and oral law that the sages consider the zenith of Torah scholarship.

This view is reflected in later statements attributed to Babylonian *amoraim*. The Bavli reports that R. Sheshet (Babylonia, late 3rd c. and first half of the 4th c.) turned away during the communal Torah lectionary in order to continue his own study of Torah.[26] Perhaps the most striking statement made in this connection is that of Raba (Babylonia, 4th c.). He criticizes R. Hamnuna (Babylonia, 4th c.) for praying at length, saying that "he is setting aside eternal life [i.e., Torah study] and is engaging in temporal matters [i.e., prayer!]."[27]

Some limits are placed on the primacy of Torah study. The *tannaim* Jonathan b. 'Amsai and Judah b. Gerim (Palestine, 2nd c.) permit one to set aside one's studies in order to fulfill a commandment that cannot be undertaken by anyone else;[28] Torah study is also to be set aside in order to read the book of Esther on Purim and in order to prepare for Passover and to partake of the meal preceding the fast of Yom Kippur.[29] These exceptions do little, however, to change the general picture of Torah study as one's supreme obligation.

Torah versus Labor

A second dispute illustrating the importance of Torah study for the sages concerns the relative importance of study and labor in the life of a rabbinic Jew. Some sages favored a life of study coupled with an occupation while others saw Torah study as the sole vocation worthy of their time and effort. The *locus classicus* of this debate is a colloquy attributed to R. Ishmael and R. Simeon b. Yohai, both

second-century Palestinian sages. They are discussing Deuteronomy 11:13–14, which promises that if Israel observes God's commandments it will receive rain in the proper time and that "you shall gather in your new grain and wine and oil."

> "And you shall gather in your new grain" (Deuteronomy 11:14): Why is this said? Because it is stated [elsewhere in Scripture], "Let not this Book of Teaching cease from your lips" (Josh 1:8) one might think that Scripture is to be taken literally. Therefore Scripture states, "And you shall gather in your new grain"—the Torah spoke in [accordance with] the way of the world [*dęrękh 'ęręṣ*]. These are the words of R. Ishmael.[30]
>
> R. Simeon b. Yoḥai says: The matter is endless; if one harvests at the time of harvesting, plows at the time of plowing, threshes at the time of [windless] dry heat, and winnows when there is a breeze, when will a man study Torah?[31] Rather, when Israel does God's will their work is done by others[32] [i.e., gentiles], as Scripture states," Strangers shall stand and pasture your flocks" (Isaiah 61:5). And [on the other hand] when Israel does not do God's will they must do their own work;[33] not only this, but they must do the work of others, as Scripture states, "And you shall serve [ועבדת] your enemies" (Deut 28:48). (*Sifre Deuteronomy*, Pisqa 42 (90); cf. bBerakhot 35b)

Both R. Ishmael and R. Simeon b. Yohai are going well beyond the literal meaning of Deuteronomy 11, a divine promise that the recompense for observing God's commands will be economic prosperity. R. Ishmael, playing on the ambiguity of the *vav*-consecutive form, reads the promise of "and you shall gather" as a prescription; Israel is commanded to engage in labor together with Torah study in order to receive God's blessing. R. Ishmael's ingenuity is more than matched by R. Simeon b. Yohai's exegetical audacity. Flying in the face of Deuteronomy 11's plain sense, he argues that the true reward for doing God's will is to have Israel's labor performed by others on its behalf; Deuteronomy 11's "and you shall gather," like Deuteronomy 28's "and you shall serve your enemies," is actually a punishment meted out because "you did not serve [לא עבדת] the Lord your God in joy and gladness over the abundance of everything" (Deut 28:47).[34] He does so because he cannot imagine an ideal world in which anything less than one's entire work or service (עבודה) is dedicated to God, as indeed is suggested by Deut 11:13, the initial verse of the second paragraph of the *Shema'*: "And it shall come to pass if you observe my commandments that I command you to love God and to serve Him (ולעבדו) with all your hearts and all your souls."[35]

The supposition underlying R. Simeon bar Yohai's statement is that manual labor itself is part of the burden carried by humanity as a result of Adam's and Eve's transgression and subsequent banishment from the Garden of Eden; in this view there is no work (other than Torah study) in an Edenic world.[36] This assumption also underlies the following tannaitic midrash on "and to serve Him" (ולעבדו) in Deuteronomy 11:13. Although ostensibly interpreting Deuteronomy,

this midrash addresses primarily the question of whether manual labor was part of the Edenic scheme:

> "And to serve him [ולעבדו]"—this means study. You say it is study; perhaps it is, rather, physical labor? Behold, Scripture states, "And the Lord God took the man and placed him in the garden of Eden to till it [לעבדה] and to tend it [ולשמרה]" (Gen 2:15). But what tilling was there in the past [i.e., before humanity was punished with the curse of "By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat" (Gen 3:19) and expelled from the Garden] and what tending was there in the past? Behold, you learn that לעבדה means to study and לשמרה means to fulfill the commandments [and therefore in Deuteronomy 11:13 ולעבדו also means "to study"]. (*Sifre Deuteronomy* Pisqa 41 [87])

In the prelapsarian world imagined in this midrash there is no physical labor. Thus Genesis 2:15 can refer only to the spiritual labor of studying and fulfilling God's commandments; Deuteronomy 11:13, which purports to describe an idealized existence, must also refer to the "labor" of study. Whereas Genesis 2:15, in this reading, describes study and observance as the *telos* of an Edenic world, Deuteronomy 11:13 describes study as the means of its attainment.

There are also parallels to this spiritualization of labor in later rabbinic sources. Commenting on the verse "the Lord God had not sent rain upon the earth and there was no man to till [לעבד] the soil" (Gen 2:5), a fifth-century Palestinian midrash states, "There was no man like Honi the Circlemaker or Elijah to bring people to the service of the Holy One, Blessed be He" (להעביד הבריות להקדוש ברוך הוא).[37] Similarly, one view cited in Genesis Rabbah interprets God's placing Adam in the Garden of Eden "to till and tend it" (לעבדה ולשמרה) (Gen 2:15) as referring to God's entrusting humankind with the obligation of sacrificial offerings, citing Exodus 3:12 and Numbers 28:2, where the verbs עבד and שמר are used in connection with sacrifice.[38] In BT we find the following homily:

> R. Eleazar said: All of humankind was created to toil, as Scripture states, "For man is born to toil" (Job 5:7).[39] I do not know if [the verse] refers to toil by mouth or by hand; when Scripture states, "[The appetite of a laborer labors (עמל) for him] because his mouth[40] forces him on" (Prov 16:26), say that one was created to toil by mouth. However, I still do not know whether [one was created] for the toil of Torah study or for the toil of [secular] speech; when Scripture states, "Let not this Book of the Teaching cease from your lips" (Josh 1:8), say that one was created to toil in Torah. (bSan 99b; cf. *GenR* 13:7 [117])[41]

Interestingly, later sources espousing a pro-labor view apparently rework portions of R. Simeon's rhetoric to reach a diametrically opposed conclusion. Consider the following passage from Genesis Rabbah:

> When Abraham was travelling through Aram Naharyim and Aram Nahor he saw them eating, drinking, and behaving wantonly; he

> said: Would that my portion not be in this land! Once he reached [area known as] the ladder of Tyre he saw them weeding at the appropriate time and hoeing at the appropriate time. He [then] said: Would that my portion be in this land! God said to him, "I will assign this land to your offspring" (Gen 12:7). (*GenR* 39.8 [371])

Note the subtle but crucial difference between R. Simeon's phrasing and that of Genesis Rabbah; while R. Simeon describes the appropriate time for each form of labor ("winnows when there is a breeze"), Genesis Rabbah characterizes it: "hoeing at the appropriate time." Whereas R. Simeon speaks descriptively, Genesis Rabbah speaks prescriptively: to hoe at the time of hoeing is to do what is right. Moreover, it is in order to perform these labors in a timely fashion that Abraham—and by implication, his descendants—have settled in the land of Israel.

A second apparent polemical response to R. Simeon is the following teaching of the fourth-century Palestinian, as was already noted by Meir Ayali:[42]

> R. Yonah said, "The daily sacrifices are offered in behalf of the entire people of Israel. Should all of Israel go up to Jerusalem [daily] to participate in, or at least be present at, the sacrificial rites]? Scripture says only, 'Three times yearly your males shall appear before me'; should all of Israel sit idle [every day in order to observe it as a holiday in honor of the sacrifices being offered]? Does Scripture not say, 'And you shall gather in your new grain'? Rather, the early prophets instituted twenty-four courses etc." (yPesahim 4.1, 30c [= yTa'anit 4.2, 67d])

R. Simeon cannot imagine the life of study being interrupted by the cyclical rhythms of labor; to R. Yonah it is inconceivable that those same rhythms, for him a fulfillment of the divine imperative to "gather your grain in its time," should be superseded by the sacrificial service.

I should note that another statement attributed to R. Simeon is taken by scholars[43] to indicate that he has a positive view of manual labor. The dictum is, "Great is labor, for it honors the doer" (bNedarim 49b). However, we must look at this statement in context. It appears as part of a brief report which is preceded by narratives giving instances of the rabbis' worldly wisdom, mainly having to do with matters of diet. The report reads as follows:

> When R. Judah went to the house of study he carried a pitcher on his shoulder. He said, "Great is labor for it honors its doer." R. Simeon would take a basket on his shoulder. He said, "Great is labor for it honors its doer."

I do not see how one can regard this report as evidence that R. Simeon has a positive attitude toward work. The "labor" in question is laughably (see later) minimal, and it is presumably done, as all the commentators suggest, so that Rabbis Judah and Simeon will have a seat in the study house.

Rather, two alternative readings suggest themselves. One is that these dicta are a sort of intentional paradox. Although these rabbis view work negatively

because it is both denigrating and a precious waste of time that could be used for study, there is one kind of labor of which they approve: the carrying of a seat to the study house that is done for the sake of Torah, the source of all honor.[44] A second possibility, not necessarily incompatible with the first, is that we are meant to find humor in these teachings. These sages, totally removed from the world of daily manual toil, can relate to labor only through the act of carrying seats to the study house. This is as close as they get to being part of the work world. (In general, it should be said, the role of humor in rabbinic literature has not been suffciently appreciated.)

The debate between R. Ishmael and R. Simeon b. Yohai has echoes elsewhere in tannaitic literature. The Tosefta lists as one of the obligations of a father toward a son the duty to teach him a craft; in this connection the *tanna* R. Judah (Palestine, 2nd c.) comments that "whoever does not teach his son a craft it is as if he taught him brigandry."[45] Along these lines there is an extended tannaitic discussion appended to Mishnah Qiddushin[46] as to what trades one should and should not teach one's son. At the end of the discussion we read the following words of R. Nehorai (Palestine, 2nd c.):

> R. Nehorai says: I put aside all of the world's professions and I teach my son nothing but Torah. For a person partakes of its reward in this world and the principal remains for him in the world to come, and all other professions are not so. [For] when a person becomes ill or old or undergoes suffering and cannot engage in his profession, behold, he dies of starvation. But the Torah is not so; rather it guards him from all evil in his youth and gives him a future and hope in his dotage. What does [Scripture] say concerning his youth? "Those who trust in the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isa 40:31). Concerning his dotage what does it say? "In old age they still produce fruit" (Ps 92:15). (mQiddushin 4.14 [= tQiddushin 5.16 (298)])

To devote one's life to Torah study is not seen by R. Nehorai as a rejection of vocation. It is a profession like other professions but one greatly superior to them. It promises sustenance and security in a way that no other trade or craft can. Thus to study rather than to ply a trade is not an act of economic irresponsibility; on the contrary, says R. Nehorai, one thereby ensures one's material as well as one's spiritual well-being.

Several statements in Mishnah Abot, essentially an extended paean in praise of Torah scholarship that is assumed by some scholars to be later than the rest of the Mishnah,[47] reflect the view expressed by R. Nehorai, referring to Torah study as one's labor (מלאכה):

> R. Eleazar said: Be eager[48] to study Torah . . . and know before whom you toil;[49] and [know that] you employer [בעל מלאכתך] may be trusted to pay you the wages of your labor.

> R. Tarfon said: The day is short and the work [והמלאכה] is great; the workers are lazy, the reward is great, and the householder presses.

> He [R. Tarfon] would say: Not for you is it to finish the work [המלאכה]; yet you are not free to stand idle from it. (mAbot 2.14–16)

Other statements in Abot encourage the student of Torah to minimize, if not eliminate, his involvement in any labor other than Torah study.

> He [Hillel] would say: . . . No one who engages in a great deal of commerce becomes wise. (mAbot 2.6)
>
> R. Nehuniah b. Haqannah said: If one accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah, they remove from him the yoke of the kingdom and of sustenance; and if one throws off the yoke of Torah, they place upon him the yoke of the kingdom and of sustenance. (mAbot 3.4)[50]
>
> R. Meir said: Lessen your involvement with business and busy yourself with Torah. (mAbot 4.10)[51]

Not all sages held with R. Nehorai that one's vocation should consist solely of Torah scholarship. Rabbinic sources refer to a קהלא קדישא, a "holy congregation," led by R. Jose b. Meshullam and R. Simeon b. Menasya, which, according to a relatively late rabbinic source, divided their time equally among study, prayer, and labor.[52] This group seems to have had close ties with the patriarchate,[53] and at least one patriarch is cited in Abot as praising labor in conjunction with Torah study:

> Rabban Gamaliel the son of R. Judah the Patriarch [= Rabban Gamaliel III] says: It is proper [to combine] Torah study with an occupation, for the effort of both causes one to forget sin. And any Torah not accompanied by labor [מלאכה] is destined to be nullified and to bring sin in its wake. (mAbot 2.2)[54]

For Rabban Gamaliel III, Torah and labor are two distinct although complementary spheres. The Abot traditions previously cited claim that Torah *is* one's labor: they employ the very term used by R. Gamaliel to describe labor as distinct from Torah study, מלאכה, to characterize the study of Torah itself. It seems likely that this latter usage reflects polemical intent.[55]

While it is possible that Rabban Gamaliel III's statement reflects an ideological commitment to a life of work and study, a more mundane explanation suggests itself. Given that the patriarch was responsible for collecting taxes and that he took care of needy scholars, he might have been happier if they worked for a living, adding to his coffers rather than draining them. We find similar tensions between the patriarch and the sages, and among the sages themselves, over whether or not sages should be exempt from taxation.[56]

In order to determine what practical consequences, if any, this debate had for the *tannaim* themselves, we need to determine their social and economic standing. It would be a considerable hardship for artisans and petty merchants and their families were they to devote most or all of their time to Torah study. Wealthy landowners and other members of the leisure class, on the other hand,

could devote significant time toward study without negative economic consequences. Unfortunately, we have meager evidence concerning the economic circumstances of the *tannaim*. Rabbinic sources, with occasional exceptions, supply precious little information about the rabbis' social status and their sources of income.[57] Scholars have assumed either that the rabbis were part of the artisan class,[58] that they were relatively poor and were subsidized by the community,[59] or that "they . . . came from all classes and strata."[60] On the other hand, after examining the evidence of the Mishnah, Shaye Cohen has concluded that the *tannaim* were from the wealthier classes;[61] stories of destitution among the early sages appear only in the Talmuds (about which see later). While Cohen is right to be skeptical of amoraic sources describing dire poverty among the *tannaim*, he does not take into account the Tosefta and those sources in the Talmuds that appear to be tannaitic and that portray tannaitic privation.

It is probable that most *tannaim* belonged to the so-called retainer class and that they served the truly wealthy, who were members of the governing class.[62] In a sociological analysis of the Pharisees, the sages' purported antecedents,[63] Anthony Saldarini concludes that "though some Pharisees were part of the governing class, most Pharisees were subordinate officials, bureaucrats, judges and educators. They are best understood as retainers who were literate servants of the governing class and had a program for Jewish society and influence with the people and their patrons."[64] It is reasonable, although debatable,[65] to assume a similar social status and function for the sages; Lee Levine's viewpoint that "most [rabbis] seem to have lived in circumstances which were neither as luxurious as [that of the wealthy businessmen and landowners] nor as abject as [those of severely limited means]"[66] is similar if not identical. Aside from inherited wealth, their main source of income would have been their services—scribal, judicial, and pedagogical—to the wealthy, the patriarchate, or the community at large;[67] at least some rabbis were supported by wealthy patrons, other sages who were affluent, or the patriarch.[68] A number of *tannaim* are identified as artisans in the Mishnah and Tosefta.[69] If so, they were in a position of relative but sometimes precarious financial well-being. Moreover, while the rabbis clearly denigrate some professions,[70] they speak positively of others and of manual labor in general,[71] in contrast to the general contempt for all manual occupations expressed by the Roman aristocracy.[72] This attitude also suggests that they were not part of, nor did they identify fully with, the upper classes.[73]

However, it is noteworthy that, general positive statements about work notwithstanding, specific craftsmanship itself is generally not praised in rabbinic sources with the exception of work performed in connection with the Temple in Jerusalem. Among the Temple-related skills singled out for mention by the rabbis are *melîqâ*, the special method of slaughter used for the sacrifice of fowl (bZevahim 64b); the *qomeṣ*, the gathering of the handful of the meal sacrifice which was to be burnt on the altar (bYoma 47a-b [=bMenahot 11a]); *hapinâ*, the scooping of a handful of incense to be burnt in the Holy of Holies by the High Priest on Yom Kippur (bYoma 49b); the baking of the *lehem hapanîm* or showbread (tYoma 2.5); the musical chants (tYoma 2.8); the script developed and used by the priests (tYoma 2.9); the preparation of the Temple incense (tYoma 2.6); and the coiffure

of the high priest (bSanhedrin 22b). Thus, while craft has instrumental value for the sages, few if any value the skill and aesthetics of craftsmanship in its own right. Why this should be so requires further investigation.

Given the probable relative wealth of most *tannaim*, the controversy concerning the relative value of labor and Torah study may have been mainly theoretical, like similar disquisitions in Plato's *Republic* and the book of Ben Sira, and in fact the point of the debate may have been more how much value, if any, to assign to manual labor. Nonetheless, wittingly or otherwise, the *tannaim* created an ideal that would require significant self-deprivation for the less wealthy and impoverished rabbis who would follow them as the social circle of sages widened in the third century.[74] In this connection it is interesting that in both Palestinian and Babylonian amoraic sources the same R. Simeon b. Yohai who appears in tannaitic sources as an advocate of exclusive involvement in Torah study is later portrayed by the Talmuds as an ascetic who spends twelve years with his son studying in a cave, sustained by a carob tree and a spring miraculously provided for him.[75]

Indeed, a number of amoraic statements, of both Babylonian and Palestinian origin,[76] urge the student of Torah to accept hardship in his pursuit of sacred knowledge:

> 1. bShabbat 83b (= bBer 63b, bGittin 57b)[77]
> Resh Laqish (Palestine, 3rd c.) said: From whence do we know that the Torah only endures through one who kills himself [ממית עצמו] for its sake? Scripture states, "This is the teaching [תורה]: When a person dies [ימות] in a tent etc." (Num 19:14).

The verse, using תורה in the sense of teaching, its usual biblical meaning,[78] proceeds to delineate the laws of impurity consequent upon the death of a human being in a tent. Resh Laqish, however, understands תורה in accordance with its rabbinic sense of the written and oral law *in toto*, and he takes "tent" to mean "the tent of Torah"; "tent" is often interpreted midrashicly as the house of study.[79] Resh Laqish reads the verse, therefore, as follows: This is the essence of Torah, or, more precisely, of its existence—that one is willing to give one's life over to its study.

> 2. bBerakhot 63b
> In the school of R. Yannai it is said: What is [meant by] what is written [in Scripture]:" As milk under pressure produces butter" (Prov 30:33). . . . In whom do you find the butter of Torah? In one who vomits forth the milk of his mother's breasts for its sake.

This midrash reflects the general rabbinic inclination to read Proverbs as a sustained praise of Torah rather than of wisdom in general.[80] The image in the verse is that of producing butter through the churning of milk, that is, the apparent paradox of creating through a violent and therefore seemingly destructive act. In similar fashion, to produce Torah in one's self one must expel from one's life all that is extraneous, and therefore a hindrance, to its study, repre-

sented here by "the milk of his mother's breasts." This may symbolize the comforts of home and sustenance that one must be willing to forgo; it may also reflect the practice of leaving home in order to study Torah. In any case, the image is one of transcending and, indeed, renouncing one's natural inclinations in order to lead the life of discipline necessary for Torah study.

3. bEruvin 21b-22a
"Dark as a raven" (Song of Songs 5:11):
In whom do you find Torah? . . . Rabbah said: In one who blackens his face[81] [due to lack of food] like that of a raven.

The Song of Songs is understood by the rabbis as an allegory describing the relationship between God and the people of Israel, with God—and God's Torah—being represented by the beloved male (דוד) and Israel by his beloved. Here, the woman describes her beloved as having curled locks that are dark as a raven. R. Hisda in the name of Mar 'Uqba interprets "his locks are curled," קווצותיו תלתלים, as encouragement to derive heaps (תילי תילים) of *halākhôt* from the tip of each letter (על כל קוץ וקוץ) of the Torah. Moving to the next phrase in the verse, "as black as a raven," the Talmud then asks: Who is able to derive these *halākhôt*? Rabbah understands this phrase as answering that question paradoxically: it describes the assiduous scholar with denigration that is actually praise. True, the perpetual student's face is blackened, but this is a sign of his devotion to Torah study, a devotion that allows him to decipher the meaning of each stroke of each letter in the Torah.

4. *GenR* 92.1 (1136)
R. Alexandri said: There is no person without suffering; happy is the person whose [involvement in] Torah [leads to] suffering.

R. Alexandri assumes that suffering is the unavoidable lot of all human beings. One should feel fortunate, however, if one's suffering is as a result of Torah study. While this statement does not call for the active embrace of self-denial in the way that the previous statements do, it encourages the acceptance of any privation necessary for Torah study.

There are also several traditions in amoraic works concerning *tannaim* who suffered great financial hardship[82] or who gave up great wealth[83] in order to study Torah. The fact that these narratives appear only in amoraic sources may mean that poverty became a significant factor in rabbinic circles only after the tannaitic period and that these stories are anachronistic retrojections. If so, they reflect a broader rabbinic tendency to retroject their own beliefs and practices onto earlier generations that is particularly noticeable in their characterizations of biblical figures.

It could be argued that what we have here is neither essential nor instrumental asceticism but rather the incidental acceptance of deprivation in the pursuit of Torah if and when necessary.[84] That is, the previous statements are

not arguing that self-denial is a prerequisite for a life of Torah study, but rather that want and poverty are among the obstacles one must be willing to transcend in order to study. If one merits the "two tables" of wealth and scholarship, so much the better. However, there is at least one rabbinic text that seems to present self-denial as an important concomitant of Torah study. This is the sixth chapter of Mishnah Abot, which is in fact a collection of *baraitôt* appended to Abot proper at some point prior to the geonic period and which appear in a number of medieval works.[85] There we find a strident insistence on the primacy of Torah study even in the face of poverty, deprivation, and suffering:

> The Torah is acquired in forty-eight ways . . . by minimizing sleep, speech, pleasure, jesting and worldly occupation . . . and the acceptance of suffering.[86]
>
> This is the way [to obtain knowledge] of the Torah: You shall eat bread with salt "and you shall drink water by measure" (Ezek 4:11)[87] and on the ground you shall sleep; you shall live a life of trouble while you toil in the [study of] Torah. (mAbot 6.4)
>
> R. Jose b. Qisma said, "I was once walking by the way and a man met me and greeted me and I returned his greeting. He said to me, 'Rabbi, from where are you?' I answered, 'I come from a great city of sages and scribes.' He said to me, 'If you will dwell with us in our place I will give you a thousand gold *denarii* and precious stones and pearls.' I answered, 'If you gave me all the silver and gold and precious stones in the world I would not dwell anywhere other than in a place of Torah.'[88] And thus it is written in the Book of Psalms by David, King of Israel, 'The Law of your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver' (Ps 119:72). Moreover at the time of a man's death neither silver nor gold nor precious stones nor pearls go with him but only the Torah [he has studied] and [his] good works; for it is written, 'When you walk it shall lead you; when you sleep it shall watch over you; and when you awake it shall converse with you' (Prov 6:22). 'When you walk it shall lead you'—in this world; 'when you sleep it shall watch over you'—in the grave; 'and when you awake it shall converse with you'—in the world to come. And Scripture says, 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine, says the Lord of Hosts'" (Haggai 2:8). (mAbot 6.9)

Because we cannot date this material with any certainty[89] and there is the ever-present possibility that these are amoraic *baraitôt*, that is, amoraic teachings composed in the tannaitic style (and sometimes attributed pseudepigraphically to *tannaim*),[90] it is unclear whether Abot 6 represents tannaitic or later thinking. Be that as it may, Abot 6 seems to have been composed as a sustained argument for studying Torah despite physical and financial hardship.

It is true that when taken as a whole it could be said that Abot 6 is talking about accepting incidental deprivation and that no principled rejection of wealth is intended. Note that R. Jose b. Qisma rejects the offer of support only because

he will dwell only in a place of Torah. Had someone in his own village made a similar offer of assistance, it seems that he would have accepted. Moreover, Abot 6 includes the statement that wealth, among other blessings, is appropriate for the righteous.[91] Read this way, the perspective of Abot 6 seems to be that in the best of all possible worlds sages would be supported, and generously so, by the community. Failing that, however, a sage is expected to endure any physical and financial hardship necessary for the intensive study of Torah.

However, I am not inclined to read the first two teachings cited above in this fashion. They sound to me like programmatic statements. "The Torah is acquired in forty-eight ways" is apparently an intentional echo of mQiddushin 1.1, "A woman is acquired in three ways." Aside from the implicit equation of Torah study with marriage, the use of similar phrasing suggests that, as in the case of marriage, the methods listed for acquiring Torah are essential and irreplaceable. Similarly, the phrase "This is the way [to obtain knowledge] of the Torah" seems to me to be emphatic and normative, not merely descriptive.[92] I believe, therefore, that the authors of these statements saw self-denial as a necessary and salutary element in their pursuit of the Torah's wisdom.

Moreover, Abot 6's statement that wealth is appropriate to the righteous may mean only that it is appropriate that the righteous enjoy the status associated with wealth. It is for this reason that the sages insisted that the high priest be wealthy.[93] This does not mean necessarily that the righteous should indulge in the luxuries of wealth if they are so blessed. Here again, Max Weber's model of the Puritans who prospered but were forbidden to partake of that prosperity may be helpful.

Sexual Asceticism

Instrumental asceticism manifests itself in the sexual attitudes and behaviors of the sages as well. There are both halakhic and aggadic pronouncements that encourage favoring devotion to Torah study over marriage and sex within marriage. Here too, as in the case of the work versus study dilemma, there are voices raised against this position. In order to put the rabbinic material in perspective, however, we need to review the evidence that abstinence in the pursuit of spiritual perfection was not unknown to the sages' Second Temple predecessors.

Jewish Sexual Asceticism in the Second Temple Period

Pliny the Elder,[94] Philo,[95] and Josephus[96] report that at least some of the Essenes, a Jewish sect that probably arose some time in the second century BCE, were celibate. The question of celibacy among the members of the Qumran community is more complex, both because scholars debate whether or not the Qumranites are to be identified with the Essenes and because the Qumran scrolls themselves never mention celibacy explicitly.[97] Regarding the first question, the consensus of scholars at this time is that the Qumranites were

Essenes.[98] As for the second issue, although there is no statement in the Dead Sea Scrolls enjoining celibacy explicitly, a number of scholars believe that there are verses implying such an obligation, at least for the elite within the community.[99]

The text that is the basis for this view is found in the so-called Damascus Covenant:

> All those who walk in these in perfect holiness [בתמים קדש] [and] are governed according to all [these things], God's covenant is an assurance to them to bring them life for a thousand generations. But if [ואם] they live [in] camps, according to the rule of the land, and take wives and beget sons, then they shall walk according to the Torah and the precept established according to the rule of Torah, as he said, "Between a man and his wife and between a father and his son" (Num 30:17).[100]

The adversative ואם in the middle of this passage was already taken by Louis Ginzberg to mean that the first section refers to celibate community members living "in perfect holiness" as opposed to those who marry, the subject of the passage's second half.[101] Joseph Baumgarten[102] and Elisha Qimron[103] adopt this reading as well.

Various explanations have been offered for the Essene/Qumran practice of celibacy. Albert Marx, who identifies the Qumran community, and therefore the Qumran *War Scroll*, with the Essenes, suggests that celibacy was part of the preparation necessary for each member of the community to do battle with the forces of darkness as described in the aforementioned work.[104] Antoine Guillaumont[105] argues that it is the Essenes' self-perception as receiving ongoing divine revelation that makes celibacy necessary. Elisha Qimron explains the basis for Qumran celibacy as follows: according to Qumran law, intercourse is forbidden within the city limits of Jerusalem.[106] Because the Qumranites considered Jerusalem and the Temple to have been defiled by their opponents, some of them chose to serve as "a temporary substitute for Jerusalem and its Temple"[107] by taking upon themselves the holiness of Jerusalem. Given the prohibition against sex in Jerusalem, this elite group had to practice abstinence and were therefore bound by the same stringencies.

The Theraputae memorialized in the early first century CE by Philo were celibate as well.[108] Unlike the celibate Essenes described by Philo and Josephus, who consisted entirely of men, the Theraputae included both men and women.[109] Philo explains their abstinence as a result of their desire to devote their lives to the pursuit of divine wisdom.[110]

Josephus mentions as one of his spiritual mentors an ascetic named Bannus. Although Josephus does not describe him explicitly as being celibate, it seems likely that a man who "dwelt in the wilderness, wearing only such things as trees provided, feeding on such things as grew of themselves, and using frequent ablutions of cold water by day and night, for purity's sake"[111]—such a man was almost certainly sexually abstinent as well. The same can be said of John the Baptist, who "appeared in the desert" and "was dressed in clothes made from

camels' hair, with a band of hide round his waist" and who "ate locusts and wild honey."[112]

Mention should also be made of the presumably Jewish core of the *History of the Rehabites*, which is thought to date from the second century CE or earlier and is probably Palestinian in origin.[113] This work, which takes as its inspiration the ascetic and nomadic group described in Jeremiah 35, includes the following description of the Rehabites' sexual practices:

> And there are those among us men who take wives and once only the man has intercourse with his wife. And then they are set apart from each other and they remain in purity for the rest of their lives. And the memory of the delight does not arise in the mind of any of us. But they remain all their days as those who grew up in virginity. But the wife conceives and bears two children; one of them is for marriage and the other grows up in virginity. And after this custom we have been commanded by God; and truly after this manner is our custom.[114]

While this work is clearly a fantasy, it may reflect to some the degree the sexual practices, or at least the ideals, of a group of Jews living in the late Second Temple or early rabbinic period. The motivation for abstinence, as for other of their practices, is to "live in purity and holiness."[115]

Rabbinic Sexual Asceticism

In regard to the sages, the question of rabbinic attitudes toward sex and sexuality has been discussed by a number of scholars in recent years, including David Biale, Daniel Boyarin, and Michael Satlow, and it has been generally recognized that certain ascetic tendencies exist within rabbinic sources concerning sexuality. I will review and supplement their findings below.

As is well known, only one rabbi, the second-century Palestinian Ben Azzai, is described unequivocally as being celibate. The context in which this fact is related is instructive:

> R. Aqiva says: Anyone who commits murder nullifies the [Divine] image. . . .
>
> R. Eleazar b. Azaryah says: Anyone who does not engage in procreation nullifies the [Divine] image. . . .
>
> Ben Azzai says: Anyone who does not engage in procreation commits murder and nullifies the [Divine] image.[116] . . . R. Eleazar b. Azaryah said to him: There is one who expounds well and fulfills well, one who fulfills well but does not expound well; but you expound well but do not fulfill well." Ben Azzai said to them: What can I do? My heart lusts[117] for Torah; let the world endure through [the efforts of] others. (tYebamot 8.7 [26; = bYebamot 63b, *GenR* 34.14 (326–327)])[118]

On its face this narrative presents us with a glaring difficulty: how can Ben Azzai live with being murderously and blasphemously sinful? Jeremy Cohen suggests that the entire passage is a polemic directed against a group (nonrabbinic Jews, Christians, gnostics) that practices celibacy. This would explain, he argues, how Ben Azzai could participate enthusiastically in the condemnation of celibacy in theory while justifying his own bachelorhood in practice.[119] Daniel Boyarin claims, in my view correctly, that this passage deals rather with the internal contradictions of rabbinic ideology itself. "In this story . . . we find the perfect representation of the extreme internal conflict set up by the contradictory demands that one be married, have children, and also devote oneself entirely to Torah."[120]

I would add, however, that although the context of the narrative is aggadic, its formal characteristics and language suggest it is meant to have a halakhic character as well. Rabbinic literature is not a collection of transcripts that record faithfully each word of the rabbis exactly as it was spoken. Rather, as is noted above,[121] the rabbinic traditions as we have received them are highly edited and sometimes fabricated.[122] One aspect of this editing is that material is often presented by the editor in a way that gives greater weight to one of the views recorded. An example of such editing is giving the last word in a dispute dialogue—that is, dialogue following or intertwined with the presentation of two or more dissenting views[123]—to one of the two debating parties; having the last word is generally viewed as having won the argument, and giving one disputant or the other this role in a dispute is a form of endorsement by the editor. This is apparently the reason, BT's explanation notwithstanding,[124] that in all disputes between the Houses of Shammai and Hillel the view of the House of Hillel is presented last.[125] In the present context, then, there is likely significance to Ben Azzai's being given the last word in his exchange with R. Eleazar b. Azarya.

A key to understanding the present exchange is the Mishnah's ruling concerning a groom reciting *Shema'* on his wedding night and the dialogue between Rabban Gamaliel and his disciples:

> A groom is exempt from reciting the *Shema'* the first night [of marriage and] until the conclusion of Shabbat if he has not yet done the deed [= consummated the marriage].
>
> It happened that Rabban Gamaliel married and recited *Shema'* the first night. His students said to him, "Did not our master instruct us that a groom is exempt?" He replied to them, "I will not accede to your setting aside my [acceptance of] the Kingdom of Heaven for even one moment." (mBerakhot 2.6)

Here too a rabbi is questioned because his practice is at variance with his own teaching in a conflict between Torah study and marital obligation;[126] once again the response is that while the master's teaching may be the law in general, the teacher, because of his intense attachment to God and Torah, is unwilling or unable to apply the ruling to himself. Significantly, Rabban Gamaliel's final reply does not remain as the lone act of a spiritual virtuoso; it is subsequently formulated as an anonymous, and therefore authoritative teaching in the Mishnah itself: "If a groom wishes to recite the *Shema'* on the first night he may do so."[127]

Of course, Ben Azzai's action is much more radical than that of R. Gamaliel: whereas R. Gamaliel is fulfilling a commandment in which he is not obligated, Ben Azzai is *failing* to fulfill a commandment that *is* his obligation; moreover, while R. Gamaliel's case involves at most a question of observance on several evenings, Ben Azzai's actions have lifelong implications. Nonetheless, a useful analogy can be drawn between these two cases. By giving Ben Azzai, like R. Gamaliel, the last word, the editor probably means him to be seen as expressing a halakhically legitimate view different in degree but not in kind from his colleagues.[128] Although Ben Azzai is distinct from his fellow rabbis in his celibacy, in saying that his soul lusts for Torah he is speaking for all rabbis; married or not, their first love is also Torah.

It can be argued[129] that the use of the phrase אבל מה אעשה, "but what can I do," indicates that Ben Azzai's words are not intended as a statement of principle but are simply a personal *cri de coeur* begging his colleague's understanding of the course of action to which he feels impelled. This line of reasoning seems to me unfounded on two grounds. First, the phrase אבל מה אעשה/נעשה is frequently used to concede the compelling authority of another halakhic view. Thus, after arguing that an Israelite woman betrothed to a priest should be able to consume *terumah*, R. Judah b. Betera concludes: "But what can I do [אבל מה אעשה]; for behold, the sages have said that a betrothed Israelite woman may not eat *terumah* until she has come under the wedding canopy."[130] Ben-Azzai can be understood as saying, therefore, that he supports the general view that one ought to marry and procreate but that his own circumstances require him *nolens volens* to follow the course of total dedication to Torah study, which requires celibacy.

That Ben-Azzai's argument is a halakhic rather than a personal one is particularly evident in the conclusion of Ben Azzai's reply as formulated in the Tosefta: יתקיים העולם על ידי אחרים, "let the world endure through [the efforts of] others." The language here is reminiscent of the resolution by the *tannaim* R. Jonathan b. Asmai and R. Judah b. Gerim of the apparent contradiction between two verses regarding whether one should cease studying Torah in order to perform another *miṣwâ*: "One verse speaks of a commandment which can be fulfilled by others [שאפשר לעשותה על ידי אחרים]; the other speaks of a commandment that cannot be fulfilled by others."[131] Similar language appears in Issi b. Judah's ruling in an instance when one is called upon simultaneously to honor one's parent and to attend to another *miṣwâ*: "If it is possible for the *miṣwâ* to be done by others, it should be done by others [תיעשה על ידי אחרים] and he should go honor his father."[132] Finally, and most notably, Ben Azzai's "Let the world endure through [the efforts of] others" also echoes the ideal state of affairs envisioned by R. Simeon b. Yohai (as cited earlier): "When Israel does God's will their work is done by others." By stating that others could perpetuate the human race and thereby fulfill God's mandate to "be fruitful and multiply," Ben Azzai was alluding to a legal principle known and accepted by his colleagues, though they may not have agreed with its applicability to the case at hand. Moreover, many of Ben Azzai's colleagues delayed marriage for several years in order to study Torah (about which see later), thereby employing his principle, albeit in a much more limited fashion. Indeed, Isaiah

Gafni sees a link between Ben-Azzai's view on the one hand and, on the other, the view of Palestinian rabbis that the value of marriage is purely to enable procreation and their general practice of delaying marriage for several years in order to study.[133] It is certainly noteworthy that according to one tradition in BT,[134] Ben Azzai was not a true celibate but rather one who married and then spent many years away from his wife. Apparently celibacy and married abstinence are sufficiently analogous to be exchanged for one another.

Besides the case of Ben Azzai there are a number of other rabbinic texts that may or may not allude to sexual celibacy on the part of the rabbis:

1. bQiddushin 81b
Whenever R. Hiyya b. Ashi (Babylonian, 3rd c.) would fall upon his face to pray he would say: May the merciful One spare us from the evil inclination. One day his wife heard him. She said: Since it is a number of years that he has separated himself [דפריש ליה] from me why does he says this?

The Talmud does not give a reason for this separation. Rashi (ad loc. s.v. דפריש) suggests that it was due to old age rather than to a desire for celibacy. Rashi does not give a basis for his interpretation; perhaps it was inspired by the similarity between the observation of R. Hiyya's wife, "Behold, it has been several years [כמה שני] since he separated himself from me," and R. Ze'ira's statement in b.Mo'ed Qatan 17a concerning R. Samuel b. Nahman, "How did it happen that this old man [סבא] came to the studyhouse today; for behold, it has been many years [כמה שני] since he stopped coming." Alternatively, Rashi may see the superhuman, lust-induced, agility that R. Hiyyah b. Ashi displays later in the narrative—at the request of a "courtesan" (= his wife in disguise) he leaps and picks a pomegranate from the top of a tree—as an intended contrast to his earlier infirmity. Recently, Shlomoh Naeh[135] has argued that R. Hiyya b. Ashi chose celibacy voluntarily and that this narrative is a polemic against those in the rabbinic community who were attracted to the celibate practices of Syrian Christians. If Naeh is right and the Hiyya narrative is to be read as a cautionary tale, at least a number of Babylonian sages must have practiced celibacy, or at least sung its praises.

2. bShabbat 53b
תנו רבנן: מעשה באדם שנשא אשה גידמת ולא הכיר בה עד יום מותה

Adolph Büchler[136] mistakenly identifies this *baraita* as another instance of celibacy in rabbinic literature. He translates it as follows: "Our rabbis taught: There was a man who married a woman with a mutilated limb and did not have marital intercourse with her until the day of her death." Apparently Büchler is understanding הכיר as a synonym of the biblical ידע, "to know," which is sometimes used in the sense of carnal knowledge; see, for example, Genesis 4:1.

However, הכיד בה is not used in this sense anywhere else in BT; on the other hand, it does refer in several instances to knowledge of a woman's physical blem-

ish. For example, in bKetubot 11b we read, "Rami b. Hama said, 'The dispute [between the rabbis and R. Meir as to the amount of the *ketûbâ* received by a woman whose hymen had been ruptured through means other than intercourse prior to the marriage] is only בשהכיר בה, i.e., when the husband was aware of her condition.'" הכיר בה is also used to refer to awareness in other, nonmarital realms as well; for example, in bB.Q. 26b Raba discusses the degree of liability of someone who had a rock in his lap ולא הכיר בה, and was unaware of it, who subsequently caused damage when he stood up and the rock fell from his lap.

The proper translation is, therefore, "There was a man who married a woman with a mutilated limb and never became aware of her blemish," this despite the fact that he *did* in fact have an ongoing sexual relationship with her. The subsequent discussion of this *baraita* now makes sense: "Rab said, 'Come and see how modest this woman must have been for her husband to have been unaware of her blemish.' R. Hiyya said, 'It is the way of women to be modest; rather, how modest this husband must have been to have been unaware of his wife's blemish.'" The point of the *baraita*, then, is to praise husband and wife for their modesty during intercourse. Such praise is not uncommon in rabbinic literature. Compare the midrashic comment found in *Tanh* Lekh Lekha 5 and elsewhere on Abraham's remark to Sarah as they embarked for Egypt, הנה נא ידעתי כי אשה יפת מראה את, "I now know that you are a beautiful woman" (Gen 12:11): "From this you learn that Abraham was previously unaware of her beauty [לא היה יודע אותה] in the way [that husbands are generally aware] of [their] wives." In short, here is an instance of asceticism within sexual practice, which I discuss further on.

> 3. bShabbat 118b
> R. Yose b. Halafta said: I had intercourse [but] five times and I planted five cedars [i.e., R. Yose sired five sons who were scholars].

On the face of it, R. Yose allowed himself intercourse with his wife only for the purpose of procreation. This is reminiscent of those mentioned in the *History of the Rehabites*, who would marry but then have intercourse only once with their wives in order to have children. BT notes that such a practice flies in the face of *ônâ*, the obligation of a man to have sex regularly with his wife. It concludes, based on a widespread belief in late antiquity that ejaculating a second time shortly after one's first ejaculation will increase the likelihood of fathering a male child, that R. Yose said: There were only five occasions on which I had sex with my wife a second time, and each resulted in the birth of a son. According to this version, there is still an ascetic tenor to R. Yose's remarks; he considers having sex twice an overindulgence that is justified only in the name of having male children.

However, it seems more likely to me that BT has retained a truncated version of the tradition, which appers in fuller form in Palestinian sources.[137] There it is stated that R. Yose had intercourse only five times with his levirate wife—his dead brother's childless widow. Given that the purpose of levirate marriage is to provide an heir for the dead brother, and that generally marrying one's brother's widow or former wife is severly prohibited, one may see R. Yose's action

as having less to do with a general sexual asceticism than with fulfilling the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

R. Yose makes a similar qualification of the teaching that, although it is prohibited to have intercourse during a period of famine or suffering, one who has no children is permitted to do so. To this R. Yose adds: One may only have intercourse on the night that one's wife goes to the ritual bath.[138] Once again R. Yose is insisting that when sex is permitted solely for the purposes of procreation, one should not indulge in it any more than neccesity requires.

> 4. tSotah 15.11(242–243)
> R. Ishamel b. Elisha said: Because they are uprooting the Torah from among us, it is decreed upon the world that it should be desolate, [that is] that one should not marry nor sire children nor [consequently] should one perpetuate the ritual of circumcision until the descendants of Abraham cease to exist of their own accord. They said to him: Better that the community sin unwittingly than that they sin knowingly.

R. Ishmael's remarks are not a principled support of celibacy; he advocates abstinence as the only possible means of protecting the Torah from defilement. Given that the Torah cannot be fulfilled because of Roman decrees, he is saying, better that the Jewish people should cease to exist. It is difficult to determine the precise valence of celibacy in this context. One possibility is that it is a form of mourning. One is reminded of the teaching that one should remain celibate during a famine or other catastrophe.[139]

> 5. *PSEZ* 22 (39–40)
> This late source[140] contains a story regarding a student of R. Aqiba who conceives an unquenchable lust for a prostitute, who cures him of his lust by telling him of the foul odors of the female genitalia and by forcing him to smell her private parts in order to prove her point. The student is indeed repelled by her odor—so much so that he never marries; a heavenly voice promises a place in the world to come for both the student and the prostitute. The moving force behind this unusal[141] narrative seems to be misogyny, or perhaps unconscious homosexual leanings. One is reminded of a comment attributed to the eighteenth-century Hasidic master Nahman of Bratslav: "Whoever knows the science of anatomy, and is aware of the human organs as seen by the surgeon, is prepared to find [sexual] desire utterly repulsive."[142] In any case it has little to do with principled sexual asceticism.

Torah versus Procreation

The Ben Azzai tradition reflects the tension between the obligation to procreate and the desire to devote all of one's energies to study. This tension may also

underlie the rabbinic insistence that one who teaches Torah to another's children is considered as if he had begotten them.[143] While this teaching is certainly of a piece with general rabbinic hyperbole intended to extol or excoriate particular behavior—in this case, emphasizing the importance of teaching Torah—it may have the added function of consoling teachers of Torah who are living away from their wives and therefore are not having or raising children of their own.

The nuances of the rabbinic view can be better clarified by comparing the rabbinic perspective with the one attributed by Philo to the Theraputae:

> Eager to have [chastity] for their life mate they have spurned the pleasures of the body and desire no mortal offspring but those immortal children which only the soul that is dear to God can bring to birth unaided because the Father has sown in her spiritual rays enabling her to behold the verities of wisdom.[144]

For the Theraputae, who have embraced celibacy, the only possible progeny are the ideas to which they give birth through spiritual communion with God.[145] This solution cannot satisfy the rabbis, who have formulated biological reproduction as a religious obligation. Instead they appropriate the biological descendants of others as their own through the binding power of Torah.

One of the string of narratives in bKetubot 62b–63a addressing the Babylonian custom of husbands studying for protracted periods away from their wives (to be discussed later) also seems to reflect this dilemma:

> R. Hami b. Bisa went to study for twelve years. [When he returned home . . . he went and sat in the house of study. He sent word to his household [that he had arrived]. His son R. Oshaya came[146] and sat before him. R. Oshaya asked him about various rabbinic traditions. [R. Hami] saw that [R. Oshaya] was a sharp student. He became downcast, saying, "If I had been here I could have had such a son."[147]
>
> He entered his house followed by his son. When he saw his son he stood before him,[148] thinking that he had come to ask a question about his studies. His wife exclaimed, "Does a father stand before a son?" (bKetubot 62b)

R. Hami b. Bisa is distraught because years spent studying away from home have prevented him from raising his son to be a scholar. In fact, however, when R. Hami returns to his town's *bet midrash*, his son "sits before him" (יתיב קמיה); that is, he adopts the posture of a disciple before his master.[149] In other words, R. Hami has merited having a son who is also worthy of being his disciple. It is noteworthy that it is R. Hami's wife who integrates the scholarly and familial relationship between R. Hami and his son with her exclamation, which, beyond its obvious narrative function of identifying father and son for each other, may also be seen as having halakhic import, given that the question of the relative claims of honor of a learned son and his father upon each other is discussed elsewhere in BT.[150] If this second level of meaning is part of the narrator's intention, then R. Hami's wife is being related to both the family unit and the bond of study that has arisen between father and son.[151] The narrative's subtext

is to reassure those who study far from home that they are not doing so at the expense of rearing scholarly sons. This message is made explicit in a footnote appended to the story by an editor:[152] "Rami b. Hama read the following verse as referring to the above: 'A threefold cord is not readily broken' (Eccles 4:12)—this refers to R. Oshaya, son of R. Hama son of Bisa."[153]

A final interesting footnote to this discussion of the tension between study and procreation is the mention of some of the disciples of the third-century Babylonian R. Huna becoming impotent as a result of staying overly long at his lectures:

> R. Abba b. Zabda became impotent [אינקר] from [attending] R. Huna's *pirqa* [periodic lectures]. R. Gidal became impotent from [attending] R. Huna's *pirqa*. R. Helbo became impotent from [attending] R. Huna's *pirqa*. R. Sheshet became impotent from [attending] R. Huna's *pirqa*. . . . R. Aha b. Ya'aqov said, "There were sixty scholars and they all became impotent from [attending] R. Huna's *pirqa* except for me; I fulfilled in myself [the verse], 'Wisdom preserves the life of one who possesses it' (Eccles 7:12)." (bYebamot 64b)

R. Aha b. Ya'aqov's exegesis of the verse in Ecclesiastes is unclear. He may simply mean that his fund of wisdom sufficed for him to avoid the fate that befell others. He may be saying, however, that wisdom, that is Torah, should be a source of life, not death, of which impotence and the resulting inability to procreate are a form;[154] among those considered dead according to a rabbinic dictum is one without children.[155] Therefore, he made sure not to allow himself to stay at the lectures so long that he became sterile. According to this latter interpretation R. Aha b. Ya'aqov is registering a theological protest against a state of affairs in which Torah study leads to sterility.

Balancing Study and Marriage

In both Palestine and Babylonia it was recognized that it would be difficult to study Torah intensively while sustaining a family. Of course, other religious cultures faced this problem as well, solving it by mandating celibacy for the religious elite (as, for example, in Christianity, Buddhism, and Jainism[156]) or by setting aside a period of life during which all (male) adherents would live this celibate life; this latter notion underlies the Hindu idea that one should pass through four *ašrāmā*s, or orders of life: disciple, married householder, forest hermit, and renouncer.[157] The resolutions offered by the rabbis are very close in content and in spirit to the Hindu approach; a time of virtual or actual celibacy was encouraged either before or after having married.

The majority tannaitic view was that one should study Torah and marry later on.[158] R. Judah qualified this ruling, saying that one who cannot remain without a wife should marry first.[159] The sages of Palestine affirmed the initial tannaitic view, urging their students to study for many years before they married. In R.

Johanan's words, "Shall one engage in Torah study with a millstone around his neck?"[160] In Babylonia this solution was considered unworkable because it was assumed most young men "cannot remain without a wife"; that is, because they would be prey to the constant distractions of their sexual urges, they would find it difficult to study productively. They therefore proposed a different solution to the conflict between study and marriage; a student should marry first and then engage in full-time study,[161] leaving home if necessary in order to do so.

Toward this end, rabbis were exempted from the usual conjugal obligations (*ʿônâ*) of a husband toward his wife.[162] This meant that a scholar could spend long periods away from his wife without her assent. The Mishnah contains a ruling that a student of Torah may leave his wife for up to thirty days without obtaining her permission in order to study.[163] The third-century Babylonian R. Ada b. Ahava goes even further, citing a view in the name of Rab that the Mishnah reflects only the rejected minority opinion of R. Eliezer; the accepted majority view is that students leave home to study for as many as two or three years without obtaining their wives' permission.[164]

This certainly meant that scholars' wives were denied sex with their husbands for months or even years at a time. What is less clear is whether these scholars were themselves celibate while away from their wives. A passage in BT mentions that two prominent rabbis, Rab and R. Nahman, upon coming to a town, would ask, "Who will be mine [i.e., my wife] for a day?"[165] As Isaiah Gafni has shown,[166] this passage reflects the Persian practice of temporary marriages. How widespread was this custom, or polygamy in general, among the rabbis?[167] On the one hand, the above reference is the only definite mention of actual rabbinic polygamy in BT. On the other hand, it is attributed to Rab and R. Nahman, two of the most prominent rabbis in Babylonia.[168] The bottom line is that we simply do not know.[169]

There are also scattered sources that suggest that on occasion some scholars visited prostitutes. Rabbinic sources tell of a student who visits an expensive courtesan and ends up marrying her—after she has undergone a sincere religious conversion to Judaism.[170] Another student[171] repents of his whoring and dies in the process of repenting.[172] A third leaves his *tefillin* in a place where they are later found by a prostitute, who comes to the *bēt midrāš* claiming that they have been given to her by the student in payment for her services. Upon hearing this, the student takes his life by jumping off the roof of the *bēt midrāš*.[173] Presumably, it is only because at least some students visited prostitutes that the accusation had sufficient plausibility for the student to be so shamed as to kill himself.[174] In these cases, however, the rabbinic attitude is clearly that these behaviors are deviant; that is, while some rabbis gave in to their sexual impulses by visiting prostitutes, this behavior was regarded as sinful.[175] In this context it is noteworthy that according to one rabbinic tradition,[176] when the second-century Palestinian sage Elisha b. Abuyah turns to apostasy his first act is to seek out a prostitute.

An attitude midway between acceptance and condemnation of such behavior is suggested by the following teaching:

> R. Ilai the Elder said: If a person sees that his evil impulses are overpowering him he should go to a place where no one knows him,

> don black garments, and do what his heart desires; but let the name of heaven not be desecrated publicly. (bKiddushin 40a [= bM. Q. 17a, bHaggigah 16a])[177]

In any case, it seems likely that many, if not most, scholars studying away from home remained celibate. True, this abstinence had little or nothing to do with valuing celibacy; Michael Satlow is mostly correct in saying that "it is likely, in fact, that the issue of sexual asceticism *per se* was of little interest to the rabbis."[178] Rather, rabbinic abstinence was a result of the desire to minimize a scholar's involvement with familial responsibilities. Nonetheless, we see a strong link between commitment to study and acceptance of long periods of celibacy.

Even when scholars were living with their wives, their devotion to Torah study led them to attenuate their sexual activity significantly. One of the most significant examples is a rabbinic ordinance, attributed by some to Ezra[179] and by others to the students of Shammai and Hillel,[180] that forbade one who had had sex or a seminal emission from studying Torah until he had immersed himself.[181] A similar notion even appears in the Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, dated by some as early second century BCE:[182] "There is a time for intercourse with one's wife and a time to abstain for the purpose of prayer."[183] No reason is given in tannaitic sources for this ordinance. It certainly would seem to be inspired, at least in part, by the proscription against sex announced by Moses to the people in anticipation of the revelation at Sinai;[184] indeed, a statement reported in the name of R. Eleazar in PT[185] connects one aspect of the rabbinic ordinance with this biblical prohibition, and a tradition appearing in BT[186] in the name of the third-century Palestinian R. Joshua b. Levi explains the origin of the ordinance itself on this basis. The midrashic tradition stating that Moses separated himself from his wife Zipporah from the time of the revelation onward[187] seems to be connected to this notion; because from the time of that great revelation Moses had to be available constantly for future divine communications, he could not maintain a sexual relationship with his wife.[188] BT explains that the reluctance of some sages to publicize a leniency with regard to this ordinance was "so that Torah scholars will not be with their wives constantly like roosters";[189] according to this formulation it is clear that "Ezra's ordinance" has as one of its goals minimizing the rabbis' sexual activity.[190]

The conflict between Torah study and marital sex is not conceptualized only in terms of purity concerns and the squandering of one's energies. As Ben Azzai's justification for his celibacy—"my soul lusts for Torah"—suggests, Torah study was seen as an erotic activity, which put it into conflict with marital eros. The midrashic tradition, for example, contains many descriptions of the revelation at Sinai as a marriage between Israel and God's daughter, the Torah. And, of course, rabbinic exegesis of the Song of Songs diverts the erotic energy of this work away from human sexuality and toward the human–divine encounter.

It may be that the tension between study and sex is alluded to by R. Hanan, who said, "Why is the Torah called *tûšiyâ* [in Isa 28:29]? Because it saps [*matęšęt*] one's strength."[191] It was commonly believed in late antiquity that intercourse had a significantly weakening effect on the body.[192] The rabbinic position being

expressed here is that study is like sex in this respect. Therefore, one can have a life of prodigious study or intense sexual activity, but not both.[193]

Understanding that study is an erotic enterprise for the rabbis is important for making sense of their attitude toward sex in general. Scholars have differed about whether the attitude of most rabbis toward sex was positive or merely grudgingly accepting. Peter Brown[194] assumes the latter, while David Biale,[195] Daniel Boyarin,[196] and Michael Satlow[197] distinguish between the more ascetically oriented Palestinian rabbinic community on the one hand and Babylonian rabbinic circles on the other, the latter viewing sex more favorably. What is important to understand is that one may have a positive valuation of sex and still live a functionally ascetic existence. Caroline Walker Bynum has pointed out that the asceticism of medieval Christian women did not reflect a hatred or denigration of the body. As she puts it:

> Women's own physicality was not, basically, dualistic. . . . The goal of religious women was thus to realize the *opportunity* of physicality. They strove not to eradicate body but to merge their own humiliating and painful flesh with [Christ's] flesh whose agony, espoused by choice, was salvation. Luxuriating in Christ's physicality they found there the lifting up—the redemption—of their own.[198]

The same point needs to be made here, but in reverse. Biale, Boyarin, and Satlow are right in concluding that Babylonian rabbis are more positively disposed toward sex and sexuality than their Palestinian colleagues. However, a positive view of sex does not necessarily result in a robust sex life. One can decide, perhaps precisely out of a recognition of the power and potential of one's sexual energy, to redirect it in the service of God. In the case of Christians this decision often meant celibacy; in the case of the sages it meant devotion to Torah study. This perspective may be reflected in the somewhat enigmatic observation in BT, "The greater one is, the more powerful one's [sexual] impulses."[199] This statement can certainly be understood as a kind of paradoxical dualism; the greater one is, the greater the spiritual challenge one is given. However, elsewhere there is a recognition of the link between sexual drive and general human creativity:

> Nahman in the name of Samuel said, "'And God saw everything that he had made and behold—it was very good' (Gen 1:31). 'Good'—that is the good impulse. 'Very good'—that is the evil impulse. But is the evil impulse very good—I am astonished by this! Yes, for were it not for the evil impulse, a man would not build a house, marry a wife and have children."[200]

Similarly, the dictum under discussion may be a recognition of the link between spiritual and sexual energy. And what Bynum calls the "lifting up" of physicality sounds a great deal like rabbis' quest for *qedûšâ*, the sanctification of existence (about which I will have more to say in chapter 3).

The eroticization of Torah study and the pouring of one's sexual energies into study may underlie the following narrative:

> R. Joseph, the son of Raba, was sent by his father to study with R. Joseph. They fixed a six-year [period of study] for him. Three years had passed and the eve of Yom Kippur was approaching. R. Joseph the son of Raba said [to himself], "I will go and visit the members of my household." His father heard [of his son's impending visit]. He took a utensil [Rashi: weapon (!)] and went to confront him. He said to him, "You remembered your whore?!"[201] [Others say: He said to him, "You remembered your dove?!"]. They became engaged in a quarrel; [consequently] neither managed to eat the final meal before the fast.[202]

The crux in this story is Raba's reproval of his son. The uncertainty about the meaning of Raba's words is due mainly to emendations which have blunted the thrust of his words. The reading "you remembered your dove," for example, suggests that Raba is concerned for his son's wife and is criticizing him for not having returned sooner.[203] There is no doubt, however, that the more difficult reading "your whore" is the original one and that Raba criticizes his son for having returned before the six years are completed. This is Raba's son's first independent act. At the beginning of the narrative he is entirely passive; he is sent by his father, and the length of his stay is determined for him by others. His father is incensed by his son's decision; by returning, his son is flouting his father's authority. Moreover, by leaving his studies in order to be with his wife—the "members of the household" to which R. Joseph son of Raba refers—Raba's son is abandoning his lawful spouse during this six-year period, the Torah, for an "unlawful" dalliance with another, who can only be, under the circumstances, a whore.[204] If this reading is correct, we have a breathtaking reversal in this narrative. In the face of one's obligation to be married to one's studies, one's wife becomes a forbidden relation and sex with her a form of harlotry.[205]

Asceticism within Sexuality

Some of the rabbis restricted their sex lives qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Perhaps the most famous instance is that of R. Eliezer:

> The rabbis asked Imma Shalom [R. Eliezer's wife], "Why are your children particularly good-looking?"[206] She replied, "He does not 'converse' [i.e., have sex] with me at the beginning of the night or at the end of the night, but rather in the middle of the night; and when he 'converses' he reveals a hand's breadth and covers a hand's breadth [i.e., he undresses me only to the degree necessary to have intercourse],[207] and he is like one being forced by a demon.[208] I once asked him why he did this and he replied, 'So that I not think of [literally, gaze at] another woman and thereby cause my children [literally, his children] to be in a state of *mamzerut*.'" (bNedarim 20a-b)[209]

R. Eliezer seems to have engaged in sex with one foot out the door, so to speak. His attitude toward sex seems to have been that it was a marital debt owed his

wife and a necessary means of fulfilling the commandment to "be fruitful and multiply"; beyond the fulfillment of these obligations he wished to be engaged physically and emotionally by sex as little as possible. Boyarin's distinctions notwithstanding,[210] R. Eliezer's actions are ascetic because they involve bypassing one's wife, even as one is being sexually intimate with her, for the sake of a transcendent religious goal, be it the propagation of healthy children or the avoidance of "sinning in one's heart." There is a delicious irony in R. Eliezer' s behavior; in order to be faithful in thought to his wife, he must minimize his sexual, and presumably emotional, availability to her. The impression one gets is that because of the visceral pull of women and sex, there is a very thin line in his thoughts and emotions between his wife and Everywoman;[211] hence minimal involvement with his wife is the only workable solution available to him.

The teaching of the *tanna* R. Yohanan b. Dehabai is also relevant here:

> R Yohanan b. Dehabai said, "The ministering angels told me four things: Why are there those who are lame? Because their fathers 'overturn the table.'[212] Why are there those who are mutes? Because their fathers kiss 'that place' [i.e., their wives' genetalia]. Why are there those who are deaf? Because their parents converse during intercourse. Why are there those who are blind? Because their fathers look at 'that place.'" (bNedarim 20a)

R. Yohanan b. Dehabai sees the primary function of intercourse as reproduction, not pleasure. Therefore one's sexual pleasures must give way before the dictates of sexual etiquette appropriate to propagation. This is in contrast to his detractors:

> R. Yohanan said, "This is the view of R. Yohanan b. Dehabai. However the sages said, 'The *halakhah* is not in accordance with R. Yohanan b. Dehabai. Rather, whatever a man wishes to do with his wife he may do. A parable: [This can be likened] to meat that comes from the butcher; if one wishes one may eat it salted, roasted or cooked. Similarly, [this can be likened to] fish that comes from the fisherman.'"[213]

It is important to emphasize that while these strictures are not entirely unlike those proposed by medical authorities of late antiquity, who proposed diets,[214] sex at certain times in the menstrual cycle,[215] the post-coital position of the woman,[216] and simultaneity of orgasms[217] in the interest of maximizing the chances of reproduction,[218] they are also fundamentally different.[219] Galen, Soranus, and their medical colleagues were speaking of biological links that they believed, rightly or wrongly, to exist between sexual behavior and conception. R. Yohanan b. Dehabai is referring to spiritual links; the larger principle emerging from his teaching is that the divine response to one's engaging in immodest or unconventional sexual behavior is to curse one's offspring with deformities or fates reflecting that conduct.[220]

Finally, the example of the *tanna* R. Yose b. Halafta should be mentioned. According to PT, R. Yose consummated a levirate marriage with his deceased

brother's widow. However, he had intercourse with her only five times,[221] each time impregnating her and producing a son who became a Torah scholar, and intercourse took place with a sheet separating them.[222] PT cites this as being in accordance with the teaching of Abba Shaul that anyone who marries his brother's childless widow for any reason other than to perpetuate his dead brother's name is engaged in fornication. The eighteenth-century Yerushalmi commentator R. Moshe Margolious sees a possible connection between R. Yose's use of a sheet and R. Eliezer's leaving two handbreadths covered. In any case, both seem committed to maximizing their focus on licit, commanded intercourse at the expense of sexual pleasure.

This would certainly seem to be the case according to BT's tradition, according to which R. Yose had intercourse *with his wife* only five times, again producing five sons who became Torah scholars.[223] The anonymous Talmud itself finds this a difficult tradition, asking, "Is this to say that R. Yose did not fulfill his conjugal obligations?" BT then suggests that the tradition be emended to state that only five times did R. Yose have intercourse twice in rapid succession, thereby producing, in accordance with the scientific beliefs of the time, male children. The emendation notwithstanding, and despite the fact that the BT's version may well be a truncated version of PT, the tradition as it stands describes a rabbi who engages in sex only in order to produce children.

Wives, Children, and Torah Study

Perhaps the most far-reaching and complex effects of rabbinic devotion to Torah study were the changes it wrought in rabbis' relationships to their families. These were expressed in their relationships both with their fathers and with their wives and children. I will examine each of these manifestations with an eye toward comparing and contrasting them with Christian asceticism.

The master–disciple relationship, in rabbinic Judaism as in many religious traditions, is a central and highly venerated one. One of the potential consequences of such a relationship is that one must choose between serving or obeying one's father or one's master. For the most part this issue is discussed by the rabbis in theoretical terms. Here, for example, is a mishnaic discussion of the relative obligations to restore the lost objects of one's teacher and one's father:

> If his lost object and his father's lost object [need to be recovered] his lost object takes precedence. If his lost object and his teacher's lost object [need to be recovered] his [lost object] takes precedence. If his father's lost object and his teacher's lost object [need to be recovered] his teacher's lost object takes precedence, because his father brought him into this world while his master who taught him wisdom gains him entry into the next world. (mB.M. 2.1)[224]

Rabbinic sources do not yield a single instance of these norms being applied in practice. It is difficult to believe, nonetheless, that they do not reflect actual tensions between paternal and rabbinic authority and a favoring of the

second over the first. The Mishnah's justification for this order of priorities may assume an understanding of one's teacher as one's spiritual father, one who gives him life in the world to come. This is also implied by the dictum that whoever teaches someone Torah it is as if one has given birth to him.[225] By putting one's master before one's father the Mishnah is privileging the spiritual father over the biological one.

In BT we find a brief narrative that reflects a similar distinction by following it to its logical conclusion. A variation on this theme is the story of Abba Hanan:

> Abba Hanan the Hidden was the grandson of Honi the Circledrawer. When the world needed rain the sages would send the young schoolchildren to him. They would grab the edges of his garments and say, "Abba, Abba, give us rain." He would [then] say before the Holy One Blessed be He, "Master of the Universe, act for the sake of those who cannot distinguish between the Abba who gives rain [= God] and the Abba who does not give rain." (Ta'anit 23b)

M. B. Lerner has shown that in rabbinic literature *abba* as a title preceding a name refers respectfully to the advanced age of one so addressed;[226] presumably, therefore, in calling Hanan *abba*, the children are addressing him as "Grandpa Hanan." However, by itself *abba* is generally a reference to one's father. The sense of Abba Hanan's response to the children's entreaty should be understood, therefore, as follows: Because of the efficacy of my prayers, the children[227] view me as a father who will provide for their needs; they do not see that it is only my Father—and theirs—who has such power.

Early Christianity, of course, emphasizes the need to separate one's self from one's parents in order to follow Jesus, who himself disowns his own family[228] and urges others to do the same.[229] For women, in particular, who choose a life of celibacy, this choice is often made against the wishes of one's parents. Separation from one's biological family appears crucial to the enterprise of the desert fathers as well:

> Abba Evagrius said: A certain monk was told that his father had died. He said to the messenger, "Stop blaspheming. My Father cannot die."[230]

The degree of separation from family present among Christian ascetics is much more extreme than it is among the rabbis.[231] One can see this difference by comparing the only narrative in rabbinic literature that describes a son disobeying his father in order to study Torah with an anecdote concerning one of the desert fathers. The following story is told concerning the *tanna* R. Eliezer b. Hyrkanos:

> The story is told about R. Eliezer b. Hyrqanos whose brothers were ploughing in the plain while he ploughed on the mountain; his cow fell and was injured. He said, "It is for my good that my cow was injured."
>
> He fled and went to Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai, where he ate clods of earth until his mouth produced a bad smell. They went and

> told Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai, "the smell of R. Eliezer's mouth is hard [to bear]."[232] He told him, "Just as the smell of your mouth has become malodorous over the Torah, so the odor of your learning will travel from one end of the world to another."
>
> Some time later his father came to disinherit him from his possessions, and found him expounding, with the great of the land sitting before him: Ben Zizit ha-Kesset, Naqdimon ben Gorion, and Ben Kalba Sabuʿa. He found him sitting and expounding the following verse: "The wicked have drawn out their sword and have bent their bow" (Ps 37:14)—this refers to Amraphel and his companions; "to cast down the poor and needy"—this is Lot; "to slay those that are upright in the way"—this is Abraham. "Their sword shall enter into their own hearts"—[this alludes to the verse] "And he divided himself against them by night, he and his servants, and he smote them" (Gen 14:15).
>
> Said his father to him, "I came up here only to disinherit you, now all my possessions are given to you for a gift." He replied, "Let them be banned to me, I shall only share them equally with my brothers."[233]

The narrative begins with a motif borrowed from the story of Elisha: leaving one's occupation and one's family in order to follow one's spiritual calling.[234] Unlike Elisha, Eliezer is not called away explicitly from his ploughing, but he takes his cow's accident as a sign of his being called. He then studies with R. Yohanan b. Zakkai under conditions of extreme deprivation. R. Yohanan promises him that his self-denying devotion to Torah study will one day bring him acclaim as a Torah scholar.

Eliezer's father subsequently arrives in Eliezer's locale with the intention of disowning him. In a sense, Eliezer's father is merely retaliating for his son's earlier abandonment of him.[235] On a more profound level, however, for Eliezer's father to disown him would be to sever formally the links between father and son.

When Eliezer's father arrives, however, he is surprised to find his son expounding in the presence of three of the greatest men of his generation. Surely it is not accidental that these men are also the wealthiest men of their generation;[236] in light of Eliezer's acclaim—and potential or actual support—by these men, his father's intended actions are irrelevant. Moreover, Eliezer's sermon is a thinly veiled preemptive repudiation of his father's attempt to disown him; those who attempt "to cast down the poor and needy" will have their comeuppance. Eliezer's father, presumably awed by his son's newfound eminence, reveals his original intention but now offers instead to give all his possessions to Eliezer. Eliezer refuses the offer, agreeing to take only that to which is entitled according to law. There is a subtle ambiguity in this conclusion. On the one hand Eliezer does not reject his relationship with his father; he wishes to inherit along with his brothers. On the other hand, his refusal of his father's magnanimity is a rejection of his attempt to forge a special relationship between them,[237] just

as Eliezer derided his father's previous attempt to single him out by disowning him. The father–son relationship remains, then, but it is the son who dictates the terms of that relationship and who insists that it be no stronger or weaker than the law prescribes. Eliezer does not wish to personalize his relationship with his father; he wishes to leave it in the general realm of obligation that all fathers and sons have toward each other.[238]

Contrast that narrative with the following story from the *Apopthegma Patria*:

> Once the mother of Mark [a disciple of Abba Silvanus], with many attendants, came to see him. She said to [Abba Silvanus], when he went out to receive her, "Abba, tell my son to come out to see me, so that I can see him."
>
> The old man went into Mark's cell and said to him, "Go out, so that your mother can see you." Mark was clad in a torn piece of sackcloth patched with rags, and his head and face were sooty from the smoke of the cooking fire. He came out obediently but closed his eyes, and so greeted his mother and her attendants, saying, "I hope you are well." And none of them, not even his mother, knew who he was.
>
> Again she sent a message to the old man, saying, "Abba, send me my son, so that I may see him." And he said to Mark, "Did I not tell you to go out so that your mother could see you?" And Mark said to him, "I went out as you said, Father. But I beg you, do not give me that order again, for I am afraid of seeming disobedient to you."
>
> The old man went out and said to his mother, "Your son is the man who came out and greeted you with, 'I hope you are in good health.'" And he comforted her and sent her on her way.[239]

On the face of it, in this instance obeying his spiritual father Silvanus and his biological mother ought to be one and the same for the disciple Mark. There is a crucial difference, however, between the mother's request as conveyed to Silvanus and the request as transmitted by him to Mark. Mark's mother requests that he come out to see her and be seen by her, whereas Silvanus asks of Mark only that he be seen by his mother. Mark fulfills his master's request to the letter; he is seen by his mother but he closes his eyes so that he does not see her. Moreover, his impersonal greeting, coupled with his physical disarray, make him unrecognizable to his mother. Thus she "sees" him in the literal sense but not in the conventional sense of recognizing him. When his mother appeals once again to Silvanus and Silvanus in turn appeals to Mark, Mark asks not to be told to go out again lest the integrity of the master–disciple relationship be impugned; that is, if Mark is made to go before his mother again, it will appear as if he has not fulfilled his master's command previously. Abba Silvanus accepts this argument and sends away his mother with the explanation that she has, indeed, seen her son without knowing it. This is obviously of little consolation to her and he must comfort her before he sends her on her way.

This narrative depicts a struggle between the authority of Mark's biological parent and his spiritual master. Whether by accident or design, Mark's master, while presumably conveying to him his mother's wishes, expresses a will at variance with hers. Mark—probably out of obedient literalism[240]—carries out his master's command in a way that frustrates his mother's wishes. When Abba Silvanus questions him subsequently, Mark is more concerned about appearing faithful to his master than to gratifying his mother's need to see him. His master, in turn, respects this choice, and Mark's mother leaves without having been greeted by her son *as* a son.

Turning now to the effects of asceticism on family life, one cannot overemphasize an essential difference in this regard between rabbinic and early Christian asceticism. Christian asceticism involved renouncing family life altogether by becoming a celibate or even an anchorite, or it involved a husband and wife mutally deciding[241] to conduct their marriage as an abstinent one. Neither of these options presented itself to the rabbis (Ben Azzai notwithstanding). The resulting situation is encapsulated nicely by Steven Fraade: "If the central obligation is that of the study of Torah (and attachment to God through it), then worldly preoccupations such as family are bound to be distracting, for reasons of time, energy, and purity."[242] The serious student of Torah is therefore faced with two difficult choices: devoting one's self to family at the expense of the pursuit of Torah, or slighting family responsibilities in order to immerse one's self in Torah study. Many within rabbinic circles chose the latter path. Thus the attitude of the rabbinic ascetic toward family, as opposed to that of his Christian counterpart, is one of neglect rather than negation. This is particularly true for Babylonian scholars who chose to marry and then study.

One facet of this neglect is the sexual and emotional absenteeism of some of the rabbis;[243] in the case of the Babylonians there was also physical absence for long periods of time. I have already discussed the sexual consequences of rabbinic asceticism. A number of rabbinic statements show an awareness of the emotionally and financially difficult lot of the wife of a Torah scholar:

> 1. bKetubot 62a
> "In vain do you rise early and stay up late, you who toil for the bread you eat; he provides as much for his loved ones [לידידן] while they sleep."[244] (Ps 127:2) . . . R. Yizhaq said, "These are the wives of Torah scholars, who remove [מנדדות] sleep from their eyes in this world and [thereby] enter into the next world."[245]

Exactly why the wives of Torah scholars remove sleep from their eyes is not clear from R. Yizhaq's homily. From the context in which his teaching is cited by the fourth-century Babylonian Abbaye, it appears that they are waiting for their husbands to return from their late-night studies[246] rather than sharing the marital bed with them.

The consequences of a husband's absence are not only sexual and emotional, however; they are also financial. It is not only his wife who suffers, moreover, but his children as well, as indicated in the following passage:

2. bEruvin 21b-22a
"My beloved's hair is] dark as a raven" (Song of Songs 5:11). In whom do you find [words of Torah]? . . . Rava said, "in one who makes himself as cruel as a raven[247] toward his children and family members. For example, R. Ada bar Matna was on his way to the house of study. His wife said, 'What shall I do [for food] for your[248] children?' He replied, 'Are all the plants in the marsh gone?'"[249]

Perhaps the most famous and instructive narrative in this connection is that of R. Aqiba and his wife Rachel. Although purportedly the story of the Palestinian *tanna* R. Aqiba, this narrative appears only in Babylonian amoraic sources and seems to reflect the Babylonian practice of long periods of study after marriage. The following is the story as it appears in Ketubot:

3. bKetubot 62b-63a (= bNedarim 50a)
R. Aqiba was a shepherd for Kalba Sabuʿa. [Kalba Sabuʿa's] daughter saw that [Aqiba] was modest and good. She said to him, "If I betroth myself to you will you go to the house of study?" He said, "Yes." She was betrothed to him in secret; she then sent him away [to study]. Her father heard [of the betrothal]; he banished her from the house and forswore her from benefiting from his possessions.

[Meanwhile] he [= Aqiba] went and sat in the house of study for twelve years. When he returned he brought with him 12,000 students. He heard an old man saying to her, "How long will you live the life of a grass widow?" She replied, "If he were to listen to me he would sit [and study] for another twelve years." He said [to himself], "I am acting with her permission."

He returned and sat in the house of study for twelve more years. When he returned he brought with him 24,000 students. His wife heard [that he was returning] and she went out to greet him. Her neighbors said, "Borrow some presentable[250] clothes and put them on." She replied, "'A righteous man knows the needs[251] of his beast' (Prov 12:10)." When she reached him she fell upon her face and kissed his feet. [R. Aqiba's] attendants began pushing her away. He said to them, "Leave her be. What is mine and what is yours is hers."

Her father heard that a great man had come to town. He said, "I will go see him; perhaps he can annul my vow [forswearing my daughter from my property]." He went to him. [R. Aqiba] said to him, "[Did you intend your vow if she were to marry] a great man." He replied, "Even [if her husband knew] a single chapter or a single vow [I would not have vowed]." [R. Aqiba] said, I am he [= your son-in-law]." [Kalba Sabuʿa] fell on his face, kissed his feet, and gave him half his wealth.

In this story the rabbis describe the ideal rabbinic wife. Aqiba does not have to wrangle with his wife in order to get permission to study; on the contrary, she marries him only on the condition that he will study. Moreover, when he

returns from twelve years of study, a lengthy period by any standard, she agrees, though quite without realizing it, to have him return to the house of study for twelve more years. The only reward she receives for her years of solitude and poverty is her husband's deep gratitude for enabling him to become a great scholar and teacher—and for her, this is enough. Moreover, there is a "happy ending" in that father and daughter and father-in-law and son-in-law are reconciled, and it is R. Aqiba, through his knowledge of Torah, who is the agent of this reconciliation, in two senses. First, as a Torah scholar he is qualified to nullify his father-in-law's vow. Second, it is his transformation from ignoramus to scholar that serves as the basis for the nullification. If we take each character in the narrative as an archetype, its message seems to be: A man's calling is to study Torah (Aqiba), and his wife's duty is to support him in his studies (Rachel). This is their obligation despite severe financial adversity. Ideally, one's family or community will recognize and value this dedication and will help with financial support (Kalba Sabuʿa).

Of course there is a subtle form of pressure being placed by the author(s) of this story on women in the rabbinic community. The corollary of the ideal being presented here is that women who oppose their husbands' study plans are bad wives. Thus, while this narrative is attempting to uphold the principle that a man should get his wife's permission for long-term study, it is also creating pressure on women to grant that permission.

Qiddûš Ha-Šem, the Sanctification of God's Name: The Ultimate Self-Offering

It is well known that early Christians were often killed as a result of Roman persecution of Chrisitanity as an "atheistic" faith not subject to protection as a *religio licita*.[252] Equally important, in many cases Christians actively sought martyrdom. As Judith Perkins notes, "It is safe to say that one thing contemporaries knew about Christianity (in fact, for some the *only* thing they give any evidence of knowing) is that Christians held death in contempt and were ready to suffer for their beliefs."[253]

What must not be forgotten, however, is that the ideal of martyrdom was part of the intellectual and spiritual legacy that Christianity inherited from Judaism.[254] Jewish martyrdom—or, to use Jewish terminology, *qiddûš ha-Šem*, sanctification of the Name—is first described in connection with the Maccabean uprising, in the stories of Eleazar[255] and the woman and her seven sons,[256] and it continues with the rabbinic descriptions of the sages martyred during the Hadrianic persecutions. There is also discussion in both PT[257] and BT[258] concerning the circumstances in which one is obligated to sanctify God's name by giving up one's life in the face of religious persecution.

If we examine rabbinic martyrologies, we find the themes discussed earlier in this chapter writ large. To choose to give up one's life, one must believe in something that is more valuable than life itself. It may be, as it was for many pagans and some biblical figures, a belief that dying with honor is more pre-

cious than a shameful life. Martyrdom may also result from the belief that through it one gives God the most precious gift that one has to offer: one's life. Finally, it may be a belief that there is something without which life is not worth living and which therefore must be pursued in the face of death. As will be shown, all three of these attitudes can be found in rabbinic thought.

Death with Honor

To prove that one must, under certain circumstances, face martyrdom rather than violate the Torah, one of the verses the rabbis cite is: "You shall not profane my holy name, that I may be sanctified in the midst of the Israelite people" (Lev 22:32).[259] That is, one who gives one's life publicly sanctifies God's name. This notion clearly is connected to the notions of shame and honor so important to the Mediterranean societies of late antiquity.[260] The confrontation between the martyr and his oppressor can be described as one of challenge and response.[261] The oppressor wishes to shame the martyr and, more important, his god, by forcing the martyr into an act of betrayal. The martyr can retain his own and his god's honor only by refusing to cooperate in this act. By refusing to violate Torah, then, one not only adds to God's glory but also shames the gods in whose name the oppression takes place. Issues of shame and honor are particularly at issue when the confrontation takes place in the public arena; for this reason the obligation to die rather than violate the Torah is more stringent under such circumstances.[262]

Moreover, one's personal honor depends on remaining faithful to God's commands. This point underlies the following narrative:

> R. Abba b. Zemina was sewing garments at the home of a gentile in Rome. The gentile brought him meat from an animal that had not been slaughtered properly and said to him, "Eat." He replied, "I cannot eat it." [The gentile] said, "Eat; for if not I will kill you." [R. Abba] replied, "If you wish, kill me, because I cannot eat meat from an animal that has not been properly slaughtered." [The gentile] said to him, "How did you know that if you had eaten I would have killed you? For if one is a Jew, one is a Jew; if one is a gentile one is a gentile." (yShebi'it 4.2. 32a [= ySanhedrin 3.6, 21b]).

The point being made by the story's conclusion is that it is dishonorable not to follow the dictates of one's own religious heritage. Moreover, this sentiment is expressed here not by a fellow Jew but by a gentile. The reader is meant to understand that by betraying one's Jewish identity one is dishonored in gentile eyes; for indeed, following the notion that interactions involving honor and shame generally occur outside the familial context,[263] it is only before gentiles that one, as a Jew, can truly be honored or dishonored.[264]

Martyrdom as a Gift to God

There are a number of rabbinic sources that suggest that giving up one's life for God's sake is a gift that one gives to God. This idea is expressed in two ways.

The first is that martyrdom is a form of sacrifice, one that is particularly significant with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and the consequent cessation of the sacrificial cult. The second is that undergoing martyrdom is the supreme expression of one's love for God.

The notion of martyrdom as sacrifice is expressed most clearly in a relatively late rabbinic text:

> Moses said before the Holy One blessed be He, "[The people of Israel] are destined to have neither sanctuary nor temple; what will happen to them?" The Holy One, blessed be He, replied, "I will take from them a righteous man as a surety for them and [thereby] grant them atonement for all their sins," and so Scripture says, "He slew all who delighted the eye" (Lam 2:4). (*ExodR* 35.4)

This is a notion, however, that has its roots in the "suffering servant" imagery of Isaiah 53 and the vicarious atonement Eleazar hopes to effect through his death in 4 Maccabees.[265] Moreover, several rabbinic sources speak of the death of the righteous serving as an atonement for the people.[266]

Perhaps the most striking instance of martyrdom as self-offering is that of R. Aqiba. According to a Palestinian rabbinic tradition, R. Aqiba was put to death in the presence of Tinneus Rufus, the Roman governor of Palestine at the time of the outbreak of the Bar Kokhba War in 132 CE. The Yerushalmi describes R. Aqiba's martyrdom as follows:

> R. Aqiba was standing in judgment before Tinneus Rufus. The time for the reading of the "*Shema'*" ["Hear O Israel," which includes the verse, "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart"] arrived. He began to recite the *Shema'* and smile. [Tinneus Rufus] said to him, "Old man, you are either a sorcerer[267] or you treat your sufferings with contempt."
>
> [R. Aqiba] said to him, "Let the soul of that man expire! I am neither a sorcerer nor do I treat my sufferings with contempt. Rather, all my days I have read the following verse and I was unhappy, saying, 'When will I be able to fulfill all three [commands in the verse]: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your might"?' I have loved God with all my heart and with all my possessions [a rabbinic interpretation of "might"]; but I did not know how to fulfill 'with all your soul.' But now the opportunity [to fulfill] 'with all your soul' has come and the time for *Shema'* has arrived and I did not become distracted; therefore I am reciting the *Shema'* and I am smiling." He had barely finished reciting the *Shema'* when he expired. (yBerakhot 9.5, 13b)

Daniel Boyarin,[268] reading this text in light of an exegesis attributed to R. Aqiba of Exodus 15:2 and a number of verses from the Song of Songs, argues that what is being described here is death as a mystical, erotic union of the martyr with his beloved God. I find Boyarin's analysis convincing; however, even if one

does not accept the presence of an erotic element here, this narrative clearly is describing martyrdom as a gift that the martyr offers to God in love.

A Life of Torah—Even unto Death

I noted earlier that martyrdom was hardly a notion that began with the sages. Nonetheless, in rabbinic literature we encounter a form of martyrdom not known to us from earlier sources. This is martyrdom that results not from refusal, at the time of martyrdom, to engage in idolatry or some other forbidden act required by the oppressor, but rather from having engaged previously in behavior proscribed by the authorities and being executed subsequently for this insubordination. Rabbinic sources seem to know of such persecution at the time of Hadrian's rule. Such persecution, moreover, apparently existed with regard to a number of the commandments:

> "For those that love Me and keep my commandments" (Exod 20:6) . . . R. Nathan says, "For those that love Me and keep my commandments," refers to those who dwell in the land of Israel and [are prepared to] give their lives for the sake of the commandments.
>
> "Why are you being led out to be decapitated?" "Because I circumcised my son to be an Israelite."
>
> "Why are you being led out to be burned?" "Because I read the Torah."
>
> "Why are you being lashed with[269] the scourge [φραγέλλιον]?" "Because I took the *lulab.*" (*MdRY* Yitro, Massekhet ba-Hodesh 6 [227])[270]

Here again is the linking of martyrdom to the love of God. However, whereas in R. Aqiba's case he shows his love for God through martyrdom itself, in the present case the primary expression of love is through the fulfillment of the commandments; the willingness to be martyred becomes simply a measure of one's devotion to God and Torah.

Most instructive for our present purposes is a dialogue that is reported to have taken place between R. Aqiba and Pappos b. Yehuda:

> Our rabbis taught: Once the evil kingdom [= Rome] decreed that Israel should not engage in Torah study. Pappos b. Yehuda came and saw R. Aqiba gathering crowds in public and engaging in Torah study. [Pappos] said to him, "Aqiba, are you not afraid of the rulers of the empire?"
>
> [Aqiba] said to him, "I will relate a parable to you: To what can this be compared? To a fox who was walking along the river bank and saw fish darting[271] from place to place. He said to them, 'From what are you fleeing?' They answered, 'From the nets that people cast over us.' He said to them, 'Do you wish to come up on shore and dwell with me as my ancestors dwelt with yours?'[272] They replied, 'Are you the one they call the cleverest of all creatures?! You

> are not clever but foolish! If we live in fear in the place of our sustenance how much more so in a place that will cause our death!'
>
> "So, too, we who are engaged in the study of Torah about which it is said, 'For it is your life and your length of days (Deut 30:20)' [and yet we are in fear of losing our lives], if we cease studying Torah how much more so [do we endanger ourselves]!" (bBerakhot 61b)[273]

This dialogue is fascinating for many reasons, including its use and reshaping of an Aesopic fable,[274] but of primary importance for us is R. Aqiba's claim that, even in the face of persecution, there is no alternative to Torah study, for there is no life without it. Thus, in this formulation, R. Aqiba sees martyrdom not as an opportunity to serve God but as a price that he is willing to pay if necessary in order to have a life of Torah. In this conception we return once again to the idea of incidental asceticism, with the ultimate asceticism, martyrdom, being an occasional secondary result of one's devotion to a life of Torah.

We have seen that in many areas the sages put Torah study before all else. As was noted several times, the self-denial resulting from this dedication is instrumental or incidental or both. However, there are also aspects of rabbinic theology that lend support not only to acceptance of want but even to active-self denial. It is to these theological views that we now turn.

2

"The Principal Remains for the Next World"

Delayed Gratification and Avoidance of Pleasure in Rabbinic Thought

[R. Jacob] used to say: . . . Greater is one hour of bliss in the next world than all the life of this world.

—mAbot 4.17

Blessed are those who are persecuted in the name of uprightness; the kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

—Matthew 5:10

Chapter I revealed that there was a significant ascetic strain within rabbinic Judaism throughout late antiquity, and that its asceticism was in great part the consequence of rabbinic dedication to Torah study. This chapter will show that the asceticism resulting from study dovetails with a general rabbinic tendency toward voluntary self-denial. This tendency is the result of the rabbinic belief in the world to come and the notions of reward and punishment intertwined with that belief.

The existence of *'olām ha-bā*, the world to come, is posited by the sages as a response to the problem of the righteous suffering and the evil prospering in this world. According to the theology of *'olām ha-bā*, one's true reward is received not in this world but in the next, as expressed in the following mishnah:

> These are the things the profits [פירות] of which a man enjoys in this world and the principal [קרן] of which remains for him in the world to come: honoring one's father and mother, charity, and making peace between man and his fellow; but the study of Torah is equal to them all. (mPeah 1.1)

The terms *qęręn* and *pērôt* are used elsewhere in the Mishnah in commercial contexts, *qęręn* being the principal[1] and *pērôt* being the profit generated by the principal or its increase in value.[2] By using these same terms in connection with the reward one receives for the performance of *miẓwôt*, the mishnah is suggesting that we look at the fulfillment of each commandment as an investment in a spiritual bank account, as it were, being held in one's name. For each *miẓwâ* one performs, a deposit is made in his or her account. When does one get to draw on this fund? The mishnah here tells us that, at least with regard to the commandments listed in the mishnah, the principal is available only in the next world; relatively small withdrawals of the interest accrued may be made available during one's lifetime. If we reformulate this notion in terms of reward, we see that the mishnah's position is that whatever reward one may receive for one's good deeds in this world is insignificant relative to the remuneration awaiting in the next.

The mishnah just quoted concedes, nonetheless, that there are some *mizwôt* for the fulfillment of which one receives some reward in this world. Is this true of *miẓwôt* in general? This question is disputed in BT in connection with a mishnah in Tractate Qiddushin. In order to unpack this debate, however, it is first necessary to do some explication of the mishnah itself. The mishnah reads as follows:

> Whoever fulfills a single commandment they act favorably with him [מטיבין לו] and give him length of days [ומאריכין לו ימיו], and he inherits the earth [ונוחל את הארץ]. Whoever does not fulfill a commandment they do not do good for him, nor do they grant him length of days nor does he inherit the earth. (mQiddushin 1.10)

The mishnah is comprised of a statement and its converse: Reward is given to one who fulfills a commandment; to one who does not fulfill a commandment no reward is given. But what reward, exactly, does the mishnah have in mind? On the face of it, the first two consequences in each clause refer to this-worldly reward and punishment. This is so because the mishnah clearly echoes two biblical verses. The first is Deuteronomy 5:16, which specifies as a reward for honoring one's parents that "you will have length of days [יאריכון ימיך] and . . . [God] will act favorably toward you [ייטב לך]." The second, Deuteronomy 22:7, urges one to send the mother bird away from the nest before taking the chicks or the eggs "so that it will go well with you [ייטב לך] and [so that] you will have length of days [והארכת ימים]." It would seem that the reward promised in these verses is a long and good life in *this* world; presumably the mishnah, which paraphrases these verses, has the same thing in mind.

Similarly, the meaning of the third phrase, "and he inherits the earth," seems to be this-worldly. It may be a continuation of the paraphrase of Deuteronomy 5:16, which promises that length of days and God's goodness will be granted "on the land that the Lord your God gives you."[3] If so, the land in question is the land of Israel, and the promised reward is very much of this world. Jacob N. Epstein reads the mishnah in this fashion and on this basis argues that it predates the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE and reflects a view that reward comes mainly, or solely, in this world.[4]

The initial discussion of this mishnah in BT has to do with interpretive issues that are not relevant here. Following this discussion the Bavli cites a *baraita* that appears to be diametrically opposed to the mishnah:

> One whose good deeds are greater in number than one's sins—they act unfavorably with him and it is as if he burned the entire Torah, not sparing a single letter.
>
> One whose sins are greater than one's good deeds—they act favorably with him and it is as if he had fulfilled the entire Torah, not neglecting a single letter. (bQiddushin 39b; *ARN* A ch. 39 [59b])[5]

Even before we consider the relationship between this *baraita* and the mishnah we must acknowledge that its formulation is provocative, to say the least. Surely the author of this *baraita* has chosen consciously to describe the "reward" awaiting the doer of good deeds in terms we would expect to be reserved for the evildoer, and vice versa. One imagines the author of this *baraita* saying, "I know that what I have stated is the converse of what seems reasonable and just, but that's the way it is; it can't be helped."

When we compare this *baraita* to the mishnah, moreover, we find them to be totally at odds with one another. The mishnah promises a good and lengthy life to one who performs *mizwôt*, and not to one who does not, while the *baraita* promises a life of misery to the doer of good and a pleasant life to the sinner. Of course, one can simply say that these two sources reflect different theological positions within the rabbinic community; historically speaking, this is probably the proper way to regard these two texts. Another possibility is to interpret these two propositions such that they can be seen as not contradicting each other. In fact, BT cites two responses to the contradiction between the mishnah and the *baraita*, one of which tries to reconcile these sources with each other, the other of which assigns each text to a different theological school of thought. A summary and analysis of each view follows.

BT first cites Abbaye's (Babylonia, fourth c.) resolution of the difficulty: "Our mishnah means that they make for him a good day and a bad day." Unfortunately, the meaning of Abbaye's proposed solution is itself unclear. The most plausible interpretation seems to be that of Tosafot (medieval French and German Talmudic commentaries, 12th and 13th c.):[6] Even a righteous person is allotted some "bad days" in order to atone for his sins immediately and in this world, while the evil person is granted some "good days" to recompense him for his good deeds. However, the bulk of the righteous person's days are good while those of the evil person are in the main bad. The mishnah refers to the fact that for the most part a righteous individual experiences "good days" in this world while the sinner generally must suffer through "bad days." The *baraita*, on the other hand, refers to the occasional "bad days" that the righteous must undergo to atone for their sins and the infrequent "good days" enjoyed by the sinners as recompense for their few good deeds. Understood this way, Abbaye's view reflects a teaching cited later in the tractate in the name of a late *tanna*:

> R. Eleazar b. Zadoq said: To what are the righteous compared in this world? To a tree standing in a place of purity but whose branches extend into a place of impurity. If the branches are pruned the tree itself stands [in its entirety] in a place of purity. Similarly the Holy One, blessed be He, brings suffering upon the righteous in this world so that they will inherit the next world; as Scripture states: "Though your beginning be small, in the end you will grow very great" (Job 8:7).
>
> To what are the evildoers compared in this world? To a tree standing in a place of impurity but whose branches extend into a place of purity. If the branches are pruned the tree itself stands [in its entirety] in a place of impurity. Similarly, the Holy One, blessed be He, showers the evildoers with good in this world in order to drive them out and chase them down to the lowest rank, as Scripture says: "There is a straight path before a man whose end is a path of death" (Prov 14:12). (bQiddushin 40b; see also *GenR* 33.1 [299] and parallels)

R. Eleazar b. Zadoq regards the sufferings of the righteous in this world as a kind of "pruning" that is necessary for one to merit unalloyed reward in the next.[7] Just as pruning, when viewed in isolation, appears to be an act of destruction but may actually be intended to maintain the health and well-being of the tree, so too the suffering that befalls the righteous, although it appears to be a sign of divine displeasure, is actually God's way of ensuring the spiritual well-being of the sufferer in this world and the next. Appropriately, the prooftext for this idea is taken from Job, the righteous sufferer par excellence whose friends seek to convince him that his suffering is for his greater good. Specifically the Talmud quotes from the speech of Bildad the Shuhite, who promises Job that, if he is righteous, in the end (ואחריתך) he will be blessed by God. R. Eleazar b. R. Zadoq chooses to understand "the end" in this verse as referring not to some future point in one's life but rather to the afterlife.

Let us now consider the second resolution cited by BT to the contradiction between the mishnah and the *baraita*:

> Raba (Babylonia, 4th c.) said: By whom was the *baraita* taught? By R. Ya'aqov who said that there is no this-worldly reward.
>
> For it was taught: R. Ya'aqob said: There is not a single *miẓwâ* that has its reward written adjacent to it upon which the resurrection of the dead does not depend. Regarding honoring one's father and mother it is written: "So that you will have length of days and so that it will go well with you" (Deut 5:16). Regarding the sending of the mother bird away from the nest it is written: "So that it will go well with you and [so that] you will have length of days" (Deut 22:7).
>
> Behold, if one's father tells one, "Go up to the loft and bring me young birds," and one went up to the loft, chased away the mother bird, and took the young birds, and on the way back down one fell and died—where is this one's goodness of days and length of days?

> Rather, "So that it will go well with you"—[this is] a day that is all good. "And [so that] you will have length of days"—[this is] a day that is everlasting. (bQiddushin 39b)

According to Raba, the mishnah and the *baraita* in fact represent two different views. The mishnah reflects the position that the righteous are rewarded and the wicked punished in this world. The *baraita*, however, embodies the view of R. Ya'aqob that there is no link between one's righteousness or sinfulness on the one hand and one's this-worldly fate on the other. R. Ya'aqob reinterprets the promises of Deuteronomy 5:16 and 22:7, which the *mishnah* apparently understands as referring to this world, by applying them to a future world of unlimited goodness and duration. It may be, therefore, that one who fulfills the commandments of honoring parents and sending away the mother bird may not receive any this-worldly reward as a result; indeed, one may be the victim of a life-ending accident, the ultimate evil, immediately after having carried out these commandments. The tradition cited here in his name is consistent with a dictum attributed to him elsewhere: "This world is like a vestibule [פרוזדור, πρόθυρον] leading to the next world. Prepare yourself in the vestibule so that you will [be fit to] enter the reception room [טריקלין, τρικλίνιον]."[8]

There is an important difference between Abbaye's explanation of the *baraita* and that of Raba. According to Abbaye, the lot of humanity in this world is apparently paradoxical but actually, upon further reflection, justifiable. The suffering of the righteous man is ultimately for his own good, while the good fortune of the evildoer is only temporary and will result in an eternity of suffering in the next world.

Raba's explanation, on the other hand, is that there is no discernible rhyme or reason to the fate of the human being in this world. In saying that one who does good deeds will be treated as though one had burned a Torah scroll, the *baraita* is not saying, as it is according to Abbaye, that this will necessarily be one's fate as a doer of good deeds. It is merely saying that any fate, including this one, is possible for the righteous; what befalls one in this world is merely the result of fate; it is not a form of reward or punishment. This view is made quite explicit elsewhere by Raba himself:

> Raba said: Longevity, progeny and prosperity depend not on one's merit but rather upon one's *māzāl* [i.e., the sign under which one was born]. (bMoed Qatan 28a)

Indeed, as Ya'akov Elman has shown,[9] there is a significant amount of relatively late material in the Bavli reflecting the assumption of Raba and his colleagues that suffering may not necessarily be linked to sin. Among other notions underlying this ideology is apparently the assumption that the material pleasures of this world cannot possibly serve as an adequate and appropriate reward for one's spiritual achievements.[10] This belief is also implicit in an exchange between Raba and the Persian official Bar Sheshakh. Raba brings Bar Sheshakh a gift on the occasion of a Persian festival and finds him in his rose garden[11] surrounded by naked courtesans. Bar Sheshakh asks Raba, presumably to mock

him, "Do you have anything like this in the next world?" Raba responds, "What we have is better than what you have."[12]

Among both *tannaim* and (named) *amoraim*, however, a majority tend toward the view that, one way or another, one's this-worldly fate is connected to one's actions. This may be so, in part, because the morally and humanly indifferent world proposed by Raba is too cruel a world to accept—one, moreover, that may lead to cynicism, despair, and even heresy. In the words of the twelfth-century sage Maimonides, "[Those] who say, '[The catastrophe] that has befallen us is the way of the world; this adversity was a matter of happenstance'—this is a cruel way [of speaking] and it causes them to adhere to their evil ways."[13] On the other hand, the position that one is rewarded or punished in this world is extremely difficult to maintain, given the daily evidence that the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper—or more precisely, that whether or not one suffers or prospers seems unrelated to one's righteousness or sinfulness.[14] Therefore, most *tannaim* and *amoraim* take a position similar to that of Abbaye, agreeing on the one hand that one's this-worldly lot reflects one's actions but leaving open the door to the righteous suffering and the evil prospering as a way of squaring their accounts with regard to their few sins or good deeds.

An interesting outcome of Abbaye's position is that the better one's life is from a material perspective, the more reason one has for concern lest one's good fortune is the prospering of the evildoer, while the more straitened one's circumstances, the greater the likelihood that one is among the suffering righteous.[15] Although most sages seem not to have sought a life of hardship as a consequence of this worldview—on the contrary, many of them speak favorably of a life of plenty[16]—some did in fact court adversity in one of two ways: material self-denial and/or physical suffering.

Material Self-Denial

Some members of the rabbinic circle apparently rejected the accumulation of wealth. It may be for this reason that one of the so-called Ushan ordinances[17] was necessary:[18] "One who is distributing [*ẓedāqâ*] should not distribute more than a fifth [of his wealth]." That this ordinance was directed against actual behavior is indicated by the story that is transmitted with the ordinance:

> A story: There was someone who wished to distribute [more than a fifth][19] but his colleague did not allow him to do so. And who was the colleague? R. Yeshebab.
>
> Others say: R. Yeshebab [was the one who wished to distribute more than one fifth of his wealth]. And his colleague did not allow him to do so. And who was his colleague? R. Aqiba. (bKetubot 50a [= bArakhin 28a])[20]

Another tradition, that of PT, has R. Yeshebab distributing *all* of his property to the poor and being reprimanded by R. Gamliel for doing so.[21]

Another such story concerns a *ḥasid* whose wife harangues him for having given a *dinar* to a pauper on the eve of Rosh Hashanah in a time of famine.[22] Leviticus Rabbah[23] describes a man who sells his house and all that he possesses in order to give *ẓedāqâ*. When his wife gives him some coins to buy food for their children, he gives them instead to the *ẓedāqâ* collectors so that they can buy clothing for an orphan girl; too embarrassed to face his wife, he sets off on an adventure that serendipitously brings wealth to himself and his family. Elsewhere in Leviticus Rabbah[24] we read the following: R. Aqiba is given money given by R. Tarfon to purchase property that will produce income and allow both of them to study Torah. In fact, R. Aqiba distributes the funds to scribes, reciters of Mishnah, and other students of Torah. R. Aqiba later explains to R. Tarfon that he has made an excellent investment the guarantee of which is Psalms 112:9: "If one gives freely to the poor his act of righteousness stands [in his favor] forever."[25] In yet another narrative found in a relatively late Palestinian source[26] the *hasid* Abba Tahnah is entering the city on the eve of Shabbat and is implored by a man suffering from boils to carry him into the city. Abba Tahnah thinks to himself: "If I abandon my bundle, from where shall I and my wife support ourselves? But if I abandon this man I will forfeit my life." Abba Tahnah decides to lay down his bundle, making it vulnerable to theft, and to carry the man into the city. Fortunately, when he returns the bundle is still there.

The clearest exemplar in rabbinic literature of those who shun the accumulation of material goods is Eleazar of Birta (or Birtota/Bartota),[27] to whom is attributed the dictum, "Give to God from what is yours, for you and what is yours are His."[28] Consider the following narrative recorded in BT, according to which Eleazar of Birta put his teaching into practice in a radical way:

> When the *ẓedāqâ* collectors saw Eleazar of Birtota they would hide from him because he would give them whatever he had with him. One day he was going out into the marketplace to acquire a dowry for his daughter. The *ẓedāqâ* collectors saw him and hid from him. He ran after them.
>
> He said to them, "I adjure you [to tell me] in what you are engaged." They said to him, "We are collecting money for the marriage of two orphans to each other." He said, "By the temple service, they take precedence over my daughter." He took all the money he had with him and gave it to them.
>
> A single *zûz* remained; he purchased grain with it, returned home and threw the grain into the storeroom. His wife came and said to his daughter, "What did your father bring?" She replied, "Whatever he brought he threw into the storeroom." She [= the mother?] went to open the storeroom. She saw that the storeroom was full of wheat, that it was coming out through the slot in the door's hinge-socket,[29] and that it was impossible to open the door because of the volume of wheat.
>
> His daughter went to the study house. She said, "Come and see what the One who loves you[30] has done for you." He replied, "By the

> Temple service! They [the grains] are as sanctified property for you [i.e., they are forbidden to you] and you may take from them only as [much as] one of the poor in Israel." (bTaʿanit 24a)[31]

The generosity of Eleazar of Birta in the narrative above is both extreme and paradoxical. According to a principle enunciated elsewhere in BT,[32] those closest genealogically and/or geographically have first claim on one's *zedaqâ*. We have already mentioned, moreover, the Ushan ordinance restricting one's *zedaqâ* to no more than a fifth of one's possessions.[33] Yet Eleazar gives away all he has with no thought for his family's needs nor for his religious obligation to provide his daughter with a dowry.[34]

There is also an irony in the justification he offers for his behavior. The needs of orphans, he reasons, come before those of his daughter, perhaps because she at least has a father to look after her needs. In giving away her dowry to others, however, he is in effect turning her into an orphan, for in fact her father does not look out for her best interests.

The theme of fatherlessness and of disconnection between Eleazar and his daughter reappears in the tale's denouement. When his daughter reports to him that God miraculously has filled their storeroom with grain, he declares it all to be consecrated—that is, forbidden—in relationship to her, presumably because he plans to donate it to the poor. It is interesting that in the only other cases in BT in which a father forbids property to his child through consecration—that of Jose b. Joezer and his son, Kalba Sabuʿa and his daughter Rachel (and son-in-law Aqiba), and an anonymous individual who transfers his property to Jonathan b. Uziel so that his son will not inherit it[35]—the action is taken because the father considers his child unworthy or rebellious. R. Eleazar of Birta does the same to his daughter, but here the act is totally impersonal. It his not his daughter's unworthiness but rather Eleazar's self-denying approach to *ẓedāqâ* that is the motivating factor here.

What R. Eleazar does allow his daughter to take is כאחת מעניי ישראל, like one of the poor in Israel. This term appears at the end of the mishnah's listing of the minimal food and clothing obligations that a husband has toward a wife. "When is the above said?" concludes the mishnah; "For the poor of Israel; but in a family of some wealth the husband must provide for his wife accordingly."[36] In forbidding his daughter to take more than one of the poor in Israel, R. Eleazar refuses to allow her to be the beneficiary of her relationship with him. She is not the daughter of Eleazar of Birta who has been blessed by God with great wealth; she is simply one of the poor in Israel.[37]

A similar notion is expressed by an anonymous desert father:

> A brother asked an old man: "My sister is poor. If I give her alms, am I giving alms to the poor?" The old man said: "No." The brother said: "Why, Abba?" And the old man replied: "Because your kinship draws you a little toward her."[38]

The abba's point seems to be that true charity can involve no element of self-interest. The assistance that one gives to a relative, therefore, is not an expression

of the selflessness that genuine generosity demands. In similar fashion, Eleazar of Birta seeks to remove any element of self-interest from his benevolence toward his daughter by making her identical to what any indigent prospective bride would receive.

What R. Yeshebab (or the anonymous donor), R. Eleazar of Birta, and the others mentioned share in common is an extravagant generosity that seems to bespeak an indifference to their own financial well-being. However, is not only they who are affected by their actions but also, as each of the stories emphasizes, members of their families. Because these individuals act on their convictions without first consulting family members who will be directly affected, their *ẓedāqâ* is a profound act of social responsibility at the expense of familial economic accountability. It is true, of course, that all the narratives have "happy endings," suggesting, in the spirit of Ecclesiastes 11:1, that ultimately the help one gives others not only will not be to the detriment of one's family's material situation but will actually improve it. Once again, however, this outcome merely illuminates the instrumental nature of most rabbinic asceticism. These narratives are not praising poverty per se, although there are scattered rabbinic statements to that effect;[39] rather, they are urging that one be willing to undergo privation as long and as often as others are in need.

Up to now we have looked at a number of instances of material self-denial and have discussed one of its possible motivations, namely to disassociate oneself from the fate of the wicked. I will now discuss a related but somewhat different motivation: the desire not to receive one's reward in this world in "reduced" form.

Invest or Spend? Reward as Spiritual Capital

I have mentioned the rabbinic use of marketplace terminology in describing one's spiritual endeavors. A marketplace model was also used by the sages to portray the calculation of one's spiritual merits and debits; we have already seen an example of this in the first mishnah of Pe'ah, which speaks of spiritual reward in terms of principle and profits. The word generally used by the sages for reward, *sākhār*, has the primary meaning of wages or payment.[40] *Pûrʿānût*, a common rabbinic term for punishment (literally: retribution), derives from the root *prʿ*, "to pay off a debt." The notion of *pûrʿānût* is connected to viewing one who sins as having incurred a *hôbâ*, an obligation towards God. As George Foot Moore puts it, "Man *owes* God obedience, and every sin, whether of commission or of omission, is a defaulted obligation, a debt."[41] That obligation is satisfied through God's retribution;[42] God allows one to pay off one's debt by undergoing punishment.

One significance of this imagery is that there is assumed to be some degree of proportionality between righteousness and sinfulness on the one hand and reward and punishment on the other. Although God is not obligated a priori to reward the righteous[43] nor does God need for his own sake to punish the wicked, God has created a system of debits, credits, rewards and punishments and he operates within its confines. Not only, therefore, were the sages conscious that

their deeds were recorded in God's ledger[44] but they were also acutely aware that any pleasure enjoyed in this world might be deducted from the store of reward being held in one's account.

Although, as we have seen, there is no one view among the sages about how or when one is rewarded and punished, and the notion of this-worldly reward and punishment is widespread[45] it is generally acknowledged that the compensation and retribution of the next world far outweigh those in this one, as implied by the mishnah in Pe'ah cited earlier. Thus, the mid-second-century *tanna* Natan ha-Babli, after recounting a tale of a Torah scholar who is rewarded in this world for his punctilious observance of the commandment of *zizit*, adds: "This is his reward in this world; as for [his reward] in the world to come, I know not how much it is."[46] Some rabbinic sources speak of a banquet awaiting the righteous in the world to come,[47] an image employed in a number of Jesus' parables as well.[48] Therefore, a number of sages express a reluctance to enjoy the benefits of this world lest that pleasure diminish or exhaust the store of reward awaiting for them in the world to come.

An apt marketplace analogy for this process, one well known to the sages,[49] is the practice of discounting. If A holds a promissory note stating that B owes him money, he may choose to sell the note to C before the note becomes due. The sale price is generally less than the face amount of the note, particularly, as in the case of *ketûbâ* (a contractual obligation to be paid by a husband to his wife if he divorces her or by his estate if predeceases her), when collection is not even a theoretical certainty, much less a practical one. By analogy, everyone possesses a divine promissory note specifying that the bulk of the reward for one's good deeds is to be paid out in the world to come. Some note-holders, however, lack either the patience or the confidence to wait for future recompense. They therefore cash in their notes now in exchange for the "discounted," relatively paltry pleasures of this world.

In the case of the wicked, some sages posit, as we saw earlier,[50] that such discounting takes place at God's initiative; God wants to pay off his debts to the wicked in this-worldly currency so that they will have no share in the recompense of the future world. Some sages, therefore, were reluctant to seek out or even accept this-worldly pleasure lest they empty their account in the next world. This is most famously illustrated by the following tradition concerning the holy man Ḥanina b. Dosa and his wife, which weaves together an attributed amoraic statement concerning Ḥanina with two stories concerning him and his wife:

> R. Judah said in the name of Rab: "Every day a Heavenly voice comes forth and says, 'The entire world is sustained through the merit of my son Ḥanina; yet for my son Ḥanina a *qab* of carobs from one Friday to the next is sufficient.'"
>
> R. Ḥanina b. Dosa's wife would heat up her oven every Friday and throw in a smoke-producing substance out of embarrassment [i.e., so no one would know that in fact there was no food in her house]. She had an evil neighbor who said, "Since I know that she has nothing in her house, what's all this?" She went and knocked on

her door. R. Ḥanina's wife was embarrassed and she went into an inner room. A miracle occurred in her behalf, and the neighbor found the oven full of bread and the kneading trough full of dough. The neighbor called, "Madam, madam, bring a shovel; your bread is burning!" Ḥanina's wife replied, "In fact I was going to bring a bread shovel." (It is taught: In fact she had gone to bring a bread shovel because she was used to the occurrence of miracles.)

R. Ḥanina b. Dosa's wife said to him, "How long must we suffer[51] so?" He said to her, "What, then, shall we do?" She said, "Pray that they give you something [from Heaven]." He prayed; something like the palm of a hand descended [from Heaven] and gave him a golden table leg. [That night] he dreamt that everyone was eating at a table with three legs and they [= he and his wife] were[52] eating at a table with two legs. His wife said [upon hearing this], "Ask that they take the table leg back." He prayed, and they took it back. (It is taught: The second miracle was greater than the first, for we have a tradition that whatever is given is not rescinded.) (Ta'anit 24b–25a)[53]

Initially we are told that although Ḥanina has sufficient merit for the entire world to be sustained in his behalf, he himself makes do with a *qab* of carobs from one week to the next. The exact wording, דיו,[54] "it is sufficient," is ambiguous. It could mean that Ḥanina himself renounces all sustenance above what is necessary for bare subsistence. Alternatively, it could mean that God has determined that this meager fare shall suffice; indeed, elsewhere BT interprets the tradition in this way.[55] Furthermore as used elsewhere in rabbinic literature, דיו generally refers to an externally imposed limitation rather than one that is self-imposed.[56] In any case, we are presented with someone whose merits are so great that they are worthy of sustaining the entire world and who nonetheless reaps no reward in this world for his righteousness.

The next unit makes clear that Ḥanina's poverty, whether imposed externally or voluntarily, has dire consequences for his wife, causing her not only material deprivation but also, potentially, the shame of appearing poverty-stricken before her neighbors. Only a miracle saves her from these two fates.

This situation leads naturally to the final pericope, in which Ḥanina's wife asks her husband to obtain a heavenly reprieve from their state of abject poverty. Ḥanina acts on her request and it is granted; however, both he and she are made to see that they can claim recompense in this world only at the expense of reward in the next. This notion is illustrated strikingly with the image of the golden table leg. This leg cannot be melted down into gold or currency for this-worldly use and still be available to support the table assigned to Hanina (and his wife?)[57] at the celestial banquet in the world to come. In sum, the story argues that Ḥanina and his wife *must* lead a life of deprivation so as not to "squander" the reward saved up for them[58] in the next world.

A similar story is told in BT[59] concerning Rabbah b. Abuha (Babylonia, second half of 3rd CE) who, when he complains to Elijah the prophet that poverty is preventing him from studying as much as he would like, is brought to

Eden and invited to gather the fragrant leaves there. He does so, but as he departs he hears a voice saying, "Is there anyone who consumes his share in the world to come as much as Rabbah b. Abuha does?" At that point Rabbah scatters the leaves he has collected. Rabbah, like Ḥanina, is forced to choose between conserving the reward due him for the next world or enjoying that reward now and receiving less of it later. Interestingly, however, Rabbah ultimately is able to achieve wealth in this world as well; the odor of the fragrant leaves remains in his cloak and he is able to extract this fragrance and sell it for 12,000 *denarii*. Rather than keeping this money for himself, however, Rabbah b. Abuha distributes it among his sons-in-law.

A Palestinian midrash[60] has R. Simeon b. Yohai telling his disciples that they must choose between riches in this world and reward in the next. Other midrashic sources[61] tell the story of Ḥanina b. Dosa and his wife just cited but substitute R. Simeon b. Halafta and his wife as the protagonists. In these versions it is R. Simeon that initiates the request for material good and his wife who convinces him to reject it. BT[62] tells of R. Eleazar b. Pedat being rewarded with thirteen rivers of balsamic oil in the next world for having forgone material good[63] in this one despite his extreme poverty.[64] Although the *tanna* R. Judah and his wife had only one cloak between them, he refuses a garment sent to him by Rabban Simeon b. Gamliel, not wanting to benefit from this world.[65] Finally, a relatively late source[66] cites the following dictum in the name of R. Judah the Patriarch: "Whoever accepts the pleasures of this world is denied the pleasures of the world to come; but whoever does not accept the pleasures of this world is granted the pleasures of the world to come."[67] This statement is in marked contrast to an oft-quoted teaching found in PT in the name of Rab: "One is destined to give an accounting for whatever one saw and did not eat."[68]

The notion that reward enjoyed in this world diminishes one's recompense in the next may underlie a reluctance expressed frequently in rabbinic sources to be the beneficiaries of divine miracles, lest such benefit reduce one's share in the world to come or even in this one.[69] A clear exposition of this notion is to be found in BT:

> R. Yannai would check [a ferry to ensure that it was seaworthy] before crossing [in it]. R. Yannai [acted] in accordance with his own reasoning, for he said:[70] One should never put oneself in a dangerous situation, saying that a miracle will be performed for him, lest the miracle not be performed. And if the miracle is performed, they will deduct it from his merits [i.e., they will lessen his reward in this world or in the next]. R. Hanan said: What is the scriptural source for the above? [The patriarch Jacob's declaration:] "I am unworthy[71] of all the kindness that you have so steadfastly shown your servant" (Gen 32:11). (bShabbat 32a; cf. *GenR* 76.5 [900])[72]

It is against the background of this belief as well that the opening of the first mishnah in Pe'ah with which we began should be understood. The mishnah lists commandments the fruits of which one enjoys in this world but the principal reward for which is reserved for the next. First on the list is the command-

ment to honor one's father and mother. As was noted earlier, this is one of the commandments in connection with which the Torah promises that if one fulfills it one will have a life of good and length of days. Because the mishnah assumes that essentially one receives one's reward in the next world, it must make sense of the Torah's promise of this-worldly reward to those who honor their fathers and mothers. The mishnah does so by interpreting the biblical promise not as the primary reward for fulfillment of this commandment but as a secondary one. What is seen as unusual about this commandment and others like it is that, unlike other commandments, one is granted reward in this world for their fulfillment with no diminution of reward in the next. This point is conveyed by the image of profit and principal; enjoyment of profit in this world does not preclude benefiting from the principal in the next.

Physical Suffering

The attitude—more precisely, attitudes—toward suffering in rabbinic literature are complex and nuanced, as David Kraemer has shown.[73] Of interest here are instances in which rabbis call suffering upon themselves, or at least they welcome suffering, in order to atone for their sins in this world and thereby clear their ledger for the next. A prime example of this attitude is the following:

> Nahum of Gimzo was bringing a gift to the house of Hama. Someone afflicted with skin disease stopped him and said, "Give me some alms from what you have." He replied, "When I return." He returned and found him dead. He said, standing over him, "Let my eyes, that saw you and gave you nothing, be blinded; let my hands, that did not extend themselves to give you [anything], be severed; let my legs, that did not run to give to you, be broken." And so it was.
>
> R. Aqiba went to see him. [R. Aqiba] said, "Woe is me that I see you thus." He replied, "Woe is me that I do not see you thus."[74] [R. Aqiba] replied, "Why do you curse me?" He replied, "And why do you show contempt for suffering?" (yPe'ah 8.8, 21b [= ySheqalim 5.6, 49b]; cf. bTa'anit 21b)

Nahum of Gimzo calls upon himself a punishment that seems incommensurately severe for what is, at most, an act of omission. Nahum is, after all, engaged in a mission of generosity when he meets the beggar. True, one can argue that he should have paused to help a man in need before continuing on his journey, but Nahum made clear that he would provide help upon his return, and presumably he had no reason to think that his failure to help the beggar initially would result in the man's death. Nonetheless, Nahum's response is very much in the spirit of מדה כנגד מדה, "measure for measure," a principle of retribution found both in biblical and rabbinic literature.[75] This principle, roughly equivalent to the notion of "poetic justice," asserts that there is a symbolic correspondence, but not necessarily commensurability, between a sinful act and the resulting punishment. Thus, God punishes the scouts who return with a

negative report about the land of Canaan, and also the Israelites who accepted their findings, with one year of wandering in the desert for each of the forty days that the scouts were engaged in their mission. Rather than waiting for God's verdict, Nahum himself applies the retributive principle of "measure for measure" to himself, and in the harshest manner imaginable.[76]

Upon seeing Nahum in his state of suffering R. Aqiba—who was, according to one tradition,[77] Nahum of Gimzo's disciple—responds with an expression of sympathy and identifies himself with Nahum's distress: Woe to Nahum who must suffer, and woe to Aqiba who must see him suffer. Nahum of Gimzo's response to R. Aqiba's cry of woe seizes upon Aqiba's words and turns them—and the assumption underlying them—on their head. Nahum is not the unfortunate; rather, Aqiba is the one to be pitied precisely because he has *not* suffered. The truly unfortunate person is the individual who is unable to atone for his sins in this world and therefore must suffer in the next. Nahum wishes to avoid this fate by calling punishment upon himself in this world. He seems to be invoking on the personal level the theology formulated to explain the communal sufferings of Israel in contrast to the relative good fortune of its oppressors:

> When Abraham, our father, had not yet come into the world, the Holy One, blessed be He, judged the world with a strict measure, so to speak. [Thus,] the people of the [generation of the] flood sinned [and God] scattered them like sparks upon the water. The people of the [generation of the] tower [of Babel] sinned [and God] scattered the them from one end of the earth to the other. The people of Sodom sinned [and God] flooded them with brimstone and fire.
>
> But when Abraham came to the world, he had the merit to receive suffering and they [= sufferings] began coming slowly. As it is said, "There was a famine in the land, Abram went down to Egypt" (Gen 12:10). And if you should say, Why do sufferings come? Because of the love of Israel: "He fixed the boundaries of peoples in relation to Israel's numbers" (Deut 32:8). (*Sifre Deuteronomy* Pisqa 311 [351])[78]

As David Kraemer points out,[79] the distinction here is not chronological but rather national, Abraham representing Israel and the people of the flood, the tower of Babel and Sodom representing the other nations. God shows his love for Israel by visiting them with afflictions so that they can atone for their sins and endure while other nations flourish for a time but then perish, presumably in the next world as well as this one,[80] as a punishment for their sins.[81]

Although Nahum of Gimzo's case is exceptional in its severity, many sages are reported by PT and BT as following a similar path by taking upon themselves an extended series of fasts to atone for a relatively minor infraction, as has been noted by Sigmund Lowy.[82] Thus, according to R. Ḥanina, R. Eleazar b. Azaryah fasted "until his teeth were blackened" for having opposed the majority view in a detail of Shabbat law.[83] R. Abbahu reports in the name of the *tanna* R. Hanina b. Gamliel[84] that R. Tarfon fasted[85] all his days for having used his status as a Torah scholar to save himself from harm. R. Joshua's "teeth were

blackened from fasting" for having made a derogatory remark about Bet Shammai;[86] R. Simeon is said to have done the same for having made a derogatory remark about R. Aqiba.[87] R. Hiyya b. Ashi died from extensive fasting undertaken to atone for having slept with his wife thinking she was another woman.[88] R. Huna and R. Hisda each fasted for forty days to atone for having slighted each other.[89]

The corollary of viewing suffering as punishment is the fear that if one is not suffering one is receiving all of one's reward in this world. This view is in fact expressed by the sages: "It was taught in the study house of R. Ishmael: Whoever passed forty days without suffering has received his world [i.e., he has received his full recompense in this world and will receive no reward in the world to come]."[90] To assuage the anxiety prompted by this view, various rabbis outdo each other in lowering the bar that must be traversed for an event to qualify as an affliction. Not liking a garment that one hired another to weave for him, accidentally diluting one's wine with warm rather than cold water, one's garment turning inside out, and taking fewer coins out of one's purse then are needed are all cited as examples of suffering.[91]

The previously cited sources assume that suffering is a form of punishment. Elsewhere the sages see suffering not simply as a response to, and atonement for, sin but as an expression of God's love for the sufferer. This idea is expressed in at least two ways. One is that by experiencing suffering, one grows spiritually:

> "The Lord tries[92] the righteous but loathes the wicked one who loves injustice" (Psalms 11:5) . . . R. Yose b. Haninah said: A flax-worker, when he knows that his flax is fine, [he can be certain that] the more he beats it the more it improves, and the more he strikes it the more it glistens. [But] when he knows that his flax is poor, [he also knows that he could barely strike it before it would split. So, too, the Holy One, Blessed be He, only tests the righteous, as it says, "The Lord tries the righteous." (*GenR* 32.1[290][93]

Adversity, in this view, can bring out the best in one's character; thus those who suffer are given the opportunity to exhibit their devotion to God and Torah in the face of formidable barriers. God makes this opportunity available only to those likely to transcend the challenges of hardship—the righteous. One who suffers, therefore, can be comforted with the thought that such suffering is a sign of one's righteousness.

A second, more provocative notion is that of *yissûrîn šęl 'ahabâ*, "afflictions of love." The rabbis believe that some forms of suffering are expressions of God's love for the individual. That suffering can be a visitation of God's love is an idea that appears in the Hebrew Bible and the Apocrypha.[94] However, in all but one of these texts, that of Job, sufferings are a form of punishment or instruction. God's love is expressed by clearing one's account through prompt punishment or by making clear that one's behavior is sinful and needs to be modified. In the remaining case, Wisdom of Solomon 4:10–11, the early death of the righteous is seen as a means of sparing them from the temptations of sin.[95] The idea expressed by the sages, however, seems to be a new one: God brings sufferings

upon those He loves in this world so that, by accepting their suffering without complaint,[96] they will merit greater reward in the next.[97] This is made clear in the following text:

> Raba, and some say R. Hisda, said: If a man sees suffering coming upon him, he should examine his deeds, as Scripture states, "Let us search and examine our ways and turn back to the Lord" (Lam 3:40).
>
> If he searched and did not find [his deeds to be the cause of suffering], he should attribute it to the neglect of Torah [study], as Scripture states, "Happy is the man whom you discipline, O Lord, the man You instruct in your teaching" (Ps 94:12).
>
> And if he attributed it [to the neglect of study] but did not find [his study to be wanting] then it is clear that they are afflictions of [God's] love, as it says, "For whom the Lord loves He rebukes" (Prov 3:12). (bBerakhot 5a)

Initially Raba, or R. Hisda, views suffering as it is generally viewed in rabbinic thought, as a form of punishment. If that explanation seems inapplicable, he suggests seeing adversity as both punishment for not studying Torah and a spur to begin doing so.[98] There are instances, however, where, like Job,[99] one can find no fault within oneself that would warrant the hardship one is undergoing. In this case one must consider the possibility that suffering is neither retribution nor exhortation but rather an opportunity for reward bestowed upon one by a loving God. Reward comes when one reciprocates God's love, as it were, by lovingly accepting these afflictions.

The notion that afflictions are a sign of God's love is not one that is accepted universally or unquestioningly by the rabbinic community. When R. Hiyya b. Abba and R. Yohanan are asked, "Are sufferings dear to you?" each replies, "Neither it nor its reward" and agrees to be relieved of his pain.[100] Moreover, David Kraemer has shown[101] that BT is generally more skeptical than other rabbinic documents about the benefits of, and justification for, human suffering. Nonetheless, the view that suffering is to be sought after, or at least welcomed, is well established in rabbinic thinking.

Two aspects of rabbinic thinking, the conviction that more suffering in this world means more reward in the next and the belief that this-worldly reward is but a pale imitation of next-worldly recompense, lead to an *ex post facto* justification of suffering and want (and occasional intentional inducement of affliction) as well as an a priori reluctance to indulge in the pleasures of this world. As described in this way, rabbinic self-restraint is again instrumental. However, there are forms of self-restraint that are related to a rabbinic ideal of asceticism. To discover what these are I shall, in the next chapter consider the two terms, *qedûšâ* and *perîsût*, used by the rabbis to describe self-denial in its idealized forms; looking at the behaviors to which these terms are applied will give a better picture of what constitutes the ideal ascetic life for the rabbis.

3

Qedûšâ and *Perîšût*

The Language of Rabbinic Asceticism

Sanctify (קדש) yourself within what is permitted to you.
—Raba, bYebamot 20a

An unmarried woman, like a young girl, can devote herself to the Lord's affairs; all she need worry about is being holy [ἁγία] in body and spirit.
—1 Corinthians 7:34

Until now I have been discussing what I call instrumental asceticism, that is, asceticism as a means to achieve some greater spiritual end. This chapter begins a discussion of essential asceticism within rabbinic Judaism. Its primary form, to be discussed in chapter 4, is fasting. However, the sages discuss self-denial in more general terms as well. Through an examination of the rabbinic use of the terms *qedûšâ* and *perîšût*, the two rabbinic terms whose meanings seem to approximate most closely that of asceticism, we will discover, first, that many of the rabbis considered certain forms of self-denial praiseworthy; and second, unsurprisingly, that most self-denial was expressed in the realms of food and sex.

Qedûšâ

Biblical Qedûšâ

The root *qdš*, which is used more than 800 times in biblical literature, has a variety of meanings and referents.[1] It refers, first and foremost, to God, but also to individuals, the priestly class, the

sacrificial cult and its sancta, and the people Israel. The Holiness Code in Leviticus has as one of its fundamental principles that the Israelites, like God, must be holy (Lev 19:1). But how does one do this? The Holiness Code itself does not provide a clear answer other than to provide a myriad of commandments and prohibitions that apparently constitute *qedûšâ* without defining it.[2] Nonetheless it is noteworthy, as Jacob Milgrom points out, that *qedûšâ* is employed in the Pentateuch mainly in connection with three groups of commandments: food prohibitions,[3] the priesthood,[4] and idolatry.[5] Milgrom suggests that the common denominator of these commandments is that they all involve separation or withdrawal: from forbidden foods, from ritual impurity and forbidden relations, or from the ways of the gentiles and the immorality they are presumed to embody.

Rabbinic Qedûšâ

The use of *qedûšâ* by the sages does not differ significantly from the way the word is employed in biblical literature.[6] We often find the root *qdš* in rabbinic literature in connection with the sacrificial system; indeed, the fifth order of the Mishnah, which deals with the Temple, is named Qodashim. Additionally, *qdš* is used in connection with the commandments in general[7] and with regard to food prohibitions[8] and idolatry[9] specifically. What is new in rabbinic literature, at least apparently so, is the frequent use of *qdš* in connection with forbidden sexual relations and activities. One striking expression of this is that *qdš* supplants *'rs* as the term for betrothal. Clearly this usage derives in part from the general meaning of *qdš* as separation; a woman who is betrothed is separated from, and forbidden to, all men other than the one who betroths her.

Where, if at all, can we find a similar biblical usage? The most suggestive parallel is Leviticus 21:6–7: "They [= the priests] shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God; for they offer the Lord's offerings by fire, the food of their God, and so must be holy. They shall not marry a woman defiled by harlotry, nor shall they marry one divorced from her husband; for they are holy to their God."[10] "They shall be holy to their God" and "they are holy to their God" serve as an *inclusio* encompassing the description of the sexual restrictions placed on the priests and the rationale for these restrictions. The first phrase suggests that their holiness is in part a consequence of the observance of these restrictions, the second that their holiness is the basis for them. In any case, the juxtaposition of the sexual restrictions against marrying a harlot or a divorcee in verse 7 with the explanation "for they are holy to their God" suggests a connection between being dedicated to God and being forbidden to contract relationships with (certain) others. Moreover, the Hebrew idiom in both phrases of the *inclusio* is *qedôšîm/qādôš le-*, "holy, or dedicated, to [God]." These verses are saying, then, that in order both to maintain and to achieve the holiness of being dedicated to God's service ("for they offer the Lord's offerings by fire"), a priest must observe the restrictions against his marrying certain women.

The expression in verse 7, "a woman defiled by harlotry" (אשה זונה וחללה), also suggests that, on the other hand, one profanes oneself by having a forbid-

den sexual relationship; therefore a woman who engages is harlotry is profaned. This notion is expressed elsewhere in the Bible. Leviticus 19:29 warns, "Do not degrade [תחלל] your daughter and make her a harlot." In his final testament Jacob recalls his son Reuben's liaison with Jacob's concubine Bilhah with the words אז חללת יצועי עלה (Gen 49:4). There is some uncertainty as to how to translate this phrase;[11] nonetheless, it clearly connects the notion of profanation (חללת) with a forbidden sexual act.

Leviticus 19:29 and Genesis 49:4 deal with forbidden relations that do not involve the priesthood. One could therefore say that these verses imply a link between *qedûšâ* and proper sexual behavior in general. The fact remains, however, that in biblical literature it is only with regard to the priesthood that a nexus of sexual restraint and holiness is claimed explicitly.[12] Perhaps it is recognition of this link that leads to the *Sifra*'s initial suggestion that Leviticus 19:29, "do not degrade [תחלל] your daughter and make her a harlot," may be prohibiting a priest from marrying off his daughter to a nonpriest, thereby diminishing her (and her family's?) sanctity.[13] There is nothing in the verse's original context to suggest that the verse is referring to the daughter of a priest. It may be, therefore, that the frequent utilization of the root חלל in connnection with priests, their offspring, and their potential mates in Leviticus 21—and especially its use regarding the errant daughter of a priest in a similar verse, Leviticus 21:9—generates this rabbinic reading.

In any case, the sages themselves expanded the linkage between sexual continence and holiness in two respects. First, they applied the label of *qedûšâ* to prohibitions that did not involve the priesthood but that did involve relations between individuals of different personal status. The prime example of this usage is the employment of the term איסור קדושה in tannaitic literature to refer to forbidden relations between Israelites and *mamzērîm* (the offspring of certain forbidden relations) and *netînîm* (descendants of gentiles who joined the people of Israel but were not granted full equality with other Israelites).[14] Underlying this usage seems to be the biblical description of Israel as *'am/gôy qādôš*,[15] or in Ezra's formulation, *zęra' ha-qôdęš*.[16] This same notion seems to inform the rabbinic formula הורתו שלא בקדושה ולידתו בקדושה, "one whose conception did not take place in holiness but whose birth occurred in holiness,"[17] referring to a child conceived when its mother was a gentile and born after its mother had converted to Judaism. The *qedûšâ* to which these texts refer is not, however, that of sexual abstention but rather the personal holiness conferred on a member of the people Israel—or, more exclusively, an Israelite who is of unblemished parentage; the basis for this *qedûšâ* is not specified. It is this *qedûšâ* which in turn is the basis for the restrictions mentioned above. Nonetheless, the Holiness Code presents the sexual proscriptions (and the dietary laws) as a central element in distinguishing Israel from the other nations;[18] and given, as we shall see momentarily, that the sages saw sexual self-restraint as a source of holiness, the use of the term *qedûšâ* to describe Jewish identity may be connected, at least in part, to the matrix of sexual prohibitions and their function in separating Israel from the other nations.

The sages also expand the notion of *qedûšâ* by defining it not only as the reason for sexual self-restraint but also as its consequence.[19] Although there is no explicit connection made in the Torah between sexual abstinence and holiness other than in the case of the priesthood, the sages couple the ambiguity of Leviticus 19:1 with its proximity to the list of forbidden relations in Leviticus 18 and find such a link. Such linkage may be intended by the *Sifra*, commenting on the exhortation to Israel to "be holy" (קדושים תהיו) (Lev 19:1); the *Sifra*[20] glosses this phrase as "separate yourselves" (*perûšîm*). Although, as we shall see, the root *prš* has many meanings in rabbinic literature, one of its most frequent uses is in the sense of sexual self-restraint. Read in light of this, the *Sifre* can be understood as saying that in order to be holy one must distance oneself from forbidden sexual relations. In any case, this understanding of the juxtaposition of Leviticus 18 and 19 is explicit in the following two amoraic traditions:

> R. Judah b. Pazi said: Why did Scripture put the portion concerning forbidden relations [Lev 18] adjacent to the portion concerning holiness [Lev 19]? To teach you that whoever separates oneself from forbidden relations is called holy. (yYebamot 2.4, 3d; cf. *LevR* 24.6 [559])

> R. Joshua b. Levi said: Why was the portion concerning forbidden relations placed adjacent to the portion concerning holiness? Rather, to teach you that wherever you find a fence [guarding against] forbidden sexual relations you find holiness. (*LevR* 24.6 [559])

This equation of sexual abstinence with *qedûšâ*, a notion that may already be present in the Damascus Covenant,[21] may underlie a tannaitic tradition according to which the term איסורי קדושה refers not to the prohibitions based on status but rather to rabbinically prohibited relatives called שניות; these prohibitions are secondary expansions of the biblical consanguinal prohibitions. Both BT[22] and PT[23] offer rationales for these prohibitions' being called איסורי קדושה. BT offers two explanations. One is that of Abbaye: "Whoever fulfills the words of the sages is called holy." In other words, the rabbinic sexual prohibitions are called איסורי קדושה because by heeding the words of the sages through the observance of these rabbinically mandated prohibitions, one attains holiness. On the other hand, Raba's explanation for this phrase is: "Sanctify yourself within what is permitted to you." That is, for Raba a form of holiness is forbidding to oneself that which is normally permitted. The rabbinic sexual prohibitions forbid that which the Torah itself had permitted previously. Therefore, in promulgating these restrictions, the sages are sanctifying both themselves and the larger community for whom they are legislating. According to both of these explanations, no specific link between holiness and sexual self-restraint is implied by איסורי קדושה. PT, however, explains איסורי קדושה applying to שניות by citing the words of R. Judah b. Pazi previously cited. Thus, in PT the prohibitions of שניות are איסודי קדושה because they involve the pursuit of holiness through distancing oneself from forbidden sexual relations.

Qedûšâ *and* Qiddûšîn

The preceding analysis can help us make sense of the rabbis's use of the root *qdš* to denote betrothal in general and the classic rabbinic betrothal formula, הרי את מקודשת לי, "Behold you are *meqûdęšęt* to me," in particular. A woman, through betrothal, has separated herself from all men other than her intended spouse; that is, she has accepted upon herself sexual restrictions that did not exist for her previously. Thus she is *meqûdęšęt* in at least two senses: in being separated from, and forbidden to, other men to whom she was previously permitted; and in being in some sense holy by virtue of having accepted the sexual restrictions that define betrothal. The formula *meqûdęšęt li*, moreover, reminds us of *qedôšîm/qādôš l-* used in connection with the priests and suggests a third meaning for *meqûdęšęt*; like the priests, who are dedicated to the service of God, a betrothed woman is designated for an exclusive relationship with the man who has betrothed her. One may therefore imagine the following parallelism between Leviticus 21:6–7 and the formula הרי את מקודשת לי: the priests are forbidden to engage in sexual relations with certain women both because they are and so that they will remain set apart to serve God in His temple, while a betrothed woman is forbidden to all other men both because she is, and so that she remain, set apart to be in an exclusive relationship with her husband.

The foregoing analysis suggests that *qiddûšîn*, like the *qedûšâ* of the priests, should be understood as having not only the negative sense of restriction and prohibition but also the positive sense of holiness. Although this idea is nowhere stated explicitly in rabbinic sources, it is implied in three sources, two of them relatively late, all in Bavli Qiddushin.

1. bNedarim 28b-29b
mNedarim 3.5 states as follows:

> [If one says:] "These saplings are *qorbān* if they are not cut down,"
> "This garment is *qorbān* if it is not burnt," they can be redeemed.
> [If one says:] "These saplings are *qorbān* until they are cut down,"
> "This garment is *qorbān* until it is burnt," they have no redemption [אין להם פדיון].

Both PT and BT understand the Mishnah to be discussing a נדר הקדש, a vow of consecration, whereby one is dedicating the saplings and the garment (or their value) to the Temple in Jerusalem. Apparently this vow is made in anticipation of the saplings' being cut down and appropriated by the king's agents or of the garment's being consumed in an approaching fire. What the first half of the mishnah is telling us is that although the vow was made only in the hope that it would ward off the destruction of one's property it is still considered binding. The third-century Palestinian Bar Padda qualifies the mishnah's second ruling: in fact one can redeem saplings made *qorbān* until they are cut down, but the saplings immediately become *qorbān* once again. However if one redeems the saplings after they are cut down, they remain redeemed. Apparently Bar Padda understands the last three words in the mishnah as referring to the status of saplings before they

are cut; he interprets the vow as follows: "These saplings are *qorbān* despite being redeemed until they are cut down [that is, they have no redemption]; at that point they can be released permanently from their *qorbān* status through redemption." 'Ulla, on the other hand, refers the last three words of the *mishnah* to the status of the saplings after they are cut. Because the vow speaks of the saplings as being *qorbān* until they were cut, once cut they are no longer holy and "they have no redemption"—that is, no redemption is necessary.

R. Hamnuna objects to 'Ullah's position, saying: "Where did the holiness that these objects had go?" He analogizes the case of the mishnah to someone who said: "Today you are my wife [i.e., he betrothed her][24] and tomorrow you are not my wife." Certainly in that case, concludes R. Hamnuna, a bill of divorce would still be necessary to dissolve the marriage; here, too, an act of redemption should be required to render the saplings or the garment profane. Raba counters this objection by distinguishing between consecration of value (קדושת דמים) and consecration of substance [קדושת הגוף]. Marriage, says Raba, constitutes consecration of substance; therefore the holiness of marriage cannot dissipate of itself. The saplings and the garment are consecrated only for their value; such holiness can simply cease to exist after a predetermined period. Abbaye, in turn, objects to Raba's distinction, arguing that items consecrated for their substance can also shed their sanctity without an act of redemption.

What is instructive for the issue at hand is that both R. Hamnuna and Raba think it appropriate to draw an analogy between betrothal and the consecration of property to the Temple,[25] and that Raba refers explicitly, and Abbaye implicitly, to marriage as קדושת הגוף, a term used widely in BT to refer to sacrifices and other sancta. This association suggests a view of *qiddûšîn* as a process that confers positive sanctity as well as creating prohibitions.

2. bQiddushin 7a

According to the sages, betrothal can take place if a man gives a woman an object of a certain minimal value but only if he simultaneously recites an acceptable betrothal formula. Consequently there are extensive discussions among the sages as to what constitutes a valid formula. One of the formulae that is discussed is: "Half of you is betrothed to me"; the fourth-century Babylonian Raba disallows the use of this formula, presumably because *qiddûšîn* is supposed to make a woman unavailable to anyone other than her mate. To speak of half of her being betrothed, implying that half of her is still accessible to other men, is therefore a contradiction. There is a discussion of Raba's view by other, later rabbis, part of which follows:

> Mar Zutra the son of R. Mari said to Ravina, "Why don't [the *qiddûšîn*] spread to include her entirely? Is it not taught, 'If one says: The leg of this animal is [sanctified as] a whole-offering, the animal in its entirety is a whole offering'?"

Mar Zutra is suggesting an analogy between sacrificial law and marriage regulations. If one designates the leg of an animal as a whole-offering, one has made, on the face of it, a nonsensical statement: the leg of an animal cannot be

offered by itself. Nonetheless, a *baraita* cited by Mar Zutra rules that the sanctity assigned by this formula to the animal's leg expands, as it were, to infuse the entire animal with holiness, resulting in our regarding the entire animal as being designated as a whole-offering. Thus, an apparently meaningless formula brings about a consequential result because its realm of applicability is automatically enlarged. The same, suggests Mar Zutra, should be true of *qiddûšîn*. While betrothal of half a woman is self-contradictory and therefore nonsensical, if we assume that the betrothal "spreads" to include the other half of the woman, a full and therefore effective betrothal should result. Although Mar Zutra's proposal is swiftly rejected, his basic assumption that an analogy can be drawn between *qiddûšîn* and sancta is not.[26]

The analogy between sacrifice and betrothal would seem to make sense only if we assume that the *qedûšâ* of offerings and the *qedûšâ* of betrothal have something in common. This would mean that when a betrothed woman is called *meqûdęšęt*, reference is being made not only to a legal state of separation and forbiddenness but also to some positive property of sanctity that results from being betrothed. It is in connection with this quality of sanctity, presumably, that sacrifice and betrothal are being compared.

3. bQiddushin 2b

A similar notion is expressed in a long post-amoraic excursus[27] that opens Bavli Qiddushin. There is a discussion of the differences between the opening words of the first mishnah in the tractate, on the one hand, and the initial words of the second chapter on the other. The first *mishnah* begins: "A woman is acquired" (נקנית); the second chapter opens with: "A man betroths" (מקדש)." It is explained that the first mishnah uses the language found in the Bible in connection with betrothal, that of acquisition, while the mishnah that opens the second chapter uses the rabbinic designation of betrothal as *qiddûšîn*. It then asked: "And what is the meaning of the rabbinic language [used to describe betrothal, namely *qiddûšîn*]? That he has forbidden her to all others as if she were *hęqdeš* [= an animal or item that has been dedicated to the Temple]."[28] Although this explanation may be based primarily on the etymological link between *hęqdeš* and *qiddûšîn*, it also implies a substantive similarity between the two; just as *hęqdeš* entails the ascription of sanctity to an animal or item, so too *qiddûšîn* signifies the assigning of holiness to the betrothed woman.[29]

Voluntary Abstinence as Qedûšâ

One of the threads running through the previous discussion is a second notion connected with *qedûšâ* in rabbinic literature, one that is not found in biblical sources and that is germane to this discussion of rabbinic asceticism. This is the association of *qedûšâ* with voluntary withdrawal from what is in principle permitted. This understanding of *qedûšâ* underlies Raba's dictum cited earlier, "Sanctify yourself within what is permitted to you," as well as R. Joshua's advice to the men of Alexandria that if one wishes to have male offspring, "he should sanctify himself during intercourse."[30] *Qedûšâ* results from forgoing even what

is permitted. *Qedûšâ* is also used in this sense in the expression הן קדושים ישראל, "the people of Israel are holy," which appears in three places in rabbinic literature,[31] in each case introducing supererogatory behavior. Thus, for example, a *baraita* cited several times in BT states that although the fat of the prohibited sciatic nerve is permitted to be eaten, nonetheless "the children of Israel are holy [הן קדושים ישראל] and they treat it as though it is forbidden."[32] Most significantly, this understanding of *qedûšâ* informs the statement by the third-century Babylonian/Palestinian R. Eleazar that whoever engages in voluntary fasting is a קדוש.[33] This idea is derived[34] *a fortiori* from the fact that the Torah designates the Nazir as a קדוש for denying himself wine. In this reading of Naziriteship the holiness of the Nazirite derives as much from the voluntary acceptance of restrictions as from the content of the particular restrictions themselves. This is the apparent intent of the following tannaitic comment: "The Nazir vowed in a manner of withdrawal [פרישות] and purity [טהרה]; therefore he is called קדוש."[35] A Nazir forswears grapes and grape products, thereby withdrawing from the permitted, and, by forbidding himself to come into contact with the dead, he maintains a level of ritual purity normally required only of the priests. The very act of accepting such restrictions, say the sages, marks him as a *qādôš*.

This same notion of *qedûšâ* may have been what led the sages to explain the designation of certain individuals as *qedôšîm* as resulting from their practice of stringencies above and beyond the norm. A number of individuals and groups are designated in rabbinic sources as *qedôšîm*, most notably Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, who is called *rabbēnû ha-qādôš*, "our holy master." The appellation אדם קדוש, "holy man," is also applied to the *tanna* R. Meir by his colleague R. Yose,[36] and the *amora* R. Simeon b. Laqish refers to him metonymically as פה קדוש, "holy mouth";[37] R. Yose himself is called גוף קדוש, "holy body," by the anonymous PT;[38] Rabbi Judah the Patriarch speaks of his colleague and disciple R. Hiyya as a holy man, אדם קדוש.[39] According to PT, a sage (?) named Nahum is known as "the holiest of the holy."[40] A variant tradition in BT reports that it is the *tanna* R. Menahem b. Sima'i and that he is known as "the son of holy ones."[41] The brothers and fellow sages R. Hanina and R. Oshaya were called "the holy rabbis in the land of Israel."[42] Additionally, at least one and perhaps two communities are designated as *qedôšîm*; BT refers to the *Qehillā' Qadîšā' de-vi-Yerûšālayîm*, "the holy congregation of Jerusalem,"[43] while Palestinian sources speak of an *'Ēdâ Qedôšâ*, a "holy assembly."[44] It is likely, though not entirely clear, that these are one and the same.[45]

Although explanations of these designations are given in the case of R. Judah the Patriarch, Nahum/R. Menahem b. Sema'i, and the "holy assembly," I believe that these were formulated after the fact. In the case of R. Judah the Patriarch the title is probably posthumous; the first sage to refer to him as "our holy master" is his student Rab.[46] A passage in bShabbat 118b that speaks of anonymous questioners asking R. Judah himself why he is called our holy master is probably a reworking of a Palestinian tradition in which the same question is asked *about* R. Judah.[47] Similarly, a *baraita* appearing in in *KalR*[48] that speaks of R. Judah as *rabbēnû ha-qādôš* is probably a later, glossed version of the tradition as it appears in bB. B. 8a, where R. Judah is called *rabî*.[49] Nonetheless, from

the explanations given we can learn what consitituted holiness for those who offered them.

Rabbi Judah the Patriarch is called holy because he never looked at his circumcision,[50] or, according to one account, because he never put his hand below his belt.[51] Nahum/ R. Menahem b. Sima'i is known as "the holiest of the holy" or "the son of holy ones" because he would never look at coins, presumably because they might contain idolatrous images.[52] R. Oshaya and R. Hanina were designated as holy men by the prostitutes for whom they made and repaired shoes because they would never lift their eyes to look at their customers.[53] And although no specific explanation is given for R. Yose being called a "holy body," a number of traditions mention his unusual modesty and sexual restraint. As with R. Judah the Patriarch, it is reported that R. Yose never looked at his circumcision,[54] and there is a tradition, which was mentioned in chapter 2, that R. Yose had intercourse only five times with his dead brother's wife, in fulfillment of his levirate obligation,[55] or, according to BT,[56] with his own wife. Of the *'Ēdâ Qedôšâ* it is said that either they divided their days into equal periods of prayer, study, and work, or that they worked in the summer and studied Torah in the winter.[57]

With the exception of the explanations given for the *'Ēdâ Qedôšâ*, all of the above interpretations assume that a *qādôš* merits his title by refraining from generally practiced actions. Moreover, all but one of these explanations is related to modesty or sexual self-restraint. It is perhaps not accidental that when called a holy man by R. Yose, R. Meir is also called a modest one.

Elsewhere, in a clear instance of retrojection, the sages apply these notions of *qedûšâ* to a biblical figure. The prophet Elisha is called "a holy man of God" (2 Kings 4:9) according to rabbinic tradition either because he never looked at the Shunamite woman[58] or because no semen was ever found on his sheets (i.e., he never had an emission).[59] Both of these interpretations apparently retroject rabbinic ideals of *qedûšâ*. We saw above that R. Hanina and R. Oshaya were considered *qedôšîm* because they never looked up at their female customers. As for the second characterization of Elisha, the sources that mention it also cite the same claim being made about the *amora* R. Samuel/Ishmael ben R. Isaac by his maidservant.

Another possible instance of retrojection can be found in *GenR*.[60] Sarah is said to encourage Hagar to become Abraham's concubine by saying: "How fortunate you are that you are cleaving to this holy body [גוף קדוש]!" Perhaps this comment is related to the midrashic tradition mentioned previously that, because Abraham never gazed at Sarah, he was unaware of her beauty until he was made aware of it accidentally on their way to Egypt. However, it seems more likely to me that this phrase is retrojecting the belief that Jews—in this case Abraham—have greater sanctity than non-Jews, that is, Hagar.

With the available data it is not possible to determine the origins of the designation *qādôš*; moreover, it seems likely that, whatever the original, more specific meaning(s) of *qādôš*, it comes to signify piety in general. Nonetheless, the fact that the appelation קדוש is often used in connection with self-denying behavior, and the attendant status attributed to those known as קדושים, suggest

a culture in which a recognized and valued sign of one's piety was voluntary abstinence, for spiritual reasons, from a generally permissible activity—that is, ascetic self-restraint.

It is not clear how, if at all, the aforementioned *Qehillā' Qadîšā' de-vi-Yerûšālayîm* and *'Ēdâ Qedôšâ* fit into this scheme, if at all. Perhaps the characterization as *qedôšâ* simply derives from the decision of each group to withdraw from society at large and form its own community. This is the conclusion reached by Joachim Jeremias, who, defining Pharisees as "separate ones" and viewing *prš* and *qdš* as synonyms, argues that the aforementioned groups were Pharisaic *habûrôt* or associations of the first-century CE.[61] Shmuel Safrai, after arguing that key members of the group were students or associates of R. Meir, links the title of the group with R. Meir's intense concern with, and stringent observance of, purity laws.[62] However, it is possible that the honorific simply signified a community of pious individuals.

The Qādôš *and the* Hāsîd

An individual similar to but significantly different from the *qādôš* is the *hāsîd*.[63] Whereas the *qādôš* is apparently distinguished by his self-restraint, the *hāsîd* generally excels in meticulous observance of the *miṣwôt*, often going beyond what is required by the letter of the law.[64] This meticulousness may, in fact, express itself in self-restraint.[65] From the association of *hasîdût* with *yir'at ḥēt*, "fear of sin," in a number of texts,[66] it would appear that this punctiliousness was motivated partially by a constant concern to avoid even the possibility of sin. This is best exemplified by the so-called *'ašam hasîdîm*, the guilt offering brought by the pious. Most sin- and guilt-offerings are brought when one discovers that one has actually sinned. However, if it is unclear whether or not an unintentional violation of a serious transgression has occurred, for which one normally brings a *hatāt*, a sin-offering, one brings an *'āšām talûy*, a suspensive guilt offering, which defers heavenly retribution unless and until one's guilt is ascertained. At that point one atones by offering a *hatāt*-offering. The *tanna* R. Eliezer reports that if one wishes one may bring a suspensive *āšām* on any day and at any time as a voluntary offering; such an offering, he says, is called *'ašam hasîdîm*. The Mishnah then recounts that Baba ben Buta pledged such a sacrifice every day of the year with the exception of the day following Yom Kippur, and even on this day he would have brought an offering had he not been prevented from doing so.[67] Thus, although there were undoubtedly *hasîdîm* who were also *qedôšîm*, and despite the appearance of both *qedûšâ* and *hasîdût* in close proximity as part of R. Pinhas b. Ya'ir's "ladder of spiritual ascent,"[68] the two terms refer to different, although sometimes overlapping, aspects of religious discipline. *Qedûšâ*, and not *hasidût*, refers specifically to the spiritual exercise of self-restraint and withdrawal.

In sum, then, many of the rabbinic usages of *qdš* are identical with those of the Tanakh. However, there are two rabbinic uses: the first, while not unique to rabbinic literature, is found there much more frequently than in biblical literature;

the second seems unique to rabbinic writings. The first is the frequent association of *qedûšâ* with sexual self-restraint, and specifically the notion that such restraint creates as well as reflects *qedûšâ*. The second is that withdrawal from what is permitted is itself a form of *qedûšâ*.[69] We find individual sages designated as *qedôšîm* because they refrain from behaviors generally permitted to others.

As a closing footnote to the discussion of *qdš* and its range of meanings in rabbinic literature, it is worth mentioning that among early Syrian Christians the term *qaddišā*, "holy one," was used to refer to married members of the church who accepted abstinence upon themselves.[70] Sebastian Brock[71] and Burton Visotzky[72] have suggested that this use of *qdš* in the sense of sexual abstinence can be found in Jewish sources. While we have seen *qdš* used by the sages in connection with sexual abstinence, we have also noted that *qdš* was used more generally in the sense of withdrawing from the generally permitted. Therefore, one must consider the possibility that, at least in part, Syrian Christians used *qdš* to refer to married couples who accepted continence because, to paraphrase Rava's dictum, they were sanctifying themselves within what was formerly permitted to them.

Perîšût

Prš *in the Qumran Scrolls, the Targumim, and Rabbinic Sources*

The verb used most frequently in the Bible to denote separation is *bdl*. In the *hif'îl* it refers to separating two entities from each other; used in the reflexive case it signifies separating oneself from another person, group or action. The root *prš* in the sense of separation hardly appears in biblical literature[73] and appears only occasionally in the Qumran scrolls;[74] in the Targumim it is often used to translate *bdl*.[75] In rabbinic sources, besides being used in the sense of physical separation,[76] *prš* is used frequently to describe mandated separation from forbidden food,[77] ritual impurity,[78] idolatry and heresy,[79] and forbidden sexual relations.[80] However, like *qdš*, *prš* also refers to voluntary abstention from permitted activities and pleasures and is often used as a synonym for *qdš* in that sense.[81] *Prš* is used in connection with voluntary withdrawal from food,[82] sex,[83] and ritual impurity.[84] In a *baraita* attributed to the second-century Palestinian R. Pinhas b. Ya'ir that has been appended to Mishnah Sotah,[85] *perîšût* is mentioned as one of the rungs on the ladder leading to spiritual perfection and salvation; it seems to refer to a general act of withdrawal, although the fact that in many versions it is associated with *tāhorâ*[86] may mean that withdrawal specifically from ritual impurity is intended.

Prš *and* Perûšîm

The sages refer in a number of places to individuals called פרושים (*perûšîm*, "separated ones"). In some cases[87] it appears to be the name of the group known as the φαρισαῖοι (Pharisees) in Josephus and the Christian Scriptures. The meaning of this appellation is far from clear and has been the subject of much schol-

arly discussion.[88] Nonetheless, it seems likely that the name has something to do with being separated from impurities and/or those who are impure.[89] In other sources the reference is to individual Jews who separated themselves from ritual impurity (and from the masses who do not practice these stringencies)[90] or to those who abstained from meat and drink as a sign of mourning for the Temple.[91] In both cases the *pārûš* observes restrictions that are not obligatory but rather are a sign and a consequence of the individual's piety; in both instances as well, the rabbinic assessment of one who practices *perîšût* appears to be positive. The פרושים/Pharisees are always contrasted with groups or individuals viewed negatively by the sages: the Sadducees and, in BT, with Alexander Janneus.[92] Individuals who are פרושים in matters of ritual purity are contrasted with the lowly *'am ha-'āreṣ*, to the detriment of the latter.

The Negative Uses of Prš

Prš can have a negative connotation as well. Hillel is reported as saying, "Do not separate yourself [תפרוש] from the community."[93] The Tosefta states that in the Amidah the sectarians are to be mentioned together with the פרושין;[94] apparently the reference here is to Jews who have separated themselves, or who have been separated, from the larger community.[95] The Israelites in the desert are described in rabbinic sources as seeking a way to separate themselves (לפרוש) from God.[96]

The "Woman Who Is a Perûšâ*" and the "Seven* Perûšîm*"*

Generally speaking, then, *perîšût*, insofar as it refers to voluntary self-denial, is a virtue in rabbinic eyes. An exception is the extensive rabbinic discussion of *perûšîm* and *perîšût* in PT and BT in connection with a rather obscure section in Mishnah Sotah:[97] "He [= R. Joshua] would say: A foolish pietist [*hāsîd*] and a cunning knave and a woman who is a *perûšâ* and the blows of the *perûšîm*, these wear out the world." We cannot easily determine the identity of the *perûšâ* and the *perûšîm* mentioned in this passage. Because understanding this mishnah can help us understand some of the nuances of the use of *prš* and may also give us some insight into rabbinic attitudes toward some forms of asceticism, I will examine these texts at length. I will first survey the interpretations of PT and BT, then turn to the observations of modern scholarship, and finally offer my own suggestions.

No interpretation of "a woman who is a *perûšâ*" is provided in BT. Abraham Geiger[98] found it incredible that the Bavli would not bother to explain how and why the term *perûšâ*, which normally has a positive connotation in its masculine form, should have a negative connotation here. He therefore favors the reading אשה פרוצה, "an immodest woman." He claims, further, that this reading is the basis for the PT's explanation of the mishnah. The Yerushalmi explains that the woman in question makes mockery of the Torah by citing such verses as "[Leah said to Jacob:] 'You shall lie with me' . . . and he lay with her that night" (Gen 30:16). A woman who cites such a verse, argues Geiger, is using the guise of Torah study to speak immodestly.

Geiger is wrong, in my opinion, for several reasons. First of all, Geiger can provide only one source, and a relatively late one at that, with the reading פרוצה. Geiger's emendation is based on a citation of this mishnah in a Parisian manuscript which in turn is quoting a letter written by Maimonides to one of his colleagues.[99] Moreover, given the orthographic similarity of צ and ש, it is quite possible that the reading פרוצה in the text cited by Geiger is the result of a scribal error, or even that Geiger misread the manuscript. Second, the principle of *lectio difficilior* suggests that it is far more likely that the original reading was the admittedly difficult אשה פרושה, which was then simplified through the emendation of פרושה to פרוצה; the reverse, that someone would change פרוצה to פרושה, is incomprehensible.[100] Third, and most important, the theme of this mishnah is to list oxymoronic personalities. We expect one who is pious to be wise and a knave to be foolish, or at least we hope for this to be so; in the mishnah's list the opposite is true, with disastrous results. So, too, with "a woman who is a *perûšâ*." In the immediately previous pericope of the *mishnah* R. Joshua states that "A woman has more pleasure in one *qab* [= a modest existence] with lechery [*tiflût*] than in nine *qab* [= a luxurious lifestyle] with abstinence [*perîšût*]." The anonymous BT explains R. Joshua's statement as follows: "A woman prefers a *qab* that has lechery with it [עמו] to nine *qab* with abstinence." M. Minkowitz[101] wrongly understands the object of עמו to be the husband and therefore misunderstands BT's clarification as being that a woman would rather be poor and together with her husband than poor and apart from him. Actually what is bothering BT is that, read literally, the *mishnah* says that women prefer lechery to abstinence and poverty to wealth; the latter assertion is, of course, counterintuitive. By glossing R. Joshua's dictum with the word עמו, the anonymous Talmud explains him as saying that, faced with the choice of poverty and lechery or wealth and abstinence, women will choose the former.

In any case, this dictum of R. Joshua's makes it clear that for him women and *perîšût* are mutually exclusive. A woman who is a *perûšâ* is therefore an "unnatural" mixing of opposites that is bound to end badly. In line with this reading PT should be understood as follows: Because a woman is constitutionally incapable, in this view, of being a true *perûšâ*, she ends up engaging in excessive prudery, mocking some passages in the Torah because they are too vulgar for her sensibilities.[102] If this reading is correct, the mishnah is in no way indicting *perîšût* but merely its being practiced by those unsuited to do so—in this case, women.

Making sense of "the blows[103] of the *perûšîm*" presents us with a much more serious challenge. If this phrase is to be understood along the same lines that I have suggested for the rest of the mishnaic list, it should refer to *perûšîm* whose behavior is at odds with their *perîšût*. This may indeed be the PT's understanding of the phrase; it explains this mishnah as follows:

> "And the blows of the *perûšîm*"—this refers to those who advise heirs to spirit away property from the widow of the deceased.
>
> As in the case of R. Shabbetai's widow who was squandering the estate's assets [in order to provide herself with sustenance]. The heirs

came and complained[104] to R. Eleazar. He said, "What shall we do for you, since you are fools?"

[R. Eleazar's?] notary came forth. He said to them, "I will say to you what was said [i.e., what R. Eleazar intended]. Conduct yourselves as if you are selling the property of the estate; [the widow] will then demand [payment of] her marriage settlement and thereby forfeit her support." They did this.

In the evening [the widow] came and complained to R. Eleazar. He said, "This woman has been struck with the blows of the *perûšîm*. May thus-and-such befall me if I intended this [stratagem]." (ySotah 3.3, 19a [= yB.B. 9.1, 16d])

Saul Lieberman[105] observes that apparently the heirs in this narrative are not providing support for the widow from the estate's property; if they were, they would be empowered to bar her from selling property from the estate in order to support herself and R. Eleazar's response would make no sense. Because the heirs are not supporting her, the widow is selling estate property on her own in order to sustain herself, her right by law.[106] Given that in such a case she is entitled to sell property privately, without the approval of the court, she may end up selling property at cut-rate prices. This, argues Lieberman, is the concern of the heirs. To this R. Eleazar replies that he cannot help them because they are fools; his intention is that there is a simple and obvious solution, namely for the heirs themselves to sell off estate property at prices acceptable to them in order to sustain the widow.

However, a notary who is present interprets R. Eleazar's remarks as an invitation for the heirs to engage in deceit. Although the heirs cannot force the widow to accept her *ketûbâ* payment and thereby forgo further support from the estate, if the widow demands payment of the *ketûbâ* before a court she is no longer entitled to sustenance.[107] His advice to them, therefore, is to act as if they are liquidating the estate; this will motivate the widow to go to court to demand her share of the estate, the *ketûbâ*, and thereby forfeit future sustenance.

The heirs follow this advice and achieve their objective; the widow demands payment of her *ketûbâ* and is barred from further support. Upon realizing that she has been duped, the widow lodges a complaint with R. Eleazar, who denies intending to advise the heirs to deceive her. He also says, however, "This woman has been struck with the blows of the *perûšîm*." How are we to understand these words?

It seems reasonable to understand R. Eleazar as saying that a *pārûš*, one from whom a superior degree of piety and learning is expected, has in this case used one of the very qualities that makes him a *pārûš*—his erudition—to inflict unjust injury. The same interpretation would apply to a second story told in the Yerushalmi, in which some of R. Judah the Patriarch's students use their knowledge of *halakhah* to render a fellow student ineligible for the *ṣedāqâ* he usually receives from R. Judah. Although R. Judah is able ultimately to undo his students' mischief, he says of the affected student, "This one was struck by the blows of the *perûšîm*." Again, the intent seems to be that those who should have used their knowledge for good have used it instead to cause hurt and loss.

What, then, is the definition of *perûšîm* in the *mishnah* according to PT? There is no definitive answer to this question, but the term seems to be used to refer to those who separate, that is distinguish, themselves in their spiritual and intellectual pursuits. It may even be that *perûšîm* is used here in the sense of Pharisees, but such an interpretation is neither necessary nor likely; the rabbis almost never refer to themselves as the party of *perûšîm*, that is, Pharisees.[108]

BT does not interpret "the blows of the *perûšîm*" directly; instead it cites a *baraita* that enumerates seven types of *perûšîm*.

> Our rabbis taught: There are seven *perûšîm*—the *pārûš sikhmi*, the *pārûš niqpi*, the *pārûš qiṣa'i*, the *pārûš medokhiya*, the *pārûš* [who says,] "What is my obligation? [Tell me] and I shall carry it out," the *pārûš* out of love, the *pārûš* out of fear. (bSotah 22b)[109]

This list also appears twice in both PT[110] and *ARN*.[111] It is obscure; there are numerous differences among the versions, many of the types listed are interpreted differently by PT and BT, and the medieval commentaries offer a panoply of interpretations as well.[112] All this leads me to believe that it is a source whose meaning was forgotten and then reconstructed by later sages on the basis of supposition rather than tradition; in other words, the original meaning of the *baraita* is virtually unrecoverable. This means both that the nature of each form of *perîšût* listed in the *baraita* is unclear and that it is uncertain whether it refers to groups or types within the Second Temple Pharisaic movement or ascetics of the rabbinic (i.e., post-Temple) period.[113]

What is the attitude of the *baraita*'s author toward the various types of *perîšût* in his list? As it appears in BT and *ARN*, the *baraita* simply lists the seven categories of *perûšîm*; there is no indication of approval or opprobrium.[114] If we hoped to get any contextual clues from *ARN* A, where the *baraita* appears in a list of items that come in sixes and sevens,[115] we are disappointed; some of the other items listed are positive, some negative, and some neutral. It seems certain that the *"pārûš* out of love," who appears in all versions other than *ARN* A, is viewed favorably. This is indubitably so according to PT's gloss (?) "like Abraham." An addendum in PT also makes it clear that—at least—the *"pārûš* out of love" is praiseworthy, as will be shown momentarily. We can infer that the fourth-century Babylonian sages Abbaye and Raba understand both "the *pārûš* out of love" and "the *pārûš* out of fear" to be positive types. When a *tanna* recites the *baraita* in their presence, they tell him to delete "the *pārûš* out of love" and "the *pārûš* out of fear"; they do so apparently because they view these forms of *perîšût* as praiseworthy while also assuming that the *baraita* is listing negative models of *perîšût*.[116]

PT adds a further comment that could clarify its attitude toward the *perûšîm* in its list were the comment itself not ambiguous. Following its explanations of each of the seven types, the following phrase appears: אין לך חביב מכולן אלא פרוש מאהבה כאברהם. Most medieval and modern scholars have understood the מ of מכולן to be partitive and therefore have taken this passage to mean: "None of the above is favored except the *pārûš* out of love, like Abraham."[117] The clear impli-

cation, according to this reading, is that the other forms of *perîšût* mentioned in the *baraita* are not laudable. However, it is also possible to understand the מ of מכולן as being comparative and to read the passage in PT as follows: "Of all these none is dearer than the *parûš* out of love, like Abraham." A similar usage is found elsewhere in rabbinic literature, as, for example, in the following passage in the *Sifre*:[118] "Of Benjamin he said: the beloved of the Lord" (Deut 33:12)—Favored [חביב] is Benjamin, for he is beloved of God. A king has many loyal subjects [אוהבים][119] but the most favored of them [וחביב מכולן] is the one whom the king loves."[120] One would be inclined to accept the former reading because the Yerushalmi's characterization of the other *perûšîm* listed seems to be negative (see further). On the other hand, it is possible that this phrase is the concluding line of the *baraita*[121] that was intended as a comparative statement that was essentially approving of all the forms of *perîšût* listed but was misunderstood by PT.

While we cannot determine with certainty what the *baraita* intends to say, we can fairly confidently establish what forms of *perîšût* PT and BT themselves find reprehensible. In PT the negative factors seem to be ostentation—as in the case of *pārûš šikhmi* who "carries his *miṣwôt* on his shoulders"[122]—and calculated self-interest, as exemplified by the *pārûš kiṣa'i* who "does one bad deed and one good one and [then] balances one against the other."[123] BT also characterizes some of the *perûšîm* listed as being overly conspicuous in their religious practices. It adds a factor not clearly in PT, however—self-mortification. Thus the anonymous Bavli interprets the *pārûš niqpi* as "one who knocks his feet against each other." The fourth-century Babylonian R. Nahman b. Yizhaq says that the *pārûš qiṣa'i* is "one who sprays [his] blood on the walls." The *pārûš medokhiya* is explained by the late third- and early fourth-century Babylonian Rabbah b. Shila as "one who is bent over[124] like a mortar";[125] this behavior seems to smack of both ostentation and self-mortification.

It is instructive to contrast the universal condemnation of self-mortification in bSotah with the following narrative:

> A Sadducee saw Raba while the latter was examining a tradition. [Raba's] fingers were resting under his thighs which pressed on his fingers; as a result blood was flowing from them. [The Sadducee] said to him, "O impulsive nation who put your mouths before your ears [= you accepted the commandments at Sinai before hearing them]! You still remain in your impulsivity! You should have listened [first]; if you were capable of accepting the commandments you would have done so, and if not, you would not have accepted it." [Raba] answered, "About us who go forward wholeheartedly it is written: "The integrity of the upright guides them" [Prov 11:3]; about those who go forth with schemes it is written: "The deviousness of the treacherous leads them to ruin" (Prov loc. cit.). (bShabbat 88a-b; cf. bKetubot 112a)

Raba, like the *pārûš kiṣa'i* as understood by R. Nahman b. Yizhaq (Raba's disciple!), is spraying his own blood in the pursuit of spiritual ends. Yet there is no indication that Raba's behavior is objectionable. Why is this so? Perhaps we are encountering once again the distinction between essential and instrumen-

tal asceticism. The Babylonian sages have nothing but contempt for those who express their piety through self-mutilation.[126] This may be the case both because they regard it as inherently wrong and because it smacks of an ostentatious piety of which they are extremely suspicious. As for suffering or self-mutilation that is not the result of calculated self-mortification but rather the by-product of intense involvement with Torah study—not only is it not denigrated but it is cited approvingly as an example of intensive dedication to Torah study.

We have seen that asceticism is part of the rabbinic vocabulary, particularly in the rabbinic use of the terms *qedûšâ* and *perîšût*. The ascetic behaviors to which this nomenclature applies include voluntary withdrawal from the permitted and self-inflicted physical suffering. Both of these, in contrast to the rabbinic asceticism discussed earlier, are direct rather than indirect. We are now ready to examine the most common form of essential asceticism practiced by the rabbis—fasting.

This page intentionally left blank

4

The Asceticism of Fasting

Not even a Jew, my dear Tiberius, fasts so scrupulously on his sabbaths as I have today.

—from a letter of Augustus to Tiberius[1]

R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Jose b. Zimra: If one fasts on Shabbat even a decree of seventy years' standing against him is torn up. Nonetheless, he is punished for not making Shabbat a delight. What is his remedy? R. Nahman b. Isaac said: Let him fast another fast to atone for this one.

—bBerakhot 31b

Scholars of asceticism have pointed out that ascetics are often social critics and that in part they criticize society by withdrawing from it in significant ways;[2] in Ramsay MacMullen's admirably succinct formulation, "what one avoids, one condemns."[3] Thus celibacy and fasting are not only forms of personal self-discipline; they are also a means of disentangling oneself from the world.[4] For some Christians, as Peter Brown has noted,[5] it was an effort to bring human history to an end. Rabbinic Judaism, with its insistence on procreation and communal study and its concern for social welfare, could not envision a retreat from societal life. It is true that the early sages in particular, perhaps following in the footsteps of the Pharisees, separated themselves from the rest of society through the establishment of stringent supererogatory purity laws.[6] Within their own circle, however, they led lives of social interaction. As the popular saying cited by the fourth-century Babylonian Raba puts it, "Either fellowship or death."[7] Moreover, as the rabbinic movement developed, it sought, or at least accepted, greater and greater accommodation with the larger Jewish community.[8]

The contours of rabbinic asceticism are therefore necessarily different from these of Christianity and other religions which allow or even encourage withdrawal and isolation. What *was* possible for the sages was either total abstinence periodically or partial withdrawal permanently. Periodic fasting is an example of the first; qualitatively restricted sexual interaction (as in the case of R. Eliezer; see chapter 1) is an example of the second. In the realm of sex, periodic withdrawal is already a part of biblical religion. A man may not have relations with a menstruant woman, or *niddâ*,[9] for seven days following the onset of her menses.[10] This prohibition was extended by the sages; a woman who had her period was expected to pass five (according to some versions), six, or seven days (depending on the duration of her menstrual flow) without experiencing bleeding before she was allowed to resume relations with her husband:

> R. Joseph said in the name of R. Judah who said in the name of Rab, Rabbi [Judah the Patriarch] instituted in Sadoth:[11] If she bled for one day let her wait[12] six additional days. If she bled for two days let her wait six[13] additional days. If she bled for three days let her count seven additional days. (bNiddah 66a)

The reason for the third part of this ordinance is apparently the concern lest women confuse menstrual bleeding with nonmenstrual flux. If the latter takes place for three consecutive days, a woman is required biblically to count seven "clean" days and then purify herself[14] (and, when there is a temple, bring sacrifices on the eighth day)[15] before resuming sexual relations.

R. Ze'ira, who flourished at the turn of the fourth century and who studied in both Babylonia and Palestine, reports that "the daughters of Israel were stringent" in extending the requirement of seven "clean" days to all cases of bleeding, "even the size of mustard seed."[16] Elsewhere in the Bavli this is cited by the fourth-century Abbaye as an example of a "cut and dried law."[17] Thus there were significant rabbinic extensions of the *niddâ* law restrictions beyond the biblical requirements. The motivation for these extensions is not entirely clear; in any case, these ordinances or practices became obligatory for the rabbinic community at large and are therefore not germane to the discussion of rabbinic asceticism as I defined it in chapter 1.

An area in which the rabbis did engage in voluntaristic asceticism was fasting. Besides those fasts that were observed regularly to mourn the destruction of the First and Second Temples,[18] and in addition to public fasts which were declared occasionally as a response to catastrophe, some rabbis chose to fast regularly as part of their spiritual discipline. Before discussing rabbinic fasting itself I will first survey the role of fasting in biblical, Second Temple, and nonrabbinic post-Destruction Judaism.

Biblical Fasting

There is little evidence for ascetic fasting in the biblical period. H. A. Brongers lists seven types of biblical fasting: "(a) fasting after a death (II Sam 1:12, II Sam

12:16–23); (b) war-fasting (I Sam 14:24); (c) preparatory or introductory fasting (Exod 34:28,[19] Judges 20:26; I Sam 27:20, I Kings 21:9); (d) fasting as a potent auxiliary of prayer, in particular of an intercession-prayer (I Sam 7:5sq., II Sam 12, Neh 1:4sq.); (e) expiatory fasting (I Sam 7:6, Jer 36:9, Joel 2:12, Jonah 3); (f) concomitant fasting (Esther 4:6); (g) the so-called Zechariah-fastings (Zech 8:19)."[20] None of these fasts appears to be part of an ongoing spiritual discipline.[21] The closest the Torah comes to describing such fasting is the forty-day fast of Moses when he ascends Sinai to receive the divine revelation.[22] Brongers includes this among the preparatory or introductory fasts, but this notion is difficult to accept; Moses does not fast in preparation for the ascent but rather during his stay atop the mountain.[23] It would appear, as Nahum Sarna suggests, that "in the presence of the ultimate Source of holiness and in communication with Him . . . [Moses] transcends the constraints of time and is released from the demands of his physical being."[24] This is an idealized form of the ascetic experience; unlike the ascetic who must decide consciously to fast and must struggle constantly with his hunger, Moses is so engaged by the world of spirit that his bonds to the material world loosen and slip away of their own accord. In that sense, Moses' abstention from food is not a true fast; it appears not to have been a decision taken consciously on his part but rather a natural result of his being in God's presence.

Food restrictions in biblical Israel that are self-imposed or that apply only to an elite are not limited to total fasting. We also have examples of groups and individuals who abstain from particular food items. The priests are not permitted to drink wine while serving in the Temple;[25] according to Ezekiel the prohibition against eating the flesh of an animal that has died of natural causes applies only to them.[26] The Nazirite, who will be discussed later at great length, refrains from the consumption of any grape products.[27] Numbers speaks of a woman who vows *le'anot nāfęš*, "to afflict [her] soul."[28] This is essentially the same phrase used to describe the obligation of Yom Kippur, which was understood as fasting; it is therefore likely that the vows included forbidding all or some food to oneself by means of a vow. The Rehabites, who are held up by Jeremiah, as an example of steadfast faith, refrain from drinking wine.[29] This restriction, combined with their abstention from dwelling in houses, farming, and viticulture, suggests "a renunciation of the agrarian and urban life to which their nation had long since assimilated."[30] Daniel abstains from savory food, meat, and wine for three weeks,[31] probably as a preparation for receiving a revelation.[32]

Fasting in Second-Temple and Nonrabbinic Early Post-Temple Writings

Fasting is mentioned more frequently in works from the Second Temple and early post-Temple periods;[33] moreover, we have many more instances of fasting by individuals. These fasts fall under three headings: mourning, penance and supplication, and preparation for visions. While only this third type of fasting is obviously ascetic, involving self-denial in the pursuit of spiritual perfec-

tion, it seems reasonable to describe as ascetic any fasting that becomes a regular part of one's religious regimen. Thus, for example, scholars have assumed that Judith, who is said to have fasted every day except for the eve of Sabbath, Sabbath itself, the eve of the New Moon, the New Moon itself, and the other holidays,[34] fasted to mourn the death of her husband.[35] While this may be so, Judith clearly concerns herself elsewhwere with bodily[36] and alimentary[37] purity. Whatever else it may signify, her fasting seems related to, or at least consistent with, these concerns as well.

In this respect the approach to Jewish fasting should be no different from the consideration of Christian fasting. Thus while Christian fasting is generally thought to be ascetic, in fact it is sometimes described by the Church Fathers as a kind of mourning. Two motifs appear often; one is that, as Gregory of Nazianzus (fourth c.) puts it, "we fast now because we did not fast then [in the Garden of Eden], conquered by the tree of knowledge."[38] The second bases itself on Luke 5:35 ("But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them; then, in those days, they will fast") and explains the Christian custom of fasting on Wednesday and Friday, the *stationes*, as mourning the betrayal and crucifixion of Jesus.[39]

Regular penitential fasting is described in a number of apocryphal works. In Tobit the angel Raphael tells Tobit and Tobias, "Prayer with fasting and alms with uprightness are better than riches with iniquity."[40] Ben Sira may be referring to individual fasting in the following verse: "Just so with someone who fasts for sin, and then goes and commits it again. Who is going to hear that person's prayer? What is the good of the self-abasement?"[41] The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* mention seven years of fasting by Reuben to atone for sleeping with his father's concubine,[42] two years of fasting by Simeon in order to overcome the vice of envy,[43] Judah's refraining from wine and meat "until old age" as penance for having intercourse with his daughter-in-law Tamar,[44] and seven years of fasting by Joseph in order to resist the temptations of Potiphar's wife.[45] The first-century[46] *Psalms of Solomon* declare : "The righteous constantly searches his house to remove his unintentional sins. He atones for (sins of) ignorance by fasting and humbling his soul."[47] All these verses, particularly the last, suggest fasting not only as penance for particular sins but as a regular spiritual regimen.[48]

The notion of regular fasting also seems to be present in the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, a work that probably predates the Destruction.[49] In chapter 7 of that work an angel shows Zephaniah a manuscript that lists his sins. Among them are days on which he did not fast or did not pray at the proper time.[50] Finally, we read the following in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, probably composed in Egypt some time before the destruction of the Alexandrian community in 117 CE:[51]

> Remember that from the time he created the heavens the Lord created the fast for a benefit to men on account of the passions and desires which fight against you so that the evil will not inflame you. "But it is a pure fast which I have created," says the Lord. The one who fasts continually will not sin although jealousy and strife are within him. Let the pure one fast, but whenever the one who fasts is

> not pure he has angered the Lord and also the angels. And he has grieved his soul, gathering up wrath for himself on the day of wrath. But a pure fast is what I created, with a pure heart and pure hands. It releases sin. It heals diseases. It casts out demons. It is effective up to the throne of God for an ointment and for a release from sin by means of a pure prayer.[52]

According to this translation by O. S. Wintermute, the author speaks of continual fasting. However, Wintermute points out[53] that in other texts "continually" modifies the word "sins" later in the verse rather than the word "fasts"; even in the manuscript that serves as the basis for this translation it is possible to read the verse in this way.

One of the most interesting descriptions of fasting as ascetic regimen can be found in the *History of the Rehabites*. The biblical Rehabites, descendants of Yonadav ben Rekhav, are cited by Jeremiah as exemplary because of their loyalty to the traditions received from their ancestors. They drank no wine, did not build or dwell in houses, and did not cultivate fields or vineyards. Jeremiah offers no reason for their behavior, other than filial fealty. The author of the *History of the Rehabites*, however, transforms the Rehabites into ascetics who fast and practice limited celibacy: "And our virtuous wives, who with us had surrendered themselves to God, now abide separately among us in this land while remaining as we (do) in a fast and praise and prayer to God."[54]

Fasting in order to receive visions also appears in a number of works, including 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and the *Ascension of Isaiah*.[55] The *Apocalypse of Abraham*, composed between 70 CE and middle of second century CE,[56] describes a vision granted to Abraham. In preparation for this vision he is commanded by an angel: "But for forty days abstain from every kind of food cooked by fire and from drinking of wine and from anointing yourself with oil."[57] In fact, Abraham eats nothing for forty days, "because my food was to see the angel who was with me, and his discourse with me was my drink."[58] Abraham must fast several more times in connection with God's appearing to him.[59] 3 Baruch, composed sometime in the first or second century CE, speaks of Noah's fasting for forty days before he asks what will happen if he plants a grapevine.[60]

The Gospels and Acts make reference to individuals who fasted regularly. Thus in challenging the practice of Jesus and his disciples not to fast, the Pharisees mention that "John [the Baptist's] disciples are always fasting and saying prayers."[61] The prophetess Anna is described as "serving God night and day with fasting and prayer."[62]

In contrast to the relative frequency of fasting among Jews in late antiquity, fasting in the Graeco-Roman world, while not unknown, was rare. Most fasting in the Graeco-Roman world was connected to particular cults and was required of officiants or devotees of the cult as a prelude to receiving a vision.[63] Moreover, Rudolf Arbesmann points out that the vast majority of cults that prescribed fasting had an eastern origin, suggesting that much of the impetus for cultic fasting was not indigenous to the Graeco-Roman world.[64] Recently Veronika Grimm has cast doubt even on the relatively few cases of fasting catalogued by

Arbesmann, in part because the actual practices of the mystery cults, to which much of the fasting is attributed, are notoriously difficult to ascertain.[65] In addition to the instances of fasting just mentioned, a handful of Greek and Roman priesthoods were subject to food prohibitions.[66] It is perhaps because fasting was so rare in Graeco-Roman society that, besides Sabbath observance and circumcision, it was the Jews fasting that was the aspect of Judaism most noted by Greek and Latin writers. Similarly, Herodotus[67] found the fasts of Egyptian priests before entering the sanctuary strange and noteworthy.

Ascetic Fasts among the Sages

In considering the sages and their adoption of fasting as an ascetic practice, it is important to remember that the rabbinic movement took shape in the decades following the great war with Rome, the sacking of Jerusalem, and the destruction of its Temple. These events provided three distinct stimuli[68] to fasting among Palestinian Jews generally and rabbinic Jews specifically. Let us examine each one.

Fasting as Mourning

As was noted earlier, a common reaction to the death of a loved one in biblical times was to fast. Although this custom fell into disuse during the Second Temple period, the practice of fasting in order to commemorate and mourn national catastrophe remained. Although there is some controversy about whether or not the so-called "Zechariah fasts," that is, the fasts mentioned in Zechariah 8:19 that commemorated the destruction of the First Temple, continued to be observed during the Second Temple period, the evidence points to the continued observance of at least one of these fasts throughout this era: the Ninth of Av.[69] This fact indicates that the destruction of the First Temple was of sufficient significance that it was mourned despite the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel and the rebuilding of the Temple. We should not be surprised, then, if Jews reacted to the destruction of the Second Temple with mourning rites that included fasting. Thus in 2 Baruch, which purports to describe the destruction of the First Temple but is actually a reaction to the destruction of the second,[70] Baruch and Jeremiah are described as reacting to the Temple's destruction by tearing their garments, weeping and mourning, and fasting for seven days.[71]

A famous rabbinic source speaks of partial abstention rather than total fasting as some Jews' reaction to the destruction of the Temple:

> From the time that the second temple was destroyed *perûšîm* multiplied in Israel, neither drinking wine nor eating meat.[72] R. Joshua met them. He said to them, "My children, why do you not eat meat?" They replied, "Shall we eat meat, that which was offered each day on the altar which has ceased to exist?" He replied to them, "We should not." [He questioned them further:] "And why do you not drink

wine?" They replied, "Shall we drink wine, that which was libated each day on the altar which has now ceased to exist?" He replied to them, "We should not."

[He continued:] "If so, we should not eat bread, from which they brought the two loaves [on Shavuot] and the showbread. We should not drink water, which they libated. We should not eat figs or grapes, from which first fruits were brought on Shavuot." They were silent.

He [then] said to them, "My children, to mourn too much is impossible and not to mourn is impossible. Rather, this is what the rabbis said: 'A man plasters his house with plaster and leaves a bit [unplastered], to commemorate Jerusalem . . .'"[73]

Of course the self-afflictions of the *perûšîm* are conventional forms of mourning, but the explanations given for them suggest a specific sense in which at least partial abstinence is an appropriate response to the Temple's destruction. The altar was the place where gifts of food were made to God; these gifts were understood to be the catalyst for God's blessing his people with sustenance in return. In some cases, moreover, permission to partake of one's own food was dependent upon the appropriate sacrifices having been first offered to God. Thus the new harvest was not permitted for consumption until the offering of the *'omer* sacrifice on the second day of Passover and not permitted for sacrificial purposes until after the offering of the two loaves on Shavuot.[74] In order to consume the produce of one's fields, one first had to apportion gifts for God's appointed servants, the priests and the Levites.[75] This same notion presumably underlies the interdiction, cited in the name of R. Eliezer b. Ya'aqov, against eating before reciting the morning prayers.[76] Here, too, the mourners may be arguing that they may not partake of meat or wine because it is not possible after the Temple's destruction to offer God's portion first on the altar.[77]

R. Joshua is a prominent rabbinic figure from the late Second Temple[78] and early post-Destruction period. His response, which is doubtlessly intended to represent the rabbinic position, is to reject this view through the use of *reductio ad absurdum* and to argue that the Temple's destruction be commemorated in a more modest and less self-denying fashion. It is not clear, however, what he means when he says that "to mourn too much is impossible." Does he refer to the physical rigors of abstention or is he voicing an ideological objection to their position? From the use of the same expression, אי אפשר, to characterize the option of mourning too little, it would appear that it is being used in the sense of "inappropriate" and that the objection to abstention is based on ideological grounds rather than on health considerations.

However, another version[79] of the narrative suggests otherwise. In this reading R. Joshua rejects the option of intensive mourning because אין גוזרין גזירה על הציבור אלא אם כן רוב הציבור יכולין לעמוד בה, "we do not issue a decree unless most of the community can abide by it." This language is echoed in a view attributed to R. Ishmael:

R. Ishmael[80] said, "From the day the temple was destroyed it would be proper not to eat meat or drink wine; however, the court may not

> issue a decree by which the community cannot abide." (tSotah 15.10 [243; = bB.B. 60b])[81]

This formulation suggests that in theory the *perûšîm* are right; their position is rejected only because of the practical impossibility of imposing their practice on the community as a whole. R. Joshua's objection is not to the existence of *perûšîm* but rather to the fact that there were so many of them (רבו; compare R. Joshua's reference to רוב הציבור). This line of reasoning gives implicit sanction to individuals who wish to accept a regimen of mourning fasts upon themselves.

The sages also considered celibacy as a possible response to catastrophe; however, this option is rejected in practice. In the continuation of his remarks R. Ishmael says the following:

> He used to say: Because they are uprooting the Torah from our midst we should decree that the world should be desolate. We should neither marry nor have children nor perform circumcisions until Abraham's seed comes to an end of its own accord. They said to him: Better that the community should sin unintentionally rather than intentionally.

In theory, then, R. Ishmael also approves of celibacy in light of Roman persecution. However, if Saul Lieberman's analysis is correct,[82] R. Ishmael (or R. Simeon b. Gamliel) took this position in response to the Hadrianic persecutions of his time, which were directed specifically against marriage and circumcision among the Jews. Under such circumstances celibacy is the only way to ensure that the Torah is not violated.

Another rabbinic source that considers whether or not abstinence is the appropriate response to oppression is the midrash concerning Moses' father, Amram.[83] When Pharaoh issues the decrees that all male children of the Israelites are to be cast into the Nile, Amram separates from his wife, reasoning that it would be wrong and pointless to have children that were going to be killed by the Egyptians in any case. His daughter Miriam, however, disputes this position, arguing that her father is being crueler than Pharaoh; Pharaoh's decree, after all, applied only to the male children, whereas Amram was foreclosing the possibility of having any children at all. Amram concedes the compelling logic of her argument; he returns to his wife and consequently Moses is born. It is likely that this midrash reflects rabbinic discussion of the appropriate responses to the persecutions of their own day.

A related notion found in rabbinic literature is that one practice abstinence at a time of natural disaster. Both Noah and Joseph are cited in rabbinic sources as exemplars of this behavior.[84]

Returning to fasting, we have virtually no evidence of rabbis fasting as a means of mourning the Temple's destruction other than their observance of the Zechariah fasts, although they advocate other means of remembering the Temple[85] and mourning its destruction.[86] A notable exception is Eliezer Ze'ira, apparently a contemporary of Samuel (i.e., fl. first half of the 3rd c.), who dressed

in black shoes to mourn the destruction of Jerusalem. Agents of the exilarch, considering this act arrogance on his part because they did not think him worthy of such behavior, imprisoned him. He was subsequently able to prove his scholarly status and was released.[87] Unfortunately, we know nothing about the identity of Eliezer Ze'ira. Moshe Beer[88] cites Samuel Klein, who theorizes that Eliezer Ze'ira was one of the Palestinian "mourners of Zion" (*'abēlē Ṣiyyôn*), and Arthur Marmorstein, who states this as a fact. However, as Beer implies, the question remains an open one.[89]

Other than Eliezer Ze'ira, the closest association between rabbinic fasting and the Temple's destruction can be found in the fasts of the first-century Palestinian R. Zadoq which were intended to *avert* the Temple's destruction.[90] The function of such fasting, however, is to propitiate rather than to mourn.

Finally, a midrashic tradition appearing in early medieval sources claims that the fasting of the Rehabites was a form of mourning. Although, as has been noted, the fasting of the Rehabites seems to have been a form of ascetic discipline, in the Tanhuma[91] the behavior of the Rehabites is interpreted as anticipatory mourning for the eventual destruction of the Temple, about which Yonadab ben Rekhab (!) learned from one of Jeremiah's prophecies.[92] This interpretation is obviously a retrojection—no fasting is mentioned in Jeremiah in connection with the Rehabites—and it suggests a familiarity with, and acceptance of, perpetual fasting as a form of mourning for the destroyed Temple.

Taking all these texts as a whole, it seems likely that the sages favored fasting as a response to the Temple's destruction when practiced by the elite, symbolized by the Rehabites in the midrash already mentioned. They objected only when fasting threatened the normal functioning of the larger community.

Fasting as Sacrifice

The mishnah describes a Temple-related practice known as the *ma'amādôt*. Its intent was to involve others besides the priests in the daily sacrificial ritual, as the Mishnah itself explains:

> What are the *ma'amādôt*?[93] In that it is written, "Command the Israelite people and say to them: Be punctilious in presenting to Me at stated times the food due Me, as offerings by fire of pleasing odor to Me" (Num 28:2); how can a man's offering be offered while he does not stand by it? Therefore the first prophets ordained twenty four courses [*mismarôt*], and for every course there was a *ma'amad* in Jerusalem, made up of priests, Levites and Israelites.[94] When it came time for a course to go up, its priests and Levites went up to Jerusalem, and its Israelites came together in their own cities to read the story of creation. (mTa'anit 4.2)

As is explained in a tannaitic passage that appears in the Mishnah but seems to be an interpolation,[95] the members of the *ma'amād* would fast Monday through Thursday:

> And the men of the *maʿamād* fasted four days in the week, from the second to the fifth day. And they did not fast on the eve of the Sabbath because of the honor due to the Sabbath, nor on the first day of the week, so that they should not go forth from rest and pleasure to weariness and fasting and [thereby] die. (mTaʿanit 4.3)

While this tannaitic passage explains why there was no fasting on Sunday and Friday,[96] it does not explain why there was fasting Monday through Thursday. PT cites a *baraita* that explains these fasts as a series of petitions on behalf of population groups that were at risk:

> The members of the *mišmār* would fast every day. On Monday they fasted for the [sake of the] seafarers—"God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water'" (Gen 1:6). On Tuesday they fasted for the travelers—"God said, 'Let the water below the sky be gathered'" (Gen 1:9). On Wednesday they fasted for the infants so that *'askārâ*[97] should not enter their mouths—"God said, Let there be lights [מאורות]'" (Gen 1:14); it is written [defectively]: מארות [which can be read *me'ērôt*, curses]. On Thursday, they fasted for the pregnant women that they should not abort and for nursing mothers that their children should not die—"God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures'" (Gen 1:20). (yTaʿanit 4.3, 68b; cf. bTaʿanit 27b)

This *baraita* intertwines the two central practices of the *maʿamad*, fasting and reading the creation story in Genesis 1,[98] by associating each day's fasting with a theme found in the reading for that day. The choice of the creation story as the reading for the *maʿamadôt* presumably reflects a belief, expressed frequently in rabbinic literature, that the world's existence depends on the sacrificial cult[99]—and, by extension, the *maʿamadôt*, as expressed in the following passage in BT:

> R. Yaʿaqob b. Aha said in the name of R. Assi: If not for the *maʿamadôt* heaven and earth could not continue to exist.[100] As Scripture says, "[And Abraham said to God:] How shall I know that I am to possess [the land of Canaan]?" (Gen 15:8) Abraham said, "Master of the universe, perhaps, if Israel sins before you, you will do to them what you did to the generation of the Flood and the generation of the tower of Babel?" God replied, "No." Abraham then said, "Tell me, then, master of the universe, through what means I will inherit [the land]." God replied, "Bring me a three-year-old heifer, a three-year-old she-goat etc." (Gen 15:9) Abraham said, "Master of the universe, this is well when the temple is standing; when the temple is not standing what will happen to [Israel]?" God replied, "I have already established for them the order of the sacrifices [i.e., the Scriptural description of the sacrificial rites]; when the people read these portions I count it as if they actually have offered the sacrifices and I forgive them for all their sins." (bTaʿanit 27b [= bMegillah 31b]).

The full import of this teaching is not clear. Is it referring only to the importance of the *maʿamādôt* that accompanied the sacrifices in Temple times, or is it alluding to a custom of *maʿamādôt* that continued in some form well after the destruction of the Temple? Ephraim E. Urbach,[101] on the basis of the statement of R. Yaʿaqob b. Aha in the name of R. Assi just cited and the fact that R. Yohanan explains that the *maʾamādôt*'s not fasting on Sunday was not because of the Christians (clearly a post-Destruction concern),[102] argues that the *maʿamādôt* continued in some form in Eretz Israel even after the Destruction.[103] There is no question that the statement cited in R. Assi's name is suggestive. Indeed, it is cited in an influential fourteenth-century legal code[104] as the basis for the practice of reading portions of the sacrificial rite as part of the morning service. R. Yohanan's statement, however, may simply be an anachronistic explanation of an earlier institution.

The formulation that Urbach cites from *Masseḵẖeṯ Sôferîm* is at best ambiguous. The passage reads as follows: דבר אחר :מפני הנוצרים שלא יאמרו על כי שמחים בראשן הם מתענים בו ,אבל אמרו חכמים בזמן מעמדות לא היו חוששין לאיבת גוי, אלא משום דכתיב וינפש ,וי לנפש. "Another explanation [of why the *maʿamādôt* did not fast on Sunday]: because of the Christians, so that they should not say, 'Because we are joyful [on this day] they are fasting.' However, the sages said: In the time of the *maʿamādôt* they were not concerned with gentile enmity; rather, the reason is because Scripture states [regarding the Sabbath] 'And he rested' [which we read midrashically] 'Woe to the soul [after Shabbat has departed; i.e. the soul is weak immediately after Shabbat and cannot bear fasting].'"[105] Rather than point to the continuation of *maʿamādôt* in the post-Destruction period, this passage seems to me to confirm its cessation. Initially the practice of the *maʿamādôt* not to fast on Sunday is explained in terms of the Christians, but the passage then rejects that explanation precisely because it is anachronistic (not, interestingly, because Christianity is assumed not to have been a threat during the Second Temple period, but because as a sovereign people the Jews did not concern themselves with gentile opinion).

We do know of a custom of reciting biblical verses describing the sacrificial order attributed to a R. Elijah the Elder b. Menahem of Le Mans;[106] according to a tradition of the sixteenth-century R. Solomon Luria,[107] this R. Elijah was a nephew of Hai Gaon, meaning that he lived in the mid-eleventh century. A *maʿamādôt* rite appears in one manuscript of the ninth-century (?) *Seder Rav Amram Gaon* but not in the others, and it may be a late addition to the original work.[108] In any case, these are relatively late reports that are not Palestinian in origin;[109] they suggest a newly developed custom rather than the continuation of an old one.

One must therefore consider the possibility that the statement cited is a melding of two originally discrete teachings. The first, perhaps drawing on the tannaitic tradition that the members of the *mišmār* would pray that the sacrifices offered by their fellow Jews be received favorably by God,[110] equates the centrality of the *maʿamādôt* to cosmic existence with that of the sacrifices. A second teaching goes further and argues, in the tradition of numerous other rabbinic statements, that in the absence of the actual sacrificial rites, reading the Torah's description of these rites suffices.

In any case, the picture that emerges from the tannaitic sources cited is that the *maʿamādôt*, together with the sacrifices, sustained the Jewish community and indeed the very cosmos itself. The members of the *maʿamād*, moreover, apparently supplement the animal, meal, and wine oblations by offering themselves symbolically through the act of fasting. This practice would help explain the apparent paradox that while priests serving in the Temple and one bringing an offering to the Temple may not fast,[111] the members of the *maʿamād* not only may but must.[112] The notion that fasting itself can be seen as a form of sacrifice is expressed by the late third- and early fourth-century Babylonian R. Sheshet:

> After he fasted R. Sheshet would say the following after his [obligatory] prayers: Master of the universe! It is revealed before you that when the Temple was standing if one would sin one would offer a sacrifice; only its fat and blood would be offered upon the altar, and the sinner would be granted atonement. Now, I have sat and fasted and thereby my fat and blood have been diminished. May it be your will that my fat and blood which have been diminished be considered as though I have offered them before you on the altar, and may my offering find favor before you.[113]

It may also be reflected in the following statement of the *amora* R. Eleazar (Babylonia and Eretz Israel, 3rd c.): "Fasting is greater than almsgiving. What is the reason? [Fasting] one does with one's body; [almsgiving] one does with one's money."[114] If R. Eleazar means for the comparison to be rigorous, he is regarding fasting as an offering.

There is significant evidence to suggest that, perhaps under the influence of the *maʿamādôt*, it became common practice for the pious to fast on Mondays and Thursdays. This evidence includes both tannaitic[115] and later rabbinic statements[116] as well as early Christian references[117] to regular fasting by the Pharisees. Scholars debate whether this practice was already common at the end of the Second Temple period or whether it developed only after the Destruction. Urbach,[118] citing the end of *Megillat Taʿanît*, claims that this practice developed after the Destruction as a way of continuing the institution of *maʿamādot* in a more attenuated fashion. Gedalyah Alon[119] argues that this practice predates the Destruction.[120] He cites the *Didache*, edited no later than the middle of the second century but probably containing much earlier material (Alon himself calls it a late first-century or early second-century work):

> But let not your fasts be with the hypocrites; for they fast on the second and fifth day of the week; but you fast on the fourth day and the preparation (i.e., Friday).[121]

This passage, which bears a striking similarity to Matthew 6:16–18, presumably means Jews who have not accepted Christ when it speaks of hypocrites. If Jewish fasting on Monday and Thursday were not a well-established practice before the Destruction, claims Alon, it is unlikely to have been so widespread by the end of the first century that it would have been discussed by Christian writers of that period. Nonetheless, Alon would presumably agree that the im-

petus to fast was intensified by the destruction of the Temple and the consequent need for an alternative mode of expiation. This notion is encapsulated nicely by Urbach: "The fasts that multiplied after the Destruction also assumed the character of a surrogate and replacement for the atonement effected by the sacrifices."[122]

We should note, finally, that fasting is a form of self-inflicted suffering, and suffering is also equated with sacrifice by some of the sages.[123] The most explicit formulation of this view is the following:

> R. Nehemiah said: Precious are sufferings; for just as sacrifices bring pardon [מרצין] so too sufferings bring pardon [מרצין]. What does Scripture say regarding sacrifices? "That it may be acceptable [ונרצה] in his behalf, in expiation for him" (Lev 1:4). [And] what does Scripture say regarding suffering? "And they will atone for [ירצו] their iniquity" (Lev 26:43). And not only this, but sufferings bring pardon even more so than sacrifices. For sacrifices are by means of one's possessions, but sufferings are by means of one's body. And thus Scripture states: "Skin for skin—all that a man has he will give up for his life"[124] (Job 2:4). (*MdRY*, Massekhet Ba-Hodesh 10 [240 = *Sifre Deuteronomy* 32 (57)])

Similarly, in bBerakhot 5b the Bavli records a *baraita* according to which the four types of skin diseases that render one ritually impure are like an altar for atonement for one who suffers from them. In bBerakhot 5a-b we read the following: "A *tanna* taught in R. Yohanan's presence, 'Whoever engages in Torah study and acts of lovingkindess and has to bury one's own children is forgiven for all his sins.'" The couplet "Torah/acts of lovingkindness" is a familiar one in rabbinic literature; the third item listed here, however, is jarring (indeed, R. Yohanan subsequently questions its appropriateness). However, one is put in mind of the famous teaching of Simeon the Righteous: "The world stands on three things—Torah, [the temple] service, and acts of lovingkindness" (mAvot 1.2). It is possible that the author of the teaching transmitted by R. Yohanan's *tanna* reworked that tradition, substituting burying one's own children for the Temple service. If so, this teaching envisions the death of one's children as a substitute for sacrificial offerings.

Elsewhere BT cites the teaching of R. Eleazar according to which the blood of a bruise atones (מרצה) in the same way that the blood of a whole-offering does.[125] In yet another passage it is said that suffering is to be accepted willingly just as sacrifices are offered willingly.[126]

Other sources, while they do not explicitly equate suffering with sacrifice, speak of the atoning power of suffering. The following passage appears in the context of a discussion of how one may atone for various types of sin:

> But for someone who intentionally desecrated the Name of Heaven and repented repentance does not have the power to suspend [punishment] nor does the Day of Atonement [by itself] atone. Rather, repentance and the Day of Atonement atone a third, and suffering

> atones a third, and the day of death cleanses along with suffering.[127] And regarding this it says, "This iniquity shall never be forgiven you [until you die]" (Is 22:14)—this teaches that the day of death finally cleanses. (tY.K. 4[5].8 [252]; cf. bYoma 86a [= *ARN* 29 (44b)]).

As David Kraemer[128] notes, although sacrifice is not mentioned here specifically, both in the Tosefta and in the Bavli this tradition appears in connection with a mishnah that begins with a discussion of the atoning power of sacrifice.[129] Thus suffering seems to be assigned a role analogous to that of sacrifice.

We also are told of a number of rabbis[130] who call suffering upon themselves as a means of atoning for their sins. Even the suffering that is brought upon the righteous as a punishment for their sins sometimes serves as an atonement for the people as a whole; witness the case of R. Judah the Patriarch. Both PT[131] and BT[132] agree that he suffered—from toothaches, according to the Yerushalmi; from gallstones and scurvy, according to the Bavli—for thirteen years as a punishment for being insensitive to the suffering of a calf bound for slaughter. Nonetheless, it is also recorded that during those thirteen years no woman in the Land of Israel died in childbirth or miscarried, according to the Palestinian tradition, while the Babylonian tradition claims that there was never drought during this period.

Fasting as Naziritism

THE NAZIR: A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS. If we look to the biblical period for a paradigm of ascetic behavior, the most obvious choice is the Nazirite (Num 6:1–21).[133] But here we must confront a conundrum. Clearly Naziriteship involves self-denial; a Nazirite is required to refrain from consuming wine and other grape products, may not come into contact with a corpse, and must let his or her[134] hair grow for the duration of one's Naziriteship. What is not clear is: To what end does one accept these restrictions upon oneself? Specifically, in terms of the issues concerning us in this study, is the essence of Naziriteship these very acts of self-denial or are they intended to serve some larger purpose? Scholars have sought a compelling answer to this question but have not found one.[135] Some have pointed to the parallel between Nazirite and prophet in Amos 2:11–12 as an indication that Nazirites must have served some significant role in the religious life of biblical Israel.[136] On the basis of the implied—according to a Qumran text, explicit—Nazirite status of Samuel (see 1 Sam 1:11), Jacob Licht has suggested, albeit hesitantly, that Nazirites could and did serve in the sanctuary.[137] As Licht himself seems to acknowledge, the evidence for his assertion is slim indeed; only if more supportive data are found can this possibility be assumed. Moreover, even if Samuel was in fact a Nazirite, it is far from clear that his service at Shiloh was an expression or result of this status.[138] It would seem, therefore, that a fresh approach to this problem is in order, based both on linguistic and formal considerations.

To begin with what is clear, James Frazer and many others since have demonstrated that in many cultures hair is seen as representing the essence of an

individual and is therefore often sacred or taboo or is given as an offering to the deity.[139] An ancient Phoenician inscription from Cyprus listing Temple expenses includes the cost of paying גלבם, or barbers; apparently at least some of those who offered sacrifices had to have their hair cut.[140] Another Cyprus inscription dating from 800 BCE, according to its editor, alludes to offerings of hair.[141] According to an account attributed to the second-century author Lucian, Syrians who worshipped at Hierapolis left the hair of both boys and girls unshorn as being consecrated; before marriage, the hair was cut off and dedicated at the sanctuary.[142] A medieval rabbinic work speaks of the service of the Moabite god Khemosh as including hair offerings.[143] In modern times, Gannath Obeyesekere has studied the phenomenon of long, matted locks among Hindu ecstatics in Sri Lanka.[144] These and numerous other hair-related cultural practices are best summed up by Stanley Cook's astute observation: "[Hair] is preserved in order that the sacred power may occupy it; or it is renounced, virtually as a sacrifice of oneself."[145] Presumably, therefore, the growing of the Nazirite's hair and its immolation within the Temple precincts reflect these same two notions.

In regard to the Nazirite prohibitions against contact with the dead and consumption of wine, it has been observed that these restrictions are almost identical to the restrictions placed upon the high priest.[146] Yet scholars have been unable to find an overarching construction of the Nazirite that would integrate and explain the significance of the aforementioned insights.[147]

The path to solving the conundrum begins with an observation made by Jacob Milgrom. He notes the similarity between the rules governing the Nazirite and those concerning land dedicated to the sanctuary (Lev 27:16):

> Naziriteship and the dedication of the land to the sanctuary are both votive dedications (Lev 27:16; Num 6:2) that are in force for limited periods, the land reverting to its owner on the Jubilee and the Nazirite reverting to his lay status upon the termination of his vow (Lev 27:21, by implication; Num 6:13). In both cases the period of dedication can be terminated earlier: the Nazirite's by contamination (Num 6:9–12), the land's by redemption (Lev. 27:16–19). In the case of premature desanctification, a penalty is exacted: The Nazirite pays a reparation offering, *asham*, to the sanctuary, and the owner of the land pays an additional one-fifth of the redemption price to the sanctuary. If the dedication period is completed, no desanctification penalty is incurred. True, the Nazirite offers an array of sacrifices together with his hair (Num 6:13–20), but the sacrifices are mainly for thanksgiving, and the hair, which may not be desanctified, must be burnt. Similarly, dedicated land (so the text of Lev 27:22–24 implies) reverts to its original owner on the Jubilee without cost.[148]

What apparently underlies Milgrom's comparison, although he never says so explicitly, is the assumption that the Nazirite is, at least in part, an offering. By dedicating his hair, the Nazirite has symbolically dedicated himself to God.[149] This understanding of the Nazirite is further strengthened by linguistic and legal parallels between Numbers 6 and Leviticus 27:1–8. The pericope in Leviticus

pertains to one who has vowed one's monetary equivalent (ערך) to God. The phrase used to describe this act in Lev 27:1 is איש כי יפליא נדר, "when anyone sets aside[150] a vow." Numbers 6:1 reads: איש או אשה כי יפלא לנדר נדר נזיר, "when anyone, a man or woman, sets [himself] apart by pronouncing a Nazirite's vow." Both Leviticus 27 and Numbers 6 describe essentially the same act, namely, dedicating a person to God. Both of these forms of dedication may be seen as descending from an earlier era in which, in the cases of oaths, the firstborn, and the *ḥērçm*, the Israelites apparently offered human life itself before God.[151] The difference is only that in Leviticus one is dedicating one's value while in Numbers one is dedicating one's physical self *pars pro toto*.[152]

Milgrom's insight is important, but it does not in and of itself make sense of Naziriteship. We still need to understand the relationship among the three categories of Nazirite prohibitions. The key to resolving this difficulty is recognizing that there is a hierarchy among the Nazirite's obligations. The essence of the Nazirite vow is that by means of consecrating one's hair for a certain period and then offering it on the altar,[153] one symbolically offers oneself to God, and in doing so one is both offering and officiant. Once one has dedicated one's hair to the altar, it follows as a matter of course that it may not be shorn, for this would constitute the misappropriation of sancta (מעילה).[154] We find the same rule in Deuteronomy 15:19 concerning the wool of firstborn sheep: "You shall consecrate to the Lord your God all male firstlings that are born in your herd and in your flock: you must not . . . shear (לא תגוז) your firstling sheep." Similarly, the grapes of the Sabbatical year, which one may not use because, in a manner similar to *bikkûrîm*, they are God's property, are designated ענבי נזירך, "your consecrated grapes" (Lev 25:5). The description of these grapes as נזירך suggests that shearing a Nazirite's hair, like harvesting grapes in the Sabbatical year, constitutes misappropriation.[155]

Moreover, as a sacrifice *in potentia*, the Nazirite's hair, like any other sacrifice, may not be ritually defiled.[156] Hence a Nazirite is forbidden to come into contact with the dead. Finally, the asceticism of abstinence from wine and other grape products during the period of *nezîrût* is not, in this analysis, intrinsic but rather instrumental. During the time the Nazirite is preparing his hair sacrifice during his *nezîrût* by allowing his locks to grow, he apparently is given a priestlike status and is therefore bound by the restriction against imbibing intoxicants, which normally applies only to officiating priests.[157] This treatment is in line with other indications that the Nazirite and the priest are similar in character. Both are described as being קדוש לה';[158] this description is not used of any other person, with the notable exception of Deuteronomy 26:19, where it is used to describe the people of Israel as a whole.[159]

From the preceding analysis, the logic behind the protocol for a Nazirite who has been defiled through contact with a corpse (Num 6:9–11) also becomes clear. A Nazirite who has become impure must first undergo the purification process required of all those who have been defiled by a corpse. Once he has been purified, he must shave his hair, offer penitential and purificatory sacrifices, and begin reckoning his Naziriteship anew. In light of our understanding of Naziriteship, this procedure makes perfect sense. The Nazirite must rid himself of his defiled

sacrifice—that is, he must shave his head—and replace it with its equivalent—in other words, he must let his hair grow for the amount of time originally promised. He cannot rid himself of the defiled hair before he is ritually purified, for if he does, the hair that will grow during the remaining period of his impurity will be defiled and will contaminate his "sacrifice." Therefore he must wait until after he is ritually pure to cut his hair. Subsequently, he must begin a new reckoning of his period of *nezîrût*, which includes a rededication of his hair,[160] in order to ensure that the quantity of his hair sacrifice will be equal to what he vowed initially. This last point is expressed in Numbers 6:12 as follows: "The previous period [of his Naziriteship] shall be void, since his consecrated hair [נזרו] was defiled."

The dual character of the Nazirite as officiant and offering may be the key to understanding another Nazirite-related text which has bedeviled biblical scholars—the birth story of Samson. In Judges 13, Manoah's wife, who until this time has been barren, is told that she will give birth to a son who will be a נזיר אלהים, a Nazirite to God whose hair is never to be touched by a razor (13:5). In preparation for the birth, she is told "not to drink wine or other intoxicant, or to eat anything unclean" (13:4). Read against the background of Numbers 6, these instructions are difficult to comprehend. We would expect Samson to be the one who must refrain from drinking wine and coming into contact with that which is unclean. Instead the three prohibitions of the Nazirite listed in Numbers 6 are apparently parceled out between Samson and his mother. There have been various attempts to address this difficulty. They include suggesting that Samson's mother was a Nazirite as well;[161] viewing the prohibitions concerning Samson's mother as later additions to the narrative;[162] claiming that the entire Nazirite motif in the Samson story is a later addendum;[163] distinguishing between self-imposed and divinely declared Naziritism;[164] differentiating between temporary and lifelong Nazirite status;[165] reading the Samson story as a metaphor for the relationship between God and Israel and the Nazirite vows as symbolic of the covenant between God and the "fathers" which is passed on to the "sons";[166] and suggesting that Judges 13 and Numbers 6 represent different stages in the evolution of the Nazirite institution.[167]

However, another solution suggests itself based on the foregoing analysis. Numbers 6 describes one dedicating oneself as a *nāzîr*. In that case, as has been suggested, the votary is both officiant and offering and is therefore subject to all the restrictions and requirements of Naziritism. In the case of Samson and his mother the roles of offerer and offering have been bifurcated; Samson's mother is the offerer, and he is the oblation. This bifurcation may reflect a practice of dedicating one's children as Nazirites, a practice possibly reflected and at least approximated by Hannah's dedication of Samuel (1 Sam 1:22–28) and alluded to in later rabbinic literature.[168] In Samson's case the dedication is seen as being dictated by God's will rather than being the result of human initiative. Hence it is his mother—the preparer of the offering—who is subject to the restrictions of wine consumption and impurity until she has brought her offering—that is, until she has given birth to her son. Samson, on the other hand, *is* the offering. As a symbol and consequence of his perpetual dedication to God, he must let his hair grow throughout his lifetime.

This interpretation of *nezîrût* also has implications for the proper understanding of much of the terminology and ritual in Numbers 6. In 6:7 the Nazirite is prohibited from coming into contact with the dead because נזר אלהיו על ראשו, "the *nēzęr* of his God is upon his head." The word נזר in this phrase has been variously translated as "vow," "crown," and "the symbol of the state of consecration and devotion," that is, the Nazirite's hair.[169] Given our understanding of the Nazirite's hair as a dedicated offering, the preferred translation would be "consecrated [hair]."[170]

At the end of one's *nezîrût*, we are told in Numbers 6:13, יביא אותו, "to the door of the tent of meeting." Both the subject and object of יביא אותו are unclear; some translate "he [the Nazirite] shall bring himself,"[171] others "he [the Nazirite] shall bring it [his offering],"[172] while yet other translations retain all the opacity of the original.[173] Granting the claim that *nezîrût* involves the symbolic offering of the Nazirite himself, one might be inclined to favor yet a fourth translation, "he is to be brought," in accordance with Baruch Levine's observation that the third person often has stative/passive force when no subject is specified.[174] The unspecified subject could conceivably be the priest who presents the Nazirite's animal sacrifices (Num 6:16), in which case the Torah would be describing the Nazirite himself as an offering brought by the priest.

The sacrificial regimen at the conclusion of one's *nezîrût* includes offering three animal sacrifices as well as bread offerings (Num 6:13–17).[175] Following these offerings the Nazirite shaves his head and places his hair on the fire under the *shelāmîm* offering (Num 6:18). There has long been a debate as to whether the placement of the Nazirite's hair in the fire constitutes a sacrifice or simply an appropriate means of disposing of a holy and therefore forbidden object.[176] The answer to this question may or may not hinge on the clarification of a textual ambiguity; Numbers 6:18 does not state clearly whether the fire into which the hair is to be placed is an altar flame or a cooking fire.[177] In any case, the phrase used concerning the placement of the Nazirite's hair in the fire, ונתן על האש, "and he shall put them on the fire" (Num 6:18), is also employed in Leviticus 16:13—ונתן את הקטורת על האש, "and he shall put the incense on the fire"—as a term of sacrificial offering.[178] In contrast, the root שלך is employed in the causative to describe the discarding of hair, into a fire or elsewhere; see Ezekiel 5:4: ומהם עוד תקח והשלכת אותם אל תוך האש, "and take some more of them [= Ezekiel's shaven hair] and cast them into the fire."[179] Thus biblical terminology suggests that the hair is an offering and not a holy object being destroyed.

This conclusion is further supported by a comparison with the rites of shaving and hair disposal in connection with the *mezora'* (Lev 14:9) and the consecration of the Levites (Num 8:7). In both of these cases shaving occurs before sacrifices are offered, depilation is clearly identified as part of the preparatory purification process, and no special provisions are made for the disposal of the hair.[180] In contrast, the burning of the Nazirite's hair is clearly part of the sacrificial rite. It takes place in conjunction with the *shelāmîm* sacrifice, which itself often has the character of a voluntary offering.[181] This aspect is emphasized here by the lifting (והניף) of the foreleg of the *shelāmîm* along with some of the loaves that accompany it; these are then given to the priest (Num 6:20).[182] Thus

we may see the conjunction of the burning of the Nazirite's hair with the offering of the *shelāmîm* as two gifts together being given to God.[183]

Understanding *nezîrût* as a form of self-offering may also help us locate the Nazirite pericope in its present setting. The laws of the Nazirite appear immediately after those of the *soṭah*, a woman accused by her husband of adultery. It seems likely that this placement is more than coincidence; the sages of late antiquity certainly thought so, and indeed both structural and substantive evidence suggests a link between the two.[184] Both ceremonies involve someone other than a priest being brought before God in the sanctuary;[185] the hair of the participant figures prominently in each instance;[186] both involve vows; and *tum'â* (impurity), though of different sorts, is central to both.

So much for the similarities; what of the differences? Perhaps we are to read the two pericopes as intertexts, both of which have as their theme the ordeal of approaching God. Remember that much of Numbers is devoted to assigning the Israelites their proper places, with regard to both God and each other.[187] There is recurring conflict and tension over the limitation of access of Israelites and Levites to certain areas of the sanctuary, to many of the holy objects it contains, and to participation in the rituals that take place there.

A key term used in Numbers to express this tension dialectically is הקרב.[188] On the one hand, Moses is commanded to bring forward the Levites (הקרב, והקרבת) before God (Num 3:6, 8:9–10). Later, when Koraḥ and his cohort argue that "all the community is holy, all of them, and the Lord is in their midst" (Num 16:3), Moses challenges them to bring incense before God, asserting that God will grant access (והקריב אליו) only to the one who is holy, to the one God has chosen (Num 16:5). Following the immolation of the 250 men who offered incense, the plague halted by Aaron by means of an incense offering, and the flowering of Aaron's rod signaling that God has chosen the tribe of Levi exclusively to serve him, the people complain: "Lo, we perish! We are lost, all of us lost! Every one who so much as ventures near the Lord's tabernacle must die! Alas, we are doomed to perish!" (Num 17:27–28). God's response is to direct Aaron to give the Levites access to certain sanctuary precincts together with Aaron's own clan (הקרב אתך), and to assign the Levites the responsibility of preventing nonauthorized persons from entering those precincts. If such unauthorized entry takes place, it is the Levites, and the Levites alone, who are to be held culpable (Num 18:2–7, 22–23).[189]

The term הקריב appears in connection with both the Nazirite and the *soṭah*. The priest is commanded to bring forward (והקריב) the *soṭah* and to stand her before God (Num 5:16). Similarly, the priest is instructed to bring forward (והקריב) the Nazirite and to stand him before God upon the successful completion of his vow (Num 6:16).[190] Perhaps, then, the Nazirite and the *soṭah* are meant to represent two classes of laity who seek to approach God's sanctuary. If they come in sinfulness, they will be punished through God's wrath.[191] If they come in purity and sobriety, God will accept them and their service as a pleasant offering which, through God's compassion, culminates with an offering that substitutes for the votary himself.[192]

Finally, it should be noted that the notion of the Nazirite as offering is very much in evidence in the post-biblical period as well. It seems to inform a narra-

tive found in I Maccabees:3. Beginning with verse 46, the chapter describes a day of prayer and fasting declared by Judah and his brothers in anticipation of the battle with Gorgias's forces. Verses 49–51 read as follows:

> They took the priestly vestments and the first fruits and the tithes and assembled[193] the Nazirites who had completed the periods of their vows. Crying aloud toward heaven, they said, "What are we to do with these? Whither are we to bring them? Your sanctuary has been trampled and profaned, and Your priests are in mourning and affliction."

The Nazirites are classed here together with inanimate objects that either are offered to the priests and Levites at the Temple or are utilized by them within the Temple's precincts. This classification would seem to make sense only if we think of the Nazirites, and specifically their hair, which is burned on the altar, as offerings that need to be brought to the Temple.

Philo also speaks of the Nazirite as one who offers oneself to God, in his explanation of why the vow of the Nazirite is called "the Great Vow."[194]

> When people have paid first-fruits of every part of their property, in wheat barley, oil, wine and their finest orchard-fruits and also in the firstborn males of their livestock, consecrated in the case of the clean species and valued at an adequate compensation in the case of the unclean, as they have no more material sources with which to give a pledge of their piety, they dedicate and consecrate themselves, thus showing an amazing sanctification and a surpassing devotion to God. And therefore it is fitly called the Great Vow, for his own self the greatest possession that anyone has, and this self he forgoes and puts himself outside it.[195]

The oblatory nature of Naziriteship may also explain the widely attested practice during Second Temple times of someone other than the Nazirite bringing sacrifices in his or her behalf. In Acts, the church elders in Jerusalem suggest that Paul establish his piety in the eyes of the masses by paying for the animal sacrifices of four Nazirites who have become ritually impure.[196] Josephus speaks of Agrippa I bringing sacrifices for Nazirites,[197] and a similar tale is told by the rabbis concerning Alexander Jannaeus, who is persuaded, somewhat disingenuously, by Simon b. Shetah to foot the bill for the sacrifices of 150 Nazirites.[198] There is even a debate recorded between the academies of Shammai and Hillel whether or not one should refrain from pledging sacrifices in behalf of Nazirites lest unscrupulous individuals make Nazirite vows as a means of supporting themselves (they are entitled to consume most of the שלמים offering brought at the conclusion of their נזירות).[199]

Other evidence of the Nazirite's being viewed as a sacrifice in late antiquity is that, according to the Mishnah, a father may dedicate his minor son as a Nazirite[200]—this, despite a father's general legal inability to impose vows on his minor son.[201] This ruling is reminiscent, of course, of the dedications of Samson

and Samuel. Interestingly, however, whereas Samuel is dedicated by his mother, and Samson's mother plays the primary (human) role in his consecration, the Mishnah specifically disallows a mother from dedicating her child as a Nazirite.[202]

Conversely, although generally a master may not coerce his slave into violating a vow he has made, a master may force his slave to disregard his vow of *nezîrût*. The Jerusalem Talmud[203] explains this rule as follows: "It is written, 'For his consecration unto God is upon his head' (Num 6:7)—[this refers to] one who has no other master; this excludes a slave who has another master." The conception here apparently[204] is that a Nazirite becomes God's chattel; such a status cannot be taken on by one who is already owned by another.

Perhaps the most dramatic expression of the self-sacrificial character of is an oft-repeated rabbinic narrative concerning Simeon the Righteous and the Nazirite from Judea:

> Said Simeon the Righteous: In my entire life I did not consume the flesh of a Nazirite's אשם offering, with one exception. It happened that [a Nazirite] came to me from the south [= Judea]; I saw that he had fine eyes, good looks and curly locks. I said to him: My son, what cause have you to destroy this beautiful hair? He answered: I was a shepherd in my town and I went to draw water from the spring. I looked at my reflection and my evil impulse rose against me and sought to remove me from the world. I said to it: Evil One, you could find nothing with which to incite except that which is not yours, that which is destined to become dust and worms!? Behold, I obligate myself[205] to shear you for Heaven's sake. [Simeon the Righteous continues:] I lowered his head and kissed him, saying: My son, may there be many like you in Israel who do God's will. Through you has been fulfilled the verse: "A man or woman who consecrate the oath of a Nazirite to God"[206] (Num 6:2). (tNaz 4.7 and parallels)[207]

This narrative suggests strongly that the goal of the Nazirite is to offer himself to God. The Nazirite of the story realizes that his entire physical being is not his to do with as he pleases but rather a gift from God to be used in accordance with the divine will. When he feels in danger of forgetting this obligation, he rededicates his entire being to God by means of offering God his hair[208]—"I shall shear you [אגלחך][209] for Heaven's sake."[210]

In sum, there is significant evidence indicating that *nezîrût* was seen in both the biblical and post-biblical periods as a form of self-offering. I now wish to argue that this understanding of Naziritism shifted in the wake of the Temple's destruction in a way that made fasting its natural successor among the the rabbinic elite.

FASTING AS POST-TEMPLE NAZIRITISM. The aforementioned understanding of Naziritism is based on the model of Numbers 6, in which Naziritism climaxes

with hair and animal offerings in the Temple. This form of Naziritism, which apparently was practiced by a small but significant few during the Second Temple period,[211] obviously was no longer possible after the Destruction. How did the rabbinic community respond to the disappearance of traditional Naziritism?[212]

The response seems to have been two-pronged. One reaction was to formulate, or at least popularize,[213] a type of Naziritism that could operate in the absence of a temple. Such a Naziritism was the type the rabbis called *nezîrût Šimšôn*, "the Naziritism of Samson." This is a lifetime form of Naziritism in which the Nazir never cuts his hair, and while grapes and grape products are prohibited to him, the injunction against coming into contact with the dead does not apply. Thus *nezîrût Šimšôn* bypasses the two major obstacles posed to Naziritism by the destruction of the Temple: the unavailibility of the ashes of the red heifer for purifying oneself from corpse impurity and the impossibility of bringing sacrificial offerings in order to conclude the *nezîrût*. This form of Naziritism was practiced throughout the medieval period[214] and is practiced still today.

A second response was to substitute fasting for Naziritism. This substitution was logical for at least two reasons. First, to the extent that Naziritism existed after the Destruction, it was in the form of *nezîrût Šimšôn*. With the omission of animal and hair sacrifice, the focus shifts from (self-)offering to self-denial. The injunctions against consuming grape products or cutting one's hair are now essential rather than instrumental. If denying oneself grape products is seen as an act of holiness, how much more so, presumably, the periodic abstention from all food and drink. This notion is attributed to the third- and fourth-century Babylonian and Palestinian R. Eleazar:

> R. Eleazar says, "[One who fasts] is called holy, as Scripture states [concerning the Nazirite], 'He shall remain consecrated,[215] the hair of his head being left to grow untrimmed.' (Num 6:5) And if this one [i.e., the Nazirite], who denied himself only one thing [i.e., wine and other grape products], is called holy, how much more so one who denies himself everything." (bTaʿanit 11a)

Second, as was noted earlier, fasting shares with Naziritism in its original form an element of self-offering. When the self-offering of the Nazirite was no longer available, fasting stepped in to take its place.

There are a number of indications in rabbinic sources of a perceived link between fasting and Naziritism. One is the aforementioned connection made between the tannaitic debate as to whether Naziritism is sinful or praiseworthy and the amoraic dispute as to whether or not one ought to engage in voluntary fasting. A second is the transference of the legal principal invalidating the acceptance of voluntary obligation for part of a day from Naziriteship to fasting. Regarding Naziriteship the Mishnah tells us the following:

> If one says, "Behold, I am a *nāzîr* for thirty days and one hour," he is a *nazir* for thirty-one days, because one may not vow Naziriteship for a period of hours (שאין נוזרים לשעות). (mNazir 1.3)[216]

We find a similar discussion among *amoraim*, and possibly among *tannaim*, as to whether or not one can accept a fast for a number of hours rather than for an entire day:

> R. Aqiva[217] came to Ginzaq.[218] They asked him, "May we fast for a number of hours . . . ?" He did not know; he went to the house of study and asked. They said to him, "The law is we may fast for a number of hours." (bTa'anit 11b)

> R. Zeira said in the name of R. Huna, "If an individual accepted a fast upon himself even if he ate and drank the entire evening before the fast [but after having accepted the fast] he may pray the liturgy for fasts the following day. If he continued to fast throughout the night following his fast [and into the next day] he may not pray the liturgy for fasts the following day. R. Joseph said, "What does R. Huna think? Does he think that one may not fast for a number of hours? Or perhaps he thinks that one may fast for a number of hours, but that one who does so may not pray the liturgy for fasts?" Abbaye said to him, "In fact, [R. Huna] thinks that one may fast for a number of hours, and that one who does so may pray the liturgy for fasts. However, this case is different, because he did not accept the fast upon himself [the previous day]." (bTa'anit 11b; cf. yNed 8.2, 40d)

We do not find the restriction of *šā'ôt* with regard to any other vow; that is, their duration may be of any length one wishes, including part of a day. Presumably the question arose concerning the validity of a fast accepted for part of a day only because of the Nazirite restriction of אין נוזרין לשעות.

A third point of contact between fasting and naziriteship is the implicit assumption of the following passage in BT that fasting and Naziriteship are connected in the mind of the average individual:

> "If one says, 'I will be,' he is a Nazirite." (mNazir 1.1) Perhaps he meant to say: I will be engaged in fasting? Samuel said, "This is a case where a Nazirite was passing before him [when he made his declaration]." (bNazir 2b)

It is likely that Samuel's statement was originally meant simply to explain how the vow cited in the Mishnah could be effective without its specifying what it is that one wishes to become. The anonymous editors presumably then contextualized Samuel's statement by suggesting other ways in which such a formula could be understood. It it probably not accidental that the alternative to Naziriteship that occurred to them was fasting.[219]

There is a final possible link to be mentioned, namely, the various rabbinic traditions concerning the biblical Rehabites. According to Jeremiah 35 the Rehabites did not dwell in houses, plant vineyards or fields, or partake of wine. Rabbinic tradition, however, added to their observances. Interpreting Chronicles

2:55 as referring to the Rehabites and the word תרעתים, "Tirathites," as being a descriptive adjective rather than a patrynomic, the rabbis expound as follows:

> "Tirathites"—because they would call out[220] and fast.[221]
>
> "Tirathites"—because they would not cut their hair.[222] (*Sifre Numbers* Pisqa 78 [73])

While it is possible to understand all these as mourning practices, as indeed some commentators do,[223] it is also possible that Rehabite abstinence from wine inspired interpretations of the Rehabites both as quasi-Nazirites (they neither drink wine nor cut their hair) and as followers of the ascetic practice that takes Naziriteship's place after the Temple's destruction (they fast).

Rabbinic Fasting

We turn now to fasting that is associated specifically with individual rabbis or rabbinic circles. On the one hand we find individuals, such as R. Abun[224] and Mar b. Ravina,[225] for whom fasting was an integral part of their spiritual discipline. We are also told of a number of *tannaim*[226] and *amoraim*[227] who commit themselves to a lifetime of fasting in order to atone for some sin, often relatively minor, of which they have been guilty. Although this latter behavior is different from the regular offering of suspensive *asham* sacrifices or Nazirite vows by Second Temple *ḥasîdîm*[228] in that it involves actual sins rather than a generalized sense of sinfulness, it is similar enough to suggest that it is inspired by these precedents.

Siegfried Lowy[229] perceptively notes that these traditions generally involve *amoraim* or are amoraic glasses that are appended to earlier tannaitic traditions.[230] In his view this pattern indicates a growing tendency in the amoraic period to fast regularly; however, it is equally possible that this is simply a case of later generations embellishing earlier traditions.

One way of testing Lowy's thesis is to compare the degree to which individual fasting is mentioned and discussed in tannaitic and amoraic literature. There is no specific reference to individual fasting in the Mishnah; mHagigah 2.4 is ambiguous and may be referring to publicly declared fasts. Of course, mTaʿanit 4.3 refers to fasting by the members of the *maʿamadôt*.

In the Tosefta, mention is made of individual fasting in tTaʿanit 2.4,12, and 15. tTaʿanit 2.16 and 3.26 and tMegillah 1.6 are ambiguous. PT makes relatively little mention of individual fasting; in addition to the fasts of R. Eleazar b. Azaryah mentioned in yShabbat 5.4 (= yBezah 2.8, 61d) and that of R. Yohanan in yNedarim 8.1, 40d, see yBerakhot 4.3, 8a, (= yTaʿanit 2.2, 65c), yTaʿanit 2.14, 66b, and yNedarim 8.1, 40d.

In BT, on the other hand, individual fasting is discussed at some length in bTaʿanit 11a–13b. Moreover, rather than simply recording instances of individual fasting, BT formulates rules for such fasts. This indicates that rather than distinguish only between tannaitic and amoraic sources, as Lowy does, we also need

to distinguish between Palestinian sources and Babylonian ones. It would appear that fasting was more common in Babylonian rabbinic circles than it was among Palestinian sages. On the other hand, as I shall show in the next chapter, attitudes toward ascetic behavior generally and toward fasting specifically were much more negative in Babylonia than in Palestine. Therefore, this difference may simply reflect BT's tendency to discuss topics at greater length than its Palestinian counterpart.

Even if embellishments, however, these addenda presumably reflect, in some measure, actual practice within rabbinic circles. Similarly, rabbinic attribution of regular penitiential fasting to Adam for having brought death into the world,[231] and to Reuben as atonement for his behavior with his father's concubine,[232] while clearly retrojections, presumably are based on rabbinic usage.[233]

Nonetheless, fasting is not discussed as a spiritual discipline at any length in rabbinic souces. There are two ways of understanding this omission. One is that fasting was so much a part of the spiritual landscape that the rabbis felt no need to note it other than mentioning exceptional cases like that of Mar b. Ravina (see earlier). A second possibility is that the attitude of many rabbis toward regular fasting was ambivalent or even negative. In the case of the Babylonian rabbis, this attitude probably had at least something to do with their generally negative views of primary asceticism, as I shall discuss in the next chapter. More broadly, however, fasting was seen by at least some rabbis as being in conflict with the rabbi's primary ascetic discipline, Torah study. Thus the third-century Babylonian and Palestinian scholar Resh Laqish said that "A Torah scholar may not fast because he is detracting from the work of heaven [i.e., his own study]."[234] A more pungent formulation of the anti-fasting position is that of the third-century Babylonian R. Sheshet: "Let the meal of a student who fasts be given to the dogs."[235] Not all rabbis agree, however, that fasting and study are imcompatible. R. Yohanan, Resh Laqish's mentor and colleague, would accept a fast upon himself until he had finished studying a certain chapter or portion.[236] It seems that R. Yohanan saw fasting as a means of minimizing possible distractions from study or at least as a useful goad.

Additionally, to the extent that fasting was viewed as a form of self-offering, there were traditions that viewed the study of Torah in the same light. We have already seen an amoraic teaching that views Torah study as an adequate replacement for sacrifice;[237] the idea of Torah as sacrifice is even more explicit in the following relatively late source:

> The study of Torah is more beloved of God than burnt offerings. For if a man studies Torah he comes to know the will of God, as it is said, "Then shall you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the will of the Lord" (Prov 2:5). Hence, when a sage sits and expounds to the congregation, Scripture accounts it to him as though he had offered up fat and blood on the altar. (*ARN* A, Ch. 4 [18])[238]

We also find traditions that ascribe priestly status to the scholar, such as the following:

> And did Elisha eat first fruit [see 2 Kings 4:42; how could he, not being a *kohen*,[239] have eaten first fruits]? Rather, whoever brings a gift to a scholar it is as if one is offering first fruits [to a priest]. (bKetubot 105b)

Finally, we find that the act of eating was itself transformed by the sages into a sacrificial act, as in the following teachings:

> R. Yohanan and R. Eleazar both said: As long as the temple stood the altar atoned for Israel; now one's table atones for him. (bBerakhot 55a [= bHagigah 27a, bMenahot 97a])

> Our Rabbis taught: It is forbidden to benefit from this world without a blessing. And whoever benefits from this world without a blessing has misappropriated sancta. (bBerakhot 35a)

According to this latter teaching, all food is God's and therefore holy. To consume this food with a blessing is a form of offering. To eat without a blessing is to consume the food exclusively for one's own benefit. This is seen as a form of *meʿilâ*, of misappropriating sancta.[240]

The idea of eating as a holy act also seems inherent in the practice, mentioned often in rabbinic writings, of eating one's food in the same state of ritual purity required of the priests when they consumed consecrated produce or portions of a sacrifice. If eating itself was generally regarded in rabbinic circles as a holy, sacrificial act,[241] this fact may have lessened the impetus to seek sacrificial holiness by abstaining from food.

There is one context, however, in which the rabbis discuss fasting at some length: fasts in the face of drought or other catastrophes. What is interesting for the purposes of this study is that although most of these fasts were required of the community at large, the initial fasts were to be untertaken specifically by *yeḥîdîm*,[242] who appear to be Torah scholars and/or community leaders. In this context there is a rabbinic debate as to whether others may join in these fasts:

> Who is a *yāḥîd*? R. Simeon b. Eleazar says, "Not everyone who wishes to comport himself as a *yāḥîd* or a *talmîd ḥākhām* may do so, unless the court has appointed him to a position of public authority." R. Simeon b. Gamaliel says, "If it is a matter of self-denial one who wishes to make oneself a *yāḥîd* or a *talmîd ḥākhām* may do so, and may he be blessed. In a matter [that engenders] praise not everyone who wishes to comport himself as a *yāḥîd* or a *talmîd ḥākhām* may do so, unless the court has appointed him to a position of public authority." (tTaʿanit 1.7 [324–325]; cf. yBerakhot 2.9, 5c-d and bTaʿanit 10b)

According to R. Simeon b. Eleazar, then, the circle of those fasting as individuals is limited to scholars and communal leaders. Moreover, although it would appear from this debate that *yāḥîd* is not identical with *talmîd ḥākhām*, or scholar, there is an attempt in Babylonian sources, as Richard Kalmin has pointed out,[243]

to limit the category of *yeḥîdîm* to rabbis;[244] there is no such tendency in Palestinian sources.[245] In Palestinian sources, moreover, nonrabbis often appear as petitioning God succesfully for rain; this motif is almost entirely absent in the Babylonian Talmud.[246] While there are several ways of understanding both the initial tannaitic debate[247] and the discrepancies between the Bavli and the Yerushalmi,[248] it seems likely that these debates are at least in part a dispute about whether fasting, at least fasting in behalf of the community, should be part of the scholar's spiritual arsenal exclusively or in the public domain. According to the restrictive view, the scholar is called upon to fast because he is a spiritual adept whose fasting is assumed to be especially potent. This status may be due in part to the assumption that scholars, as those who fast regularly, have perfected fasting as a spiritual discipline.

This perspective helps us to understand the following teaching in the Yerushalmi:

> R. Yannai the Younger said in the name of his ancestors: Whoever is not as fit as Joshua [ben Nun] so that if he were to prostrate himself the Holy One, blessed be He, would say to him: "Arise and go!"—such a one should not prostrate himself. And [this applies only to] an individual [*yāḥîd*] praying in behalf of the community.[249]

Presumably the fear being expressed here is that if one fasts and prays in behalf of the community and is not answered, the members of the community will have doubts about his piety, thereby causing a profanation of God's name.[250]

A similar teaching is found in the Bavli:

> R. Eleazar said: A person of importance should not fall prostrate himself unless he will be answered as was Joshua ben Nun; as Scripture states, "But the Lord answered Joshua: 'Arise! Why do you lie prostrate?'" (Joshua 7:10)
>
> R. Eleazar said further: A person of importance should not don sackcloth unless he will be answered as was Jehoram son of Ahab; as Scripture states, "When the king heard what the woman said, he rent his clothes; as he walked along the wall the people saw that he was wearing sackcloth underneath" (2 Kings 6:30). (bTaʿanit 14b; see 2 Kings 7:1)

Although the Yerushalmi's limitation of this teaching to an individual is not mentioned in the Bavli, it is implicit in that R. Eleazar's teaching is brought in connection with the mishnah[251] that advises *yeḥîdîm* to continue fasting if the entire cycle of public drought fasts has failed to bring rain. R. Eleazar's dictum is to be construed, therefore, as advising only those who are confident of their prayers being answered to participate in the fasts of the *yeḥîdîm*.

The custom of fasting by communal leaders and *yeḥîdîm* is mentioned in one other context, that of the High Holy Days, a period for individual and communal repentance. R. Mana of She'ab and R. Joshua of Sikhnin cite[252] a parable in the name of R. Levi concerning a king who is owed taxes by a certain town and who is advancing on it with the intent of collecting the monies owed him.

When he is ten miles outside of the town, the elders of the town meet him with praise, at which point he remits one-third of the taxes due him. Five miles outside of the town the citizens of middling standing greet him with praise, whereupon he remits another third of the taxes. When he enters the city, all the townspeople, men, women and children, greet him with praise, causing him to remit the entire amount owed him. The king then says to the people, "What was, was; from this moment on let us begin the accounting anew." The parable is explained in the following way:

> So, too, on the eve of Rosh Hashanah the great ones of the generation fast, and the Holy One, blessed be He, absolves [the people][253] of a third of their sins.
>
> From Rosh Hashanah until Yom Ha-Kippurim the *yehîdîm* fast, and the Holy One, blessed be He, absolves [the people] of an [additional] third of their sins.
>
> On Yom Ha-Kippurim everyone fasts—men, women, and children—and the Holy One, blessed be He, says to Israel, "What was, was; from this moment on let us begin the accounting anew."

The custom of fasting on the eve of Rosh Hashanah and during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur continued into medieval and modern times. In the next chapter I shall discuss this practice in the context of an ongoing debate concerning the permissibility of fasting on Shabbat.

We have seen that fasting as an ascetic discipline, although almost unknown in biblical Israel, was an integral part of Second Temple and rabbinic Judaism. I have proposed that fasting became an especially important form of spiritual *askesis* after the Destruction in that it was a continuation of *maʿamād* fasting as well as a substitute for both sacrifice and Naziritism. At the same time there was some opposition to regular fasting, either because it was seen as a form of excessive and unnecessary self-denial, because it was seen as diminishing one's ability to study Torah, or because it was superseded by other forms of self-offering, namely Torah study or eating in holiness. The negative voices notwithstanding, fasting continued to figure prominently in the spiritual lives of medieval scholars and continues to be a mark of rabbinic piety to this day.

However, there is a pattern to the support of and opposition to fasting in particular and asceticism in general among the sages. In the next chapter I shall examine the evidence indicating that Palestinian scholars were more positively disposed to fasting and asceticism than Babylonian sages, and I will attempt to explain the possible reasons for this difference.

5

Saint or Sinner?

Rabbinic Attitudes toward Fasting and Asceticism in Palestine and Babylonia in Late Antiquity

Until this point I have made few distinctions between the periods and the areas that formed the world of the sages in late antiquity. My goal rather has been to show that the themes of asceticism run throughout the literature of the rabbinic period. Not surprisingly, however, there was a range of attitudes toward fasting and asceticism among the sages, as we have seen already. It would be wonderful if one could identify those sages who were proponents of asceticism and those who were its opponents; notwithstanding the many pitfalls of rabbinic biography, I believe that it may be possible to do so in at least a few instances. Instead, however, I will turn to an endeavor that is both more attainable and more useful: a comparison of Babylonian and Palestinian rabbinic attitudes toward fasting and asceticism. As we will see, an examination of the evidence suggests a significant difference between Palestine and Babylonia in relating to asceticism. I will first examine the evidence concerning fasting and then consider sexual asceticism; finally, I will speculate upon the possible reasons for this difference in attitude.

Fasting

As was mentioned in the previous chapters, a number of Greek and Latin writers of late antiquity note that Jews fast. What is striking, however, is that they speak of Jews fasting on the Shabbat. Pompeius Trogus (1st c. BCE–1st c. CE), for example, says that Moses consecrated every seventh day as a fast day to commemorate seven days of fasting he and the people had to bear while wandering through the Arabian deserts.[1] Most scholars have assumed that these writers were simply

mistaken and that they had conflated Shabbat observance with the fast of Youm Kippur.[2] Recently, however, Yizhaq Gilat[3] has suggested that these sources may reflect the actual practice of some Jews in late antiquity. This hypothesis is based largely on his claim that a careful reading of rabbinic sources yields the conclusion that some sages fasted on Shabbat and Yom Tov. This practice would seem to be based on understanding the biblical description of Shabbat as מקרא קודש, "a sacred occasion,"[4] and as mandating it as an occasion for separating oneself from the material world. Given that, as we saw in chapter 3, *qedûšâ* often meant for the sages withdrawal from normally permitted pleasures, this should not surprise us. In fact Yom Kippur's sacred character is understood in this fashion in the following passage:

> The exilarch asked R. Hamnuna,[5] "What is the meaning of what is written in Scripture, '[And you shall call the Sabbath a delight] and God's sacred day honored' (Is 58:13)?"
>
> He replied, "This [= 'God's sacred day'] refers to Yom Kippur, which has no eating or drinking; [therefore] the Torah said to honor it with [the wearing of] clean garments." (bShabbat 119a)[6]

The Bible often uses poetic parallelism; thus "God's sacred day" in the verse's second stich is presumably identical with Shabbat in the first stich. However, as is often the case, the rabbinic exegesis of this verse assumes that every word or phrase in a biblical verse must have substantive and not merely stylistic significance. If "God's sacred day" refers to Shabbat, then from the perspective of content the verse is simply repeating itself, a possibility the sages considered unacceptable. Therefore R. Hamnuna asserts that the verse's second half refers not to Shabbat but to Yom Kippur, and that it distinguishes between the two. Whereas Shabbat is a day of עונג, "delight," Yom Kippur is a day which is made holy, מקודש, through withdrawal from eating and drinking. It is therefore "honored" in a different fashion: through the wearing of clean garments. It is instructive that R. Hamnuna's exegesis equates Yom Kippur's sacred character with its prohibitions against eating and drinking. A similar exegesis presumably underlay the practice of those who fasted on the Sabbath in the rabbinic period.

Gilat cites two rabbinic sources that, in his view, allude to the practice of fasting on Shabbat or Yom Tov. The first is a dispute between the first- and second-century sages R. Eliezer and R. Joshua as to how one should observe the festivals.[7] Some biblical verses refers to the festivals as being לכם, "for you;" others describe a festival לה', "for God." R. Joshua resolves this apparent contradiction by saying that half the day of each festival should be for eating and drinking and half should be for Torah study. R. Eliezer disagrees, saying, "The entire day should be either for eating and drinking or for sitting and studying"; for him the two verses describe two mutually exclusive alternatives. Gilat[8] assumes that R. Eliezer's first possibility is purely theoretical and that he means to say that unless one devotes the entire festival (or Shabbat)[9] to Torah study—as one should[10]—one might as well feast the entire day.[11]

The second source is a statement by R. Eleazar[12] or R. Yohanan[13]—both third-century Palestinians[14]—in the name of the second- and third-century Pal-

estinian R. Yose b. Zimra: "If one fasts on Shabbat a decree of seventy years is torn up."[15] According to some text-witnesses, including the standard printed edition of BT, the statement continues: "Nonetheless, they then exact payment from him because of [his not having fulfilled] the precept of delighting in the Shabbat." Many others,[16] however, attribute these words to the fourth-century Babylonian R. Nahman b. Yizhaq. According to this second version, we have a Palestinian tradition praising the practice of fasting on Shabbat on the one hand, and a Babylonian tradition discouraging it on the other.

There are also nonrabbinic Palestinian and Alexandrian sources that describe Shabbat as a day of prayer and study, making no mention of festive meals on that day. Josephus cites as an apparently accurate description of Shabbat the words of Agatharchides of Cnidos (2nd c. BCE): "The people known as Jews, who inhabit the most strongly fortified of cities, called by the natives Jerusalem, have a custom of abstaining from work every seventh day; on those occasions they neither bear arms nor take any agricultural operations in hand, nor engage in any other form of public service, but *pray with outstretched arms in the temples until evening* [emphasis added–E.D.]."[17] Of course, this may be typical exaggeration or imprecision on the part of an outside observer, but it is perhaps noteworthy that although Josephus is citing Agatharchides in order to criticize him, he says nothing to contradict him on this point. Moreover, Josephus himself says that "we [Jews] give every seventh day over to the study of our customs and law."[18] These formulations sound very much like R. Eliezer's aforementioned view of the holy days as occasions for study rather than feasting.

Similarly, the pseudo-Philonic *Biblical Antiquities*, probably written in Palestine in the first century,[19] says of the Sabbath, "You shall not do any work on it, you and all your help, except to praise the Lord in the assembly of the elders and to glorify the Mighty One in the council of the older men."[20] While the description of Shabbat as a day of praising God does not preclude having meals as well, it is certainly striking that eating is not spoken of as a part of Shabbat observance. Gedalyah Alon[21] also sees an echo of this attitude in the *Epistle to Barnabas*, a Christian work probably written in Alexandria at the end of the first or the beginning of the second century.[22] The author cites the commandment in the Decalogue to observe the sabbath as "Sanctify the Lord's Sabbath with pure [καθαραῖς] hands and a pure heart."[23] Alon suggests that the author may be alluding to a (Jewish)[24] exegesis of the requirement to sanctify the Sabbath (לקדשו) as an obligation to purify oneself and one's spirit on that day, as well as to the practice mentioned in 2 Maccabees, another Alexandrian work, to immerse onself ritually on the eve of the Sabbath.[25] Again, we do not know exactly what practices did or did not accompany such purification, but the absence of any mention of celebratory meals is once again noteworthy.

However, all these sources, though they are suggestive, are not compelling evidence that some Jews did not feast on the Sabbath. This is true first and foremost because they can be used only to construct an argument from silence. Second, a report by Philo of the Sabbath observances of the ascetic Theraputae is similar in many respects to those cited here;[26] in it he also indicates that the Theraputae ate a more substantial meal on the seventh day than on any other.[27]

Returning to the sages themselves, there is little evidence that any of them actually fasted on Shabbat. The lone explicit reference to such fasting in rabbinic literature is the report that the fourth-century Babylonian Mar bar Ravina fasted every day of the year except Shavuot, Purim, and the eve of Yom Kippur.[28] On the other hand, as was noted in chapter 4, there were a number of *tannaim* and *amoraim* who engaged in constant fasting for long periods of their lives. It may well be that they fasted on Shabbat as well, but this is far from certain.[29] According to a legend cited in a thirteenth-century Italian work, R. Aqiba sat and mourned on Shabbat, justifying himself by saying that for him this constituted delight.[30] We cannot determine the date and provenance of this midrash, although it seems likely that it is of Palestinian origin.[31]

The question of whether or not one may fast on Shabbat continued to have relevance in the early medieval period in the context of the custom of some to fast on Shabbat Shuvah, the Shabbat that falls between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. On the one hand a number of Palestinian sources suggest that this was a common practice.[32] On the other hand, Pirqoi ben Baboi, a student of Rav Abba, who was in turn a student of Yehudai Gaon, fulminates against the Palestinian custom of fasting on Shabbat Shuvah in a letter apparently addressed to the North African Jewish community of Qairouan.[33] He declares: "Delighting in the Shabbat is greater than bringing a thousand offerings or fasting a thousand fasts."[34] As for R. Yose b. Zimra's statement (cited earlier) in praise of fasting on Shabbat, Pirqoi explains that only dream fasts are meant, a popular interpretation among the Babylonian *geonim* and and other early commentators;[35] one who had an ominous dream and is fasting to neutralize its effects is engaged in the saving of life, says Pirqoi, which takes precedence over Shabbat observance.[36] We do, however, find, Babylonian *geonim* speaking approvingly of this custom as well. Jacob Gartner has attempted to analyze the debate along Suran and Pumbedithan lines, with the Surans, as is often the case, showing greater affinity for the Palestinian practice of fasting.[37] However, as Gilat has pointed out, the picture is not quite that neat.[38]

I referred in the previous chapter to a general amoraic debate about the value of fasting which builds on a tannaitic discussion of the Nazirite. The Babylonian Samuel calls one who fasts a sinner, while R. Eleazar, the Babylonian emigre to Ereẓ Yisrael, calls him holy and the Palestinian R. Simeon b. Laqish calls him pious.[39] Again, the Palestinian view of fasting seems to be more positive than the Babylonian one.

BT records two traditions that seems to indicate the frequency, or at least the importance, of fasting among Palestinian Jews. It reports that in the time of R. Ze'ira a decree was made prohibiting fasting; R. Ze'ira ruled, therefore, that if an occasion arose requiring communal fasting—drought or some other calamity—the community should accept upon itself commitment to fast and carry out its obligation once the decree has been rescinded.[40] R. Ze'ira was a native Babylonian who emigrated to Palestine while still relatively young; it seems likely that he is speaking here to the Palestinian Jewish community.[41] Similarly, Raba knows of a tradition, confirmed by the Palestinian R. Abin, that a decree was

issued in Palestine forbidding fasting on Yom Kippur. The Jews responded by observing Yom Kippur on Shabbat that year.[42] Both of these traditions, particularly the first, indicate that periodic fasting was a sufficiently well-known Jewish practice to become the subject of oppressive decrees.

From the post-Talmudic period is a document known as *Megillat Taʿanit Batra*.[43] Although often appended to *Megillat Taʿanit*, a work having its origins in the Second Temple period, it has a diametrically opposed agenda—whereas *Megillat Taʿanit* lists days on which fasting is forbidden, *Megillat Taʿanit Batra* lists those on which one ought to fast[44]—and some of the days it lists as fast days appear in *Megillat Taʿanit* as days when fasting is forbidden. For example, the first of Nisan, because it was one of the days on which the Sanctuary in the desert was dedicated, is listed in *Megillat Taʿanit* as a day on which one may neither fast nor mourn. On the other hand, *Megillat Taʿanit Batra* lists the same day as a fast because it is the anniversary of the death of two of Aaron's sons. Indeed, when a Babylonian *gaon* was asked about these fasts he replied: "I do not know who instituted them, whether they are from the earlier rabbinic scholars or from someone else."[45] Mordechai Margaliot has shown that, in spite of this list's appearance in such Babylonian works as *Halakhot Gedolot* and *Seder Rab Amram Ga'on*, the provenance of this work is Palestinian.[46] Furthermore, Sid Leiman, noting that with one possible exception we have no citations from *Megillat Taʿanit Batra* in midrashic literature, has suggested that this list has its origins in nonrabbinic circles.[47]

Another instance of fasting in Ereẓ Yisrael in the post-Talmudic period was that of the אבילי ציון, "mourners of Zion." This movement has two apparent antecedents. One is the post-Temple *perûšîm* who refrained from drinking wine and eating meat as a sign of mourning for the Temple's destruction.[48] The other is the Second Temple institution of the *maʿamādôt*. The men of the *maʿamādôt* are described as having fasted in behalf of all Israel in order to forestall various types of catastrophe;[49] similarly, the *abēlē Ṣiyyôn* fasted not only to mourn but in behalf of national redemption as well. These two facets of the *abēlē Ṣiyyôn* are adumbrated in *Pesiqta Rabbati*'s description of them as those "who arise early each morning in order to ask God's mercy in bringing the redemption and [to mourn] Zion."[50] This group was centered in Jerusalem and mourned the Temple's destruction through fasting and other ascetic practices. As Moshe Zucker has shown, *Sēfer Aḥîma'aṣ*[51] and *Pesiqta Rabbati*[52]—both authored in Italy,[53] which was within the Palestinian sphere of influence[54]—speak positively of this group.[55] In any case, it is noteworthy, though perhaps not surprising, that such a group flourished in Jerusalem.

The Karaites were particularly drawn to this type of ascetic mourning. 'Anan himself, like the *perûšîm* of the post-Temple period, forbade the consumption of meat until the rebuilding of the Temple.[56] Later Karaite scholars limited this prohibition to Jerusalem itself; there were then various opinions as to how to define the boundaries of Jerusalem for the purposes of this restriction.[57] 'Anan also instituted a fast on the seventh day of each month as a means of atoning for one's sins and in anticipation of future practice in the era of the third temple

as understood by 'Anan.[58] The twelfth-century Karaite scholar Judah Hadassi advises that if any of the fast days commemorating the Temple's destruction falls on Shabbat, one should fast nonetheless.[59]

Moreover, a significant number of Karaites emigrated to Jeusalem in order to join the circle of *abēlē Ṣiyyon*. The ninth- and tenth-century Karaite scholar Daniel al-Qumisi wrote a letter calling upon his fellow Karaites to come to Jerusalem and live a life of asceticism there.[60]

Thus far I have reviewed evidence suggesting that, among Jews living in Palestine and those who were part of its sphere of influence, fasting was viewed favorably beginning in the late Second Temple period and continuing at least as late as the ninth century. We have also seen that this was not so of Babylonian Jewry. I will now examine further evidence that regular fasting was not an integral part of Babylonian Jewish religious life.

Chapter 4 mentioned the institution of *maʿamādôt* and the attendant fasting practices. It also noted the probable connection between the *maʿamādôt* and the later practice of fasting on Mondays and Thursdays. The *maʿamādôt* in Temple times were limited to those living in Palestine; there were no *maʿamādôt* in Babylonia. Nor, apparently, was there fasting on Monday and Thursday. In commenting on a *baraita* that speaks of liturgical insertions on Monday and Thursday,[61] BT is forced to assume that these are days that have been designated fasts because of drought or other calamity or, alternatively, they are the Monday and Thursday of the *maʿamādôt*. Two things are clear. The first is that interpretation of the *baraita* is forced in the extreme. The second is that, as Alon has noted,[62] BT is apparently unaware of the practice of fasting every Monday and Thursday.

I have already noted that according to many text-witnesses the Babylonian R. Nahman b. Yizhaq expresses disfavor toward fasting on Shabbat. There is other Talmudic and post-Talmudic evidence of Babylonian opposition to such fasts. One instance in which the Bavli prescribes fasting on Shabbat is that of a bad dream; fasting is recommended the day after the dream occurs, even if that day is Shabbat.[63] However, some text-witnesses then add the words: "And what is the remedy [for having fasted on Shabbat]? One should fast [as penance] for one's [Shabbat] fast,"[64] the same passage attributed in Berakhot 31b to R. Nahman b. Yitzhaq, namely, one should fast subsequently as penance for having fasted on Shabbat.[65] Gilat suggests[66] that this statement may have been added in Taʿanit as a result of (Babylonian) rabbinic discomfort with the prospect of people fasting on Shabbat. In any case we have later traditions in the name of Yehudai Gaon[67] and Hai Gaon[68] severely limiting the types of dreams that justify fasting on Shabbat; these traditions presumably reflect a desire to minimize fasting on Shabbat as much as possible.

The overall picture, then, is of a definite tendency in Palestine to favor fasting while the Babylonian attitude is generally one of ambivalence or opposition. Fasting is not the only arena in which differences between Palestine and Babylonia can be detected. In the area of sexual mores as well, the attitude of the Palestinian sages seems to have been more restrictive, and therefore ascetic,

than that of the Babylonians. That this is so has been documented in a major study by Michael Satlow;[69] a summary of some of his findings follows.

Sex and Asceticism

One of the ways in which we can measure the relative attitudes of the Palestinian and Babylonian rabbis toward sexuality is by examining their attitudes towards licit, that is marital, sex. Michael Satlow, after surveying Palestinian and Babylonian sources dealing with sex within marriage, concludes that the Palestinians see sex primarily as a means of procreation; the Babylonians are more aware and accepting of the pleasurable aspects of sex.[70] For example, the fourth-century Babylonian Raba says that "a man is obligated to cause his wife to be happy [לשמח את אשתו] with a *debar miṣwâ*."[71] Satlow[72] contrasts this statement with a Palestinian source preserved in BT that interprets the "joyful" (שמחים) return of the Israelites to their homes mentioned in 1 Kings 8:66 as meaning that "the wife of each one conceived and bore a male child."[73] In Raba's view, the joy of marital sex is apparently in the pleasure of sex itself; the Palestinian source locates joy in sex's outcome, procreation, rather than in sexual pleasure.

A Palestinian preoccupation with procreation is evident in other areas of sexual behavior as well. The Babylonian *amoraim*, like their Palestinian counterparts, are condemnatory of male self-arousal; however, argues Satlow, "in the statements attributed to them there is a much more 'relaxed' attitude."[74] In promoting various sexual prohibitions, the Palestinians raise the concern of tainted progeny as a consequence much more often than do the Babylonians.[75]

Another distinction between the Babylonians and the Palestinians, one not addressed fully by Satlow,[76] is in their attitudes toward modesty during sex. While both Babylonian and Palestinian sources condemn sex in the light and in front of other living creatures,[77] there may be some difference of opinion regarding whether it is acceptable or even desirable to be partially or fully clothed when having intercourse. The Palestinian *tanna* R. Gamliel is reported as praising the Persians for being modest during sex; presumably this modesty includes their practice of having intercourse while clothed.[78] PT also speaks approvingly of the *tanna* R. Yose, who had intercourse with his brother's widow דרן סדין, by way of a sheet, in order to fulfill his levirate obligation.[79] BT, which understands R. Yose as having had sex only five times with his wife, finds this behavior incompatible with R. Yose's marital obligation to his wife and reworks the tradition accordingly.[80] The *tanna* R. Eliezer is described as מגלה טפח ומכסה טפח, "revealing a handbreadth and covering a handbreadth," while having intercourse with his wife.[81] This is understood by some as meaning that R. Eliezer's wife wore an apron of some kind even during intercourse that he lifted only enough to enable penetration.[82] On the other hand, the third- and fourth-century Babylonian R. Joseph b. Hiyya interprets Exodus 22:10 as forbidding a husband from "following the practice of the Persians" by having intercourse with his wife while clothed;

the third-century Babylonian R. Huna regards a husband's insisting on this practice as grounds for divorce.[83]

Palestine versus Babylonia: Two Approaches

As we have seen, we have data indicating a relatively positive attitude toward fasting and certain forms of sexual asceticism in Palestine and more negative or at least ambivalent attitudes in Babylonia. We can now ask why such differences exist. Broadly speaking, two approaches are possible here, one internal and one external. That is, one can hypothesize differences in the internal social and religious nature of each community that led to different stances toward fasting, and—the two approaches are not mutually exclusive—one may look to the surrounding cultures and the possible influences they may have had. Let us consider each possibility.

In the first century Jews living in Palestine experienced onerous taxation and the often religiously insensitive administration of the Romans, capped by the unsuccessful revolt against Rome that culminated in the destruction of the Temple. A short seventy years later, with the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt and the paganization of Jerusalem, it became clear that political autonomy and the rebuilding of the Temple were dreams not to be realized for the forseeable future. In a sense, with the fall of Bar Kohkba the Temple's destruction was finalized for the Jewish community. Perhaps rabbinic tradition intends to express this finality by assigning the ninth of Ab, the day designated for mourning the destruction of both temples, as the day for mourning the destruction of Betar, Bar Kokhba's last stand, as well. The next two centuries brought with them inflation, even more ruinous taxation, political unrest, and population decline.[84]

There are several elegaic passages that describe post-Temple Palestine as devoid of blessing and beauty. R. Simeon b. Gamliel is cited in the name of R. Joshua as saying, "From the day the Temple was destroyed there is no day without a curse; the dew of blessing has not fallen; and the taste of produce has been taken away." R. Jose adds to this lament, "Even the richness [i.e., the nourishing quality] of produce has been removed."[85] Moreover, both biblical and rabbinic Judaism assume a world in which one is permitted to partake only after having first offered a portion to God. With the destruction of the Temple and the discontinuation of the sacrifices, there may have been widespread ambivalence about taking one's pleasure in this world, as Ephraim Urbach suggests,[86] out of a sense that partaking of this-worldly pleasures without first offering sacrifices is a form of sacrilege.[87]

This Palestinian sense of lost pleasure extends to sexuality as well. In the words of R. Yizhaq: "From the day that the Temple was destroyed the pleasure [literally: flavor] of intercourse was taken away and given to the sinners, as Scripture states: 'Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten furtively is tasty'" (Prov 9:17).[88] The commitment to being fruitful and multiplying remained for these sages; hence they married. However, as has been mentioned, marriage and sex were valued in Palestine chiefly as a means for perpetuating the nation rather than as a source of

pleasure or companionship. A particularly fascinating statement is the following teaching of the Babylonian/Palestinian R. Assi:[89] "The Son of David will not arrive until the *guf* [= a storehouse for preexistent souls] has been depleted of all its souls, as Scripture states: ['For I will not always contend, I will not be angry forever:] for the spirit [*rûaḥ*] that enwraps [*ya'atof*] itself is from me, and the souls which I have made (Is. 57:16).'"[90] Considered apart from the various contexts in which it appears, this statement seems to bespeak a resignation to begetting children until the cycle of birth and death has been completed and the messianic era, from which procreation and mortality will be banished, can at long last begin.[91] According to this reading, one has children in order to come closer to the moment when it will no longer be necessary to bear them.

Nisan Rubin has traced a movement away from from the anthropological monism of the Bible toward a moderate dualism that begins in the wake of the Hadrianic persecutions and becomes much more marked among the sages of second- and third-century Palestine.[92] This shift reflects itself in the views that it is the body that serves the soul, rather than the reverse, and that there is little or no connection between one's behavior in this world and one's this-worldly fate. Such viewpoints undoubtedly led to a greater acceptance and even valorization of fasting and other forms of asceticism (though not necessarily self-mortification).

The history of Babylonian Jewry, on the other hand, is a much happier one. The Arsacid dynasty (240 BCE–224 CE) followed a policy of granting virtual autonomy to their Jewish communities. There was some persecution of the Jews when the Sassanians came to power in the early third century and thereafter intermittently until the Islamic conquest of 640, but rabbinic evidence suggests that these oppressions were limited and relatively short-lived.[93] Babylonian Jews had a tradition, quoted often in geonic times, that because their community was composed in part of Torah scholars exiled from the land of Israel before the destruction of the First Temple, they had uninterrupted and therefore reliable traditions in matters of law and scriptural interpretation.[94] Although this tradition is known to us from relatively late sources, and despite its clearly polemical intent, it probably reflects a sense of communal continuity and political security that was felt by earlier generations of Babylonian Jews as well.

In this atmosphere of relative prosperity and security, this-worldly pleasure, as long as it took permitted forms and was indulged in moderation, was seen as part of God's blessing to humankind—as indeed is assumed by so many biblical texts. This notion is encapsulated admirably in a remarkable passage in which Yalta, the wife of the third-century Babylonian R. Nahman, asks her husband to find for her a permitted means of eating meat with milk. She is sure that such a means exists, arguing as follows:

> Observe—for everything that the Torah has forbidden us it has permitted us an equivalent. It has forbidden us blood but it has permitted us liver. It has forbidden us intercourse during menstruation but it has permitted us the blood of purification [דם טוהר].[95] It has forbidden us the fat (חלב) of domesticated animals but it has

> permitted us the fat of wild beasts. It has forbidden us pork but it has permitted us the [similarly flavored] brain of the *šibbûta'*. It has forbidden us the *girûta'* but it has permitted us the [similarly flavored] tongue of fish. It has forbidden us the married woman but it has permitted us the divorcee during the lifetime of her former husband. It has forbidden us the non-Jewish woman but has permitted us the יפת תואר [= a woman taken captive in war]. (bHullin 109b)

The Torah, Yalta is saying, regulates pleasure but does not forbid it. (Indeed, R. Nahman is able to find a means of eating milk with meat that is permissible, namely consuming a roasted udder.) Moreover, to turn away from these pleasures could be seen as a sinful rejection of God's creation. This, perhaps, is the intent of a well-known statement cited in Rab's name: "A man is destined to give an account for each thing that his eye saw and [yet] he did not eat."[96] Presumably this perspective was particularly congenial to those sages who had sufficient personal wealth to allow large blocks of time for study together with a life of relative comfort. As Moshe Beer has shown,[97] there appear to have been many such sages in Babylonia.

Regarding the second approach, there is a significant difference between most of the Graeco-Roman religions and philosophies, on the one hand, and Zoroastrianism, the religion of the Arsacid and Sassanian empires, on the other, with regard to asceticism generally and fasting in particular. The Graeco-Roman world was the birthplace of Cynicism and Stoicism; while neither urged complete abstinence, both emphasized a detachment from, and indifference to, the material world. Pythagoreans and Neoplatonists emphasized limiting one's indulgence in physical pleasure; some of them specifically advocated vegitarianism.[98] The ideas of these philosophic schools did not remain within the walls of the academy, moreover; itinerant preachers, particularly Cynics, could be found from the early days of the Roman empire.[99] Certainly many of the medical notions current in the Graeco-Roman world were shared by the Palestinian rabbis, including those concerning advisable and inadvisable sexual behaviors.[100] Therefore, without necessarily assuming direct influence of these movements and ideas on Palestinian Jewry—the question of Stoic influence, in particular, upon rabbinic thinking has been the subject of much debate[101]—one must consider such influence as a possibility.

Thus while Veronika Grimm may be correct in her claim that total abstinence from food and drink was a rarity in Graeco-Roman culture,[102] *askesis*, training and disciplining one's soul and body that often included some form of self-denial, was not. While Greek and Roman writers may have seen Jewish fasting as exotic, even those authors hostile toward Judaism did not denigrate fasting as they did other Jewish practices such as Sabbath observance and the prohibition against eating pork. In sum, the Graeco-Roman environment in which the Palestinian rabbis lived was one that valorized asceticism. Although total withdrawal from food and drink was not a significant medium of ascetic expression in the Graeco-Roman world, Jews choosing to fast in such a culture would have been viewed sympathetically.

Zoroastrianism, on the other hand, though dualistic in its view of divinity, strenously rejects a mind/body dualism. This is true generally, and particularly in the early Sassanian period when Zoroastrianism was battling Manicheaism, which endorsed soul/body dualism and which, in contrast to Zoroastrianism, viewed the corporeal as evil. Arthur Vööbus[103] points out that early Sassanian persecution of the Christians was fueled in part by Persian distaste for Christian asceticism, particularly its indifferent and even hostile attitude toward the cultivation of the soil. For the Persians, farming was the very act through which the Daêvas, the demons of darkness, could be defeated:

> He who sows corn sows righteousness; he makes the religion of Mazda walk, he suckles the religion of Mazda, as well as he could do with a hundred men's feet, with a thousand women's breasts, with ten thousand sacrificial formulas.
>
> When barley was created the Daêvas started up; when it grew, then fainted the Daêvas' hearts; when the knots came, the Daêvas groaned; when the ear came, the Daêvas flew away.[104]

Similarly, Naomi Koltun-Fromm has suggested that it is not accidental that a Jewish-Christian polemic about the relative merits of abstinence and marriage took place in the east, where the prevailing culture valued family and children.[105] When, in the Vendîdâd, which was apparently composed in the Parthian[106] or early Sassanian[107] period, Zoroaster asks Ahura Mazda about the places where the earth feels happiest, his second answer is:

> It is the place whereon one of the faithful with the priest within, with cattle, with a wife, with children and with good herds within; and wherein afterwards the cattle continue to thrive, virtue to thrive, the wife to thrive, the child to thrive, the fire to thrive, and every blessing of life to thrive.[108]

Regarding fasting in particular, at least three passages in the Vendîdâds forbid fasting. One of these refers to unnamed opponents[109] of orthodox Zoroastrianism as "ungodly fast[ers]." This passage makes it clear that fasting was a mark of heresy from the perspective of orthodox Zoroastrianism. This point is also made, although in more diplomatic fashion, in the Sad Dar, an apologetic Pahlavi Zoroastrian text of uncertain date but probably from the early Islamic period:

> It is requisite to abstain from the keeping of fasts. For, in our religion, it is not proper that they should not eat every day or [not eat] anything, because it would be a sin not to do so. With us the keeping of the fast is this, that we keep fast from committing sin with our eyes and tongue and ears and hands and feet.[110]

The notion that fasting is secondary to abstinence from sin is certainly known in rabbinic literature as well.[111] However, the view that (voluntary) fasting is inherently sinful is encountered mainly among Babylonian rabbinic scholars, as was discussed earlier.

A second reference to fasting in the Vendîdâds is interesting because of its similarity to rabbinic concerns about fasting:

> Then let people learn by heart this holy saying: "No one who does not eat has strength to do heavy works of holiness, strength to do works of husbandry, strength to beget children. By eating, every material creature lives, by not eating it dies away."[112]

Two of the reasons mentioned by the Zoroastrian scriptures not to fast are cited in rabbinic literature as well. I mentioned in the previous chapter statements by the third-century Babylonian and Palestinian scholar Resh Laqish and the the third-century Babylonian R. Sheshet discouraging Torah scholars from fasting. Moreover, the PT mentions that an employee, and particularly one who teaches youngsters Torah, should not fast or engage in other forms of self-privation if these will diminish his effectiveness as a worker or teacher.[113]

There is little question that Babylonian Judaism in general[114] and rabbinic practices in particular were influenced by Persian beliefs and customs in several regards.[115] The Bavli itself quotes *tannaim* and *amoraim* speaking approvingly[116] of Persian practice and of following Persian etiquette at meals. A Babylonian narrative concerning the third-century Babylonian sages R. Nahman and R. Judah b. Yehezqel indicates that rabbis close to the exilarch were prone to using Persian expressions rather than rabbinic or vernacular language.[117] Lately it has been argued that Babylonian Jewish attitudes toward the menstruant were influenced by Persian ones. The sages know and use the Persian term for menstruant, *daštānā*,[118] and *Baraita de-Niddâ*, a text of uncertain date and origin,[119] contains many of the taboos concerning menstruants that are found in Persian texts.

Thus it certainly possible that the sages of Babylonia were influenced in their thinking about fasting and asceticism by the surrounding Zoroastrian culture. It seems plausible that Persian culture's basic hostility toward asceticism helped create a negative or at least ambivalent attitude toward fasting and sexual asceticism among the Babylonian sages.

Conclusion

Rabbinic Asceticism: Alternative, Not Aberration

I have argued at length that asceticism, in its incidental, instrumental, and essential forms, is part of the fabric of rabbinic Judaism. In its incidental and instrumental forms, rabbinic asceticism stemmed from two sources. The first was an intense devotion to Torah study on the one hand which, though it probably began among the wealthy classes, expanded to include the poorer classes as well. Some sages were prepared to suffer extreme privation, and to allow their families to suffer the same fate, in order to master Torah, and they encouraged others to do so as well. While for some sages, circumstances rather than ideology necessitated their acceptance of poverty and other forms of austerity, others saw self-deprivation as an integral part of their program of study and piety.

The second source was a worldview according to which the travails and delights of this world are a mere prelude to the soul's true recompense in the next world. Such a view led many sages to see the pleasures of this world as trifling and, to the extent that they could lessen their future reward, a snare to be avoided. This outlook led some sages to accept suffering and even, in exceptional cases, to invite it upon themselves.

The sages saw self-denial not merely as a means to an end, however; they also viewed restraint as having inherent religious value. This view is evident in their identification of self-denial with *qedûšâ* and *perîsût* and their identification of those who practice self-denial as *qedôšîm* and *perûšîm*. Moreover, although the sages generally eschewed celibacy, they did engage frequently in a characteristically ascetic behavior: fasting. As a consequence of the Temple's destruction, fasting became a richly multivalent symbol, serving both to mourn the loss of the sacrificial cult and to achieve

by other means the atonement it had offered; it also became a vessel for the ascetic energies previously poured into Naziriteship, the practice of which was attenuated with the cessation of the sacrificial cult. Finally, I have contended that, on the whole, Palestinian sages were much more positively disposed toward various forms of self-denial than were their Babylonian counterparts. The ascetic temper of each rabbinic community apparently was determined by its internal history and the external influences upon it.

The origins of asceticism within Judaism generally, and rabbinic Judaism specifically, still need to be investigated further. Broadly speaking, however, three forces seem to have been powerful contributors to Second Temple and rabbinic asceticism. The first is the development during the Second Temple period of belief in a future world of reward and punishment for the soul. Such a creed radically undercuts one's ability to savor the pleasures of this world. One suddenly finds oneself in Plato's cave, experiencing only the shadow of a greater, richer reality. Second, the destruction of the Second Temple creates a sense of exile, even within one's own land, that expresses itself in guilt and mourning as well as in constant search for atonement for the sins that caused that destruction. Third, the nature of rabbinic Judaism is to expand upon both the obligations and restrictions that it inherits from biblical Israel and from Second Temple Judaism. This expansion creates a dynamic whereby greater restriction—certainly if it is prescribed only for the self and not for others—is intrinsically praiseworthy.

To the extent that the second factor, that of destruction and exile, motivates much of Jewish asceticism in the late antique and subsequent periods, we can perhaps discern a fundamental difference between Jewish and Christian asceticism. For the desert fathers, and perhaps even more so for Christian gnostics, the ideal self is one stripped of all bodily wants and needs, a soul communing with and serving its creator. Self-denial is eagerly embraced as the path to spiritual excellence. For Jews, however, self-denial is often a symptom of one's frailty and sinfulness and the dystopian state of Jewish existence. In a perfect world, one would sit under one's vine and one's fig tree, enjoying the God-given pleasures of this world. However, in the words of the traditional festival liturgy, "because of our sins we have been exiled from our land . . . and we are unable to go up [to Jerusalem] to appear and prostrate ourselves before you because of the hand that has been stretched forth against Your sanctuary." Asceticism—fasting, in particular—becomes both a means of expressing the degradation of exile and an instrument aimed at ending it. For all the differences between Christian and Jewish asceticism, however, we should remember that the monastic communities of Egypt and Palestine were, to a significant degree, the spiritual descendants of the ascetic communities of Qumran; and that the sages, while rejecting thoroughgoing asceticism, nonetheless partook of its spirit of systematic self-denial in the pursuit of spiritual perfection.

My findings have implications not only for understanding the rabbinic period but also for putting the asceticism of medieval and modern Jewry in proper perspective. Periodically, ascetic factions developed within Jewish society. These include the German pietists of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries

known as *ḥasîdē Ashkenaz*,[1] the twelfth-century *perûšîm* of Southern France,[2] the ascetic mystics of sixteenth-century Safed,[3] the ascetic school within the eighteenth-century Hasidic movement,[4] the austere eighteenth-century Gaon of Vilna and his circle,[5] and the self-denying adherents of the nineteenth-century *musar* movement in Lithuania.[6] While scholars have often debated the degree of outside cultural influences on, or parallels to, some of these groups and individuals,[7] it is also important to ask about the degree to which they reflect an ever-present theme in Jewish life. My view is that while external influences periodically have played a role in bringing the ascetic impulse within rabbinic Judaism to the fore, that impulse itself is part of the fabric of rabbinic thought and practice.

Moreover, one can see traces of the same forces that animated rabbinic asceticism in later manifestations of Jewish asceticism. I have described at length how the rabbinic commitment to Torah study resulted in incidental as well as systematic self-denial. Austerity in the pursuit of Torah knowledge is embodied by the eighteenth-century Gaon of Vilna, R. Elijah b. Solomon. The Gaon was renowned not only for his encyclopedic knowledge of Torah and his seemingly superhuman assiduousness in its study, but also for the austerity of his personal life. His son R. Abraham says of him: "All the many days of his life . . . he spurned all of the many pleasures of this world—food, drink, and sleep—and only then found good fortune in the land of the living."

A second force that drove rabbinic self-denial was the fact and perception of living in exile. The Temple's destruction, the exile of the Jewish people, and the loss of sovereignty even with the land of Israel itself, created a heavy burden of guilt for the Jewish people. For all Jews, reminders of the exile and destruction were a constant presence even—actually, particularly—at the most festive moments of Jewish life. The words "and because of our sins we were exiled from our land" became a part of the festival liturgy. A bridegroom placed ashes on his head under the *huppâ*. When a new home was built, a part of a wall was to be left unplastered. This sense of sinfulness was intensified by the persecutions suffered at the hands of Christians during the Crusades and the Inquisition.

As I mentioned in chapter 5, Nisan Rubin links the destruction of the Second Temple, the Hadrianic persecutions, and the failure of the Bar Kokhba revolt to the turn toward anthropological dualism among the sages. Citing the work of Arnold van Gennup and Victor Turner, Rubin proposes that the sages saw themselves as living in a liminal world between destruction and redemption.[8] Such a self-perception allowed some sages to feel relative indifference toward their material condition as well as a desire to intensify their spiritual efforts in order to make redemption possible.

Throughout the medieval period in every venue in which Jews lived, including Palestine, they had a strong sense of being in exile. Thus the Mishnah requires that trees be planted at a distance from the city[9] in order, according to the *amora* Ulla, to improve the city's appearance.[10] The thirteenth-century Spanish sage Nahmanides says that this ordinance does not apply to the cities of the Diaspora. On the contrary, he adds, "would that [the cities of the diaspora] appear repugnant in the eyes of their [Jewish] inhabitants."[11] Nor is the Palestin-

ian Jewish community exempt from this sense of displacement. When David b. Daniel, upon becoming the Egyptian exilarch in the eleventh century, wishes to include Palestine in his sphere of jurisdiction, it must be argued in turn by his Palestinian adversary Elijah b. Solomon that by definition the land of Israel cannot be part of the Diaspora.[12]

This sense of exile contributed to asceticism in at least two ways. First, because traditional theology taught that the Temple had been destroyed and the Jews had gone into exile because of their sins, Jews everywhere bore a heavy burden of guilt. As we have seen, a sense of sinfulness was one of the main motivators of ascetic behavior among the sages of late antiquity; this was undoubtedly true of medieval Jewry as well. The *ḥasîdē Ashkenaz* in particular expressed a basic pessimism about human nature.[13] Second, many Jews had a deep sense that their communal life, and therefore their individual ones, were temporary, or, in the case of the thirteenth- and sixteenth-century mystics of Spain and Safed, merely a reflection of a greater cosmic mystery. This sense of dislocation led to the paradox that human action was simultaneously crucial to the divine drama yet also secondary to, and radically shaped by it. In many cases this belief led to hermetism, fasting, sexual restrictions, and other forms of asceticism.[14]

For the *mitnaggedim* of eighteenth- and nineteenth century Lithuania and Poland it was clear that all that was left of God's presence in this world was the four ells of *halakhah*. It was crucial, therefore, that one spend as much of one's time as possible engaged in Torah study. This notion often led to ascetic extremes, most notably in the case of the Vilna Gaon and his students.[15] Today numerous *haredi*, or ultra-Orthodox communities, sponsor *kollelim*, institutions in which married students study Torah full-time, supported by a relatively meager stipend, one's wife's earnings, and, if available, the largess of parents and in-laws. Ironically, the growth of this phenomenon is due in great measure to the relative wealth and stability of the Jewish communities in the United States and Israel.

In short, I am arguing that the sense of dislocation that affected Jews from late antiquity onward, combined with a preoccupation with scholarship and spiritual perfection, were powerful factors in making asceticism an attractive option for Jewish elites. Thus the presence of asceticism in ambient cultures was a factor in stimulating Jewish asceticism but not the only cause, or even the main one.

Returning to where I began, then, my experience at the *mesivta* was not an aberration, if one takes the long and nuanced view of Jewish history. As a people without a country and the relative social, financial, and political security that are its boons, unable and unwilling to become fully integrated members of the larger societies in which they lived, Jews affirmed marriage and family as a crucial means of survival and growth; however, the intellegentsia among them built a spiritual kingdom that for some came largely to supersede the material as much as it governed and shaped it. This spiritual kingdom continues to exist for some Jews today. As long as it does, for those who inhabit this kingdom the threefold cord of Torah study, holiness, and asceticism will not be quickly torn asunder.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations of Book and Journal Titles

AAJR	American Academy for Jewish Research
AJSReview	*Association for Jewish Studies Review*
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang in der Romische Welt*
BDB	F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, eds. *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
DShŠ-Sôṭâ	*Diqdûqē Sôferîm ha-Šālēm, Masseḳheṭ Sôṭâ*
EM	*Enṣiqlôpeḏyâ Miqrā'ît*
FJB	*Frankfuter Judaistische Beitrage*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HUCA	*Hebrew Union College Annual*
ICC	*International Critical Commentary*
IDB	*Intepreter's Dictionary of the Bible*
IEJ	*Israel Exploration Journal*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JJS	*Journal of Jewish Studies*
JQR	*Jewish Quarterly Review*
JSJ	*Journal for the Study of Judaism*
JSS	*Journal of Semitic Studies*
JTSA	Jewish Theological Seminary of America
MGWJ	*Monätschrift fur die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthüm*
NJPS	*Tanakh and the Holy Scriptures: The New Jewish Publication Society Translation according to the Traditional Hebrew Text*
NTA	*New Testament Apocrypha*

NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OTP	*Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudopigrapha*
PAAJR	*Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*
REJ	*Revue des Etudes Juives*
RQ	*Revue de Qumran*
SH	*Scripta Hierosylimata*
ThLOT	*Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*
ThWAT	*Theologische Wortebuch zum Alte Testament*
TK	*Tôsefta' Ki-Fešutâ*^{h}
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
ZAW	*Zeitschrift fur die Alttestamentische Wissenschaft*

Abbreviations of Qumran and Cairo Geniza Manuscripts

CD MS A	*Damascus Covenant,* manuscript A
1QH	Thanksgiving Scroll in Qumran cave 1
1Qap	Genesis Apocryphon in Qumran cave 1
11QT	Temple Scroll in Qumran cave 11
11QtgJob	Aramaic Targum to Job in Qumran cave 11

Abbreviations of Titles of Biblical and Rabbinic Works

ARN	*Abot de-Rabi Natan*
A.Z.	Abodah Zarah
b	Bavli (Babylonian Talmud)
BT	Babylonian Talmud
DER	*Derekh Eretz Rabbah*
Deut	Deuteronomy
DeutR	*Deuteronomy Rabbah*
DeutR-L	*Deuteronomy Rabbah,* Lieberman edition
DEZ	*Derekh Eretz Zuta*
Eccles	Ecclesiastes
EcclR	*Ecclesiastes Rabbah*
Exod	Exodus
ExodR	*Exodus Rabbah*
Ezek	Ezekiel
Gen	Genesis
GenR	*Genesis Rabbah*
Isa	Isaiah
ISG	*Iggeret Šerīrā' Gā'ōn*
Josh	Joshua
Kal	*Massekhet Kallah*
KalR	*Kallah Rabbati*
Lam	Lamentations

LamR	*Lamentations Rabbah*
Lev	Leviticus
LevR	*Leviticus Rabbah*
Lk	Luke
m	Mishnah
Macc	Maccabees
MdRSbY	*Mekhilta de-Rabi Simeon ben Yoḥai*
MdRY	*Mekhilta de-Rabi Yišmā'ēl*
MidPr	*Midrash Proverbs*
MidTan	*Midrash Tannaim*
MidTeh	*Midrash Tehillim*
Mk	Mark
Mt	Matthew
Num	Numbers
NumR	*Numbers Rabbah*
PesR	*Pesiqta Rabbati*
PRE	*Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer*
PRK	*Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana*
Prov	Proverbs
Ps	Psalms
PsSEZ	*Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta*
PT	Palestinian Talmud
RuR	*Ruth Rabbah*
SongR	*Song of Songs Rabbah*
SZ	*Sifre Zuta*
t	Tosefta
Tanh	*Midrash Tanhuma*
TanhB	Midrash Tanhuma, Buber edition
y	Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud)
YalEccl	*Yalqut Ecclesiates*
YD	*Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah*

This page intentionally left blank

Editions of Rabbinic Works Cited

Abot de-Rabi Natan, ed. Solomon Schechter, Vienna 1887.

Aggadat Bereshit, ed. Solomon Buber, Cracow 1903.

Derekh Eretz Rabbah, ed. Michael Higger, New York 1935.

Derekh Eretz Zuta, ed. Daniel Sperber, Jerusalem 1982.

Deuteronomy Rabbah, Lieberman edition, ed. Saul Lieberman, Jerusalem 1974.

Exodus Rabbah, ed. Avigdor Shinan, Tel Aviv 1984.

Genesis Rabbah, ed. J. Theodor and Hanokh Albeck, Berlin 1912–1936.

Jerusalem Talmud, Venice ed. 1520–1521.

Lamentations Rabbah, ed. Solomon Buber, Vilna 1899.

Leviticus Rabbah, ed. Mordechai Margaliot, Jerusalem 1953–1960.

Massekhtot Kallah, ed. Michael Higger, New York 1936.

Mekhilta de-Rabi Simeon ben Yoḥai, ed. J. N. Epstein and Ezra B. Z. Melamed, Jerusalem 1955.

Mekhilta de-Rabi Yišmā'ēl, ed. Haim Horovitz and I. A. Rabin, Frankfurt 1935.

Midrash on Proverbs, ed. Burton Visotzky, New York 1990.

Midrash Tanhuma, Buber edition, ed. Solomon Buber, Vilna 1885.

Midrash Tannaim, ed. David Hoffmann, Berlin 1908–1909.

Midrash Tehillim, ed. Solomon Buber, Vilna 1891.

Pesiqta Rabbati, ed. Meir Friedmann, Vienna 1880.

Pesiqta de-Rav Kahana, ed. Bernard Mandelbaum, New York 1962.

Pseudo-Seder Eliyahu Zuta, ed. Meir Friedmann, Vienna 1904.

Sifra, ed. Isaac Hirsch Weiss, Vienna 1862.

Sifre Deuteronomy, ed. Louis Finkelstein, Berlin 1939.
Sifre Numbers, ed. Haim Horovitz, Leipzig 1917.
Sifre Zuta, ed. Haim Horovitz, in *Sifre Numbers*, Leipzig 1917.
Tosefta, ed. M. S. Zuckermandel, Trier 1882.
Tosefta Zeraim, Moed and Nashim, ed. Saul Lieberman, New York 1955–1988.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. By rabbinic Judaism I mean the Judaism delineated in the Mishnah, the Tosefta, the Talmuds, and the halakhic and aggadic midrashim. The Mishnah was composed in the early third century and the Palestinian Talmud in the late fourth or early fifth century; the "classical" aggadic midrashim date to the early or late fifth century. The dating of other works in the rabbinic corpus is the subject of much debate; for a summary of the various views see Hermann L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996). The so-called rabbinic period is usually defined as beginning in 70 C.E. with the destruction of the Second Temple and ending in the sixth century (see Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987], 18) or in 636–640 C.E. with the Islamic conquest of Persia and Palestine (see, for example, Gedalyah Alon, *The Jews in Their Land in the Talmudic Age*, trans. G. Levi [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1980], 1:3); however, compare idem, *Tôledôt ha-Yehûdîm be-'Ereẓ Yisra'ēl bi-Teqûfat ha-Mišnâ weha-Talmûd* [Tel: Aviv Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1977[6]], 1.3, where the *terminus ad quem* is implied but not stated explicitly).

2. See R. Eliyahu Dessler, *Strive for Truth*, trans. Aryeh Carmell (Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1978), 161–172.

3. Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 1.

4. Although these two are generally presented as antinomies, Paul's depiction, in Romans 11, of gentile Christians as branches that have been grafted onto the olive tree to replace the branches that were broken off is a fascinating attempt at fusing these two images so that gentile converts are in some sense Israel in the flesh as well as in the spirit. However, a number of New Testament scholars believe that the olive tree represents not ethnic Israel but rather the community of believers in Jesus Christ, both Jewish and gentile, that has its roots, according to Pauline theology, in the Abrahamic

covenant; see Joseph A. Fitzmeyer, *Romans*, Anchor Bible, volume 23 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 610.

5. Ambrose of Milan implies such a link between celibacy and the allegorical understanding of Torah. Immediately after insisting on the importance of celibacy for priests administering the Eucharist (*De officiis*, book I, chapter 50, par. 248), he discusses the role of clergy in keeping watch over "the depths of the mysteries" (ibid., par. 249–250), which include the symbolic significance of the biblical commandments (ibid., par. 260): "Moses, indeed, saw the circumcision of the spirit, but veiled it, so as to give circumcision only in an outward sign. He saw the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, he saw the sufferings of the Lord; but he veiled the unleavened bread of truth in the material leavened bread, he veiled the sufferings of the Lord in the sacrifice of a lamb or a calf" (trans. H. De Romestin in P. Schaff and H. Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series* (1896; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 10: 42.

6. Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 36–38 and 57–105; see also Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 108.

7. For recent analyses of Paul's attitude toward celibacy see Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 44–57, and Boyarin, *A Radical Jew*, 170–172. For a comprehensive review of early Christian attitudes toward the biblical commandment to "be fruitful and multiply" see Jeremy Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 221–270.

8. Eusebius of Caesaria, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 1.9, as cited in J. Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 232.

9. *Demonstrationes* 18.1; for a discussion of this passage see Jacob Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Chrisitan–Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971); Naomi Koltun, "Jewish-Christian Polemics in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia: A Reconstructed Conversation," Ph.D. Diss. (Stanford University, 1993), ch. 3, esp. 113–118; Naomi Koltun-Fromm, "Marriage or Celibacy: Which Does God Prefer? A Jewish–Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia," in *JJS* 47 (1996), 45–63. Judah Halevi (Spain, 1075–1141) stresses Judaism's non-ascetic character and its superiority to ascetic disciplines; see Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari* (*Kitab al Khazari*)*: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*, trans. H. Hirschfeld (1905; repr. New York: Schocken Books, 1964), part II, 50 (113–114).

10. See Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (Louvain: Catholic University, 1958), 1:13–14, and Robert Murray, "The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church," *NTS* 21 (1975), 59–80.

11. James A. Montgomery, "Ascetic Strains in Early Judaism," *JBL* 51 (1932), 183–187.

12. See, for example, Israel Abrahams, *Studies in Pharasaism and the Gospels: First Series* (1914; repr. New York: Ktav, 1967), 121–122; Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trans. and ed. by H. H. Gerth and D. Martindale (New York: Free Press, 1952), 254, 343, 401–410; idem, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. E. Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 246; George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of The Tannaim* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927) 2:263–266; H. Strathmann, "Askese I (nichtchristlich)," *Reallexikon für Antike und*

Christentum I (Stuttgart: Hiersemann Verlag, 1950), 750; Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), 447–448; idem, "Asceticism and Suffering in Rabbinic Thought" (Hebrew), *Sēfer Yôvēl le-Yitsḥāq Baer* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 48–68; David Feldman, *Birth Control in Jewish Law: Marital Relations, Contraception, and Abortion as Set Forth in the Classic Texts of Jewish Law* (New York: New York University Press, 1968), 81–95. See also the popular work by Abba Hillel Silver, *Where Judaism Differed* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957), 182–223. Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (1909; repr. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1993), mentions asceticism only in connection with acts of penance (339–340, 342).

13. David Halivni, "On the Supposed Anti-Asceticism or Anti-Nazritism [sic] of Simon the Just," *JQR* 58 (1967–1968), 244.

14. Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1952[2]), 2:256–257.

15. Allan Lazaroff, "Baḥyā's Asceticism against Its Rabbinic and Islamic Background," in *JJS* 21 (1970), 11–38, esp. 11–20.

16. Steven Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," in Arthur Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 253–288.

17. Moshe Sokol, "Attitudes toward Pleasure in Jewish Thought: A Typological Proposal," in J. J. Schacter, ed., *Reverence, Righteousness and Rahamanut* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson), 293–314, is also helpful; however, as Sokol himself points out, his study is conceptual rather than historical and therefore draws mainly from medieval Jewish philosophical sources. Additionally, Sokol is mistaken in his assumption that extreme asceticism can be the product only of dualism (294).

18. I mean the term to have both biological and psychological significance in this context.

19. See the sources cited in Urbach, "Asceticism," 48–49. For discussion of another example of "historical analysis" that assigns a role of *prepratorio evangelica* to Judaism, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Adolf Harnack's 'The Mission and Expansion of Judaism': Christianity Succeeds Where Judaism Fails," in B. Pearson, ed., *The Future of Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 163–169. Cohen argues that when Harnack speaks of Jewish proselytizing in the Diaspora preparing the way for and being fully realized in Christian evangelism, he is engaging in theological speculation rather than historical analysis.

20. See, for example, M. Viller and M. Olphe-Galliard, "Ascèse. Ascétisme: III. L' ascèse chrétienne; A. Les origines scriptuaires," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique, et mystique, doctrine et histoire* (Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1932–1995), 1:961–962, who assert that there existed within Judaism "un esprit et un pratique d'ascèse, encore imparfait sans doute et assez plus généralisée, mais qui cependant préparait l'essor de l'ascèse chrétienne."

21. T. C. Hall, "Asceticism (Introduction)," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (New York: Scribner's, 1910), 66.

22. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism*, 1:14.

23. Ibid., 17–23.

24. Vincent L. Wimbush and Richard Valantasis, *Asceticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), xix–xxv.

25. One should also mention in this connection William James's late nineteenth-century taxonomy of ascetic types and motivations (William James, *The*

Varieties of Religious Experience [1902; repr., New York: The Modern Library, n.d.], 291–292) as well as Durkheim's discussion of asceticism (Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. Jospeh Ward Swain [New York: The Free Press, 1965], 350–356). Also relevant is Nietzsche's provocative and penetrating essay on the ascetic ideal in his *On the Genealogy of Morals* (trans. Walter Kaufmann [New York: Vintage Press, 1967]), about which more will be said later.

26. Hall, "Asceticism."

27. Oscar Hardman, *The Ideals of Asceticism: An Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion* (London: SPCK, 1924).

28. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958); idem, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. E. Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

29. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 95–183; idem, *Sociology*, 166–168.

30. Weber, *Sociology*, 173, 175–176.

31. The term actually used by Weber is "world-rejecting asceticism" (*welt-ablehnende Askese*); see Weber, *Sociology*, 166 and 169.

32. Weber, *Sociology*, 169–172.

33. Elizabeth Castelli, "Asceticism—Audience and Response," in Wimbush and Valantasis, *Asceticism*, 183, notes that the asceticism group of which she is a member has been meeting for seven years without reaching anything approaching agreement on a definition of asceticism.

34. Yitzhak (Fritz) Baer, *Yisrā'ēl bā-ʿAmîm* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1955), 38–57.

35. Urbach, "Ascesis"; see also idem, *The Sages*, 443–448.

36. Baer, *Yisrā'ēl bā-ʿAmîm*, 40.

37. Urbach, "Asceticism," 67–68.

38. See Nisan Rubin, "From Monism to Dualism: The Body–Soul Relationship in the Perception of the Sages" (Hebrew), in *Daʿat* 23 (1989), 33–63, who argues that although rabbinic thought until the Hadrianic persecutions was essentially monistic, it shifted subsequently toward dualism.

39. Urbach, "Asceticism," 67 n. 99. On the subject of German Hasidic asceticism see H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim* (London: Marla Publications, 1976), 237–246; Ivan Marcus, *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), 34–35. For Safed, see Lawrence Fine, *Safed Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984) 11–16. The absence or presence of an elite class of ascetics in rabbinic Judaism of late antiquity will be mentioned later.

40. Baer, *Yisrā'ēl bā-ʿAmîm*, 41.

41. See D. A. Dombrowski, "Asceticism as Athletic Training in Plotinus," in *ANRW* II.36.1 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987), 701–712.

42. See the discussion of pagan testimony and Christian martyrologies in Judith Perkins, *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era* (London: Routledge, 1995), 15–40. Note in particular the following remark: "It is safe to say that the one thing contemporaries knew about Christianity (in fact, for some the *only* thing they give any evidence of knowing) is that Christians held death in contempt and were ready to suffer for their beliefs" (18).

43. Urbach is certainly not alone in seeing asceticism as undesirable. For example, Wimbush and Valantasis, *Asceticism*, xx, comment that "in nineteenth-century England and Germany works appeared that focused upon asceticism as a legacy of pathology . . . that had to be addressed and overcome if a healthy social order were to be sustained." See also the works cited there and Perkins, *Suffering*

Self, 173. For a nineteenth-century defense of asceticism see James, *Varieties*, 352–361.

44. See, for example, Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Adolf Harnack's 'The Mission and Expansion of Judaism,' Christianity Succeeds Where Judaism Fails," in B. Pearson, ed., *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of H. Koester* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 163–169. See also Judith Lieu, John North and Tessa Rajak, eds., *The Jews among Pagans and Christians* (London: Routledge, 1992), 1–8, where the editors discuss the effect of "triumphalist" views of Christianity on earlier studies of the Roman Empire's religious history; these include caricatured descriptions of late antiquity Judaism (3–6). Note also the brief but pointed remarks of Schechter, *Aspects*, 17–18.

45. Steven Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," in Arthur Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 253–288.

46. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects," 257.

47. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects," 260.

48. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects," 257.

49. Similarly H. Strathmann, "Askese I (nichtchristlich)," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Hiersmann, 1950), 1:750, speaks of the goals of asceticism being achieved through "einen freien Verzicht auf *grundsätzlich erlaubte* Lebensgewohnheiten [emphasis mine–E.D.]."

50. In fact Strathmann, "Askese," 750, suggests that perhaps the Sabbath and *kašrût* prohibitions should be considered a form of asceticism. Compare Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 350–351, and Weber, *Sociology*, 246–247; and see the comment of M. A. Williams in *Rethinking "Gnosticism: An Argument for the Dismantling of a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 141.

51. See how Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, 350, deals with this problem.

52. Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell, eds., *Qumran Cave 4.V: Miqṣat Maʿasē Ha-Torah* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

53. An English translation of the Coptic original can be found in *NTA* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991) 2:339–405.

54. Lee Levine's, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Yizhak Ben-Zvi Press; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1989) is an outstanding exposition of the shift in Palestinian rabbinic attitudes toward the nonrabbinic community. Regarding the relationship of Babylonian rabbis to the surrounding Jewish community as it emerges from the Bavli, see Richard Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 1–24 and passim.

55. Other versions: "more burdened by your sexual impulses."

56. Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

57. Weber, *Sociology*, 167–168.

58. See chapter 1 of this book.

59. *GenR* 44.1 (424–425).

60. bErubin 31a; bHullin 89a.

61. My thanks to Zvi Zohar for clarifying this point for me.

62. Of course, I am speaking only on the level of conscious ideology. On the subconscious or unconscious plane the reverse may be true: Ascetic discpline may be an instrument for escape from the confines of an undesirable social construct. See, for example, Carolyn Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious*

Significance of Food to Medieval Women (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 219–244, who shows how fasting, extreme forms of charity, and other unconventional behaviors were used by medieval women to manipulate their social circumstances.

63. Concerning the *ḥabûrôt* of the Second Temple and rabbinic periods, see Jacob Neusner, "The Fellowship [Haburah] in the Second Jewish Commonwealth," in *HTR* 53 (1960), 125–142 (= idem, *Fellowship in Judaism: The First Century and Today*, pref. by Robert Nisbet [London: Valentine Mitchell, 1963], 22–40).

64. See, for example, mAbot 1.5 and 3.11.

65. Urbach, "Asceticism," 67–68.

66. To cite a relatively recent example of such behavior, I. Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth*, trans. J. Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 18–20, describes the asceticism of the Gaon of Vilna, a renowned eighteenth-century Lithuanian Talmudist who slept no more than two hours a day, as being motivated primarily by a desire to immerse himself as fully as possible in Torah study.

67. See n. 8.

68. Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, III, 7 (82).

69. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 153–154.

70. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 124.

71. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 158.

72. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 159.

73. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 157–158, 168–169.

74. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 172–173.

75. Weber, *Sociology*, 253. Actually Weber is overstating the case here, in part because he does not acknowledge the rabbinic distinction between ideal and accepted behavior—between *šurat ha-din* and *li-pnîm mi-šurat ha-din*, to employ the language of the rabbis. Certainly many among the rabbinic elite sought to maintain the highest possible religious and ethical standards in their financial dealings, at least with fellow Jews; see, for example, the story of the "field of the rabbis" in bQiddushin 59a. Note also the tradition that the first question one is asked in the world to come is whether or not he dealt honestly in business (bShabbat 31a). At the same time, it must be admitted that there are rabbinic narratives that describe, in a forthright and unembarrassed fashion, questionable behavior on the part of some rabbis. See, for example, bBava Batra 149a (the story of Rava and the estate of Issur the proselyte), and Moshe Beer, *Amôrā'ē Bābęl* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1974), 343 n. 3.

76. Weber, *Sociology*, 253. This last phenomenon was a distinctly medieval development; see Louis Finkelstein, *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1924), 377–379.

77. Weber, *Sociology*, 256. While granting that "there are ascetic traits in Judaism," he sees these as "not central" to Judaism but rather as "by-products of the law, which have arisen in part from the peculiar problem-complex of Jewish piety."

78. A related example of stereotypical thinking—if not worse—on Weber's part is his explanation of Judaism's two-tiered ethical system, which is more lenient concerning behavior toward gentiles than it is regarding dealings with fellow Jews. Weber notes that "[t]his is of course the primordial economic ethics of all peoples everywhere." Weber is not surprised that this "primordial" ethic survives among the Jews, "for even in antiquity the Jews almost always regarded strangers as enemies" (Weber, *Sociology*, 251). In the course of two sentences Weber manages to rehearse two of the standard (mis)characterizations of Jews: that they embody a primitive

moral ethos, and that they are a clannish lot, regarding outsiders with suspicion and hostility.

79. On this notion see, e.g., Ben-Sasson, *Hagût ve-Hanhāgâ*, 71–74.

80. Concerning Germany in the thirteenth century, see Hayyim Hillel Ben-Sasson, "Haside Ashkenaz Regarding the Distribution of Material Acquisitions and Spiritual Resources Among Humanity" (Hebrew), in *Zion* 35 (1970), 61–68.

81. Regarding sixteenth-century Poland see Ben-Sasson, *Hagût ve-Hanhāgâ*, 90–110.

82. See, e.g., Harpham, *The Ascetic Imperative*.

83. Susanna Elm, *"Virgins of God": The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 373.

84. For an examination and explication of this characteristic of the rabbinic movement, see Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," *HUCA* 55 (1984), 27–53.

85. A major impetus for the early critical study of rabbinic literature was a desire to recover the purportedly "purer" or "more rational" Palestinian traditions that were seen as having been obscured by centuries of scholarly preoccupation with the Babylonian Talmud. For a discussion of this tendency in the modern critical evaluation of Palestinian and Babylonian sages and their literary creations, see Isaiah Gafni, "Between the Land of Israel and Babylonia: The World of the Talmud and Ideological Confrontation in the Historiography of the Modern Period" (Hebrew), in *Zion* 62 (1997), 213–242; and see the works cited in Shamma Friedman, "Concerning Historical Aggadah in the Babylonian Talmud" (Hebrew), in idem, ed., *Sēfęr ha-Zikkārôn le-Rabbî Šā'ûl Lieberman* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993), 121 n. 3 regarding the relative trustworthiness of Palestinian and Babylonian rabbinic texts as sources of historical information.

86. Julius Kaplan, *The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud* (1933; repr. Jerusalem: Maqor, 1973), 149–178; Abraham Weiss, *le-Ḥēqęr ha-Talmûd* (New York: Phillipp Feldheim, 1954), 18–63; Louis Jacobs, "Are There Fictitious Baraitot in the Babylonian Talmud?" *HUCA* 42 (1971), 185–196; Jacobs, "How Much of the Babylonian Talmud Is Pseudepigraphic?" *JJS* 28 (1977), 46–59; Neusner, *In Search of Talmudic Biography: The Problem of the Attributed Saying* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984); Neusner, *Reading and Believing, Ancient Judaism and Contemporary Gullibility* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986); Richard Kalmin, "Quotation Forms in the Babylonian Talmud: Authentically Amoraic, or a Later Editorial Construct?" in *HUCA* 59 (1988), 167–187; David Kraemer, "On the Reliability of Attribution in the Babylonian Talmud," in *HUCA* 60 (1989), 175–190; Richard Kalmin, "Collegial Interaction in the Talmud," in *JQR* 82 (1992), 383–415; Kalmin, "Talmudic Portrayals of Relationships between Rabbis: Amoraic or Pseudepigraphic?" in *AJS Review* 17 (1992), 165–197; Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994), 111–140; S. Stern, "Attribution and Authorship in the Talmud," *JJS* 45 (1994), 28–51. Regarding the relatively late date of so-called Babylonian *baraitot* in the Tosefta, see Yaakov Elman, "Babylonian Baraitot in the Tosefta and the 'Dialectology' of Middle Hebrew," in *AJS Review* 16 (1991), 1–29.

87. The *locus classicus* is *Sifre Deuteronomy* Pisqa 188 (226); and see David Halivni, "Doubtful Attributions in the Talmud" (Hebrew), *PAAJR* 46 (1979–1980): Hebrew section, 67–83.

88. Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors*, 1–13.

89. Christine Hayes, *Between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 9–16.

90. See, for example, the characterizations by Neusner and Paul Flesher of Urbach's study of slavery in the Second Temple and Talmudic periods in J. G. Weiss, ed., *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies London, Volume I* [Brown Classics in Judaica], preface by J. Neusner (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), preface, xv–xix.

91. Summarized most recently as follows in Neusner, *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), xxxi: "The irrefutable fact, the uncontingent, independent variable was the document." See Hayes, *Between the Talmuds*, 190 n. 13, for references to other important statements of Neusner's theories.

92. Arnold Goldberg, "Entwurf einer formanalytschen Methode für die Exegese der rabbinischen Traditionsliteratur," *FJB* 5 (1977), 1–41; idem, "Distributive und kompositive Formen: Vorschläge für die descriptive Terminologie der Formanalyse rabbinischer Texte," *FJB* 12 (1984), 147–153; idem, "Form-Analysis of Midrashic Literature as a Method of Description," *JJS* 36 (1985), 159–174. See Hayes, *Between the Talmuds*, 10, for a discussion of the differences between Goldberg and Neusner.

93. Even concerning the Mishnah there is uncertainty as to when it was "canonized" and the degree to which additions were made to it after its (presumed) redaction by Rabbi Judah the Patriarch; a brief summation of these issues can be found in Hermann L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. Marcus Bockmuehl (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 133–135.

94. Concerning the Tosefta, see, most recently, Abraham Goldberg, "The Tosefta—Companion to the Mishnah," in Shmuel Safrai, ed., *The Literature of the Sages—First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 284; he proposes a date of 220–230 CE; on the other hand, Ya'akov Elman, in *Authority and Tradition: Toseftan Baraitot in Talmudic Babylonian* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1994), concludes that "the Tosefta was not known as such in Amoraic Babylonia" (281). Each of the halakhic midrashim must be considered separately; see Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, 255 (Mekhilta de-Rabi Ishmael), 259 (Mekhilta de-Rabi Simeon bar Yohai), 261–263 (Sifra), 267 (Sifre Numbers), 269–270 (Sifre Zutta), 273 (Sifre Deuteronomy), for a survey of views. For the Palestinian Talmud, scholars have suggested dates ranging from 360 to 430; see the summary in Strack and Stemberger, 170–171. Dating the Bavli is particularly difficult. Strack and Stemberger, 206, cite approvingly Leopold Loew's view that one cannot date with certainty the redaction of the Bavli any earlier than the early eighth century.

95. Hayes, *Between the Talmuds*, 11.

96. Hayes, *Between the Talmuds*, 16. Similar conclusions are reached by Michael Satlow in his study of Babylonian and Palestinian texts dealing with sexuality, though with a greater degree of qualification (Michael Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality* [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995], 328–330).

97. On this distinction see Kalmin, *The Sage in Late Antiquity*, 14–15.

98. Catherine Hezser, "Apopthegmata Patrum and Apophthegmata of the Rabbis," in *La Narrativa Cristiana Antica: Codici Narrativi, Strutture Formali, Schemi Retorici* (Rome: Estratto, 1995), 453–464; idem, "Der Verwendung Der Hellenitischen Gattung Chrie in Frühen Christentum und Judentum," in *JSJ* 27 (1996), 371–439.

1. "WHAT WILL BECOME OF TORAH?"

1. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 218.

2. See S. J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 22.

3. Ibid., 219.

4. See bBerakhot 17a as well as bPesahim 50b and parallels. For an analysis of how this concept was understood by Ashkenazic (= northern European) Jews in the medieval and early modern periods, see Norman Lamm, *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah's Sake in the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries* (New York: Yeshiva University Press; Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1989).

5. bMakkot 23b.

6. Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*, (1909; repr. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1993), 142.

7. See, for example, mAbot 2.1 and 4.2.

8. mBerakhot 3.1-2.

9. mRosh Hashanah 4.8.

10. mAbot 2.8.

11. mPe'ah 1.1.

12. Two Yemenite manuscripts of the Mishnah with Maimonides' commentary do not include Torah study in this list; it is clear, however, that PT had this reading in the Mishnah. See Nisan Zaks, ed., *Mišnâ—Zerā'îm* (Jerusalem: Makhon ha-Talmudi ha-Yisre'eli ha-Shalem, 1972), 1:92 n. 5.

13. See yPe'ah 1.1, 15a.

14. Cf. mAbot 2.8.

15. This phrase could refer to a house belonging to a man named 'Aris; there are several alternate readings for *'aris* in the Sifre.

16. Parallels can be found in *MidTan* (= *Midrash Tannaim*) to Deut 11:13 (34); yPesahim 3.7, 30b; yHagiga 1.7, 76c; bKiddushin 40b; *SongR* 2.14. Hoffmann includes the parallel found in the sixteenth-century *Midrash Ha-Gadol* in his edition of *Mekhilta de-RSBY* to Exod 19:17 (100).

17. See Gedalyah Alon, *Tôledôt ha-Yehûdîm be-'Ereẓ Yisrā'ēl bi-Teqûfat ha-Mišnâ weha-Talmûd* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1971), 1:314, concerning the historical setting and significance of this debate.

18. yPesahim 3.7, 30b. R. Abbahu's colleagues, while agreeing generally with his view, gave precedence to other commandments over Torah study when there was no one else to fulfill them. A similar position is taken by the *tannaim* R. Judah b. Amsai and R. Judah b. Gerim; see bMoed Qatan 9b.

19. Other versions: R. Simeon. The single-minded devotion to Torah study suggested by this teaching is certainly consistent with other dicta attributed to R. Simeon b. Yohai elsewhere in rabbinic literature.

20. mAbot3.7. Compare the following story told about the monk Abba Silvanus (trans. Benedicta Ward in idem, ed., *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Cistercian Studies Series Number 59 [Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975], 223):

> One day while Abba Silvanus was living on the mountain of Sinai his disciple Zacharias went away on an errand and said to the old man, "Open the well and water the garden." The old man went out with his face hidden in his cowl, looking down at his feet. Now at that moment a brother came along and seeing him from a distance he observed what he was doing. So he went up to him and said, "Tell me, abba, why were you hiding your face in your cowl while you watered the garden?" The old man said to him, "So that my eyes should not see the trees, my son, in case my attention should be distracted by them."

21. Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, trans. Richard Sarason, Studia Judaiaca IX (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1977), 159 n. 4.

22. This is the most likely reading of mBerakhot 2:2; the view that the third paragraph is not recited in the evening is stated explicitly in *Sifre Numbers* Pisqa 115 (126). For a full discussion of this question, see Louis Ginzberg, *Pērûsîm ve-Ḥiddušîm li-Yerušalmî Berākhôt* (New York: Ktav, 1971), 1:207–209.

23. yBerakhot 1.2, 3b; and cf. bBerakhot 7a.

24. bBerakhot 13b. Cf. yBer 2.1, 4a-b. This report and the previous one are, of course, amoraic; nonetheless, given that they both appear in the BT as well as the PT, it seems likely that they are reliable attributions.

25. The Mishnah states that if one recites the *Shema'* after the prescribed time, "one has not lost thereby, for it is like one who reads the Torah" (mBerakhot 1.2).

26. bBerakhot 8a. R. Sheshet justifies this behavior by declaring, אנן בדידן ואינהו בדידהו, "we [engage] in ours and they [engage] in theirs." Compare the story of Elisha b. Abuya's circumcision, at which R. Eliezer and R. Joshua are honored guests (yHaggiga 2.1, 77b, and parallels). When singing and dancing begin after the celebratory meal, R. Eliezer says to R. Joshua, עד דאינון עסיקין בדידהון נעסוק אנן בדידן, "while they are engaged in theirs let us engage in ours." They then begin to engage in Torah study.

27. bShabbat 10a. Interestingly, the same expression appears in the name of R. Simeon b. Yoḥai elsewhere in the Bavli (bShabbat 33b) as a critique of those who work the land rather than toil in the study of Torah.

28. bMoed Qatan 9a-b. Medieval rabbinic commentators debate whether in fact the teaching of these sages grants preeminence to Torah study or merely equates it with other commandments (see Aharon Jacobowitz and Shmuel Eliezri, eds. *Šîtâ 'al Mô'ed Qāton le-Talmîdô šęl Rabbēnû Yehî'ēl mip-Parîs, Ḥēlęq Alęph* [Jerusalem: Harry Fishel Institute, 1937] 68–69). I side with the former view.

29. bMegillah 3b; bPesahim 109a.

30. Cf. the statement attributed to R. Ishamel in yPe'ah 1.1, 15c (= yKiddushin 1.7, 61a).

31. bBerakhot 35b reads: "What will become of Torah?"

32. אחרים. This term is often used in rabbinic literature to refer to gentiles.

33. bBerakhot 35b adds: "as Scripture states, 'And you shall gather in your new grain.'"

34. Alternatively, R. Simeon b. Yoḥai may read Deut 11:13–14a as promise—"And it shall come to pass if you hearken to my commandments . . . rain"—and 14b as descriptive: Israel may choose to respond to God's blessing of rain by working the land themselves, which is not God's will. If they do, they are told "beware" (Deut 11:16–17). This would then be similar to Deut 6:10–12, which follows a description of the blessings that will befall Israel in Canaan with a warning lest that blessing be misused.

35. Maimonides steers an interesting course between these two views in his Laws of Repentance 9.1. On the one hand he takes the verses literally: if we heed God's commandments, the rains will fall and we will gather our grain. On the other hand, Maimonides insists that this abundance is not the reward for our obedience but merely the means by which Israel will receive its true reward, the ability to study Torah unburdened by material concerns.

36. Seligmann Meyer, in *Arbeit und Handwerk im Talmud* (Berlin, 1878), 20–21, suggests that R. Simeon b.Yoḥai's view reflects the disdain of the Roman aristocracy for manual labor.

37. *GenR* 13.7 (117).

38. *GenR* 16.5 (149).

39. כי אדם לעמל יולד. NJPS (= New Tanakh translation of the Jewish Publication Society) translates עמל here as "mischief"; Marvin H. Pope, *Job*, Anchor Bible, volume 15 (New York: Doubleday, 1963), 40, translates it as "trouble"; and see Rashi's commentary ad loc.

40. פיהו. NJPS translates "his hunger" but indicates uncertainty as to the meaning of the verse's second stich.

41. One version of the Aramaic Targum to Job translates כי אדם לעמל יולד, as ארום בר נש למלעי באורייתא איתברי, "for man was created to toil in [the study of] Torah;" see David M. Stec, *The Text of the Targum of Job: An Introduction and Critical Edition* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 35*.

42. Meir Ayali, *Pô'alîm ve-'Ūmānîm: Melakhtām u-Ma'amādām be-Siprût Ḥazal* (Givatayim: Yad la-Talmud, 1987), 96–97.

43. See, for example, Moshe Beer, "Talmûd Tôrâ ve-Dęrękh Ęręs," *Bar-Ilan Annual* 2 (1964): 144–148, 161–162.

44. A similar interpretation is offered by MaHaRŠA, ad loc. s.v. גדולה; and see the observation concerning the honoring of Shabbat by the Torah scholar made by Maimonides in his Laws of Shabbat 30.6.

45. t (= Tosefta) Qiddushin 1.11 (279–280; = bQiddushin 29a).

46. See Jacob Nahum Epstein, *Māvô' le-Nûsaḥ ha-Mišnâ*, 977; idem, *Mebo'ôt le-Sifrût ha-Tannā'îm*, 54 n. 193.

47. See Hermann L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 122, and M. B. Lerner, "The Tractate Avot," in Shmuel Safrai, *The Literature of the Sages—First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates* (Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 273.

48. שקוד. Compare mSotah 9.15: "When Ben 'Azzai died the שקדנים [i.e., those eager and diligent in the study of Torah] ceased."

49. Some versions do not contain the following phrase.

50. The statement attributed here to R. Nehuniah b. Haqannah is consistent with the prayer attributed to him, apparently, in bBerakhot 28b; cf. the version of this prayer cited in yBerakhot 4.2, 7d.

51. According to a number of sources R. Meir himself was a scribe. Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, in *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), 609, also cites mAbot 1.1 ([The Men of the Great Assembly said:] "Raise up many disciples"), mAbot 1.13 ([Hillel said:] He who does not study is deserving of death'"), and mAbot 1.15 ([Shammai said:] "Fix a period for the study of the Torah") as relevant to the question of the relative importance of Torah study and other occupations. Although these dicta certainly stress the importance of Torah scholarship, they do not address how it is to be weighed against other obligations and necessities.

52. *EcclR* (= *Ecclesiastes Rabbah*) 9.9.

53. In the previously cited passage in *EcclR* it is R. Judah the Patriarch who cites a tradition in the name of the holy congregation.

54. The end of the mishnah reads סופה בטילה לגרר עון. Urbach, *The Sages*, 967, notes that in the Kaufmann ms. of the Mishnah the end of the mishnah reads סופה בטילה לגדר עוון. Abrahams there mistranslates this version as "comes to naught in the end amounting to sin." A correct translation would be "comes to naught in the end as a protection against sin."

In tQiddushin 1.11 (280) we find a Rabban Gamliel speaking in praise of learning a craft. It is impossible to tell which Rabban Gamliel is meant there. PT

(yPeah 1.1, 15c) speaks of a R. Gamliel who discourages R. Yeshebab from giving all his property to charity; this seems to be R. Gamliel II.

55. The use of עסק to describe both business and study in the aforementioned teaching of R. Meir (mAbot 4.10) urging one to maximize the latter at the expense of the former probably has a similar significance. Compare also the prayer attributed, apparently, to the *tanna* R. Nehuniah b. Haqannah (see n. 50). The Bavli's version, at least, may be denigrating those who engage in commerce in contrast to those who study Torah.

Contrast this with the saying attributed to the sages of Yavneh in bBerakhot 17a: "I am God's creation and my fellow human being is God's creation; my work [מלאכתי] is in the city while his [מלאכתו] is in the fields. I arise early and so does he. Just as I am not presumptuous concerning [the worth of] my labor, so, too, he is not presumptuous concerning his. [Another reading: Just as he cannot excel in my work so, too, I cannot excel in his.] And if you will say: I do much and he does little—we have learned: It is all the same whether one does a lot or a little, as long as one directs one's heart to heaven." The image of the laborer as a metaphor for the servant of God is used often, of course, in the Gospels as well, particularly in a number of parables.

56. See Reuven Kimmelman, "The Conflict between R. Yohanan and Resh Laqish on the Supremacy of the Patriarchate," in *Proceedings of the Seventh World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981) 3: English section, 1–20.

57. For a current and balanced review of the evidence see Ayali, *Pô'alîm ve-'Umānîm*, 143–151.

58. Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1952–), 2.277–278. Though he does not mention them, Baron's remark on 278—"no fewer than one hundred rabbis are recorded as earning a livelihood as artisans"—suggests that he was influenced by the work of Franz Delitsch (Delitsch, *Jewish Artisan Life in the Time of Jesus*, trans. B. Pick [New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883], 75–80) and Seligmann Meyer (Meyer, *Arbeit und Handwerk in Talmud* [Berlin: n.p., 1878]), both of whom provided extensive lists of rabbis identified in rabbinic sources with a profession. For a critique of Meyer's list see Moshe Beer, *Amôrā'ē Bābęl*, (Ramet Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1982), 284 n. 49.

59. Adolph Büchler, *The Political and Social Leaders of the Jewish Community in Sepphoris in the Second and Third Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1909), 66–71; Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 112–116 (and see the sources cited on 116 n. 29); Martin Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee* (Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, Totawa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983), 34, 93. On the practice of giving tithes to the rabbis rather than to the priests in third- and fourth-century Palestine, see A. Oppenheimer, "Separating First Tithes Following the Destruction of the Second Temple" (Hebrew), *Sinai* 83 (1978), 284–285.

60. Urbach, *The Sages*, 574 (cf., however, idem, "Class Status and Leadership in the World of the Palestinian Sages" [Hebrew], *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences* [Jerusalem, 1968), 2, 50–51]; this is the view of Alon, *Tôledôt*, 1:309, as well.

61. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Place of the Rabbi in Jewish Society of the Second Century," in Lee I. Levine, ed., *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 157–173, esp. 169–170 and 173; idem, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 222. Cohen's view is also espoused, though with greater caution, by Hayim Lapin, *Early Rabbinic Civil Law and the Social*

History of Roman Galilee: A Study of Mishnah Tractate Baba' Mesi'a' (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 233–234. Concerning the statement attributed in *ARN* A, ch. 3 (14–15) to the *tanna* Shammai that a Torah scholar should be wealthy, see the comments of Alon, *Tôledôt*, 317.

Some *tannaim* are described as merchants, namely R. Eleazar b. Zadoq and Abba Shaul b. Botnit (tY.T. 3.8 [295]); this same R. Eleazar b. Zadoq is described as having purchased the Alexandrians' synagogue in Jerusalem (tMeg 2.17 [352]), suggesting that he was a man of means. See also the tradition in *Sifre Deuteronomy* 357 (427) and parallels that R. Yohanan b. Zakkai was a merchant.

62. See Anthony Saldarini, *Pharisees, Sages and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 39–42, for a fuller explanantion of these terms.

63. This is the general scholarly consensus; see S. J. D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," in *HUCA* 55 (1984), 36–42. For a select bibliography of those who identify the Pharisees with the Damascus/Qumran community, see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973–1987), 2:403 n. 81.

64. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Sages and Sadducees*, 284.

65. As emphasized to me by my colleague Richard Kalmin.

66. Lee I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Yizhak Ben-Zvi Press; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1989), 69; and see ibid. 70 concerning wealthy benefactors of the sages.

67. Alon, *Tôledôt*, 1:302–306, 313 (=Alon, *History*, 2:479–485, 498). See also the comments of Beer, *Amôrā'ē Bāḇel*, 270.

68. See Levine, *The Rabbinic Class*, 70 and the sources cited there.

69. Beer, *Amôrā'ē Bāḇel*, 285, points out that more *tannaim* than *amoraim* are identified as artisans.

70. See Ayali, *Pô'alîm ve-'Umānîm*, 97–100.

71. See mQiddushin 4.12: "R. Meir said: A man should always teach his son a craft that is easy and clean." In the same mishnah R. Judah says that "most camel-drivers are proper individuals, most sailors are pious." See also mAbot 1.10, tQiddushin 1.11, yPe'ah 1. 1, 15c (= yQiddushin 1.7, 61a), bBerakhot 8a, bBerakhot 17a, bKiddushin 82b, bB.B. 110a, ARN (= *Abot de-Rabi Natan*) A ch. 11 (44), *ARN* B ch. 21 (44). The passage in bBerakhot 8a seems to be a polemic against the denigration of manual labor: "R. Hiyya bar Ammi said in the name of 'Ulla: One who thrives on his own toil is greater than one who fears heaven etc." For a comprehensive discussion of rabbinic attitudes toward work, see Ayali, *Pô'alîm ve-'Umānîm*, 79–101.

72. See Alon, *Tôledôt*, 1.330 n. 38 and Ramsay MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 114–116.

73. See Beer, *Amôrā'ē Bāḇel*, 284–288.

74. See the generation-by-generation figures for *amoraim* in Palestine and Babylonia in Levine, *The Rabbinic Class*, 67 (Palestine) and 68 n. 120 (Babylonia). There was a significant decline in the number of Palestinian rabbis in the fourth century; see the discussion in ibid., 68.

75. yShebi'it 9.1, 38d; bShabbat 33b. For an analysis of this narrative, see Ofra Meir, *Ha-Pô'ẹṭîqā šḷ Sippûrē Ḥazal*, (Tel-Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1993), 11–34, and Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 195–237.

76. Although the first three of the following sources appear in BT, the first two are cited in the name of Palestinian *amoraim*.

77. Cf. *Tanh* Noah 3.3.

78. See *BDB* s.v. תורה (435–436); *ThLOT*, 3:1415–1422.

79. See, for example, *GenR* 63.9 (693).

80. See Isaac Heinemann, *Darkē hā-Aggādâ* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1970), 115–116.

81. There are several references in PT and BT to one's teeth being blackened from constant fasting. See yShabbat 5.4, 7c; bHagigah 22b; bNazir 52b.

82. Hillel (bYoma 35b), R. Joshua (bBerakhot 28a), R. Aqiba (bKet 62b, bNed 50a, *ARN* A ch. 6 [14a]), R. Judah (bNed 49b-50a; bSan 20a), R. Hanina b. Dosa (bTa'anit 24b-25a), and R. Simeon b. Halafta (*RuR* 3.5 and parallels, 5.7).

83. R. Eleazar Harsom (bYoma 35b) and R. Eliezer b. Hyrkanos (*GenR* 42.1; *TanhB* Lekh Lekha, 10; *ARN*, 6a [15b-16a]; *PRE* chs. 1,2). There is also a tannaitic tradition that until he was forty R. Yohanan b. Zakkai was a merchant, after which he studied for forty years (*Sifre Deuteronomy* 357 [427] and parallels), but there is no suggestion that study involved financial difficulty for him.

84. My thanks to Devora Steinmetz for discussing this point with me at length.

85. mAbot 6.1–8 and 11b appear in *PsSEZ* ch. 17 (15–20, 21). *KalR* 5 (273–298) contains the entire chapter with the exception of 11b (which also appears in bMakkot 23b). M. Friedmann, *PsSEZ*, Introduction, 15, concludes, on the basis of numerous statements attributed to Rava (Babylonia, fourth c.) in the "Gemara" of *KalR* that it was composed in Babylonia by Rava's disciples sometime in the fourth century. This would mean that mAbot 6 was known as a unit no later than that time. However, Victor Aptowitzer, "Deux Consultations des Gueonim dans Le Pardes," *REJ* 57 (1909), 245–248, theorizes that *KalR* was composed by Rav Abba (Babylonia, second half of eighth c.), a disciple of Yehudai Gaon.

Michael Higger, *KalR*, 110, responding to Friedmann, notes that Friedmann's assumption that the Rava named in *KalR* is the fourth-generation Babylonian Amora Rava is problematic. Many of the dicta in *KalR* either are attributed to *amoraim* who postdate Rava or are apparently inferred from statements made by them. Moreover, many of the statements ascribed to Rava do not appear in the Bavli and some contradict other statements assigned to him there. All this renders Friedmann's thesis untenable. (However, it should be noted that Higger *KalR* [110–111] does cite some evidence supportive of Friedmann's view.) Higger (113) also rejects Aptowitzer's proposal because many of the phrases used in *KalR* correspond to those utilized in those tractates presumably edited in Pumbedita, while Rav Abba is a product of the academy at Sura. As an alternative to Aptowitzer's theory Higger suggests that *KalR* was compiled under the editorship of Rava Gaon of Pumbedita, who flourished in the mid-seventh century (see B. M. Levin, ed., *ISG* [repr. Jerusalem: Maqor, 1972], 101 and n. ה ad loc.). Finally, Higger (113–115) notes similarities between *KalR* and *Tanh*; however, the nature and dating of *Tanhuma* are themselves problematic.

The foregoing discussion addresses only the probable dating of the chapter as a whole, not that of the individual *baraitôt*. Several *baraitôt* in Abot 6 are attributed to *tannaîm* (6.1, R. Meir; 6.8, R. Simeon b. Judah in the name of R. Simeon b. Yohai; 6.10, R. Jose b. Qisma; 6.11b, Hananiah b. Aqashiah); 6.2 is attributed to R. Joshua b. Levi, an early *amora* who appears in only one other tannaitic source (mUqzin 3.12). There is no way at present of determining whether or not these attributions are genuine; hence the need to establish a *terminus ad quem* for the chapter as a whole.

86. mAbot 6:5.

87. Compare the following story from the *Apophthegma Patria:*

> Once Abba Achillas came to the cell of Abba Isaiah in Scete and found him eating. He had put salt and water in his vessel. Seeing that he hid the vessel behind the plaits of palm leaves, Abba Achillas said: "Tell me what you were eating." And he answered: "Forgive me, Abba; but I was cutting palms and began to be on fire with thirst. And so I dipped a piece of bread in the salt, and put it in my mouth. But my mouth was parched, and I could not swallow the bread, so I was forced to pour a little water on the salt and then I could swallow it. But forgive me." And Abba Achillas used to say: Come and see Isaiah eating broth in Scete. If you want to eat broth, go to Egypt." (translated in Owen Chadwick, ed. and trans., *Western Asceticism* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958], 49–50)

88. A contrasting image of R. Jose b. Qisma appears in bA.Z. 18a, where he appears as an accommodationist foil to R. Hanina b. Teradyon's defiance of the Roman ban against the public study of Torah.

89. Alon, *Tôledôt*, 1.298, posits, without any supporting evidence, that mAbot 6.4 dates from the period following the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt.

90. On this issue see Zechariah Frankel, *Mebô' Ha-Yerûšalmî* (1870; repr. Jerusalem: n.p., 1967), 26a; Isaac Hirsch Weiss, *Dôr Dôr Ve-Dôreshav* (1904; repr. Jerusalem: Ziv, n.d.), 2:215–216; Higger, 9.149–150; Hanokh Albeck, *Mçḥqārîm bi-Beraita' ūve-Tôsçftā ve-Yahasan la-Talmud* (1944; repr. Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1969), 15–89; Louis Jacobs, "Are There Fictitious Baraitot in the Babylonian Talmud?" *HUCA* 42 (1971), 185–196; Jacobs, "How Much of the Babylonian Talmud Is Pseudepigraphic?" *JJS* 28 (1977), 46–59; David Goodblatt, "The Babylonian Talmud," *ANRW* (Berlin: DeGruyter, 1979), 19.2: 287–288; Jacob Neusner, *In Search of Talmudic Biography: The Problem of the Attributed Saying* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984), 133 ff. (among many other places in his work).

91. mAbot 6.8.

92. Cf. 1.15, *DeutR* (= *Deuteronomy Rabbah*) 1.11, *MidPr* (= *Midrash to Proverbs*) 15.17 (123).

93. tKippurim 1.6 (222) and parallels.

94. Pliny the Elder, *Nat. Hist.*, 5.73, cited in M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, Vol. I* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), 470 (text), 472 (translation).

95. Philo, *Quod Omnis Probus*, 75–91; *Hypothetica* 11.1–18.

96. Josephus, *Wars* II, 120–121, *Ant.* XVIII, 21. In *Wars* II, 160–161, Josephus reports on another group of Essenes that did marry. In *Life*, 11, Josephus claims to have submitted to the rigorous training required of those who wished to join the Essene community.

97. For bibliographies of the literature discussing the question of celibacy at Qumran, see Joseph M. Baumgarten, "The Qumran-Essene Restraints on Marriage," in Lawrence H. Schiffman ed., *Archaeology and History of the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigal Yadin* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 21 n. 1; Gary Anderson, "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden," in *HTR* 82 (1989), 140 n. 45; and Elisha Qimron, "Celibacy in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Two Kinds of Sectarians," in J. T. Barrera and L. V. Montaner, eds., *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid 18–21 March, 1991* (New York/Köln: E. J. Brill/Editorial Complutense, 1992), 1:287 n.1.

98. For a summary of the arguments for identifying Qumran with the Essenes and a bibliography of both supporting and opposing views, see Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, 2:583–585.

99. In addition to the scholars discussed below, see Barbara Thiering, "The Biblical Source of Qumran Asceticism," *JBL* 93 (1974), 429–430.

100. CD MS A 7.4b–9a.

101. Louis Ginzberg, *An Unknown Jewish Sect*, trans. Ralph Marcus et al., foreword by Eli Ginzberg, Moreshet Series No. 1 (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1976), 32–33. We now have a Qumran document, 4Q502, which Maurice Baillet in idem, ed., *Qumran Grotte 4, III (4Q482–4Q520)*, *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* 7 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 81, interprets as being a marriage ceremony. However, see Joseph Baumgarten, "4Q502, Marriage or Golden Age Ritual?" in *JJS* 35 (1983), 125–135.

102. Baumgarten, "Qumran-Essene Restraints," 18–19.

103. Qimron, "Celibacy," 287–294.

104. Albert Marx, "les Racines du Célibat Essénien," *RQ* 7 (1970), 338–342; see 336–338, where he summarizes and rejects earlier explanations of Essenic celibacy. This hypothesis is also endorsed by Anderson, "Celibacy or Consumation," 140.

105. Antoine Guillaumont, "A propos du célibat des Esséniens," *Homage á André Dupont-Sommer* (Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1971), 395–404.

106. 11TS 45:7–12; see the other references cited by Qimron, "Celibacy," 291.

107. Qimron, "Celibacy," 291.

108. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*. In the past, scholars debated whether Philo's account reflects historical reality or is simply a literary fantasy. The historical basis for Philo's account is now considered established by Conybeare and Wendland; see *Philo*, vol. IX, trans. F. H. Colson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941), 106–108, and Schürer, *History*, 2:591 n. 1.

109. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*, 32, 68. For a discussion of women and the Theraputae, see Ross Kramer, *Her Share of the Blessings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 113–117.

110. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*, 13, 18, 68.

111. Josephus, *Life*, 2.

112. Mk 1.4, 6–7. In Mk 2.18 (= Mt 9.14, Lk 5.33) we are told that his disciples fasted. However, see C. S. Mann, *Mark*, Anchor Bible, vol. 27 (New York: Doubleday, 1986), 233, who argues on linguistic grounds that this verse refers not to customary fasting but rather to a particular fast; he suggests that John's disciples were fasting to mourn John's death. Mann also assumes that the mention of the Pharisees is a later interpolation.

113. See the remarks of James Charlesworth in *OTP* 2.444–445.

114. *History of the Rehabites* 11.6–8 (*OTP* 2.456).

115. *History of the Rehabites*, 12.1a (*OTP*, 2.456).

116. Cf. *DER* ch. 11(313): "Ben Azzai says: Whoever hates his wife is a shedder of blood."

117. חשקה; the same term is used elsewhere to refer to erotic desire, as noted by Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel, Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 135. Compare Paul's statement in Phillipians 1.23–24: "I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and be with Christ, which would be very much the better, but for me to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need for your sake." The original Greek for "I want" is ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων; the verb ἐπτυμειν and the noun ἐπιθυμία are often used to express sexual desire.

118. For a discussion of the various rabbinic and medieval versions of this passage and the relationships among them, see Jeremy Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 110.

119. Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase,"* 114 n.177.

120. *Boyarin, Carnal Israel*, 135.

121. p. 23.

122. See the references cited in n. 86 of the introduction to this book.

123. I use this term to refer to dialogue between two sages that appears immediately following the presentation of their views. I first used this term in a paper entitled "The Editing of Dialogue in Rabbi's Mishnah," delivered at the 1986 Association for Jewish Studies Conference in Boston. It has subsequently been used by Richard Kalmin, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia*, Brown Judaic Series 300 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994); and see n. 43 there.

124. bErubin 13b.

125. This theory was proposed by J. Bassfreund, "Zur Redaktion der Mischna," in *MGWJ* 51 (1907), 686–687, and is mentioned in Abraham Goldberg, *Mābo' le-Mišnâ ve-Tôsefṭā*, ed. M. Assoulin (Jerusalem: Akademon, 1970), 98.

126. The reason for a groom's being exempt from *Shema'* is that "one who is engaged in one *miṣwâ* is exempt from another."

127. mBerakhot 2.9. In fact, there is debate about how widely to apply Rabban Gamliel's personal practice. The anonymous ruling in the Mishnah is followed by R. Simeon b. Gamliel's teaching, "Not everyone who wishes to assume the reputation [of extreme piety] may do so."

128. Compare Max Weber's remark that "the sexual asceticism of Puritanism differs only in degree, not in fundamental principle, from that of monasticism" (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons [New York: Scribner's, 1958), 158.

129. This objection was raised by some of the fellows at the Shalom Hartman Institute when I presented my analysis of Ben Azzai's statement there in April 2000.

130. tKetubot 5.1 (72).

131. bM. Q. 9b.

132. bQiddushin 32a.

133. Isaiah Gafni, *Yehûdę Bābęl bit-Teqûfat ha-Talmûd* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1990), 267–268. For a summary of the normative significance of Ben Azzai's behavior in medieval halakhic discourse, see J. Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase,"* 135.

134. bKetubot 63a.

135. Shlomoh Naeh, "Freedom and Celibacy: A Talmudic Variation on Tales of Temptation and Fall in Genesis and Its Syrian Background," in J. Frishman and L. Van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation* (Louvain: n.p., 1997), 73–89.

136. Adolph Büchler, *Types of Jewish-Palestinian Piety from 70 BCE to 70 CE: The Ancient Pious Men* (1922; repr. New York: Ktav, 1968), 51 n. 2.

137. yYebamot 1.1, 72b and *GenR* 85.

138. yTa'anit 1.6, 64d.

139. yTa'anit 1.6, 64d (= *GenR* 31 and 34; cf. bTa'anit 11a).

140. Although a number of *tannaim* are cited in *PsSEZ*, and the chapters in which this narrative is found are known as *Pirqē Rabî Elîęzęr*, presumably meaning

the *tanna* R. Eliezer, Meir Friedmann, *PsSEZ*, 22, assumes that these are retrojected attributions.

141. Friedmann, *PsSEZ*, 40 n. 35, says he knows of no comparable narrative. There is a statement in bShabbat 152a, noted by Friedmann, op. cit. 39 n. 32, that speaks of woman as "a skin full of feces and her mouth (= vagina) is full of blood"; however, the passage continues, "and [nonetheless] everyone pursues her."

142. *Sibhe Ha-RaN* (Jerusalem: n.p., n.d.), par. 16 (p. 11).

143. This is stated most explicitly in bSanhedrin 19b; see also *Sifre Deuteronomy* 34 (61); ySanhedrin 10.2, 28b; *GenR* 41.3 (402).

144. Philo, *On the Contemplative Life*, 68. For a similar trope in Qumran literature see 1QH 7:20–22. Of course, there is much in Philo's statement—the eroticization of knowledge, the feminization of the soul—that shares much in common with writings and movements that have commonly been characterized as gnostic; see Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon, 19912), 278–281, 283–284. For a recent critique of the coherence and usefulness of gnosticism as a descriptive category, see M. A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

145. The notion of "spiritual birth" as a result of the soul's being impregnated by the divine is very common in so-called gnostic documents; see Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 278. The Gospel of Philip, a document containing "clearly Valentinian teachings" (H.-M. Schenke in *NTA* 1:182), uses as similar concept to explain the significance of the "kiss of peace" among early Christians: "The perfect conceive through a kiss and give birth. Because of this we also kiss one another. We receive conception from the grace which we have among us" (Gospel of Philip, ¶ 31 [*NTA* 1:192]).

146. Yonah Fraenkel, *'Iyyûnîm be-'Olāmô šęl sippûr hā-'Aggādâ* (Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Memuehad, 1981), 110, suggests that it was R. Oshaya's custom to engage visitors in scholarly discourse. It may be that R. Oshaya has arrived from home to greet his father. In any case, R. Hami and R. Oshaya do not recognize each other as father and son.

147. This does not necessarily mean that R. Ḥami is unaware that he has a son. Perhaps, as Rashi s.v. אי suggests, he means that had he remained at home he could have raised his son to be a scholar.

148. It is not clear to me why R. Ḥami stands. See the comment of *Sifte Kohen* to *YD* 246.9 (9), and n. 150 of this chapter.

149. The Hebrew ישב לפניו, ישב לפני and the Aramaic יתיב קמיה are used throughout rabbinic literature to describe a student in the presence of his teacher. See, however, Gafni, *Yehûdē Bābęl*, 200–201, particularly n. 100.

150. Although there is no explicit statement to this effect, the medieval codifiers (see Maimonides' *Laws of Rebels* 6.3 and *YD* 240.7) derive from the story of R. Yosef standing for his mother (bKiddushin 31b) that a child must stand in the presence of a parent. Presumably R. Hami's wife's statement reflects that assumption; it is the son who should stand for the father, not vice versa. In fact, in bQiddushin 33b the Talmud asks whether a man who is his father's teacher should stand before him or whether, conversely, the father should stand before the son. The question is not resolved; R. Asher b. Yehiel (Germany and Spain, 1250–1327), *Pisqe ha-Rosh*, Qiddushin 1.57, reports that, so as not to face dealing with this uncertainty, R. Asher's teacher R. Meir of Rothenberg avoided meeting with his father from the time that R. Meir "rose to greatness."

151. In any case I find Fraenkel's reading (*'Iyyunîm*, 111) unconvincing.

152. Rami b. Hama's statement also appears in bB. B. 59a. That would seem to be the statement's original context, given that Rami b. Hama mentions R. Hama b. Bisa's father, who appears in the narrative in B. B. but not here in Ketubot.

153. Two mss. have "son of R. Bisa/Bisna," which is the reading in B. B. Bisa's title may have been dropped by most text witnesses here because he does not figure in the narrative. With Bisa's title dropped, his name simply becomes R. Hama's patronym.

154. According to this reading, R. Aha b. Ya'aqob's words are similar to those of R. Ishmael cited in bA.Z. 27b: "How do you know that if they say to a person worship idols and do not be killed [i.e. but if you do not worship idols you will be killed] that he should worship the idols and not be killed? Scripture states 'and live by them' (Lev 18:5)—and not that one should die on their account."

155. *Tanh* Zab, 13.

156. See James Laidlaw, *Riches and Renunciation: Religion, Economy and Society among the Jains* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 151–189.

157. See Patrick Olivelle, *Samnyasa Upanisads: Hindu Scriptures on Asceticism and Renunciation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 19–57. In a less formal way this was true of many Christian ascetics as well, particularly women, who were often first in a position to choose a life of celibacy only after having been married and widowed.

158. tBekhorot 6.3 (= bKiddushin 29b).

159. In bQiddushin 29b this qualification appears not in the name of R. Judah but rather as part of the ruling by the anonymous *tanna*. This is suggestive in light of the preference of the Babylonian *amoraim* for marriage before study (see later); it is possible that the *baraita* in Qiddushin has been reworked in accordance with Babylonian predilections.

160. bKiddushin 29b. This Palestinian practice seems to be one of the bases for the teaching found in Palestinian sources (*GenR* 68.5 [773] and parallels) that Jacob spent fourteen years after leaving his parents' home studying in the *bēt midrāš* of Shem and Eber before traveling on to Haran, where he married Leah and Rachel.

161. This is the ruling of third-century Babylonian R. Judah in the name of Samuel in bKiddushin 29b.

162. I will discuss the familial implications of this later.

163. mKetubot 5.6.

164. bKetubot 62b.

165. bYoma 18b (= bYebamot 37b).

166. I. Gafni, "The Institution of Marriage in Rabbinic Times," in D. Kraemer, ed., *The Jewish Family Metaphor and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 24–25; idem, *Yehûdei Babel*, 272–273.

167. See Gafni, "Institution," 23, for other Babylonian rabbinic sources that make reference to polygamy as at least a theoretical possibility.

168. In both Yoma and Yebamot, BT objects to the practice of Rab and R. Nahman based on Raba's teaching that a woman who has assented to a proposal of marriage must allow seven days to pass during which she sees no menstrual blood before the marriage is consummated. One of the Talmud's answers is that when women consented to marry these rabbis, they were designated to become the rabbis' wives, but the marriages were not actually consummated; the point of this arrangement, concludes the Talmud, is that "one who has bread in his basket is not the same as one who does not," that is, the very knowledge that a woman had designated herself to be his wife was enough to satisfy each rabbi's libido.

Rashi's understanding is that according to this interpretation the marriage was never actually consummated. If so, it is possible that the function of this answer was at least in part apologetic. This interpretation is even more likely according to the reading in Yoma cited by Ra'abad in his glosses to Maimonides' *Laws of Forbidden Sexual Relations* 11.10. According to this reading, the explanation of "designation" is cited to explain why there was no violation of the prohibition against a man's marrying and having children in two different locales lest an unknowingly incestuous relationship between his offspring eventually result. As a response to this difficulty, the implication of the "designation" response is clearly that there was never a consummation of the marriage.

169. Regarding rabbinic attitudes toward polygamy in general, see Mordechai Friedman, *Ribbûy Nāšîm be-Yisrā'ēl* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Tel Aviv University, 1986), 7–11, who, after examining some of the primary sources and summarizing earlier scholarship, concludes that the Babylonian sages were more positively disposed toward polygamy than were their Palestinian counterparts.

170. *Sifre Numbers* 115 (128–129; = Menahot 44b). For analyses of this narrative see Eliezer Berkovits, *Crisis and Faith* (New York: Ktav, 1976), 61–73, and Warren Zev Harvey, "The Pupil, the Harlot and the Fringe Benefits," in *Prooftexts* 6 (1986), 259–264.

171. Although he is called "rabbi," it seems from a postscript to the narrative attributed to Rabbi Judah the Patriarch that the title "rabbi" was awarded posthumously ("Not only is the repentance of those who turn away from sin accepted, but they are also called 'my master' [רבי]"). Of course, this gloss may have been motivated by apologetic concerns; a portrait of a whoring rabbi could hardly have added luster to the rabbinic image.

172. bAvodah Zarah 17a. See the analysis of Rena Kushelevsky, "The Legend of Ben-Dordaya: A Monotheistic Manifesto in Opposition to a Mythic Conception" [Hebrew], *Meḥqerē Yerûšālayîm Be-Fôlqelôr Yehûdî* 18 (1995–1996), 7–18.

173. bBerakhot 23a.

174. Similarly, because Christian anchorites sometimes yielded to sexual temptation with the young women of nearby villages, they were accused by pregnant women of being their child's father even when they were innocent; see Aline Rousselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. F. Pheasant (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1996), 144–145. Another story which may be relevant here is that of the individual (a student?) who attempted to seduce R. Judah the Patriarch's maidservant (yBerakhot 3.4, 6c).

175. See also bPesahim 113b, where R. Hanina and R. Oshaya are praised for not looking at, much less succumbing to, prostitutes although they work in the marketplace of the prostitutes and have constant contact with them.

176. bHaggigah 15a.

177. There is, of course, another possible sexual outlet to be considered, that of homosexuality. Unfortunately, there is even less discussion of this phenomenon in rabbinic sources than of frequenting prostitutes. The rabbinic attitude can be summed up in the dictum, "Israel is not suspected of [homosexuality]" (tKiddushin 5.2 [= yKiddushin 4.11, 66c]). For a comprehensive survey and analysis of the rabbinic sources dealing with male and female homosexuality, see Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 185–222. Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California, 1997), 127–150, speaks of rabbinic "homosociality," that is, a culture in which strong and emotionally

intimate bonds were created between men without, however, including sexual intimacy.

178. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 244.

179. yMegillah 4.1, 75a; bB.Q. 82a.

180. yShabbat 1.7, 3c.

181. Perhaps Clement of Alexandria refers to this practice when he says, "It was a custom of the Jews to wash frequently after being in bed" (*Stromateis* 4.22).

182. See the discussion in James Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:778–779. Although M. de Jonge argues that the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* is essentially a Christian work, he too agrees that the *Testament of Naphtali* is one of the early Jewish elements in the work; see Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:777.

183. *Testament of Naphtali* 8.8 (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1.814). Cf. Eccles 3:5.

184. Exod 19:15.

185. yBerakhot 3.4, 6c.

186. bBerakhot 22b.

187. *Sifre Numbers* 99 (98) and parallels. This tradition also appears in Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.68–69.

188. This is stated explicitly in *Tanh* Ṣab, 13. Christian authors often cite Moses as a precedent for their own celibacy. In Gregory of Nyssa's *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, a dialogue with his sister Macrina, she cites Moses' ability to overcome all human emotion and his lack of desire for anything of this world as proof that emotion and desire are not essential elements of the human soul (Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, eds., *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*: Second Series Peabody, MA: 1896; [repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 5:440).

189. bBerakhot 22a. The Palestinian *amora* R. Ya'aqob b. Abun explains the goal of the ordinance as ensuring "that Israel should not be like roosters that have intercourse, go up and descend and then eat" (yBerakhot 3.4, 6c). According to this reasoning, the ordinance's main function seems to be preventing the consumption of food while ritually impure.

190. Presumably the difficulty or inconvenience of immersing each time one has sex, or the embarrassment of not being able to study or pray because one has not immersed, will bring about an attenuation of sexual behavior. Compare yBerakhot 3.4, 6c, where the ordinance is seen as discouraging sexual misconduct.

191. bSanhedrin 26b.

192. For a summary and discussion of late antique sources on this question see Rouselle, *Porneia*, 12–20.

193. See Maimonides' *Laws of Marriage* 1.14, in which he explains the limited conjugal obligations of the Torah scholar as being due to the weakening effects of Torah study. There was in fact a school of thought advocating a daily sexual obligation for Torah scholars; see R. Abahu's statement in yKetubot 5.7 and that of Raba in bKetubot 62a. In the second source Raba's view is challenged by Abbaye.

194. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Lectures on History of Religions, New Series, number 13 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

195. Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 49–53.

196. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 46–57.

197. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 318.

198. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast*, 246.

199. bSukkah 52a.

200. *GenR* 9.7 (71–72); *MidTeh* 9.1 (40 a–b).Compare the charge leveled by Thamyris, the erstwhile fiancé of Thecla, against Paul, under whose influence Thecla has accepted perpetual virginity, according to the author o*f The Life and Miracles of Saint Thecla* (a medieval expansion of the late antique *Acts of Paul and Thecla*), par. 16:

> This man has introduced a new teaching, bizarre and disruptive of the human race. He denigrates marriage: yes, marriage, which you might say is the root and fountainhead of our nature. From it spring fathers, mothers, children and families. Cities, villages, and cultivation have appeared because of it. Agriculture, the sailing of the seas and all the skills of this state—courts, the army, the High Command, philosophy, rhetoric, the whole humming swarm of rhetors—depend on it. What is more, from marriage come the temples and sanctuaries of our land, sacrifice, rituals, initiations, prayers and solemn days of intercession.

201. זונתך. Some texts read זוגתך, "your mate"; this reading is probably due either to mistaking the orthographically similar *nun* and *gimel* for one another or to a desire to soften the harsh language of the original. This latter motivation probably motivated the creation of the alternative reading יונתך, "your dove."

202. bKetubot 63b. Given the frequent use of eating metaphors for sex there may be a double entendre here. Raba's son does not get to eat in both the alimentary and sexual senses.

203. This reading is suggested, for example, by Shulamit Valler, *Našîm ve Nāšiyût be-Sifrût ha-Talmûd* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Ha-Meuhad, 1993), 79.

204. Cf. the phrase, "If I marry another wife [because my present one is barren], people will say, 'This [= his new wife] is his wife and the other is his whore'" (bKetubot 62b); and see Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 277–278.

205. Cf. *EcclR* 9.9: "'Enjoy happiness [literally, see life (*hayyim*) with a woman you love' (Eccles 9:9)—Rabbi said in the name of the holy assembly: Acquire a profession together with Torah." *Hayyim* is being interpreted here as sustenance, and the "woman you love" is being identified with Torah.

206. יפהפין. R. Asher b. Yehiel (Rosh) ad loc. s.v. בניך, presumably in light of the preceding teaching of R. Yohanan b. Dehabai (see later), interprets יפהפין as "without blemish."

207. See Rashi ad loc., s.v. מגלה and s.v. ומכסה, and R. Nissim b. Reuben (RaN) ad loc., s.v. מגלה, for different interpretations of this passage.

208. The notion of being coerced by a demon is also raised in bRosh Hashanah 28a.

209. As R. Samuel Edels (MaHaRSha) explains, R. Eliezer does not mean that his children literally would be *mamzerîm* if he thought of a woman during sex, but rather that he might impart to him some of the same negative personality characteristics assumed to be common among *mamzerîm*. For this notion see the view of R. Yohanan b. Dehabai later in this chapter. Cf. also Menander, *Epideictica* 2.7.407.

210. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 22 n. 18.

211. Cf. bQiddushin 81b, where R. Hiyya b. Ashi literally thinks he is coupling with another woman while having sex with his wife.

212. Exactly what sexual practice is meant here is unclear and is discussed by the commentators. Probably the Talmud refers to coupling from behind or anal intercourse. In either case the woman is face down rather than face up; thus the "table" has been overturned.

213. bNedarim 20b. For other rabbinic sources that speak positively of sexual pleasure see, for example, bBerakhot 62a and bShabbat 140b.

214. Galen, *Medical Collection*, I, 18, recommends foods that cause flatulence because it was considered important to impart as much air (*pneuma*) as possible to the sperm, which was seen as containing the breath of life necessary for conception. The contrary view is expressed in the Hippocratic writings (*Diseases of Women*, I, 75).

215. Galen, *Medical Collection*, XXII, 3 and 8.

216. *Hippocratic Collection*, *Nature of Women*, 11.

217. *Hippocratic Collection*, *Barrenness*, V. Compare the rabbinic dictum, based on an exegesis of Lev 14:55, stating that if a woman "seeds" (i.e., climaxes) before her husband their child will be a boy; the reverse will be true if the husband climaxed first (bNiddah 31a and parallels). This view is shared with Aristotle, *De Generatione* 4.25.

218. For a synthetic presentation of the medical views in late antiquity concerning sex and conception, see Rouselle, *Porneia*, 9–46.

219. I am taking issue here with Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, 116.

220. It is true that in at least one instance there is an interesting overlap of R. Yohanan b. Dehabai's strictures and those of the Roman medicos. Like R. Yohana b. Dehabai, Soranus warns against getting one's wife drunk before attempting to conceive with her (*Gyn.* I, 38–39).

221. See Tosafot Shabbat 118b, s.v. אימא, who seem to have had a different version of PT according to which R. Yose engaged in levirate marriages with five different women, each time having intercourse only once in order to fulfill his minimal obligation.

222. yYebamot 1.1 (= *GenR* 85.5 [1038]).

223. bShabbat 118b. Compare Sozomen's report (*Ecclesiastical History* 7.28) that Ajax of Gaza, although his wife was unusually beautiful, slept with her only three times, producing three sons, two of whom became monks (cited in Brown, *The Body and Society*, 325).

224. Cf. the teaching attributed to Aristotle in Diogenes Laertes 5.19: "Educators are to be venerated more greatly than those who merely produce, for while the latter bestow life the former bestow the morally good life." This parallel has been noted by Gerald Blidstein, *Honor Thy Father and Mother* (New York: Ktav, 1975), and Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, trans. J. C. G. Grieg (Edinburgh: T & T. Clark, 1996), 33 n. 58, among others. The privileging of one's teacher over one's parent is greatly qualified in the *Sefer Hasidim*, a work emanating from the circle of Haside Ashkenaz, twelfth-century German Jewish pietists. There it is stated that a teacher takes precedent over a parent only if he has provided his instruction gratis. If his salary is paid by the parent, however, then he is in effect the parent's agent and his honor does not take precedence over that of the parent (*Sefer Hasidim* par. 967 [Bologna ed. 579] and par. 1731 [Bologna ed. 585]). This view is codified by R. Moses Isserles in *YD* 242.34.

225. *Sifre Deuteronomy* Pisqa 303. One also thinks of Deut 33:9, but as Hengel, *Charismatic Leader*, 24 n. 17, points out, this verse goes unmentioned in rabbinic sources.

226. M. B. Lerner, "Toward the Study of Sobriquets and Titles; I:Abba" (Hebrew), in *Te'ûdâ* 4 (1986), 93–113.

227. I wonder whether Abba Hanan also means to denigrate the sages who sent the children to him as "those who cannot distinguish."

228. Mk 3.31–35.

229. Mt 10.37; Lk 14.26; and see Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader*, 13 n. 31.

230. O. Chadwick, ed. and trans., "The Sayings of the Fathers," in *Western Asceticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958), 37.

231. The Essenes swelled their ranks by adopting the children of others. See also Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader*, 13 n. 34.

232. Cf. bSanhedrin 21a.

233. *GenR* 42.1 (397–399); the narrative also exists in other versions in *TanhB* Lekh Lekha 10 (67–69), *ARN* A ch. 6 and *ARN* B ch. 13. For a comparative study of these versions see Zipporah Kagan, "Divergent Tendencies and their Literary Moulding in the Aggadah," in J. Heinemann and Dov Noy, eds., *Scripta Hierosolymitana XXII: Studies in Aggadah and Folk-Literature* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971), 151–170.

234. See I Kings 19:19–21.

235. According to the version in *TanhB*, Eliezer's brothers accuse him explicitly of having abandoned his father, in their attempt to convince their father to disinherit Eliezer.

236. See, for example, bGittin 56a.

237. Cf. the story of Eleazar of Birtota in bTa'anit 24a and my analysis of this narrative in the next chapter and in Eliezer Diamond, "Hunger Artists and Householders: The Tensions between Asceticism and Family Responsibility among Jewish Pietists in Late Antiquity," in *USQR* 48 (1994), 31–34.

238. This problem is addressed, and softened somewhat, by *ARN* B ch. 13 (16b). There we are told that Eliezer's father stood while he was expounding. Eliezer finally told his father, "Father, I cannot sit and expound and say words of Torah while you are standing." He then makes his father sit at his side. Note that here Eliezer is depicted as wishing to maintain the respectful relationship of a son toward his father. Nonetheless, it is still he, and not his father, who determines that his father should sit.

239. Chadwick, *Western Asceticism*, 151.

240. Mark is renowned for the virtue of obedience; see Chadwick, *Western Asceticism*, 150–151.

241. Not all such decisions were mutual. See the cases cited from Palladius' *Lausiac History* and the *Historia Monarchum in Aegypto* in Rouselle, *Porneia*, 185.

242. Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects," 274–275.

243. See in this connection the comment of Valler, *Našîm*, 78–79.

244. A note in the JPS translation describes the meaning of this part of the verse as uncertain.

245. bKetubot 62a.

246. So Rashi ad loc., s.v. מנדדות.

247. There is an assumption, based on Psalms 147:9, made in several places in rabbinic literature that ravens are indifferent toward their young; see, for example, bKetubot 49b.

248. The use of "your" here is clearly not accidental.

249. One may wonder whether there is any connection between this and the rhetorical exclamation of one sage to another, "Are we [mere] reed-cutters?!" in bSanhedrin 31a. For a more contemporary example of this attitude, see R. Hayyim of Volozhin's praise of his mentor R. Elijah of Vilna (18th c.), known as the Gaon of Vilna, in his introduction to the latter's commentary to the kabbalisitic work *Sifra de-Zeniyuta*: "And his detachment from all this-worldly matters was exceptional, such that he never inquired concerning his children's welfare, nor did he ever write them letters of greeting or read the letters that he received from them" (*Sifra de-Zeniyuta* with Elijah of Vilna's commentary [Vilna, 1882²], R. Hayyim of Volozhin's introduction, v).

250. Literally, "wearable."

251. נפש. In the present context the verse is perhaps better translated, "A righteous man knows the soul of his beast"; in other words, R. Aqiba, the righteous man, will recognize his beast, that is, the wife who has supported him and borne with him through all these years.

252. See Robin Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 425, where he connects the widespread persecution of Christians with the deep concern of pagan religion with the honor of the gods and fear of the gods' anger at being dishonored.

253. Perkins, *The Suffering Self*, 18.

254. See the discussion in Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians*, 436–437; on the relationship between pagan, Jewish, and Christian notions of voluntary death see A. J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among the Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1992).

255. II Macc 6:18–31; IV Macc 5, 6.1–32.

256. 2 Macc 7; 4 Macc 8–18.

257. ySanhedrin 3.6, 21b.

258. bSanhedrin 74a–75a.

259. yShebi'it 4.2, 32a (= ySanhedrin 3.6, 21b); bSanhedrin 74 a-b. See also tShabbat 15.17 and Saul Lieberman, *TK* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1955–1988). 3.263; Saul Lieberman, "Taslûm Tosefta," in M. S. Zackermandel, *Tôseftā 'al pi Kitvē Yad Erfurt u-Vienna*, supp. and rev. ed. (Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1975), 52; H. Albeck, *Mehqarîm be-Baraita ve-Tosefta*, 101.

260. On this question see Bruce Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, rev. ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 28–60, and the bibliography there, 60–62. See also *Semeia* 68 (1994).

261. See Malina, *New Testament World*, 34–37.

262. yShebi'it 4.2, 32a (= ySanhedrin 3.6, 21b); bSanhedrin 74 a-b.

263. Malina, *New Testament World*, 34.

264. In halakhic literature the term *ḥillûl ha-šēm*, the desecration of God's name, generally refers to behavior before, or interactions with, non-Jews that will lead to dishonor for Jews and their God.

265. See especially Eleazar's death speech in 4 Macc 6.29 (Charlesworth, *OTP* 2.552): "Make my blood [the people's] purification and take my life as a ransom for theirs."

266. yYoma 1.1, 38b and elsewhere. See also *MidTan* to Deuteronomy 32:43, where it is stated that the martyrdom of Israel in this world acts as an atonement for them in the next.

267. חרש. I follow the interpretation of the *Pene Moshe* s.v. חרש או. Alternatively, חרש can be understood here as deaf; see *Perûš le-Ba'al Seper Ḥarēdîm* ad loc.

268. Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 117–128.

269. Following the reading in *LevR* 32.1 (775).

270. See Saul Lieberman, "The Persecution of the Jewish Religion" (Hebrew), in Saul Lieberman and Arthur Hyman, eds., *Salo Baron Jubilee Volume* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1975), Hebrew Section, 213–245.

271. מתקבצים. Literally, "gathering together."

272. See Haim Schwarzbaum, *The Mishle Shualim* (*Fox Fables*) *of Rabbi Berechiah ha-Nakdan: A Study in Comparative Folklore and Fable Lore* (Kiron, Israel: Institute for Jewish and Arab Folklore, 1979), 35 n. 3.

273. Cf. *MdRSbY* 17:7 (118–119).

274. Many Aesopic and other Oriental fables were translated into Hebrew in the twelfth century by Berakhiah ha-Naqdan, a Jew of twelfth-century Normandy and England, and published as *Mîšlē Sû'alîm*.

2. "THE PRINCIPAL REMAINS FOR THE NEXT WORLD"

1. See, for example, mBava Qamma 9.6.

2. See, for example, mKetubot 8.3.

3. See also the verses cited by Jacob Nahum Epstein, *Mebo'ôt le-Sifrût ha-Tannā'îm*, ed. E. Z. Melamed (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1957), 52.

4. Epstein, *Mebo'ôt-Tannā'îm*, 52. David Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering in Classical Rabbinic Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 59, cites Epstein's reading, though not his historical claims, approvingly. The medieval commentators understand this phrase as referring to the world to come; see Rashi Qiddushin 39b, s.v. ונוחל, Pseudo-Tosafot Ri Ha-zaqen ad loc. s.v., ונוחל, and Maimonides' Mishnah commentary ad loc. Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1963–1965), 1:200, commenting on the second of Matthew's beatitudes ("Blessed are the gentle; they shall have the earth as inheritance" [Mt 5.4]), side with the medievals, noting other rabbinic sources in which ארץ signifies the world of the messianic area or the kingdom of heaven. Compare also the apparently next-worldly interpretation of ארץ in mSanhedrin 10.1: "All of Israel have a share in the world to come, as Scripture states, 'And your people, all of them righteous, shall inherit the land [ארץ] for all time'" (Isa 60:21). However, this reading of the verse may have been influenced by the presence of לעולם, "for all time."

5. See the variants cited by Solomon Schechter in *ARN* there and on 75b.

6. Tosafot ad loc., s.v. מתניתין.

7. The motif of tree/branches, and questions concerning their relative status, appear a number of times in the Mishnah. See mMa'aserot 3.10, mMa'aser Sheni 3.7, and mMakkot 2.7. This is one of many cases in which imagery or terminology used by the rabbis in a legal context is transferred to a homiletic one.

8. mAvot 4.16. See also mAvot 4.17, cited as an epigram at the beginning of this chapter.

9. Ya'akov Elman, "The Suffering of the Righteous in Palestinian and Babylonian Sources," in *JQR* 80 (1990), 338–339.

10. A parallel to the *sugya* in bQiddushin 41a can be found in the debate between R. Nahman son of R. Hisda and Raba in bHorayot 10b. See also yHorayot 3.3, 47c, and Elman's discussion and analysis ("Suffering of the Righteous," 325–326).

11. I am following the reading in MS JTS 44830: דיתיב על צואראי בי ורדי. The exact text and its meaning are not clear.

12. bA.Z. 65a.

13. Maimonides, *Laws of Fasts*, 1.3.

14. See Raba's comparison of Rabbah and R. Hisda in bMoed Qatan 28a.

15. The assertion by F. Gerald Downing that for the sages "[f]inancial prosperity . . . is God's gift, a reward for virtue" (F. Gerald Downing, *Christians and Cynic Origins* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992], 159), and his consequent contrasting of Jesus' teaching with those of the sages, is an unfounded oversimplification.

16. Concerning the generally positive attitude of Babylonian *amoraim* toward wealth and material pleasure, see Moshe Beer, *'Amorā'ē Bābeł* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1982), 241–249.

17. Gedalya Alon, *Tôledôt ha-Yehûdîm be-Ḳreṣ Yisrā'ēl bi-Teqûfat ha-Mišnâ weha-Talmûd* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz HaMeuhad, 1977), 1:152–153, suggests that the Ushan ordinances may have been issued by a convocation of *amoraim* in the third century rather than by a mid-second-century tannaitic Sanhedrin; however, see ibid. 1:67.

18. bKetubot 50a (= bKetubot 67b, bArakhin 28a).

19. יותר מחומש. These words are clearly implied; they actually appear in some versions.

20. See Alon, *Tôledôt*, 1.332–333.

21. yPeah 1.1, 15b.

22. bBerakhot 18b (= *ARN* A 3.8 [16–17]; *Yalqut Ecclesiastes*, s.v. בבקר זרע).

23. *LevR* 37.2 (856–860).

24. *LevR* 34.16 (812–813); there are parallels in *PesR* 25 (126b–127a) and, with significant variants, *Kal* 21 (157–159).

25. I have translated the verse in Psalms in accordance with its (implicit) rabbinic interpretation in Leviticus Rabbah. NJPS translates: "He gives freely to the poor; his beneficence lasts forever." A related narrative is that of Monobazus, first-century king of Adiabene and a convert to Judaism, who justifies giving much of his inheritance to charity by saying: "My ancestors stored up treasures on earth below; I store them up in heaven above. They stored up treasures in a place from which they can be taken; I do so where they cannot be taken away" (tPe'ah 4.18 [60] and parallels). Concerning the provenance of the image of heavenly treasures see Arthur Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinic Literature* (1920; repr. New York: Ktav, 1968) 20–21.

26. *EcclR* 9.7 par. 1.

27. Concerning the location of Birtota see Y. Press, *Ḳreṣ Yisrā'ēl: Ēnṣîqlopıdyâ Tôpôgrafît Hîstôrît* (Jerusalem: Reuben Mass, 1946–1955), s.v. בירתותא, and Gedalya Alon, *Mḳhqārîm be-Tôledôt Yisrā'ēl* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1957–1958), 2:98.

28. mAbot 3.7.

29. Cf. bKetubot 67b, where it is reported that Mar Uqbah would leave *zedaqah* surreptitiously in the hinge-socket of the recipient's home. Perhaps the narrator's intention is that in this Eleazar of Birta story as well a gift has been left surreptitiously by a donor (that is, Donor) who acts purely out of generosity with no motive of self-interest, and in a way that allows the recipient to maintain his sense of dignity.

30. אוהבך. The term אוהב often means friend or intimate in both biblical and rabbinic literature.

31. For a fuller analysis of this narrative see Eliezer Diamond, "Hunger Artists and Householders: The Tension between Asceticism and Family Responsibility among Jewish Pietists in Late Antiquity," in *USQR* 48 (1994), 31–34. Cf. the regulations established by Rabbula, early fifth-century bishop of Edessa, for the monasteries in his diocese (Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (Louvain: Catholic University, 1958), 2:154–155).

32. bBava Mezia 71a.

33. It should be noted that the Ushan ordinance may have been instituted after R. Eleazar of Birta's death; in any case it would have been formulated when he was already advanced in years. In mTevul Yom 3.4–5 R. Eleazar appears as the student of R. Joshua, who lived through the destruction of the Second Temple, and the colleague of R. Aqiba, who was reputedly martyred during the Bar Kokhba revolt. On the other hand, the story brought in conjunction with this ordinance and cited earlier mentions R. Aqiba, according to one version, as restraining a colleague from

giving away more than a fifth of his wealth. See, however, yPeah 1.1, 15b, where it is argued that the one-fifth ceiling on charitable contributions predates the Ushan period and was merely reinvoked at that time.

34. Concerning this obligation see bKetubot 54b.

35. Jose b. Joezer: bB.B. 133b; Kalba Sabu'a: bKetubot 62b, bNedarim 50a; anonymous father: bB.B. 133b. Cf. yNedarim 5.6, 39b according to which it is Jonathan b. Uziel himself who is disowned. See also the story of R. Eliezer b. Hyrqanos (*GenR* 41[42].1 [397–399] and parallels), in which Eliezer's father intends initially to disown him but ultimately does not do so.

36. mKetubot 5.9.

37. Cf. R. Eliezer b. Hyrqanos's refusal to allow his father to bequeath his property to him exclusively, expressed as follows: "Let them [= his father's possessions] be banned to me, I shall only share them equally with my brothers" (*GenR* 42.1 [398–399] and parallels); and see my analysis of this narrative in chapter 1.

38. Cited in Chadwick, *Western Asceticism*, 128.

39. See, for example, bHagigah 8b.

40. It is true, nonetheless, that the use of *sākhār* in the sense of divine reward already appears in biblical literature; see, for example, Gen 15:1.

41. George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 2:95.

42. *Pûr'ānût* may also be related to the aforementioned notion of "measure for measure." When a human laborer produces sins for one's divine employer rather than the *mizwôt* one has contracted to provide, one is paid in kind—with punishment rather than the agreed-upon recompense. The imagery of wages and obligation is used widely in the Christian Bible to depict reward and punishment; see the discussion in Moore, *Judaism*, 2:90–91, 95.

43. See Moore, *Judaism*, 2:94–95, and Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits*, *passim*, and esp. 24–25.

44. See, for example, mAbot 2.1.

45. On this last point see Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), 436–442.

46. *Sifre Numbers* Pisqa 115 (129; = bMenaḥot 44a).

47. See, for example, mAbot 3.16; and see the story of Ḥanina b. Dosa and his wife later.

48. See, for example, Mt 22.1–14.

49. The sages deal at length with the sale of *ketûbôt* and promissory notes in a number of places; see, for example, bKetubot 53a.

50. See also the sources cited in Arthur Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* (1927; repr. New York: Ktav, 1968), 186.

51. Cf. the story of R. Eleazar b. Pedat in bTa'anit 25a, where he asks God, "How long must I suffer in this world?"

52. Some texts read, "he was." Indeed, given that the celestial banquet would probably follow the protocol of the meals that the rabbis ate in common, it seems likely that they expected women to be excluded, or at least to have a meal of their own. See the description of the messianic meal in bPesahim 119b, where only men are mentioned.

53. For a fuller and somewhat different analysis of this text than the one that follows, see Diamond, "Hunger Artists and Householders," 37–39.

54. Other texts read דיו לו, "it is enough for him."

55. bBerakhot 17b; bHullin 86a.

56. An example of this is the tannaitic expression, דין לבא מן הדין להיות כנידון, "It is enough for a law derived from *a fortiori* argument to be equal in scope to the law from which it is derived [and not more extensive than it]." Clearly the limitation of the derived rule is not of its own choosing, as it were, but rather a systemically imposed limitation.

57. See n. 52.

58. While it is true that according to one reading (see n. 52) only Ḥanina will be sitting at the celestial banquet, it may be that Ḥanina's wife is presumed to have a vested interest in basking in his reflected glory. There is another tradition (bBava Batra 84b) that speaks of a basket sitting at the bottom of the ocean and set with precious stones and pearls that is destined to be used by Ḥanina's wife in the world to come to store the purple woolen [i.e., royal] garments of the righteous.

59. bBava Mezia 114b.

60. *MidTeh* (= *Midrash Tehillim*) 92.8 (204a); *ExodR* 52.3.

61. *ExodR* 52.3; *RuR* (= *Ruth Rabbah*) 3.4; *MidTeh* 92.8 (204a-b).

62. bTa'anit 25a. The narrative is a complex and perplexing one.

63. Cf. bMegillah 28b, where R. Eleazar refuses a gift sent to him from the house of the patriarch, citing the verse, "He who spurns gifts will live long" (Prov 15:27). See also his homily in bSanhedrin 108b.

64. On R. Eleazar's poverty see also bEruvin 54b.

65. bNedarim 49b–50a. See also bSanhedrin 7a.

66. *ARN* A, ch. 28 (43a).

67. Rabbi Judah the Patriarch is said to have held up his hands and claimed that his ten fingers never benefited from this world (Ketubot 104a). However, the intent of this statement may be less to present Judah as an ascetic than to defend him against charges of improper use of commnual funds; cf *GenR* 100.2 (1285) and parallels.

68. yQiddushin 4.12, 66b.

69. See bTa'anit 20b and 24b. Perhaps the story of R. Yose b. Yoqrat and his son (bTa'anit 24a) should be understood in this light. See my analysis of this narrative in Diamond, "Hunger Artists and Householders," 34–36.

70. The *sugya* from this point on appears in bTa'anit 20b as well.

71. קטנתי. Apparently, R. Ḥanan is translating this word in the sense of "my account has been diminished."

72. See also bSanhedrin 101a. Perhaps this is the reasoning behind R. Judah's advice not to partake of grain that arrived as a result of a miracle (bTaʿanit 24b)

73. Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering*. Kraemer's work is organized according to authorships, to use the Neusnerian term. That is, he examines the rabbinic data work by work in the (presumed) order of their composition. Kraemer assumes that an idea that appears for the first time in a particular work, even if attributed to an authority from an earlier period, should be seen as expressing that work's *weltanschauung* in particular. I harbor grave doubts about the correctness of Neusner's thesis of authorships. Moreover, I am particularly skeptical of this method when it is applied to a subject mentioned that is discussed at length only a few times in the literature. Until we know a great deal more about how the rabbinic canon was composed and edited, we cannot weigh properly the significance of a theological dictum appearing, or not, in one work or another. As a result, the presentation here will treat the rabbinic material on suffering synchronically rather than diachronically.

74. Cf. the exchange between R. Simeon b. Yoḥai and R. Pinḥas b. Ya'ir in bShabbat 33b.

75. For a discussion of this principle, see Isaac Heinemann, *Darkē hā-'Aggādâ* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1970), 64–74.

76. The harshness of Nahum's self-imposed penance also seems to be in accordance with the rabbinic belief that God "is exacting with those who are near him [some versions: the righteous] within a hair's breadth"; see ySheqalim 5.1, 48d and parallels.

77. tShebu'ot 1.7 (446; = bShebu'ot 26a).

78. The connection of the final verse to what precedes it is unclear; see the variant readings in Finkelstein's edition of *Sifre Deuteronomy*.

79. Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering*, 88.

80. See mSanhedrin 10.3, where it is stated that the generation of the flood, the generation of the dispersion (i.e., those who built the tower of Babel), and the people of Sodom have no share in the world to come.

81. A similar tactic is employed as part of communal drought fasts, at least according to one school of thought in BT; see bTa'anit 16a.

82. Sigmund Lowy, "The Motivation of Fasting in Rabbinic Literature," in *JJS* 9 (1958), 22–23.

83. yShabbat 5.4, 7c; correct Lowy, "Motivation," 22 n. 27, accordingly.

84. y Shebi'it 4.2, 35b; bNedarim 62a.

85. התענה, according to PT; BT states: היה מצטער, which is apparently the basis for Lowy, "Motivation," 22, who says that "for the rest of his life [R. Tarfon] lived in sorrow." However, צער can refer to fasting as well; see, for example, tTa'anit 1.7 (325) and bTa'anit 10b. Moreover, the anonymous Bavli apparently understands R. Tarfon's actions as including active self-denial; it characterizes them as ציער נפשיה, "he caused himself suffering."

86. bHagigah 22b.

87. bNazir 52b.

88. bQiddushin 81b.

89. bBava Mezia 33a.

90. bArakhin 16b.

91. bArakhin loc. cit.; and cf. ySotah 1.7, 17a, and parallels. I am taking issue here with Urbach, *The Sages*, 448, who sees these views as representing an anti-ascetic school that wishes to minimize the religious need for suffering. To me it appears rather that these sages cannot imagine a pious life without being visited by adversity and are therefore willing to expand its definition to ensure that God is constantly bringing them atonement through affliction.

92. יבחן. NJPS translates "seeks"; cf. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms*, Anchor Bible 16–17A (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966–1970), 68; and see Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering*, 23 and 228 n. 15.

93. A similar notion is expressed elsewhere concerning the function of the commandments: "'The way of God is perfect; the word of the Lord is pure' (2 Sam 22:32) . . . Rab said: The commandments were given only to purify humankind. Does God care whether one slaughters from the throat or from the neck? [Rather,] this means that the commandments were given only to purify humankind" (*GenR* 44.1 [424–425]). See also *Tanh* Shemini 12.

94. See Kraemer's discussions of the following verses: Deut 3:2 and 8:5, Prov 3:12, Ps 11:5 and 94:12, and Isa 52:13–53:12 (*Responses to Suffering*, 22–23); and Wisdom of Solomon 4:10–11, Psalms of Solomon 13:7–9 (correct Kraemer accordingly) and 2 Macc 6:13–16 (*Suffering*, 38–39).

95. The midrash expresses the view that Enoch was taken before his time so

that he should not fall into sin (*GenR* 25.1 [238]). Similarly the rabbis explain Abraham's death at age 175, rather than at age 180 like his son Isaac, as a kindness on God's part. Because God knew that Esau was destined to be a murderer, idolater, and adulterer, he caused Abraham to pass away before his time (*GenR* 63.12 [694–695] and parallels).

96. See the statement by Raba in the name of R. Seḥora in the name of R. Huna (bBerakhot 5a) that in order to be "afflictions of love" they must be accepted willingly by the sufferer.

97. Thus Rashi to bBerakhot 5a s.v. יסורין; and see Elman, "Suffering of the Righteous," 337 n. 58. Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering*, 130–131 and 191, seems to understand sufferings of love as sufferings of reproof that are loving because their intention is to lead the sinner back to the path of righteousness. I cannot see how Kraemer would explain Raba/R. Hisda's distinction between sufferings resulting from neglect of Torah study on the one hand and sufferings of love on the other (see further); according to Kraemer, both would seem to be sufferings of reproof. On the other hand, the derivation of the notion of sufferings of love from the law of the injured slave cited by R. Hiyya b. Abba in R. Yohanan's name suggests that such sufferings are expiatory. MaHarSha, *Hiddûsē* ad loc., s.v. אלא, addresses this difficulty; his solution is ingenious but unlikely.

98. Cf. R. Simeon b. Laqish's remark that suffering departs from anyone who studies Torah (bBerakhot 5a).

99. See MaHarShal, *Hiddûsē* ad loc., s.v. לא מצא.

100. bBerakhot 5b; cf. *SongR* 2.16.

101. Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering*, 184–210. Kraemer, making reference to Mary Douglas, explains this phenomenon as being the result of relative fluidity and lack of authority of the Babylonian rabbinic community (208–209). See, however, Richard Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 5–7, who argues that Babylonian sages had greater political authority and less contact with nonrabbis than their Palestinian counterparts.

3. *QEDÛŠÂ* AND *PERÎŠÛT*

1. For a summary see *EM* 7:44–62 (s.v. קדושה, קדוש, קדש).

2. On the meaning of *qedûšâ* in the Holiness Code see Baruch Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 256–257; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, Anchor Bible, volume 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 729–731.

3. Exod 22:30; Lev 11:44–45; 20:22–26; Deut 14:4–21.

4. Lev 21:6–8. Cf. Num 6:8 concerning the Nazirite, and see my remarks in chapter 4 of this book.

5. Lev 20:6–7; Deut 7:4–6; 14:1–2.

6. For earlier studies of the rabbinic concept of *qedûšâ* see Max Kadushin, *The Rabbinic Mind* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1952); idem, *Worship and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964); Arthur Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinic Literature and the Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* (1920 and 1927; repr. New York: Ktav, 1968), 208–217. For a recent brief survey see Steven Fine, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 10–13.

7. *MdRSbY* 19:6 (139); *Sifre Numbers* Pisqa 115 (127). The phrase אשר קדשנו במצותיו

that is part of every blessing recited before the fulfillment of a commandment also refers to the sanctity conferred by מצות; see Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams (Jerusalem: Haynes Press, 1979), 367–369.

8. *See MdRY*, Massekhet Kaspa, Parsha 20, s.v. (השני) לא תבשל (337); *MidTan* 14:21 (75: "Whoever separates oneself from forbidden foods is called *qādôs*"); bBerakhot 53b (purification in connection with eating); bPesahim 24b (= bQiddushin 57b; also cf. bMenahot 101b; bHullin 116a); bHullin 115b (= bBekhorot 10a); *Tanh* Shemini 6.6.

9. *MdRY* Yitro, Massekhet Ba-Hodesh, Parsha 3, s.v. ויאמר (213); ySanhedrin 10.5, 29c; bPesahim 104a (= bA.Z.50a).

10. Literally, "for each one is holy to his God."

11. NJPS translates "You brought disgrace—my couch he mounted." The two difficulties with this translation are, first, that the verb חלל always takes a direct object and, according to this translation, it does not here; second, there is a change of address from the first half of the verse, addressed to Reuben, and the second, addressed to the other brothers. Ephraim Speiser, *Genesis*, Anchor Bible, Volume 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 361 and 364, suggests, on the basis of orthographic similarity between *yod* and *he* in ancient Hebrew script, that עלח be read as עלי. Taking עלי as an adverbial expression of burden, oppression, or sorrow (see Gen 33:13 and 48:7), he translates as follows: "Thus defiling my couch to my sorrow." This emendation provides חללת with an object (צועי; and compare 1 Chron 5:1) and removes the change of address.

12. Perhaps for this reason the *Sifra* (*Sifra Qedôšîm* Pereq 7,1 [90d]) suggests initially that Lev 19:29 may be prohibiting a priest from marrying off his daughter to a nonpriest, thereby diminishing her (and her family's?) sanctity.

13. *Sifra Qedôšîm* Pereq 7,1 (90d).

14. See mYebamot 2.4.

15. *Gôy qādôš*: Exod 19:6 ; *'am qādôš*: Deut 7:6, 14:2,21, 26:19, 28:9.

16. Ezra 9:2. See also Isa 6:13.

17. This phrase appears twice in the Mishnah—mYebamot 11.2 and mKetubot 4.3—and in numerous other places in rabbinic literature.

18. See Lev 18:1–5, 24–30 and Lev 20:22–26.

19. Exod 19:10 ("Go to the people and warn them to stay pure [וקדשתם] today and tomorrow") may be a biblical example of such usage if 19:15 ("And he said to the people, '. . . do not go near a woman'") is understood as its explication, as suggested in *MdRY* Yitro, Massekhet Ba-Ḥodesh, Parsha 3, s.v. ויאמר (213).

20. *Sifra Qedôšîm* Parsha 1,1 (86c).

21. CD MS A 7.4b–9a. See the discussion of this passage in chapter 1.

22. bYebamot 20a.

23. yYebamot 2.4, 3d.

24. This formula is mentioned in a number of places; see, for example, bQiddushin 5b.

25. This assumption also underlies the discussion of the mishnah in PT (yNedarim 3.6, 38b [= yQiddushin 3.5, 64a]), the discussion of R. Yirmiyah, R. Abin, and R. Yizḥaq be-Rabi on bNedarim 29b–30a. However, judging from bQiddushin 62a-b, the analogies made in these discussions may not be based on a presumed substantive similarity between betrothal and consecration of property to the Temple.

26. Interestingly, Tosafot ad loc., s.v. ונפשטו, suggests that Mar Zutra may be suggesting the possibility of the *qiddûšîn* "spreading" only in a case where the man used used the formula *meqûdeşeţ* as opposed to other betrothal formulae.

27. That bQiddushin 2a-3a is of saboraic, or post-amoraic origin is first noted by the tenth- and eleventh-century Babylonian *gaon* Sherira in his *ISG*, 71.

28. bQiddushin 2b.

29. See Tosafot Qiddushin ad loc. s.v. דאסר, which points out some of the limitations of this analogy.

30. bNiddah 71a. The same advice is cited in the name of R. Eleazar (Babylonia and Palestine, 3rd c.) in bShebuʿot 18b; and cf. bNedarim 20a-b (= *Kal* 10 [137–140] and *KalR* 15 [210–211]) discussed in chapter 1 of this book.

31. bShabbat 86a (= bKetubot 65a; bNiddah 17a); bPesahim 83b (= bHullin 91a, 92b); Hullin 7b.

32. bPesahim 83b (= bHullin 91a, 92b).

33. bTa'anit 11a. Cf. the statement attributed to him in bShebuʿot 18b.

34. It is not clear whether this derivation is R. Eleazar's or that of the anonymous Talmud.

35. *SZ* (= *Sifre Zuta*), Num 6:8 (242); cf *SZ*, Num 6:2 (240). See also *GenR* 35.1 (328), where Noah's voluntary abstention from sexual relations after the flood is described as נהג בקדושה, "he practiced holiness."

36. yBerakhot 2.7, 5b (= yMoed Qatan 3.5, 82d; *GenR* 100.7 [1291]). In PT loc. cit. he is also described as אדם צנוע, modest.

37. bSanhedrin 23a. See *ARN* A ch. 38 (57b), where R. Ishmael b. Elisha applies this expression elegaically to the just martyred R. Simeon b. Gamaliel.

38. yYoma 8.1, 44d (= yBerakhot 3.4, 6c; yTaʿanit 1.6, 64d).

39. *GenR* 33.3 (307); however, these words do not appear in all text witnesses and parallels.

40. ySanhedrin 10.5, 29c.

41. bPesahim 104a (= bA.Z. 50a).

42. bPesahim 113b.

43. bBerakhot 9b, bR. H. 19b, bYoma 69a (= bBezah 14b), bBezah 27a.

44. yM.S. 2.10, 53d; *EcclR* 9.9. In *EcclR* the same appellation is applied by the fourth-century Palestinian sage R. Yiṣhaq b. Eleazar to his contemporaries R. Borqa'i and R. Joshua b. R. Timi; the latter is known to us only from this passage. In *ExodR* 21.8 *ʿēdâ qedôšâ* simply refers to the Jewish people; in *Aggadat Bereshit* 65.6 (130) the term is apparently used to distinguish Jacob's progeny as being in their entirety Abraham's covenantal (i.e., Jewish) descendants as opposed to Abraham and Isaac's offspring. This usage seems related to the notion of the people Israel as having *qedûšâ* in contrast to the other nations.

45. Inscriptions in synagogues in Bet Shean, Jericho, and Susiya also mention a holy congregation or community; see Lee Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 221. At some point it became a commonplace to refer to a synagogue community as a "holy congregation."

It is intriguing to me that there are links among several of those individuals and communities designated as *qedôšîm*. It is R. Yose, the "holy body," who calls R. Meir a holy man; R. Judah the Patriarch, "our holy master," is the one to declare that R. Hiyya is holy; in the main the traditions concerning the holy assembly/congregation of Jerusalem are cited in the name of R. Judah the Patriarch. In a passage in PT, moreover, R. Judah the Patriarch is cited as saying on occasion that "the difference between our generation and that of R. Yose is the same as that between that which is most profane and that which is most holy" (yGittin 6.9, 48b). I do not claim to understand the significance of this phenomenon, but I doubt that it is the result of sheer coincidence.

46. bSanhedrin 98b. *KalR* 2.14 (209) cites a *baraita* (?) referring to R. Judah as "our holy master"; however, in the parallel version in bB. B. 8a R. Judah is called *rabî* rather than *rabbēnû ha-qādôš*. *KalR*'s version would appear, therefore, to be a gloss. R. Judah is designated as "our master" in a *baraita* found in Megillah 18b and elsewhere; the identity of "our master" in a *baraita* (?) found in bMegillah 14a and elsewhere is unclear.

47. yMegillah 1.13, 72b, and parallels.

48. *KalR* 2.14 (209).

49. We find such glosses by the anonymous BT to amoraic traditions that refer to R. Judah as *rabî*; see bShabbat 156a and bPesahim 112b (= bBezah 22b).

50. yMegillah 1.10, 72b (= yMegillah 3.1, 74a; ySanhedrin 10.5, 29c; yA.Z. 3.1, 42c); bShabbat 118b. Ofra Meir, *Rabî Yehûda ha-Nāsî': Diyuqnô šęl Manhîg bi-Mesôrôt Ęręş Yisrā'ēl u-Vāvęl* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz Hameuhad, 1999), cites this as one of two instances in rabbinic literature—the other concerns the ability to recite the *Shema'* in the midst of teaching Torah—in which Rabbi Judah the Patriarch is cited as being exceptional in his religious practices. The claim of holiness based on his never gazing at his circumcision is made for R. Yose in bShabbat loc. cit.

51. The anonymous Talmud in bShabbat 118b. See also bKetubot 103b. Interestingly, Rabbi Judah the Patriarch is, to the best of my knowledge, referred to as רבינו הקדוש only in a narrative setting, not in the context of an unadorned statement of opinion, with the exception of *ExodR* 18.5.

52. See the discussion in Tosafot Shabbat 149a, s.v. ודיוקני, and Tosafot A.Z. 50a, s.v. ה"נ.

53. bPesahim 113b.

54. bShabbat 118b.

55. yYebamot 1.1, 2b; *GenR* 85.5 (1038).

56. bShabbat 118b.

57. *EcclR* loc. cit.

58. *LevR* 24.6 (559).

59. yYebamot 2.4, 3d; bBerakhot 10b; *LevR* loc. cit. There is also a midrashic tradition, based on Gen 49:3, that Jacob's firstborn, Reuben, was the product of his first seminal emission (*GenR* 98.4 [1253], so-called "new version" 97.1 [1204]). By contrast, Elisha's servant Gehazi is not a *qādôs* because, according to rabbinic exegesis, he seized the Shunamite's breasts when attempting to push her away (bBerakhot 10b and parallels).

60. *GenR* 45.3 (449).

61. Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, trans. F. H. Cave and C. H. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 247–249.

62. Shmuel Safrai, "The Holy Congregation of Jerusalem" (Hebrew), Zion 22 (1957), 183–193. See also Steven Fine, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synogogue during the Greco-Roman Period* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 19.

63. Much has been written about the *hāsîd*. Some basic studies are: Solomon Schechter, "Saints and Saintliness," in idem, *Studies in Judaism: Second Series* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1908), 148–181; Adolph Büchler, *Types of Jewish Palestinian Piety from 70 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.* (1922; repr. New York: Ktav, 1968); Yizḥaq Baer, "The Ancient *ḥasîdîm* in Philo's Writings and in the Jewish Tradition" (Hebrew), *Zion* 18 (1953) 91–108; Louis Jacobs, "The Concept of the Ḥasid in Biblical and Rabbinic Literatures," *JJS* 8 (1957), 15–33; Gad Ben-Ami Ṣorfatti, "*Hasîdîm, 'Anšę Ma'asēh*, and the Early Prophets" (Hebrew), *Tarbiẓ* 26 (1957), 126–153; Shmuel Safrai,

"Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature," *JJS* 16 (1965) 15–33; Zev Falk, "From the Teaching of the Pious" (Hebrew), in E. Z. Melammed ed. *Sēfęr Zikārôn le-Binyāmîn De Vries* (Jerusalem: Tel Aviv University Research Authority and Stichting Fronka Sanders Fonds, 1968), 62–69; Geza Vermes, "Ḥanina ben Dosa," *JJS* 23 (1972), 28–50 , and 24 (1973), 51–64; idem, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973); Dennis Berman, "Hasidim in Rabbinic Tradition," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1979 Seminar Papers*, ed. Paul J. Achtemeier, 2 vols. (Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979), 2:15–33; William Scott Green, "Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabbinic Tradition," in *ANRW* 2. 19.2 (1979), 619–647; Sean Freyne, "The Charismatic," in W. E. Nickelsburg and J. J. Collins, eds., *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 223–258; Baruch M. Bokser, "Wonder-Working and the Rabbinic Tradition: The Case of Ḥanina ben Dosa," *JSJ* 16 (1985), 42–92. I have not seen Lazar Gulkowitsch, *Die Bildung des Begriffes Hasid* (Tartu, 1935).

64. Cf. the remark of the eighteenth-century kabbalist, moralist, and poet R. Moses Hayyim Luzzato, in chapter 18 of his ethical work *Mesillat Yešārîm*, that "*hasîdût* is akin to *perîšût* [a cognate for *qedûšâ*, as we shall see below]; however, *perîsût* is [practiced] in connection with prohibitions while *hasîdût* is [practiced] in connection with positive obligations."

65. See, for example, bHullin 7b, where it is said of the *hasid* Pinḥas b. Ya'ir that he never ate from a meal that was not his, nor did he eat any food from his father's table from the time he was able to provide for himself.

66. See mSotah 9.15 and parallels and mAbot 2.5,8. See also *Sifre Deuteronomy* Pisqa 323 (374), where *hasidim* are paired with *yir'ē šāmayîm*, those who fear Heaven.

67. mKeritut 6.3.

68. This *baraita* has been appended to the end of mSotah; see p. 85.

69. We should note that while withdrawal is a means of achieving *qedûšâ*, self-mortification is not mentioned as a path to holiness; and see later.

70. Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (Louvain: Catholic University, 1958), 1:104–106.

71. Sebastian Brock, "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources," in *JJS* 30 (1979), 217–218, 226.

72. Burton Visotzky, "Three Syriac Cruxes," in *JJS* 42 (1991), 174–175.

73. See Ezek 34:12. The use of *prš* in the sense of "interpret, explain" may derive from its meaning of "separate."

74. See 1QapGen 21.5,7 and 11tgJob 26.6. Interestingly, all three instances appear in Aramaic texts.

75. See, for example, Targum Onkelos to Lev 11:47, where להבדיל is rendered לאפרשא, and Num 16:21, where הבדלו is translated אתפרשו. For the uses of *prš* in Palestinian Aramaic, see Michael Sokoloff, *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 451 (s.v. פרש); and cf. פרישן (ibid. 447). See also Leo Baeck, *The Pharisees and Other Essays*, trans. from the German (New York: Schocken, 1947), 3, where he mentions a theory connecting the title Pharisee with the verse "they had separated themselves [נבדלים] from the impurities of the nations of the land" (Ezra 6:21).

76. See, for example, yYebamot 4.2, 5c.

77. *SZ* Num 6:8 (242); yNazir 5.2, 51d (a person may become a Nazir by saying concerning a bunch of grapes, "I am separated [*pārûš*] from you"); bHullin 74a; bKeritot 21b, 22a (מצות פרוש; see n. 82).

78. mSotah 9.15 (טהרה and פרישות are juxtaposed); tShabbat 1.15 (4:"A *pārûš* who is *tāmē'* because of genital flux shall not eat with one similarly *tāmē'* who is an *'am*

hā-'āreṣ [i.e. not a *pārûš*]"); tParah 12.12; *Sifra* Tazriʿa, Pereq 12,7 (67d); yMaʿaser Sheni 5.1, 55d (= ySheqalim 1.1, 46a, yM.Q. 1.2, 80c, ySotah 9.1, 23c; bM.Q. 5a); yHagigah 2.7, 78c; yM.Q. 2.3, 81b.

79. *MdRY* Bo, Massekhet Pisḥa, Parsha 8 s.v. [1] והיה לכם (16); *MdRY* Mishpatim, Massekhet Kaspa, Parsha 20, s.v. מדבר (327); *Sifre Numbers* Pisqa 131 (171; = ySanhedrin 10.2, 28d: "R. Eleazar b. Shamu'a/Eleazar says: Just as it is impossible for a nail to separate from a door without taking some wood with it, so, too, it is impossible to separate [לפרוש] from Peʿor without some lives being lost in the process"); bA.Z. 50a; *ExodR* 6.5 (190; "It was difficult for Israel to separate themselves [לפרוש] from idolatry").

80. mSotah 3.9 (*perîšût* is the antithesis of *tiflût*, frivolity or obscenity); mHorayot 2.4; *MdRY* Yitro, Massekhet Ba-Hodesh Parshah 3, s.v. ויאמר אל העם (213; in reference to a temporary prohibition in preparation for receiving the Torah); *Sifra Numbers* Pisqaot 90 (91) and 103 (101); *SZ* Num 11:10 (270), 12:1 (274), and 12:8 (276); yHorayot 2.5, 46b, (= bHorayot 8b); bShebuʿot 18a; *NumR* 13.15,16. See also the phrase לפרוש מן המטה in *TanhB* Shemot 6 (2b).

81. For the explicit use of *qdš* and *prš* as synonyms, see Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, 249 n. 13; the reference there to *LevR* should read 24.4.

82. *MdRSbY* 19.6 (139, where it is stated that until the sin of the Golden Calf all of Israel was fit to partake of *qodāšîm*, the sanctified flesh of animal sacrifices). In bHullin 74a and bKeritot 21b and 22a the phrase מצות פרוש is used to refer to a theoretical rabbinic food prohibition. The sense is that the rabbis are commanding us to distance ourselves from something that the Torah permits. This phrase is parallel in meaning and usage to איסורי קדושה according to the tradition that it refers to the rabbinically forbidden relations (see previously).

83. *Prš* is used in connection with Moses' separation from his wife Zipporah in *Tanh* Ẓav 13 and *ExodR* 46.3, where the separation is desribed as voluntary (compare, however, *Sifra Numbers* Pisqa 103 [101], *SZ* Num 12:8 [276], and the views of R. Aqiba and R. Judah in *ExodR* loc. cit.); and regarding Adam's separation from Eve (*DeutR-L* Devarim 12 [10]: "Adam separated himself [פרוש] from his bed," i.e., was celibate for 130 years after Cain killed Abel; cf. *TanhBub* Bereshit 26 [10b]). For example, In bQiddushin 81b, describing her husband's (apparently) voluntary abstention from sexual relations with her, R. Hiyya bar Ashi's wife says, "He has separated [פריש] himself from me for many years."

84. mHagigah 2.7 (but see n. 87); mTohorot 4.12; tShabbat 1.15.

85. mSotah 9.15.

86. See the chart at the end of DShŠ (= *Diqduqe Soferim ha-Shalem*), *Sotah*, vol. 2.

87. mYadayim 4.6,7; tHagigah3.35 (= yHagigah 3.5, 79d); tYadayim 2.20; bYoma 19b; bSotah 22b; bQiddushin 66a; bNiddah 33b (and cf. tNiddah 5.1). Tur-Sinai (E. Ben-Yehuda, *Millôn ha-Lāšôn hā-'Ivrît*, vol. 6, N. Tur-Sinai, ed. [New York and London: Thomas Yosselof, 1959], col. 5150, thinks that the term is used in this sense in mHagigah 2.7; however, it seems equally likely that the mishnah is referring to individuals who observe a stringent form of ritual purity.

88. The literature on this question is both vast and inconclusive. For a fairly recent consideration of the question, see Albert Baumgarten, "The Name of the Pharisees," *JBL* 102 (1983), 411–428, and the critique in Steven Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism," in Arthur Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages* (New York: Crossroad, 1988), 284 n. 63.

89. See Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ,*

rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973–1987), 2:395–397.

90. tShabbat 1.15 (4).

91. tSotah 15.11 (243); bB.B. 60b.

92. About the tendency of BT to view the Hasmoneans negatively, see Richard Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity*, (London: Routledge, 1999), 61–67.

93. mAbot 2.4.

94. tBerakhot 3.25 (18).

95. See *TK* 1:53–54 (s.v. וכולל).

96. *Sifre Numbers* Pisqa'ot 86 (86), 95 (95); *SZ* Num 11:4 (269).

97. mSotah 3.4.

98. Abraham Geiger in a letter written to Y. Blumenfeld on 15 Heshvan 5617 and published in Y. Blumenfeld, ed., *Oṣar Neḥmād* 2 (1857), 100.

99. See Geiger, 100–101. Weinstein's reference to "a manuscript of Maimonides" (Sara Epstein Weinstein, *Piety and Fanaticism: Rabbinic Criticism of Religious Strigency* [Northvale, NJ: London: Jason Aronson, 1997], 109 n. 4) should be corrected accordingly.

100. Geiger is aware of this problem; he suggests that פרוצה became פרושה under the influence of the word פרושים in the mishnah's next phrase, "and the blows of the *perûšîm*."

101. M. Minkowitz, "Iša Perûšâ u-Ṣebû'îm še-Dômîm li-Perûšîm," *Hadoar* 5735 No. 8, 136. The notion that women are highly libidinal may or may not be reflected in the conjugal obligation known as *onah* that requires husbands to engage in sexual relations with their wives on a regular basis; the requisite frequency is determined by the husband's social status and occupation. It is possible that such a requirement assumes a sexually aroused wife who needs to be satisfied regularly by her husband. However, it is at least equally plausible to view the *onah* rule as a response to the difficulty, for cultural reasons, of women in late antiquity requesting sex of their husbands. The modesty expected of women precluded "forward" behavior in sexual matters. For example, a woman who discussed sexual matters in a loud voice was to be divorced without alimony (bKetubot 72b).

102. This is essentially how PT is understood by the classical commentators. A similar interpretation is offered by Minkowitz, "Iša Perûšâ," 136. I find the interpretation of Saul Lieberman, "Tiqqûnē Yerûšalmî—6," in *Tarbiṣ* V (1934), 101, forced and unconvincing. See also Weinstein, *Piety*, 131 n. 68.

103. Weinstein, *Piety*, cites Saul Lieberman, "Tiqqûnē Yerûšalmî—6," 101, as having the reading "and the sect [וכת] of *perûšîm*." Given that there is no text-witness that supports this reading, one must assume a typographical error in Lieberman's article.

104. וקרבון; the meaning is uncertain.

105. In E. S. Rosenthal, ed., *Yerûšalmî Nezîqîn*, intro. and comm. Saul Lieberman (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1983), 221.

106. mKetubot 11.2. Lieberman points out that R. Nahman's requirement that she sell the property before a court of laymen (bB. M. 32a) is unknown to PT.

107. bKetubot 54a.

108. See the discussion of the rabbinic evidence for linkage between the Pharisees and the sages in Shaye J. D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," in *HUCA* 55 (1984), 36–42.

109. In PT the last two items on the list are reversed; see the subsequent discussion of PT.

110. yBerakhot 9.5, 13b; ySotah 5.7, 20c.

111. *ARN* A, ch. 37 (55a); B, ch. 45 (62b).

112. A good summary of these interpretations can be found in Weinstein, *Piety*, 146–164.

113. George Foote Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 2:193; Saul Lieberman, "The Discipline in the So-Called Dead Sea Manual of Discipline," *JBL* LXXI (1951), 206; Judah Goldin (*The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*, trans. J. Goldin [New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1955], 153), and (apparently) Fraade, "Ascetical Aspects," 271–272, understand this *baraita* as referring to subgroups within the Pharisaic party of the first century. This is a plausible but unproven assertion. The fact that there is no clear tradition concerning the meaning of the *baraita* could be seen as favoring the preceding hypothesis; that is, the *baraita* may reflect an early post-Destruction tradition whose meaning has been lost.

114. The anonymous BT notes (bSotah 22b) that "the *pārûš* [who says,] 'What is my obligation?' would seem to be worthy of emulation; however, it interprets his question as a rhetorical one: 'What more am I obligated to do [that I have not already done]?'" As will be noted, moreover, the fourth-century Babylonians Abbaye and Rava propose deleting "the *pārûš* out of love" and "the *pārûš* out of fear" because these, unlike the other forms of *perîšût* listed, are clearly praiseworthy. These glosses suggest that in its original form the *baraita* may have in fact intended the *perûšîm* it lists to be viewed favorably.

Moore, *Judaism*, 2.193, lumps together the Yerushalmi's gloss that only "the *parûš* out of love" is praiseworthy together with the *baraita*; Goldin, *Fathers*, 213 n. 5, says, "All that can be said with certainty is that such imitation Pharisees are strongly condemned by the Rabbis." If he means that both the Bavli and the Yerushalmi interpret most of the *perûšîm* negatively, I agree with him. If he means that the attitude of the *baraita* itself is negative, I profess agnosticism on this question.

115. For this reason, among others, Solomon Schechter, *ARN*, 55a n. 4, emends the reading "there are eight *perûšîm*," found in the printed editions of *ARN* A, to "there are seven *perûšîm*."

116. bSotah 22b.

117. See *Sifre Deuteronomy*, Pisqa 352 (409) and parallels, where Abraham is listed as one of six people or things referred to in Scripture as beloved. See also bShabbat 137b and Tosafot ad loc. s.v. ידיד.

118. *Sifre Deuteronomy*, loc. cit.

119. In *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*, trans. R. Hammer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 364, אוהבים is translated as "favorites," as if the text read אהובים; I see no basis for this translation.

120. See also *Sifre Deuteronomy* Pisqa 32 (55, 57–58), where חביב מ- is used several times in the comparative sense. See also *LevR* 1.8 (22).

121. I raise this possibility in light of the fact that this passage is in Hebrew, while the previous discussion of the *baraita* is in Aramaic.

122. yBerakhot and ySotah loc. cit. Some commentators understand this definition literally while others take it to be a metaphor; see Weinstein, *Piety*, 149.

123. yBerakhot and ySotah loc. cit. See Lieberman, "Tiqqûnē Yerûšalmî," 101, who cites the case of Miriam bat 'Alē Beṣālîm; according to one tradition in the Yerushalmi, she would fast one day and count it [ומקוה ליה] as two (yHagigah 2.2, 77d).

124. משפע. Because of the difficulty of the text as it stands (see n. 125), one must wonder whether the original reading was משפי, in which case the meaning would be "one who appears crushed, as is a mortar [כי מדוכיא or כמדוכיא] [by the pestle]." It is noteworthy that in bShabbat 77b (according to the Munich 95 manuscript and the Arukh) we read: "An אסיתא [= mortar] is so called because it is חסידתא [pious]." Given that one of the qualities of the pious man is that he accepts insult without responding in kind, it may be that BT's intent is that the mortar accepts the blows of the pestle without striking back, as it were.

125. Actually, a mortar is not bent over; it is a receptacle. For this reason most medieval and modern scholars understand מדוכיא as "pestle" and interpret "one who is bowed like a pestle in a mortar." This explanation is not very convincing, given that BT has another word, בוכנא, for pestle, and that מדוכה, מדוכא, and מדוכתא are used in the sense of mortar, not pestle, in BT. Perhaps a mortar is "bowed" in the sense that its cavity is curved and shaped to receive the blows of the pestle.

126. Compare Apuleus's contemptuous description of a fraudulent band of worshippers of the Syrian goddess who engage in ostentatious self-flagellation as a means of soliciting donations (Apuleus, *The Golden Ass*, Book 8; trans. J. Lindsay [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962],181–182).

4. THE ASCETICISM OF FASTING

1. Cited by Suetonius, *Divus Augustus* 76.2; see M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: The Israeli Academy of Arts and Humanities, 1980), 2:110 (no. 303).

2. See, for example, James A. Francis, *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995).

3. Ramsay MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire:* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 50.

4. As Carol Walker Bynum has discussed at some length (*Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 219–244), this was particularly true for women, whose social roles were much more rigidly determined than those of men. See also Aline Rouselle, *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*, trans. F. Pheasant (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1996), 196–198, who describes communication with others itself as being, for the desert solitaries, the inevitable prelude to desire, and therefore to be shunned.

5. Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 31–32.

6. The most thorough analysis of these laws is still Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Laws of Purity—Part Twenty-Two: The Mishnaic System of Uncleanliness* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977); see, however, the recent critique of Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, Anchor Bible, volume 3A (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 1004–1009, and the important caveats of E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), 131–254.

7. bTa'anit 23a.

8. Lee I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Yad Yizhak Ben-Zvi Press; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1989), has illustrated a gradual process of increasing contact between the Palestinian sages of the third and fourth century and the larger community. Richard

Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), has argued recently for a relatively greater degree of separation between Babylonian rabbis and their nonrabbinic contemporaries.

9. Lev 18:19; Lev 20:18.

10. Lev 15:24. See Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 940, for a discussion of whether this verse refers to an inadvertent or intentional violation of the prohibition against intercourse with a menstruant.

11. Other versions: "in Sevadit"; neither location is known to us. Medieval commentaries assume that the ordinance was instituted in a locale where the populace was not particularly learned and it was likely that the women of the place would easily confuse menstrual and nonmenstrual bleeding.

12. Literally, "sit."

13. Other versions: "five."

14. Lev 15:25–28.

15. Lev 15:29–30.

16. bNiddah 66a.

17. bBerakhot 31a.

18. These fasts are first mentioned in Zechariah 7–8 in connection with commemorating the destruction of the First Temple.

19. See also Deut 9:9 [E.D.].

20. H. A. Brongers, "Fasting in Israel in Biblical and Post-Biblical Times," in *Instruction and Interpretation: Studies in Hebrew Language, Palestinian Archaeology and Biblical Exegesis* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977), 3. Cf. the categorization in J. S. Licht, "Ṣom," in *Encyclopedia Miqra'it*, Vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1981²), col. 692. Brongers's classification needs substantial correction and revision. His characterization of the fast declared by Ahab because of Naboth's (falsely) alleged blasphemy as preparatory is incorrect. Rather it is a form of mourning (and in that sense belongs with fasts after death) as well as expiation. Category d should include the fasts mentioned in Ps 35:13, Ps 69:11 (especially if one accepts Dahood's emendation; see Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms II: 51–100* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968], 158), Ps 19:24 (see M. Dahood, *Psalms III: 101–150* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970], 108), Daniel 9:3 (but see L. F. Hartman and A. A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel* [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978], 248), Ezra 8:21, and 2 Chron 20:3. Nehemiah's fast (Neh 1:4), besides being an auxiliary to his prayers, is a form of mourning ("and I wept, and was in mourning for days, fasting and praying to the God of Heaven") over the state of affairs in Judea. The fast of the Jews in response to Haman's decree (Esther 4:3) is also both mourning and propitiation; so, too, the fast mentioned in Ps 69:11. The fasting of Esther 4:16 is also propitiatory and should not be categorized separately as "concomitant fasting." Category e should include Neh 9:1; Yom Kippur (Lev 16 and Num 29:7) probably belongs in this category as well. The fast alluded to in Jer 36 was probably in response to the Babylonian incursions along the Philistine plain; see John Bright, *Jeremiah Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965), Introduction, xlviii and ci.

21. What Brongers means when he says "the underlying motives (sic) of all these acts [of fasting] is to arrive at a state of asceticism" (1) is unclear to me.

22. Moses' fasting is looked to as a model by many of the Church Fathers who favored frequent fasting. See, for example, Tertullian, *On Fasting*, ch. 6.

23. Interestingly, in the case of Elijah (I Kings 19), whose experience in the desert is clearly modeled consciously after Moses' experience at Sinai, God does not appear to him until after he has fasted for forty days. R. David Kimhi, in his com-

mentary to I Kings 19:8, notes that Elijah, unlike Moses, is described as subsisting during the forty days on the food previously given to him by an angel. He concludes, therefore, that the miracles were dissimilar.

24. Nahum M. Sarna, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 220.

25. Lev 10:8–9; Ezek 44:21.

26. Ezek 44:31.

27. Num 6:3–4. In Daniel 1:12–15 Daniel, Mishael, Hananiah, and Azariah partake only of legumes and water. However, this is only in order to avoid being polluted by food coming from the table of Nebuchadnezzar.

28. Num 30:14.

29. Jer 35:6.

30. Bright, *Jeremiah*, 150.

31. Daniel 10:2–3.

32. See Hartman and Di Lella, *Daniel*, 262, 278–279.

33. This has been noted already by Licht, "Ṣom," 694.

34. Judith 8.6. A fast of public supplication is also mentioned in Judith 4.13.

35. This is the view of Adolph Büchler, "Notes and Observations about Women's Status in the Book of Judith" (Hebrew), in idem, *Studies in Jewish History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), Hebrew section, 47; and Joshua M. Grintz, *Sefer Yehudit* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1957), 48. Indeed, in Judith 8.5, the verse immediately preceding the one describing her fasts, we are told that Judith wore sackcloth and widows' garments.

36. Judith 12.7–8 reports that each evening when she left Holifernes's camp, she would bathe in order to purify herself.

37. Judith is careful not to eat the food offered to her by Holifernes (Judith 12.1–2). She also predicts that the downfall of her own people would result from their eating the first fruits and tithes that have been consecrated to the priests and that may not be handled, much less eaten, by others (Judith 11.13).

38. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 45.28.

39. See the sources cited in H. Musurillo, "Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Writers," *Traditio* 12 (1956), 24.

40. Tobit 12.8.

41. Ben Sira 24.31(36). There is, of course, a notable similarity between the view expressed here and that expressed in the Mishnah: "If one says, 'I will sin and then repent; I will sin and then repent," they do not allow him to repent" (mYoma 8.9).

42. *Testament of Reuben* 1.9–10 (James Charlesworth, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* [=*OTP*] [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985], 2:782).

43. *Testament of Simeon* 3.1–6 (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:786).

44. *Testament of Judah* 15.4 (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:799).

45. *Testament of Joseph* 4.8 (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:820); from 9.2 (2:821) it appears that Joseph may have continued to fast even after he was imprisoned. See also 10.1–2 (2:821). In *Joseph and Asenath* (1st c. BCE–2nd c. CE) 10:2 (2:215) Asenath fasts in repentance and as a preparation for her conversion.

46. See Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:640–641.

47. 3.7–8 (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:654–655).

48. The regimen described here is reminiscent of Job's behavior after his sons' feasts (Job 1:5): "When a round of feast days was over, Job would send word to them to sanctify themselves, and rising early in the morning, he would make burnt offerings, one for each of them; for Job thought, 'Perhaps my children have sinned

and blasphemed God in their thoughts.'"Job 1:5. Cf. also the "pious ones of old" who became Nazirites so that they would be able to bring sin offerings (tNedarim 1.1 [100]).

49. O. S. Wintermute concludes that is was written, possibly in Egypt, between 100 BCE and 70 CE, but conceivably as late as 175 CE; see Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:500–501.

50. 7.6 (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:513). Wintermute (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1.504) finds nothing special in this mention of fasting. However, it seems to imply regular fasting, rather than occasional fasting as in the biblical cases cited by Wintermute.

51. See Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:730.

52. 1.15–22 (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:738). Elsewhere in this work the author warns against "the deceivers who will multiply in the last times"; they "have made their belly their God, saying, 'The fast does not exist, nor did God create it'" (1.13 [Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:737]). It is difficult to determine whether he is speaking here of a specific fast (Yom Kippur?) or of fasts in general.

53. Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:738 n. e3.

54. *History of the Rehabites* 10:7a (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:455).

55. 4 Ezra 5.20, 6.35, 9.26 and 12.51; 2 Baruch 20.5–6; Ascension of Isaiah 2:10–11.

56. Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:683.

57. *Apocalypse of Abraham* 9.7 (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:693).

58. Apocalypse of Abraham 12.2 (694).

59. See 12.5 (1:625); 20.5–6 (1:627); 21.1 (1:627); 47.2, 48.1 (1:635). Interestingly, the work concludes with the following exhortation to its readers: "When you, therefore, receive this letter, read it carefully in your assemblies. And think about it in particular, however, on the days of your fasts" (86.1 [1:652]).

60. *3 Baruch* 3.14, Slavonic version (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:668) In the Greek version (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:669) only prayer is mentioned. In the *Apocalypse of Ezra* (Christian work, 2nd to 9th c.) 1.3–5 (1:671) Ezra is commanded by the angel Michael to fast for seventy weeks before having a vision. Ezra fasts for 120 weeks. This idea continues into the medieval period; see, for example, the words of Hai Gaon (d. 1038) in J. Mussafia, ed., *Tešûvôt ha-Ge'ônîm* (Lyck, 1864), 31 (Responsum 99): "When one wishes to gaze upon the Divine Chariot and see the Palaces of the heavenly angels he has ways of doing this, [namely] he fasts for a known number of days and puts his head between his knees and whispers specified songs and chants."

61. Luke 5.33.

62. Luke 2.37.

63. An extensive survey of Graeco-Roman cultic fasting can be found in Rudolf Arbesmann, "Fasting and Prophecy in Pagan and Christian Antiquity," *Traditio* 7 (1949–1951), 9–32. For a description of some of the Greek mystery cults, see Walter Burkert, *Ancient Mystery Cults* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

64. Arbesmann, "Fasting and Prophecy," 5.

65. Veronika Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1996), 40–43.

66. Arbesmann, "Fasting and Prophecy," 5.

67. *Histories* 2.40.

68. Two of these stimuli, fasting in order to mourn the Temple and as a substitute for the sacrificial cult, are identified and discussed briefly by Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, "Asceticism and Suffering in Rabbinic Thought" (Hebrew), in

S. Ettinger, S. Baron, B. Dinur, and Y. Halperin, eds., *Sēfęr Yôvēl le-Yiṣḥāq* Baer (Jerusalem: Manges Press, 1961), 55–56.

69. See Jacob Nahum Epstein, *Māvô' le-Nûsaḥ ha-Mišnâ* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1964²), 1012–1014, and Judah Rosenthal, "The Four Commemorative Fast Days," in Abraham Neuman and Solomon Zeitlin, eds., *The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Volume of the Jewish Quarterly Review* (Philadelphia: Jewish Quarterly Review, 1967), 446–459.

70. See Charlesworth, *OTP* 1:616–617.

71. 2 Baruch 9.2 (Charlesworth, *OTP* 1:623).

72. *MdRY*, Massekhet 'Amalek, Parshah 2 (200), speaks of בני שותה מים, a group that apparently limited its liquid intake to water. Abraham Geiger, *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer abhangkeit innern Entwicklung von der das Judentums* (Breslau: Hanauer, 1857), 152, theorizes that the Mekhilta refers to *perûsîm* who drank no wine as a sign of mourning but who ate meat because they subscribed to the view that animal sacrifices may be offered even in the absence of a temple.

73. tSotah 15.11–12 (243–244). I am following the version that appears in the Vienna ms. of the Tosefta.

74. mMenahot 10.6.

75. See bSanhedrin 83a; but cf. *Sifra* Emor, Pereq 6, 9 (98a).

76. bBerakhot 10b.

77. The following statements in the Mishnah may be related to this notion:

> Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says in the name of R. Joshua: Since the the day that the Temple was destroyed there has been no day without its curse; and the dew has not fallen in blessing and the fruits have lost their savor. R. Jose says: The fruits have also lost their fatness. R. Simeon b. Eleazar says: [When] purity [ceased in Israel it] took away the flavor and the fragrance; [when] the tithes [ceased they] took away the fatness of the corn. (mSotah 9.12–13)

The idea expressed here may be that when God is not given his dues through sacrifices, tithes, and the observance of purity rules, the food with which these commandments should have been performed lose their taste as a consequence.

78. A *baraita* in Sukkah 53a includes an eyewitness account by R. Joshua of the *bēt ha-šô'ēvâ* celebrations that took place during Sukkot in the Temple; according to bArakhin 11b, R. Joshua, who was a Levite, served as a temple singer.

79. bB.B. 60b.

80. The Erfurt ms. of the Tosefta has "R. Simeon b. Gamaliel"; see Lieberman, *TK* 8:771.

81. Saul Lieberman (*Tôseftā' ki-Fešûtâʰ* [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1955–1988], 8:771) argues that the phrase in bBava Batra is a later gloss based on R. Ishmael's statement in the Tosefta.

82. Lieberman, *TK* 8:771–772.

83. bSotah 12a (cf. *Exodus Rabbah* 1.13 [57–58]).

84. See *Tanh* 12 and related sources.

85. See, for example, mSukkah 3.12 and mRosh Hashanah 4.3.

86. See, for example, tSotah 15.12–14 (244). For an example of such behavior in Babylonia, see what follows in the text.

87. bBava Kamma 59a-b.

88. Moshe Beer, *Rāšût ha-Gôlâ bîymē ha-Miṣnâ veha-Talmûd* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1976), 86 n. 118.

89. See also Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia: III, From Shapur I to Shapur II* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), 83 n.2, who suggests that perhaps mourners of Zion were considered by the exilarch to be subversive and were therefore persecuted; however, Neusner is at a loss to suggest the nature of the subversion. The "mourners of Zion" movement was revitalized with the emergence of the Karaites; see chapter 5 for a fuller discussion.

90. bGittin 56a; cf. *LamR* (= *Lamentations Rabbah*) 1.5 (34b). *TanhB* Shemini 9 (14a) and *Tanh* Shemini 5 attribute the ascetic practice of the Rehabites to a desire to mourn the coming destruction of the Temple (see later); it may be that according to this view their self-denial was also a form of penance and propitiation intended to avert the destruction. In any case, it is impossible to know whether the authors of the midrash meant the Rehabites to allude to an actual group or individuals, and if so, from what period. Similarly, it is difficult to interpret the midrashic tradition that Caleb's face was blackened from fasting (*ExodR* 1.17 [66]). This may refer to fasting intended to atone for the sin of the scouts. On the other hand, this may refer to fasting before the fact intended to avert their sin. This tradition would then be related to the midrashic claim that the use of the singular in Num 13:22 indicates that of all the spies Caleb alone went to Hebron. He did so in order to prostrate himself before the graves of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs and pray that he not be tempted to join the other scouts in speaking slanderously about the land of Israel (bSotah 34b).

91. *TanhB* Shemini 9 (14a); *Tanh* Shemini 5.

92. This midrash is doubtless based on the fact that the Rehabites are known to us only from the book of Jeremiah; the midrashists therefore construct a scenario whereby they came into existence during Jeremiah's lifetime and as a result of his prophecies. The assertion of Moshe Beer, *'Amôrā'ē Bābęl*, (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1982²), 314 n. 89, that this exegesis has an anti-ascetic agenda is neither necessary nor convincing.

93. Henry Malter, ed. and comm., *Massękhęt Taʿanît*, AAJR Publications, Vol. 1 (New York: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1930), 120 [notes to line 4], proposes, in part because of the mishnah's syntactic awkwardness, that from "In that" and on is a later interpolation into an earlier mishnah, necessitated by the lack of familiarity by later post-Temple readers with the institution of *ma'amādôt* and its rationale. According to his hypothesis the original meaning of the mishnah's initial question was not: what is the rationale for the *maʿamādôt* but rather: what was the liturgical procedure to be followed during these days. This question is answered in the section of the mishnah immediately following the portion quoted: "On the first day from 'in the beginning' until 'and let there be an expanse' etc."

94. There is an apparent contradiction between the statement here that the Israelites of each *maʿamād* accompanied the priests and the Levites to Jerusalem and the later statement that the Israelites gathered in their cities. This problem was recognized by the traditional commentators. One solution they suggest is that the *maʿamādôt* (i.e., those who supplemented the Temple rites through prayer and lection but were not involved in these rites directly) included priests and Levites as well as Israelites. However, whereas all of the priests and Levites went up to Jerusalem, only some of the Israelites accompanied them. The rest remained in their locale, where they met daily to pray and read the Torah (see Pseudo-Rashi, bTaʿanit 26a, s.v. *qorban mûsaf* and elsewhere; Rambam's Mishnah commentary ad loc.; *RiD* [= R. Isaiah of Trani the Elder] and *Shittat Ribab* [= R. Judah b. Berekhiah], bTaʿanit 26a, s.v. בתעניות). Alternatively, they propose that the *maʿamādôt* consisted solely of Israelites, some of whom gathered in Jerusalem while the rest convened locally; the

Mishnah is using the term *maʿamād* loosely here and means only to say that during each *mišmār* priests, Levites, and Israelites participated in the sacrificial rites in some fashion (see Ritba, bTaʿanit 26a, s.v. ומה ששנינו; *Nimmûqē Yôsēf*, bTaʿanit 26a, s.v. בתעניות [although he caims that this interpretation is supported by the Yerushalmi, I do not see how this is so]; *RaN*, bTaʿanit 26a s.v. ובמעמדות). Malter, *Masseḳheṭ Taʿanît*, 120 (n. to l. 8), building on his previous hypothesis that the mishnah contains a later interpolation (see n. 93), proposes that the phrase "for every *mišmār* there was a *maʿamād* in Jerusalem" was added in order explicitly to link the interpolation, which is discussing *mišmārôt* with the mishnah's initial statement, which refers to *maʿamādôt*. The difficulty with this suggestion is that the goal of linking the interpolation with the mishnah's opening line could have been accomplished without adding the phrase "in Jerusalem," which in fact creates a new problem rather than solving the existing one. Hanokh Albeck, *Mishnah-Mo'ed*, 495–496 marshals several sources supporting the view that priests and Levites as well as Israelites were members of the *maʿamādôt* and that while some of the Israelite members went up to Jerusalem the rest gathered locally. His most compelling proof for the first assertion is that mTaʿanit 4.1 speaks of priests offering the priestly blessings four times a day during the *maʿamādôt*. Both Talmuds conclude from this that the priests who were members of the *maʿamādôt* were fasting (yTaʿanit 4.1; bTaʿanit 26b). If they had been actually performing sacrificial rites, they would have been forbidden to fast (see mTaʿanit 2.6). His second point is supported by mBikkurim 3.2, which speaks of different locales in Israel having a "town of the *maʿamād*;" this phrase apparently refers to the town in which the Israelites of that area's *maʿamād* gathered.

The Tosefta states, "and the Israelites of that *mišmār who cannot go up to Jerusalem* gather in their cities." See *TK* 5:1103 and the sources cited there.

95. This section appears in none of the Mishnah manuscripts, and it does not appear in the version of the Mishnah found in the Yerushalmi. Moreover, PT needs to infer from mTaʿanit 4.1 that the members of each *maʿamād* fast (yTaʿanit 4.1, 67b), and BT cites a different tannaitic source that describes the *maʿamādôt* fasts as well as amoraic reasons for not fasting on Sunday and Friday that differ from those in the Mishnah as we have it; it appears, therefore, that neither BT's nor PT's editor had this pericope in their version of the Mishnah. The only relatively early text-witness that includes this pericope is the 1492 Napoli edition of the Mishnah. Concerning this edition's version of the Mishnah, see Epstein, *Māvô' le-Nûsaḥ ha-Mišnâ*, 2:1275–1276. That this section is an interpolation is noted by R. Shlomo ha-ʿAdeni and R. Yom Tov Lippmann Heller in their Mishnah commentaries.

96. Other explanations for not fasting on Sunday are given by *amoraim* in bTaʿanit 27b:

> What is the reason [that the *maʿamadot* did not fast on Sunday?] R. Yohanan said: Because of the Christians. R. Samuel bar Nahmani said: Because it is the third day of creation [of humanity and human beings are therefore weak; see mShabbat 9.6]. Resh Laqish said: An extra soul is given to man on the eve of Shabbat; after Shabbat it is taken from him.

The reasons offered by R. Yohanan and Resh Laqish are rehearsed, and R. Yohanan's explanation expounded upon, in Soferim 17.4 (303):

> Some say [that there is no *maʿamad* fasting on Sunday] because during twilight on the eve of Shabbat each Israelite receives an additional soul and

after Shabbat they take it from him. Another reason: Because of the Christians, so that they should not say, "They are fasting because it is our day of celebration."

Soferim goes on to point out that this reason would hardly seem applicable at the time the temple was standing. Indeed, the offering of this explanation may be regarded as evidence that *maʿamad* fasting continued in some form well after the Destruction; see later. A *baraita* in the Yerushalmi (yTaʿanit 4.4, 68b) explains the injunction against fasting on either Sunday or Friday as being due to the honor of Shabbat.

97. J. Preuss, *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine*, trans. F. Rosner (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993), 157–159, favors the view that *askara* is some form of diphtheria. He also reviews, and rejects, several other proposed identifications.

98. See mTaʿanit 4.3.

99. See, for example, mAbot 1.2.

100. Some versions add here Jer 33:25 (אם לא בריתי יומם ולילה חקות שמים וארץ לא שמתי), which is apparently understood, "If not for my covenant [which exists] day and night I would not have established the statutes of heaven and earth." See Malter, *Masseḵhet Taʿanit*, 127, n. to l. 20.

101. Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, "*Mišmārôt* and *Maʾamādôt*," *Tarbiz* 42 (1973), 313–314 (= idem, *Mēʿ Ôlāmām sʸabel Ḥḥamîm* [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988], 278–279).

102. bTaʿanit 27b.

103. This argument was made previously by Ze'ev Wolf Jawitz in his *Meqôr ha-Berakhôt* (1910; repr. Jerusalem: Kiryah Ne'emanah, 1966), 90.

104. Tur Oraḥ Ḥayyim ch. 48.

105. *Massekhet Soferim* 17.4 (301–302).

106. R. Abraham b. Isaac Av Bet-Din of Narbonne, *Sēfẹr Hā-Ḫškôl*, ed. Z. B. Auerbach (Halberstadt, 1868), 7. This passage does not appear in Shalom Albeck's edition of *Sēfẹr Hā-Ḫškôl*. For other, later customs see Jawitz, *Meqôr ha-Berākhôt*, 90–91.

107. *Responsa MaHarShal*, No. 29.

108. See Urbach, "*Mišmārôt* and *Maʿamādôt*," 314.

109. Pirqoi ben Baboi, the early eighth-century Babylonian polemicist, does speak of Palestinian Jews reciting *maʿamādôt* in place of the Amidah, the usual prayer rite, in times of persecution (Louis Ginzberg, ed., *Ginzē Schechter Volume II* [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1928], 552. Ginzberg assumes, however, that what is meant is liturgical poems. Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy* trans. R. Scheindlin (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1993), 181, notes that poetic compositions for fast days and the days of *selîhôt* are called *maʿamadôt*.

110. bTaʿanit 27b.

111. Priests: mTaʿanit 2.6. Indivduals bringing offerings: yTaʿanit 4.4, 68b and parallels; and see Maimonides' *Laws of Temple Utensils* 6:9–10.

112. This apparent inconsistency was noted by the nineteenth-century R. Isaac of Karlin in his novellae *Qẹrẹn Ôrâ* to Taʿanit 27b s.v. אנשי משמר.

113. bBerakhot 17a; a similar statement appears in *NumR* 18.21.

114. bBerakhot 32b.

115. bShabbat 24a; bTaʿanit 12a. The passage in *Megillat Taʿanit* cited further on may belong to this group as well.

116. yPesahim 4.1, 30d (= yTaʿanit 1.6., 64c); *TanhB* Vayera 16 (47b); Soferim 21.3 (354).

117. Luke 18.12 (and see also Mk 2.18; Mt 6.16, 9.14; Lk 5.33); *Didache*, 8.1; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 15.1; and see Moore, *Judaism*, 1.788 and Hermann Leberecht Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1961), 2:242.

118. Urbach, "Asceticism," 55.

119. Gedalyah Alon, *Męḥqārîm be-Tôledôt Yisrā'ēl* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz HaMeuhad, 1957–1958), 2:120–127.

120. Similarly, Meir Bar-Ilan, "The Nature and Origins of *Megillat Taʿanît*" (Hebrew), *Sinai* 98 (1996), 126–135, contends that the need for *Megillat Taʿanît*, a Second Temple era document that specifies the days on which one may *not* fast, suggests a culture in which frequent fasting is the norm.

121. *Didache* 8.1.

122. Urbach, *The Sages*, 434.

123. Cf. Schechter, *Aspects*, 308: "Self-inflicted suffering, such as fasting, assumes naturally the aspect of sacrifices."

124. In other words, a man will give up all of his possessions for the sake of his physical well-being.

125. bHullin7b. Raba is cited there as qualifying this teaching significantly.

126. bBerakhot 5a.

127. A similar motif is found in *LevR* 30.7 (704–705).

128. Kraemer, *Responses to Suffering*, 69.

129. mYoma 8.8.

130. Nahum of Gimzo (yPe'ah 8.8,21b [= bTaʿanit 21a]); R. Eleazar b. R. Simeon (bBava Mezia 84b). Although it is explained otherwise by BT (see later), there may be a tradition in bBava Mezia 85a that R. Judah the Patriarch accepted suffering upon himself voluntarily.

131. yKil'ayim 9.3, 32b (= yKetubot 12.3, 35a).

132. bBava Mezia 85a.

133. This section is a slightly modified version of my article "An Israelite Offering in the Priestly Code: A New Perspective on the Nazirite," in *JQR* 88 (1997), 1–18.

134. Num 6:2 speaks of Naziriteship for both men and women, and later sources speak of female Nazirites (mNaz 3.6, 4:3–5, 4:7, 6:11; tNaz 3.4–7, 3.10–14; Josephus, *Wars* 2.313).

135. A recent and comprehensive discussion of this question can be found in Baruch Levine, *Numbers 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible, vol. 4A (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 229–235.

136. Levine, *Numbers*, 230.

137. J. Licht, *Pērûš 'al Sēfęr be-Midbar Perāqîm 1–10* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985), 83. 4QSam^{a} 1:22 reads: נתהן יהו נזיר עד עולם כל ימי וחיו The Septuagint has the following as part of Hannah's vow in 1 Sam 1:11, which also indicates that Samuel is to be a Nazirite: καὶ οἶνον καὶ μέθυσμα οὐ πίεται, "he shall drink neither wine nor strong drink."

138. See the astute comments of T. R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 139 and esp. n. 23.

139. James Frazer, *Folklore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend and Law* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1918), 2:480–491; W. Robertson Smith, *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions* (Cambridge, 1927^{3} [repr. New York, 1969]), 323–335, and Cook's note to p. 325 (606–607); G. R. Gray, *Numbers* (New York: Scribner's, 1920) [ICC], 69; Jacob Milgrom, *The JPS Commentary: Numbers* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990), 356–357

and the sources cited there in the notes; Saul Olyan, "What Do Shaving Rites Accomplish and What Do They Signal in Biblical Ritual Contexts?" *JBL* 117 (1998), 611–622.

140. J. C. L. Gibson, *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions. Volume III: Phoenician Inscriptions including Inscriptions in the Mixed Dialect of Arslan Tash* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 124, and see the note to line 12 on 129 (my thanks to the *JQR* reader for drawing my attention to this source).

141. Ibid., 129 note to line 12 (my thanks to the *JQR* reader for drawing my attention to this source).

142. Lucian (?), *De Dea Syria*, trans. H. W. Attridge and R. A. Oden (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976), pp. 59, 61 (¶ 60).

143. See *Midrāš ha-Gādôl* to Exod 20:5 (ed. Margaliot, 405), also cited in D. Z. Hoffmann's edition of *MdRŠbY* (111); see also Maimonides' *Sēfęr ha-Miṣwôt*, Negative Commandment 6.

144. Gannath Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981).

145. Robertson Smith, *Lectures*, 607. See also E. R. Leach's summation of G. A. Wilken's earlier thesis in Leach's "Magical Hair," in *Man* 88 (1958), 149.

146. As Milgrom, *Numbers*, 355–356, notes, there are two differences: first, the high priest is forbidden to drink wine only while serving in the Temple, while the Nazirite's prohibition applies throughout his נזירות; second, the Nazirite is forbidden grapes and all grape products, not merely wine.

147. Thus J. C. Rylaarsdam, *IDB* 3:526, suggests that נזירות is "an expression of loyalty to God in which forms of abstinence are illustrative rather than constitutive." Compare the remarks of Gray, *Numbers*, 60.

148. Milgrom, *Numbers*, 355–356.

149. Actually, this notion is already proposed by Cook in Smith Robertson, *Lectures*, 607: "The Nazirite's vow is a dedication of one's self"; to my knowledge, however, Milgrom is the first to ground this proposal textually by reading Num 6 in light of the larger biblical context.

150. Here and in the following verse I am translating in accordance with Baruch Levine's understanding of פלא in the *hif'îl* in the sense of "to set apart"; see Levine, *Numbers*, 218. For a survey and discussion of the various scholarly interpretations of the phrase פלא נדר, see J. Berlinerblau, *The Vow and "Popular Religious Groups" of Ancient Israel* [JSOTS 210] (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 177–178 (my thanks to the *JQR* reader for directing my attention to this work).

151. On oaths see Judges 11:30–31, 34–40; it seems that Jepthah offers his daughter as a sacrifice in fulfillment of his vow to offer to God as a burnt-offering "whatever comes out of the door to meet me on my safe return from the Ammonites" (31). However, the text is ambiguous—perhaps intentionally so, as suggested by David Marcus, *Jepthah and His Vow* (Lubbock, TX.: Texas Tech Press, 1986), 51–55—and both medieval and modern Bible scholars disagree as to whether or not Jepthah actually sacrificed his daughter. On the firstborn, see M. Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 181–187, who proposes, on the basis of both biblical and parallel Ancient Near Eastern evidence, that firstborn were initially sacrificed, then dedicated as Temple serfs, and finally redeemed in exchange for a donation given to the priests. On the *ḥēręm* see *EM* 3:289–291, s.v. חרם.

152. In rabbinic parlance, these two categories are denoted as קדשי המזבח and קדשי בדק הבית—that is, items consecrated to the altar on the one hand and those

consecrated to the Temple treasury on the other. See, for example, mTem 7.1, and Baruch Levine's comparison of the verses in Leviticus and Numbers in *Numbers*, 218.

153. See the later discussion of Num 6:18.

154. Cf. Lev 5:15.

155. My thanks to my colleague Edward Greenstein for pointing this out to me.

156. Cf. Lev 7:19; see also mMenahot 12.1.

157. Admittedly, this construction does not account for the Nazirite's being forbidden to consume grapes and any grape products. This aspect of נזירות has long troubled scholars; see Gray, *Numbers*, pp. 62–63; Milgrom, *Numbers*, p. 356. Compare the following passage in *NumR* 10.8:

> "He shall abstain from wine and any other intoxicant" (Num 6:3), and from vinegar as well because of intoxication. Why, however, did the Torah forbid anything in which grapes have been steeped as well as the consumption of any grape products, as these are items which cannot cause intoxication? Rather, from here we are to learn that one must distance oneself from the unseemly, from that which is similar to the unseemly, and from that which is distantly similar to the unseemly. From here we also see that the Torah provides a protective hedge for its words.

In this view, then, the biblical prohibitions against the consumption of nonintoxicating grape products is a means of distancing the Nazirite from the consumption of wine. Note also the proverb cited there in Numbers Rabbah and employed in bBM 92a and parallels: לך לך, אמרינן לנזירא; סחור סחור, לכרמא לא תקרב; "Go, go," we say to the Nazirite; "go all the way around; do not come close to the vineyard." See also Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed* 3.48.

In the context of my suggested explanation of the prohibition against wine and grape product consumption for the Nazirite, it is interesting to note that it is when Hannah clears herself of Eli's accusation of appearing in the Shiloh sanctuary while drunk (I Sam 1:13–16) that she merits his blessing (17) and eventually has the son for whom she prayed, Samuel, and whom she dedicates to the sanctuary (possibly as a Nazirite; see earlier). On the prohibition against priests becoming intoxicated, see Lev 10:9 and Ezek 44:21.

158. See Lev 21:7 regarding the priest (כי קדש הוא לאלהיו), Exod 28:36 and 39:30 (which mention the inscription of קדש לה' on the ציץ) in connection with the high priest, and Num 6:8 (כל ימי נזרו קדש הוא לה') regarding the Nazirite. On the basis of Num 6:5 (and presumably 6:8 as well), Fishbane says that "the lay Israelite could, however, attain a priestly status while a Nazirite (*Biblical Intepretation*, 122 n. 47). My thanks to the *JQR* reader for stimulating this line of thought.

159. See the discussion of Deuteronomy's notion of corporate holiness in Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, 121–123.

160. Num 6:11: "That same day [= the eighth day of his purification process] he shall reconsecrate his head."

161. Z. Weisman, "Naziriteship in Scripture—Its Typology and Origins" (Hebrew), *Tarbiẓ* 36 (1967): 210.

162. E. Zuckschwerdt, "Zur literarischen Vorgeschichte des priestlichen Nazir-Gesetzes (Num 6:1–8)", in *ZAW* 88 (1976): 192.

163. Y. Amit, "Perpetual Naziriteship: The Migration of a Motif" (Hebrew), *Te'uda* 4 (1986): 23–36.

164. Gray, *Numbers*, p. 59; Tony W. Carteledge, "Were Nazirite Vows Unconditional?" *CBQ* 51 (1989): 411–413. The rabbinic consensus seems to have been that

Nazirite status could only be the result of a vow; hence they were at pains to explain Samson's apparent Nazirite status. R. Simeon's view, in fact, is that Samson was not a Nazirite because he made no Nazirite vow (tNez 1.5 [125]). See also Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Naziriteship 3.13 and the commentaries ad loc.

165. This is the distinction implied by the rabbis in mNaz 1.2.

166. Edward Greenstein, "The Riddle of Samson," *Prooftexts* 1 (1981), 249–251.

167. Gray, *Numbers*, 60; Carteledge, *Nazirite Vows*, passim; Zuckschwerdt, "Zur literarischen Vorgeschichte," passim; Milgrom, *Numbers*, 357–358.

168. See, for example, mNazir 4.6.

169. Vow: the Septuagint's εὐχή; see H. L. Ginsberg, "Psalms and Inscriptions of Petition and Acknowledgment," in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 160–161 and esp. n. 8 (my thanks to my colleague Edward Greenstein for drawing my attention to this article). Crown: Targum Onkelos and Targum Ps-Jonathan ad loc. (כלילא); Targum Neofiti ad loc. (כליל). The term נֵזֶר is indeed used in biblical literature in the sense of "crown"; see, for example, Lev. 8:9 and especially Zech 9:16. For the possibility that נזר-crown and נזר-dedicated hair have different etymologies, see G. Mayer, *ThWAT*, 5:334. Hair: Gray, *Numbers*, 61.

170. As in Milgrom, *Numbers*, 46 ("hair set apart"); Levine, *Numbers*, 217 ("reserved [hair]"); and Ashley, *Numbers*, p. 136 ("dedication").

171. *Sifre Numbers* Pisqa 32 (38–39); Targum Ps-Jonathan, Rashi, Gersonides, and Abravanel.

172. Rashbam and S. D. Luzzato, cited in Milgrom, *Numbers*, 304 n. 27; König, cited in Gray, *Numbers*, 70; Licht, *Pērûš*, 92.

173. E.g., Targum Onkelos and Targum Neofiti (ייתי יתיה); Ashley, *Numbers*, 136 ("he shall bring it").

174. Gray, *Numbers*, 67 (but cf. his remarks on 70); Milgrom, *Numbers*, 48; Levine, *Numbers*, 217 (and see his remarks there on 224). A semantically but not grammatically identical interpretation can be found in *SZ* ad loc. (244) and in Abraham ibn Ezra's commentary to the verse, which is cited by Gersonides and Abravanel. (See the objection of Milgrom, ibid., to ibn Ezra; but compare Acts 21.26). Further support for this translation may be adduced from the verse in Maccabees to be discussed here, and from a number of the verses that include the phrase זאת תורת (Lev 6:7, 13:59, 14:2, 14:32). Each of these verses contains a pronominal object whose antecedent is the predicate following זאת תורת. Compare also Lev 7:11. On the stative/passive use of the third person, see Levine, *Numbers*, 224. Other examples of this usage include Num 35:30, לפי עדים ירצח את הרוצח, rendered in NJPS as "the manslayer may be executed only on the evidence of witnesses", and 2 Chron 24:11, ויהי בעת יביא את הארון, translated in NJPS as "whenever the chest was brought." See the related discussion of the impersonal use of the third person singular in Gesenius 144 b (459).

175. The sacrifice that has been most difficult for both the rabbis and modern scholars to explain is the חטאת, a sacrifice that the rabbis understood to be a sin offering but which Jacob Milgrom has shown convincingly to be a purificatory offering (Milgrom, "Sin-offering or Purification-offering?" *VT* 21 (1971): 237–239 [repr. in idem, *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (E. J. Brill: Leiden, 1983), 67–69], *pace* Baruch Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974), 107, and others; Milgrom's attempt to attribute his view to the rabbis is forced). Because the rabbis consider the חטאת a sin offering, they must explain what sin the Nazirite has committed. A second-century rabbi, R. Eleazar ha-Qappar, states that the

Nazirite's sin is one of excessive self-denial (bNazir 19a and parallels; see, however, bNazir 3a). Levine, *In the Presence*, is vague on this question. Somewhat inconsistent with his translation, Milgrom, *Numbers*, 48, follows Nachmanides and Abravanel in suggesting that "[the Nazirite's] self-removal from the sacred to the profane realm requires sacrificial expiation." After attempting to buttress this interpretation, he concedes that "the use of the purificatory offering for this purpose is nonetheless unique."

176. For the former view see Morris Jastrow, "The 'Nazir' Legislation," *JBL* 33 (1914), 274; Gray, *Numbers*, 68. The latter view is taken by the rabbis (see mNazir 6.8; yOrlah 3.2, 63a; and bTemurah 34a), and by Milgrom, *Numbers*, 49, and Ashley, *Numbers*, 148 (and see the sources cited there in n. 50). Note also Licht's (*Pērûš*, 94) strong objection to the hair-sacrifice interpretation. It is interesting that bNazir 45b records a tannaitic view that requires pouring some of the juices from the שלמים sacrifice on the Nazirite's shorn hair before placing it in the fire. Is this done simply for practical reasons, to facilitate the burning of the hair, or is the hair being given sacrifice-like status in this fashion?

177. For the altar flame, see Gray, loc. cit.; Levine, *Numbers*, 226. This may be the intent of Targum Neofiti (ויתן על אשתא די תחות נכסת קונדשיה); on the other hand, we may simply have a case of a literal translation that retains the ambiguities of the original phrase. For the cooking fire, see mNaz loc. cit.; Targum Onkelos and Targum Ps-Jonathan ad loc.; Licht, *Pērûš*, 94; Milgrom, loc. cit.

178. Compare also the use of נתן in Lev 4:6 to describe the placement of sacrificial blood on the corners of the altar. Although נתן clearly is multivalent, at least one of its meanings is sacrificial and/or donative; see Ephraim A. Speiser, "Unrecognized Dedication," *IEJ* 13 (1963), 69–73.

At least one rabbinic source, *Sifre Numbers* Pisqa 35 (40), clearly does not interpret the ונתן of the verse in this fashion: "I only know [from Num 6:13] that a Nazirite's hair is to be burnt in the Temple; how do I know that it should be burnt throughout the land? Therefore Scripture teaches: 'And he shall place it on the fire'—wherever it may be." The fire being spoken of here is not necessarily a sacral one. The author of this passage apparently holds that a Nazirite's hair should be burned rather than buried; see J. N. Epstein, "On the Language of *Nezîrût*" (Hebrew), *Magnes Anniversary Book* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1938), 16 n. 23.

179. Cf. also Jer 7:29 (concerning hair) and 36:23 (concerning the scroll dictated by Jeremiah to Baruch, son of Neriah). See also *LevR* 8.1 (167). The casting (והשליך) of cedar and hyssop into the fire which turned the red heifer into ash (Num 19:6) is not an offering but rather a preparatory act of immolation; hence the use of the root שלך is appropriate.

180. These points apply also in the case of the ritual shaving of the Nazirite who has become ritually impure (Num 6:9–10).

181. As in Lev 7:16; and see *EM* 7:243–245.

182. Although תנופה is commonly translated as "waving," Jacob Milgrom, "The *Tenûfâ*," in B. Z. Luria, ed., *Zer Li-Gevurot: The Zalman Shazar Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1973), 38–55, argues convincingly that the correct translation is "lifting." G. R. Driver, "Three Technical Terms in the Pentateuch," *JSS* 1 (1956), 100–105, proposes that תנופה does not refer to a physical action at all and should be translated "special contribution."

183. It is also worth considering a possible parallel between the sacrificial rites of the Nazirite and those of the two loaves on the Feast of Weeks (Lev 23:17–20). There too a *shelāmîm* sacrifice—the only such sacrifice brought communally—

accompanies an offering which is not a sacrifice in the usual sense. The two loaves are not burned on the altar but rather are elevated before God.

184. See bBerakhot 63a and parallels: "Rabbi [Judah the Patriarch] says: Why does the portion of the Nazir immediately follow the portion of the *soṭah*? This is to teach you that whoever sees a *soṭah* in her disgrace should abjure drinking wine." Also noteworthy in this regard is the view expressed in bNaz 45a that a female Nazirite should not shave her hair in the Temple precincts lest the young priests become aroused. Note also the manner in which the elders in Jerusalem urge the Soṭah to confess, according to mSoṭah 1,4: "My daughter, much [sin] is caused by wine, much by light conduct, much by childishness, and much by evil neighbors; act for the sake of His great name, written in holiness, that it may not be blotted out through the water [of bitterness]."

185. The priest is commanded to bring the *soṭah* before God (Num 5:16). It may be that the Nazirite was also brought before God by a priest; see the previous discussion of Num 6:13.

186. Richard L. Goerwitz, "What Does the Priestly Source Mean by ופרע את הראש?" *JQR* 86 (1996), 377–394, maintains, contrary to the conventional view that a *soṭah*'s hair is merely uncovered or undone, that her head, like that of the Nazirite, is shaved. This would make the similarity between them all the more striking.

187. It is worth noting that whereas the beginning of the book deals with the place of each tribe in the desert camp, at the end of the book the focus shifts to the proper place of tribes (especially Reuben, Gad, and Menasseh) and individuals (the daughters of Zelophehad) in the land that Israel has been promised.

188. Jacob Milgrom has discussed this term at great length in his *Studies in Levitical Terminology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 16–22, 33–43. He demonstates that in a cultic context *qrb* means "to be admitted" or "to have access."

189. See ibid., 22–33.

190. The actual phrase, והקריב הכהן לפני ה׳, alternatively translates as "the priest shall draw close before God"; this, in fact, is how it is understood by Targum Onkelos and Ps-Jonathan. Similarly, Levine, *Numbers*, 225, explains והקריב as having "stative force, but of an intensive or elative character" because of the use of the causative rather than the simple conjugation; cf. Ephraim Speiser, "The 'Elative' in West-Semitic and Akkadian," in idem, *Oriental and Biblical Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), 468–493, and the dissenting view of Menahem Moreshet, "The Hif'il in Mishnaic Hebrew as Equivalent to the Qal" (Hebrew), in *Bar-Ilan Annual* 13 (1976), 250–252. However, Licht, *Pērûš*, 93, and Milgrom, *Numbers*, 48, following the lead of the Peshiṭṭa, understand the verse as an ellipsis, with the object of והקריב understood but unstated. Even so, both Licht and Milgrom are uncertain as to whether the object is the Nazirite or, as the Vulgate suggests, his offerings.

191. The exact nature of the *soṭah*'s punishment is unclear. According to Num 5:27, if she is guilty, her fate upon drinking the accursed water is וצבתה בטנה ונפלה ירכה, "her belly shall distend and her thigh[s] shall sag." The sages assumed that the woman would die but that these three limbs, the ones with which she sinned, were assailed first in accordance with the retributive principle of "measure for measure" (see *Sifre Numbers* Pisqa 18 [22]).

192. Compare the following remark of Levine, *Numbers*, 65: "A frank evaluation of Numbers 5–6 leads to the conclusion that matters bearing on the purity of the Israelite encampment and its Tabernacle were stated (or restated) in anticipation of the actual dedication of the Tabernacle, an event recorded in chapter 7."

193. Assembled = ἤγειραν. Brenton's "stirred up" (L. Brenton, *The Septuagint*

and Apocrypha: Greek and English [London: S. Bagster and Sons, 1851 (repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d.)], Apocrypha, 147) and Abel's "firent paraitre" (F-M. Abel, *Les Livres des Maccabees* [Paris: Gabalda, 1949], p. 71) are more literal translations. Tedesche (S. Tedesche and S. Zeitlin, *The First Book of Maccabees* [New York: Harper, 1950], 98) cites a manuscript which has the reading ἤνεγκαν, "brought forward," the same verb used in the first stich of the verse. Epstein, "On the Language of *Nezîrût*," 15, cites a manuscript reading ἔκειραν, "sheared," which he prefers. Tedeshe's translation, "shaved" (ibid., 99), is apparently based on this reading, although he does not cite it.

194. εὐχὴ μεγάλη. In Num 6:12 the Septuagint renders כי יפליא לנדור as μεγάλως εὔξηται.

195. *The Special Laws* I, 248.

196. Acts 21.23–24.

197. Ant. 19.294.

198. yBerakhot 4.11, 11a (= yNazir 5.5, 54b) and *GenR* 91.3 [ed. Theodor-Albeck 1115]).

199. *SZ* Numbers 6:13 (244).

200. mNazir 4.6 and mSotah 3.8. See tNazir 3.17 (134 = tEd 2.2 [457]; yNazir 4.6, 53c), where the academy of Shammai is recorded as invalidating such dedications.

201. See bNaz 29a.

202. Mishnah loc. cit. Compare the remarks of R. David Kimhi in his commentary to 1 Sam 1:10, and see Ashley, *Numbers*, 139 n. 21. The contrast between the biblical and rabbinic views may reflect the rabbis' general tendency to exclude women from holding positions of ritual responsibility with regard to their children; cf. bKidd 29a (my thanks to my colleague Edward Greenstein for pointing this out to me).

203. yNazir 9.1, 57c.

204. It should be noted, however, that from a discussion later in the Jerusalem Talmud it emerges that the exegesis of Num 6:7 is an ex post facto justification for an existing ordinance rather than its basis; see Lieberman, *TK*, 7:571.

205. הרי עלי, a standard votive formula in rabbinic literature.

206. In other words, you accepted the vow of the Nazirite upon yourself solely for God's sake, with no ulterior motive.

207. For a collection of the various versions and textual variants of this narrative, see Shalom Spiegel, "From the Language of the Liturgical Poets" (Hebrew), *Ha-Do'ar* 42 (1963), 397–398. For a discussion of whether or not this narrative reflects an anti-ascetic perspective, see David Halivni, "On the Supposed Anti-Asceticism or Anti-Nazritism (sic) of Simon the Just," *JQR* 58 (1967–1968), 243–252.

208. An apparently contemporary example of such self-dedication is suggested by a photograph and caption accompanying the article "Drug Therapy: Powerful Tool Reaching Few Inside Prisons," *New York Times*, July 7, 1995, 1 col. 1. The photo shows locks of hair shorn by prison inmates in drug treatment, as the caption explains, "to separate themselves symbolically from prison culture." Certainly recovery from drug abuse can be seen as a contemporary form of Naziriteship, and it is certainly of interest that for some it is accompanied by the cutting of hair.

209. Elsewhere in rabbinic literature the root גלח alludes to the entire series of Nazirite offerings; see, for example, תגלחת טהרה and חגלחת טומאה in mNaz 6.6–7. Moreover, the Greek equivalents of גלח, κειρεῖν and ξυρεῖν, are employed in the same fashion in Antiquities, Acts, and I Maccabees; see Epstein, "On the Language of *Nezîrût*," 15.

210. It seems likely that this narrative has a strong sexual subtext. The terms יצר, "impulse"—the term used in this narrative—and יצר הרע, "evil impulse," generally refer to the sexual impulse; see, for example, *GenR* 9.7 (72). What the

shepherd sees in his reflection, moreover, is presumably his sexual attractiveness. The shearing of his hair should therefore be understood, perhaps, as an act of symbolic castration. In suggesting this possibility, I am not adopting the thesis of Charles Berg (*The Unconscious Significance of Hair* [London: George Allen and Unwin, 1951]) that all public hair-cutting ceremonies have the identical unconscious meaning of castration. Rather, I am taking the position of Gannath Obeyesekere, *Medusa's Hair*, 18–21, that whatever the public cultural and religious meaning of cutting one's hair, it *may* have personal, often unconscious, sexual significance for *some* of those who participate in the ritual. (For a summary of much of the recent discussion of the cultural and psychosexual significance of hair, see Patrick Olivelle, "Deconstruction of the Body in Indian Asceticism," in Wimbush and Valantasis, *Asceticism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1995], 203–207.) Finally, I direct the reader's attention to the following exchange recorded in bShabbat 152a:

> A certain [Sadducee] eunuch said to R. Joshua b. Karhah [= the Bald]: "How far is it from here to Karhina [Baldtown]?" "As far as from here to Gawzania [Eunuchville]," he replied. Said the Sadducee to him, "A bald buck is worth four *denarii*." "A castrated goat is worth eight," he retorted. Now [the Sadducee] saw that [R. Joshua] was not wearing shoes [= his feet were also "bald"?], whereupon he remarked, "He [who rides] on a horse is king, upon an ass, is a free man, and he who has shoes on his feet is a human being; but he who has none of these, one who is dead and buried is better off." "Eunuch, eunuch," he retorted, "you have enumerated three things to me, and now you will hear three things: the glory of a face is its beard; the rejoicing of one's heart is a wife; 'the heritage of the Lord is children' (Ps 127:3); blessed be the Omnipresent, who has denied you all these!" "Quarrelsome baldhead!" he [= the eunuch] said to him. "Reproving castrated goat!" he replied.

The presumed connection here between hair loss and castration needs no further commentary.

211. In addition to the evidence from 1 Macc, Josephus, and Acts already mentioned, we have evidence of Second Temple naziritism in the following rabbinic sources and in Josephus's writings:

> (1) Mishnah: mNazir 2.3 (a woman used a dedicatory formula which the rabbis determined did not make her a *nezîrâ*); mNazir 3.6 (the naziriteship of Queen Helena of Adiabene); mNazir 5.4 (Nazirites who arrive in Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices only to learn that the Temple has been razed have their naziriteships annulled by Nahum the Medean; the sages dispute his ruling); mNazir 6.11 (the naziriteship of Miriam the Palmyran); mKelim 6.2 (a description is given of the "cooking stove of the Nazirites" in Jerusalem).
>
> (2) Tosefta: tNedarim 1.1 (100; conflicting traditions about whether or not the early *hasidim* took vows of *nezîrût*); tNazir 4.7 (138–139; a narrative attributed to Simeon the Righteous which describes his encounter with a particular *nazîr*, cited on p. 113); tNiddah 5.15 (646; a narrative concerning a boy who had accepted *nezîrût* upon himself and was brought before [the first] Rabban Gamaliel).
>
> (3) Josephus, *Wars* 2.313: Berenice, sister of Agrippa II, fulfills her vows as a Nazirite in 64 CE.

I see no reason not to assume that Naziritism was practiced throughout the Second Temple period. The view of Büchler (Adolph Büchler, "The Fore-Court of Women and the Brass Gate in the Temple of Jerusalem," *JQR X* (1898), 700–702; idem, *Studies in Sin and Atonement*, 420) that Naziritism became a common practice only from the 40s CE and on is based on an argument from silence; I do not find it convincing.

212. There is a third-century Palestinian *amora* known as Simeon b. Nazira, who apparently was a Nazirite or the son of a Nazirite. Presumably, if this description is intended in the technical sense, Simeon or his father was a *nezîr Šimšôn*.

213. It is impossible to determine whether *nezîrût Šimšôn* was created initially to enable the practice of Naziritism to survive the Destruction or whether it was initially the product of an attempt to address the contradiction discussed here earlier between the depiction of Naziritism in Num 6 and that in Judges 13. The Mishnah's description, immediately after *nezîrût Šimšôn*, of *nezîr 'ôlām*, which seems to be an attempt to make sense of the Bible's description of Absalom's tonsorial and sacrificial practices, suggests that both it and *nezîrût Šimšôn* are constructions motivated initially by exegetical concerns.

214. See, for example, Samuel Morrell, "The Samson Nazirite Vow in the Sixteenth Century," *AJS Review* (1984), 223–262.

215. קדוש יהיה. R. Eleazar apparently understands the antecedent of יהיה to be the Nazirite. Cf. R. Josiah's view in *Sifre Numbers* Pisqa 25 (31).

216. Neither BT nor PT gives a basis for this rule. Medieval Mishnah commentaries such as that of R. Ovadiah of Bartinoro (Italy, 15th c.) connect it to the use of the phrase ימי נזרו, "the *days* of his Naziriteship," in Num 6:8 and elsewhere.

217. R. Aqiva is a mid-second-century *tanna*. Pseudo-Rashi ad loc. s.v. מר עוקבא proposes the reading "Mar Uqba," which is found in the Oxford and Vatican manuscripts. Mar Uqba was a Babylonian exilarch in the first half of the third century CE. Although all other text-witnesses, both here and in the parallel in bAvodah Zarah 34a (and cf. yAvodah Zarah 2.4, 41b), read "R. Aqiba," there are two major difficulties with this tradition, as Pseudo-Rashi points out. The first is that it would be surprising to have a tradition according to which R. Aqiba, perhaps the most revered of the rabbis, was at a loss to answer halakhic questions posed to him by the populace and found himself forced to consult the (local?) studyhouse for assistance. Second, the style of the narrative is amoraic rather than tannaitic. The language is Aramaic rather than Hebrew, and the usual introductory language for a tannaitic narrative (מעשה or תנו רבנן מעשה) is not used. Tosafot in bAvodah Zarah 34a, s.v. רבי עקיבא, cite these objections in Rashi's name and reject them, pointing out that we have other instances of narratives concerning tannaim that do not begin with the standard introductory terminology.

218. The exact location of Ginzaq is not known. See B. Z. Eshel, *Yišûvē ha-Yehûdîm be-Vāvęl bî-Teqûfat ha-Talmûd: Onomastikon Talmudi* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), 87 (s.v. גינזק).

219. The same phenomenon can be found in bNedarim 9a.

220. מתריעים. The midrash is reading תרעתים as if it is derived from the root רוע, "to sound."

221. ומתענים. Other versions have ונענים, "and are answered." As has been mentioned, the Rehabites are also described as fasting in the Second-Temple–period work *The History of the Rehabites* 10.7a.

222. Here the midrash is reading תרעתים as a metathetic form of תער, "razor."

223. See R. Naphtali Zevi Yehudah's commentary to the *Sifre*, s.v. שלא גילחו עצמם. This view is supported by an earlier statement by the midrash about the Rehabites:

"Because the Temple is destined to be destroyed they regard it as though it is already destroyed." Furthermore, the midrash later interprets "Sucathites" in 1 Chron 2:55 to mean that the Rehabites did not anoint themselves with oil, a practice associated with mourning but not with Naziriteship.

224. According to yTa'anit 3.11, 66a, R. Abun fasted every Friday. However, in yNedarim 8.1, 40d it is reported only that he fasted on the eve of Sukkot. These two passages also mention that R. Jonathan fasted regularly on the eve of Rosh Hashanah.

225. bPesahim 68a. See Ya'aqov Gartner, "Fasting on Rosh ha-Shanah in the Geonic Period" (Hebrew), in idem, *Gilgullē Minhag bā-Ôlām ha-Halākhâ* (n.p.: Hemed, 1995), 86–88, for a summary of the medieval rabbinic discussion of Mar b. Ravina's practice.

226. R. Eleazar B. Azaryah: yShabbat 5.4, 7c (correct Sigmund Lowy, "Motivation of Fasting in Rabbinic-Literature," *JJS* 4 [1958], 22 n. 27 accordingly; = yY.T. 2.8, 61d). R. Joshua: bHagigah 22b; cf. tOholot 5.11 (603). R. Tarfon: yShebi'it 4.2, 35b; cf. bNed 62a (which does not mention fasting; correct Lowy, "Motivation," 22 n. 31 accordingly). R. Simeon: bNaz 52a.

227. R. Hiyya b. Ashi: bQiddushin 81b. R. Huna and R. Hisda: bBava Mezia 33a. In bSanhedrin 100a we are told that R. Pappa fasts after referring to a Torah scholar direspectfully; however this seems to have been a single fast or a short period of fasting rather than an ongoing regimen.

228. Suspensive *āšām* sacrifices: mKeritot 6.3. Nazirite vows: tNedarim 1.1 (100).

229. Lowy, "Motivation," 21–22.

230. The one case in which this is debatable is the tradition concerning R. Joshua in bHagigah 22b. Lowy, "Motivation," 22 n. 34, claims that the tradition about fasting is a later addendum to the body of the narrative because it begins with the word אמרו, "they said," and he also points out that this gloss has no parallel in tannaitic sources. None of this proves, however, that this tradition itself is not of tannaitic provenience.

231. bEruvin 18b; see also bAvodah Zarah 8a.

232. *Sifre Deuteronomy* 31 (52); *GenR* 84.19 (1023); *PRK* 24.9 (356); *PesR* Addendum 3 (199a); *Midrash Mishle* 1:11 (17); Targum Ps-Jonathan, Gen 37:29 (correct Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* [Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1968], 5:331 n. 60 accordingly).

233. Cf. also the tradition in bAvodah Zarah 8a concerning Adam's fasts.

234. bTa'anit 11b.

235. bTa'anit 11b. See *GenR* 57 (616): "R. Hama b. Hanina said: It is like a king who was sitting at a meal and a dog came to attack him. The king said, 'Give him a cut of meat and let him loose his passions upon it.'"

236. yNed 8.2, 40d. A passage in bMakkot 24a praises R. Yohanan swearing to fast until he reaches his home, seeing this as an example of one willing to vow even when it is a source of hardship to oneself. However, the anonymous BT there explains that this vow was an act of self-interest; it was a means of avoiding meals at the home of the patriarch. Cf. Acts 23:12, where a number of Jews vow not to eat or drink until they have killed Paul; and the question addressed to the eleventh- and twelfth-century Spanish halakhist R. Joseph ibn Migash (Responsa Ri Migash, No. 186) concerning someone who had sworn not to eat meat or drink wine until he reached the Land of Israel.

237. bTa'anit 27b (= bMegillah 31b).

238. A similar statement is made in bBerakhot 15a concerning prayer:

> R. Hiyya b. Abba said in the name of R. Yohanan: Whoever relieves himself, washes his hands, dons *tefillin* and recites the Shema' and prays—

Scripture accounts it as if he had built an altar and made an offering upon it; as Scripture states: "I will cleanse my hands and walk around your altar" (Ps 26:6).

The idea expressed in bMoed Qatan 28a, *LevR* 20.12 (471–472) and elsewhere that the death of the righteous atones for the sins of the people may be related to the notion of Torah study as offering. In dying, perhaps a righteous individual is seen as offering up the Torah he has studied, as well as his very life, in expiation for Israel.

239. See Rashi ad loc., s.v. וכי.

240. For a further analysis of this passage and of this concept in general, see Baruch M. Bokser, "*Meʿal* and Blessings over Food: Rabbinic Transformation of Cultic Terminology and Alternate Modes of Piety," *JBL* 100 (1981), 557–574.

241. For an important study of the significance of eating for the sages and a comparison with Christian views, see Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994).

242. mTaʿanit 1.4.

243. Richard Kalmin in an unpublished paper, "Ancient Rabbinic Responses to the the Threat of Communal Disaster," 10–11.

244. R. Huna defines *yeḥîdîm* as rabbis (bTaʿanit 10a). On bTaʿanit 16a, Abbaye interprets a tannaitic source that apparently gives precedence to an elder over a sage as referring to an elder who is also a sage.

245. In yTaʿanit 1.4, 64b, *yeḥîdîm* are defined as those who have been appointed to positions of communal responsibility.

246. Kalmin, "Ancient Rabbinic Responses," 9–14.

247. See Weinstein, *Piety and Fanaticism*, 33–41.

248. See Kalmin, "Ancient Responses," 11–14, and my discussion in the next chapter.

249. yTaʿanit 2.6, 65d (= y Avodah Zarah 4, 43d). It is not clear whether the final qualification is part of R. Yannai's teaching or whether it is an anonymous editorial comment. See yAvodah Zarah loc.cit., where concern about prostrating oneself on a fast day is expressed for another reason, namely that one may thereby violate the prohibition against prostrating oneself on a stone floor outside of the Temple (see Lev 26:1).

Perhaps the notion that one should not pray unless he is confident of being answered informs 3 Maccabees 6.1. We are told that a distinguished priest named Eleazar instructs his colleagues to cease praying for salvation from the oppression of the Egyptian king Ptolemy so that he himself can pray. As H. Anderson points out (*OTP*, 2:526 n. c), this seems to be a strange request. Perhaps, however, Eleazar is indicating that, his colleagues' prayers not having been answered, the time has come for the individual whose prayers are most likely to be answered to offer them.

250. Thus *Qorban Hā-Ēdâ* ad loc. s.v. ובלבד.

251. mTaʿanit 1.7.

252. *LevR* 30.7 (705).

253. Literally, "them," from which it might be inferred that the antecedent is "the great ones." It is clear, however, that what is meant here is the sins of all the people.

5. SAINT OR SINNER?

1. Pompeius Trogus *apud* Justin's *Historical Epitome*, book 36, 1.14 (M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, Vol I* [Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of

Sciences and Humanities, 1976], 335 [Latin text], 337, [translation], and 341 [notes]). See also Strabo of Amaseia, *Historica Hypomnemata*, apud Josephus, *Antiquities*, XIV, 66–68 (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors, I*, 276–277); idem., *Geographica*, XVI, 2:40 (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors, I*, 297, 302, 307); Petronius, *Fragmenta*, No. 37 (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors, I*, 444); Martial, *Eppigrammata* IV, 4 (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors, I*, 523–524); Suetonius, *Divus Augustus*, 76:2 (M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, Vol II* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980), 110). On the other hand Cassius Dio (c. 160–230) does not mention fasting in connection with Shabbat; see his *Historia Romana* XXXVII, 17:3 (Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors, II*, 350–351).

2. See Y. D. Gilat, "Fasting on Shabbat" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 52 (1983), 111 and nn. 14–17; and add H. J. Leon, *The Jews of Ancient Rome* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1960), 245, and Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors, I*, 277.

3. Gilat, "Fasting on Shabbat," 1–18.

4. Leviticus 23:3.

5. Several *amoraim* shared this name. The Hamnuna of our story is apparently the early fourth-century disciple of R. Hisda; compare yShabbat 12.1, 13c.

6. R. Hamnuna's point seems to be that because the forms of honor appropriate to Shabbat, such as eating sumptuous food in fine dishes (see the story of R. Hiyya b. Abba and the Laodicaean householder on the same page), cannot be practiced on Yom Kippur, the verse must refer to another form of honor. Furthermore, R. Hamnuna may be reading the verse as emphasizing that despite the lack of opportunity to honor Yom Kippur through food and drink, the obligation of honoring the day by means of special dress remains.

The MaHarSha, R. Samuel Edels (Poland, 16th c.), in his novellae to this passage, points out that there seems to be a disagreement between the views cited here, which seem to understand honor primarily in terms of food and drink, and a passage earlier in the tractate (113b), which defines the honor of Sabbath in terms of dress. While it is not certain that there is an actual debate here, it is worth noting that the authority cited in the earlier source is R. Yohanan, a mid-third–century Palestinian sage, while the authorites mentioned here, R. Hamnuna and (in the following pericope) Rab and Samuel, are Babylonian. Perhaps some cultural difference is being reflected here; the matter needs further study.

7. bPesahim 68b (= bBezah 15b).

8. Gilat, "Fasting on Shabbat," 3–4.

9. Gilat assumes that R. Eliezer refers to Shabbat as well, basing himself on yShabbat 15.3, 15a. There we have an amoraic debate similar to that of R. Eliezer and R. Joshua but one that encompasses Shabbat as well as Yom Tov. Moreover, the Yerushalmi cites as support for these two views a *baraita* citing the opinions of R. Eliezer and R. Joshua in anonymous form.

10. Gilat, "Fasting on Shabbat," 4, sees this view of R. Eliezer reflected in a narrative in bBezah 15b in which he criticizes those of his students who depart before he has completed a lesson he is giving on Yom Tov. In fact, however, at the end of his lecture R. Eliezer encourages those of his disciples who remain to return home and enjoy a festive meal with their families, citing Nehemiah 8:10. (Interestingly, Gilat does not quote this part of the narrative.) Of course, it is possible that R. Eliezer prescribed more stringent behavior for himself than he did for his students.

11. Interestingly, the converse argument is made by the fifteenth-century German halakhist R. Jacob b. Judah Weil, who warns that those who fast on Rosh

Hashanah may do so only if they spend the entire day in prayer and study (*Dinin va-Halakhot Mahari Weil*, No. 56).

12. Correct Gilat, "Fasting on Shabbat," 4, accordingly.

13. R. Eleazar was R. Yohanan's disciple; we often find their names interchanged. There is a rabbinic tradition that R. Eleazar would often cite R. Yohanan's teachings anonymously, assuming that his listeners would understand that he was quoting his master; see yBerakhot 2.1, 4b (= ySheqalim 2.6, 47a; yMoed Qatan 3.7, 83c) and bYevamot 96b.

14. R. Eleazar was a native Babylonian who came to Ereṣ Yisra'el and studied with R. Yohanan and other Palestinian scholars.

15. bBerakhot 31b.

16. See Gilat, "Fasting on Shabbat," 5 n. 31; and add *Nimmûqē Yôsēf* ad loc., s.v. אמר ר' אלעזר. It is possible that R. Hananel (N. Africa, 10th and 11th c.) and R. Yom Tov b. Abraham of Seville (Spain, 13th and 14th c.) had this reading as well; see *Pērûšē Rabbēnû Hananēl bar Hûši'ēl lim-Meseḳhṭ Berakhot*, ed. D. Metzger (Jerusalem: Makhon Lev Sameah, 1990), 68, and *Šîṭâ lehā-Rab Abrāhām al-Sebîllî*, ed. M. Hershler (Jerusalem: Makhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1967), 377. See also *Ginzē Schechter*, II, 566, n. to l. 24.

17. Josephus, *Against Apion*, I, 209.

18. Josephus, *Antiquities*, 16.43; cf. idem, *Against Apion*, II, 175.

19. See James Charlesworth, *OTP*, 2:299–300.

20. 11.8 (Charlesworth, *OTP*, 1:318).

21. Gedalyah Alon, *Meḥqārîm be-Tôledôt Yisrā'ēl* (Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1957–1958), 1:306–307.

22. Ibid., 296.

23. *Epistle to Barnabas*, 14.1.

24. Scholars debate whether the author was a Jew or a gentile by birth. In any case, he seems to have had some knowledge of Jewish practice; see Alon, *Meḥqārîm*, 1:307–311.

25. 2 Macc 12.38.

26. "But every seventh day [the Theraputae] meet together as for a general assembly. . . . Then the senior among them who also has the fullest knowledge of the doctrines which they profess comes forward and with viasge and voice alike quiet and composed gives a well-reasoned and wise discourse." (Philo, *The Contemplative Life*, 30–31).

27. Ibid., 36–37.

28. bPesahim 68b.

29. I am suggesting a more cautious approach than that taken by Gilat, "Fasting on Shabbat," 5.

30. Zedekiah ben Abraham Anav, *Šibbolē ha-Leqeṭ*, ed. S. Buber (Vilna, 1887), 33b (Shabbat No. 93).

31. Louis Ginzberg, ed., *Ginze Schechter, II* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1928), 541, says that this is "undoubtedly a Palestinian legend."

32. *LevR* 30.7 (705); *PRK* Pesiqta 27 (412–413); *EcclR* 9.7.

33. See B. M. Levin, "Mi-Serîdē hag-Genīzâ, I: Pirqoi ben Baboi," *Tarbiẓ* 2 (1931), 385, and Shalom Spiegel, "Regarding the Polemic of Pirqoi ben Baboi" (Hebrew), in Saul Lieberman, ed., *Harry Wolfson Jubilee Volume: Hebrew Section* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965), 246–249.

34. Ginzberg, *Ginze Schechter, II*, 566. Cf. *Tanh* Bereshit 3.

35. See the sources cited in Gilat, "Fasting on Shabbat" 6 n. 33.

36. See Ginzberg *Ginze Schechter, II*, 566, n. to l. 24.

37. Ya'aqov Gartner, "Fasting on *Rosh Hashanah*: The Origins of This Custom and Its Development" (Hebrew), *Ha-Darom*, Tishrei 5733 (1972), 125–162; idem, "Concerning 'Fasting on the Sabbath'" (Hebrew), *Tarbiẓ* 54 (1984), 454–455.

38. See Y. D. Gilat, "Response to Y. Gartner" (Hebrew), *Tarbiẓ* 54 (1984), 456–457.

39. bTaʿanit 11a-b according to Pseudo-Rashi; however, see Rabbenu Hananel and Tosafot, ad loc., who understand Resh Laqish as opposing fasting. David Halivni, *Meqôrôt u-Mesôrôt: Sēdeṛ Môʿēd* (Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1975), 442–443, proposes that both R. Eleazar and R. Simeon b. Laqish actually spoke against fasting; however, his arguments are unconvincing, and in the case of R. Eleazar Halivni himself rejects this possibility.

40. bTaʿanit 8b.

41. This is the assumption of M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule* (New York: Schocken; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984), 165.

42. bḤullin 101b. However, Avi-Yonah (see n. 41) assumes that both sources refer to the same decree and that it took place during the rule of Constantine I (324–337), reflecting Christian anti-Jewish animus. However, his basis for this claim is that "this event happened in the time of Raba (299–352) that is to say in the time of Constantine." In fact, Raba is only reporting a tradition from R. Abin; this statement does not tell us when the decree took place. In the first source the decree is reported to have occurred in R. Zeʿira's time. R. Zeʿira was probably born about 260, which would make him quite an old man by the time of Constantine's reign. On the other hand, R. Zeʿira is said in bMegilla 28a to have lived to a ripe old age. In short, Avi-Yonah's proposal is possible but not likely, and in any case it is not supported by the evidence he cites.

43. This work appears in several geonic works as well as later legal writings; see E. Hildesheimer ed., *Sefer Halākhôt Gedôlôt, Vol. I* (Jerusalem: Meqize Nirdamim, 1971), 396 n. 6; and M. Magaliot, ed., *Hilkhôt Ẹrẹṣ Yisrā'ēl min hag-Genizâ* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1973), 141–142.

44. Meir Bar-Ilan, "The Nature and Origins of the Fast Scroll" (Hebrew), *Sinai* 98 (1986), 130, theorizes that *Megillat Taʿanit* was written in a milieu in which fasting was common; hence the need to list days on which fasting was forbidden. *Megillat Taʿanit Batra*, on the other hand, was written in a context of infrequent fasting; hence it lists the days on which one should fast. Bar-Ilan's logic is not compelling, and the historical data would seem, if anything, to support the opposite conclusion; widespread individual fasting in the Second Temple period, during which *Megillat Taʿanit* was composed, gave way to customary communal fasting, at least in the Land of Israel, in the post-Temple period, as exemplified by *Megillat Taʿanit Batra*.

45. B. M. Lewin, *Ôṣar Hag-Geʾônîm*, (Haifa: and Jerusalem: n. p.; Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1928–1962) Taʿanit (Responsa), 17.

46. M. Margaliot, "Festivals and Fasts in Palestine and Babylonia in the Geonic Period" (Hebrew), *Arẹšẹt* 1 (1944), 216.

47. Sid Leiman, "The Scroll of Fasts: The Ninth of Teveth," *JQR* 74 (1983), 194.

48. tSotah 15.11 (242–243) and bB.B. 60a; see pp. 98–99. See also *MdRY*, Massekhet 'Amalek, Parsha 2 (200).

49. yTaʿanit 4.4, 68b.

50. *PesR*, Pisqa 24 (158b).

51. B. Klahr, ed., *Megillat Aḥîmaʿaṣ* (Jerusalem: Tarshish, 1973), 14 and 35.

52. *PesR* ch. 34 (159a-b); see Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs* (repr. New York: Ktav, 1970), 47–48.

53. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt*, 48, argues that *PesR* was written in about 845 CE after the author had moved to Jerusalem and joined the *'abēlē Ṣiyyôn*. This assertion is plausible but unproven.

54. See Klahr, *Megillat Aḥîma'aṣ*, 116–121.

55. See Moshe Zucker, "Reactions to the Karaite 'Mourners of Zion' Movement in Rabbinic Literature" (Hebrew), *Sēfęr ha-Yôvēl le-Rabî Hanokh Albeck* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963), 378–385.

56. A. Harkavy, *ha-Sārīd ve-ha-Pālīt* (St. Petersburg, 1903), 4, and Solomon Schechter, *Documents on Jewish Sectaries* (Cambridge, 1910), 23; cited in Raphael Mahler, *ha-Qarā'īm* (Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim, 1949), 155–156. Mahler, op. cit., 156 n. 110, points out that 'Anan contended that even when the temple was standing it was forbidden to drink large quantities of wine or consume large amounts of meat. This view is part of 'Anan's general tendency to favor asceticism.

57. See Jacob Mann, *Texts and Studies* (repr. New York: Ktav, 1972), 2:71–72.

58. Schechter, *Documents on Jewish Sectaries*, 29, cited in Mahler, *ha-Qarā'īm*, 155 and n. 105 ad loc.

59. Hadassi, *Ęškôl hak-Kôfęr*, No. 246 (94a), cited in Mahler, *ha-Qārā'īm*, 161. There is discussion among medieval halakhists as to whether or not one may refrain from eating meat and drinking wine during the final meal of a Shabbat that coincides with Tisha B'Av or the eve of Tisha B'Av. See Yaʿaqov Gartner, "The Ninth of Av in the Geonic Period" (Hebrew), in idem, *Gilgûlē Minhāg be-'Olām ha-Halākhâ* (Jerusalem: n. p., 1995), 12–14; idem, "The Ninth of Av in the [Medieval] Rabbinic Period" (Hebrew), op. cit. 39–41. Gartner argues that such customs were the result of the influence of the *abēlē Ṣiyyôn*. Regarding the custom attributed (mistakenly) to the Yerushalmi of not drinking wine and eating meat from 1 Av, or 17 Tammuz, until Tisha B'Av, see Daniel Sperber, *Minhāgē Yisrā'ēl: Volume 1* (Jerusalem: Mossad Ha-Rav Kook, 1990), 138–143.

60. Jacob Mann, "A Tract by an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem," *JQR* n.s. 12 (1921–1922), 257–292.

61. bShabbat 24a.

62. Alon, Męḥqārîm, 2:120–127.

63. bTaʿanit 12b. This ruling is cited in the name of the third-century Babylonian R. Joseph.

64. See Henry Malter, ed., *Massekhet Taʿanit*, AAJR Publications, Vol. 1 (New York: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1930), 44, n. to l. 26.

65. This statement is not found in the parallel in bShabbat 11a.

66. Gilat, "Fasting on Shabbat," 11–12.

67. B. Lewin, *Ôṣar ha-Ge'ônîm* (Haifa: and Jerusalem: n.p.; Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1928–1962), Yom Tov (Responsa), 21.

68. B. Lewin, *Ôṣar ha-Ge'ônîm*, Taʿanit (Responsa), 22.

69. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*. Boyarin, *Carnal Israel*, 46–57 and throughout, also assumes, but without providing systematic evidence, that Palestinian attitudes towards sexuality are much more ambivalent than Babylonian ones. See also Biale, *Eros*, 49–53.

70. Michael Satlow, *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 314.

71. bPesahim 72b. See Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 292 n. 99, for a discussion of other sources in BT that use *smḥ* in connection with marital sex.

72. Ibid., 293.
73. bShabbat 30a; cf. bMoed Qatan 9a, *GenR* 35.15 (332).
74. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 263.
75. Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 323–324.
76. But see Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 302.
77. See Satlow, *Tasting the Dish*, 298–301.
78. bBerakhot 8b.
79. yYebamot 1.1, 2a.
80. bShabbat 118b.
81. bNedarim 20b. On the larger question of R. Eliezer's affinity for ascetic and pietistic practices, see Y. D. Gilat, *R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: A Scholar Outcast* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1984), 417–429.
82. See *Šîṭâ Meqûbeṣeṯ*, Nedarim 20b s.v. יפיפים.
83. bKetubot 48a.
84. See Avi-Yonah, *The Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule*, 89–110.
85. mSotah 9.12.
86. Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, "Asceticism and Suffering in Rabbinic Thought," (Hebrew), in S. Ettinger, S. Baron, B. Dinur, and Y. Halper in eds., *Sēfęr Yôvēl le Yiṣḥaq Baer* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961), 53–54.
87. See also Baruch Bokser, "*Meʿal* and Blessings over Food: Rabbinic Transformation of Cultic Terminology and Alternate Modes of Piety," in *JBL* 100 (1981), 557–574.
88. bSanhedrin 75a.
89. Concerning the identity of the statement's tradent, see Jeremy Cohen, *"Be Fertile and Increase: Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 115 and the sources cited there in n. 178.
90. bYebamot 62a and parallels.
91. I am following in part the analysis of Jeremy Cohen, *Be Fertile and Increase*, 115–118.
92. Nisan Rubin, "From Monism to Dualism: The Body–Soul Relationship in the Perception of the Sages" (Hebrew), *Daʿat* 23 (1989), 33–63.
93. For a recent survey of the political status of Babylonian Jews under the Arsacids and the Sasanians, see Isaiah Gafni, *Yehûdē Babel bit-Teqûfat hat-Talmûd* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1991), 26–51.
94. See B. M. Levin, ed., *Iggeret Rav Sherira Gaon* (repr. Jerusalem: Maqor, 1972), 72–73 and the sources cited on 72 in n. נ.
95. This refers to a period after childbirth during which a woman is permitted to engage in intercourse even though she is discharging blood; see Lev 12.
96. yQiddushin 4.12, 66b.
97. Moshe Beer, *Amôrāʾē Bāḇęl* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1982²), passim.
98. See Veronika Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting, The Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1996), 58–59, and the sources quoted in the footnotes there.
99. See F. Gerald Downing, *Cynics and Christian Origins* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 96–112.
100. For two examples of rabbinic assimilation and utilization of Greek medical concepts see Shlomo Naeh, "Regarding Two Hippocratic Concepts in Rabbinic Literature" (Hebrew), in *Tarbiz* 66 (1996–1997), 169–185.

101. Among those who argue for Stoic influence on rabbinic thinking are J. Bergmann, "Die stoische Philosophie und die jüdische Frommigkeit," *Judaica* [Festschrift Hermann Cohen] (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1912), 145–166; A. Kaminka, "Les Rapports entre le rabbinisme et la philosophie stoicienne," *REJ* 82 (1926), 233–252 (Fischel's summary of Kaminka's views is in H. Fischel, ed., *Essays in Greco-Roman and Related Talmudic Literature* (New York: Ktav, 1977), Prolegomenon, xli, no. 24, is incorrect in my view); idem, "Hillel's Life and Work," *JQR* 30 (1939), 107–122; idem, "Judaism and Hellenism in the Ways of Rhetoric and Ethic" (Hebrew), in *Meḥqārîm: Volume Two* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1950/1951), 42–69. A similar question exists in Christianity, namely, the degree of Cynic influence on Christianity. For a recent discussion see Downing, *Christians and Cynic Origins*; his comments on 149 are particularly relevant to a consideration of the possible connections between Stoicism and rabbinic Judaism.

102. Grimm, *From Feasting to Fasting*, 34–59, esp. 41–43; and see the previous note. Greek mystery cults may have included fasting as a central element, usually for the purpose of obtaining divine inspiration; but see ibid., 41. Grimm herself notes numerous instances in which fasting and food restrictions are countenanced within this world; furthermore, as she notes (59), the pagans of the Graeco-Roman were far less interested than the Jews in regulating daily eating habits. Pagan religion was limited almost exclusively to worship and sacrifice, as opposed to the much more comprehensive restrictions of Judaism in its various manifestations. The relative lack of fasting in the Greco-Roman world, therefore, is the product of indifference, not principled opposition.

103. Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (Louvan: Catholic University, 1958), 1:256.

104. *Vendîdâds*, Fargard III, 31–32; trans. J. Darmesteter in M. Müller, ed., *The Sacred Books of the East* (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1898), 3:30–31.

105. Naomi Koltun, "Jewish-Christian Polemics in Fourth-Century Mesopotamia: A Reconstructed Conversation,": Ph.D. Diss., Stanford, 1993, 124–125. For a ninth-century Zoroastrian anti-Christian polemic see the *Sikand-Gûmânîk Vigâr*, chapter XV; trans. E. W. West in M. Müller, *The Sacred Books of the East* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901), 12:229–243.

106. Thus M. Boyce, ed. and trans., *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 2.

107. R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961), 27.

108. *Vendîdâds*, Fargard III, 2, 3; trans. Darmsteter 3:23.

109. James Darmesteter (Müller, *Sacred Books*, 3:48 n. 1) quotes the Pahalvi commentary which has: "like Mazdak, son of Bamdat." Darmesteter explains that Mazdak was a sectarian who was put to death by the Persian king Noshrivan in the sixth century.

110. *Sad Dar* 83, 1–3, trans. E. W. West in Müller, *Sacred Books* (1901), 12:348.

111. See, for example, mTaʿanit 2.1.

112. *Vendîdâds*, Fargard III, 33 (trans. Darmesteter, 3:31). The third passage is *Vendîdâds*, Fargard IV, 48 (trans. Darmesteter, 3:47). See also Boyce, *Textual Sources*, 69, 140, 146, who cites one tenth-century writer (Al-Biruni) and two twentieth-century sources that emphasize Zoroastrian opposition to fasting.

113. yDemai 7.4, 26b. See also bTaʿanit 22b.

114. For examples and an analysis of the patterns of mutual influence between Judaism and Zoroastrianism see most recently K. D. Irani, "The Conceptual Basis for

Interaction between the Ancient Traditions of the Jews and the Iranians," in S. Shaked and A. Netzer, eds., *Irano-Judaica III* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1994), 90–96.

115. It should be noted that Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia: II, The Early Sassanian Period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 72–91, argues convincingly that the influence of Persian beliefs and practices on the rabbis was minimal, although its influence on the general Jewish population, particularly in the matter of magical practices, was significant. Nonetheless, as I shall show, the rabbis apparently were affected by the surrounding religious culture as well.

116. There is evidence that the exilarch and those close to him followed Persian customs more enthusiastically than at least some of the rabbis. See, for example, bBer. 46b, where the exilarch suggests to R. Sheshet (Babylonia, end of third c.–beginning of fourth c.) that the seating and hand-washing arrangments of the Babylonians at their meals is superior to those of the rabbis. R. Sheshet, after unsuccessful attempts at convincing the exilarch that this is not the case, finally replies, "As for me, I know a tannaitic source," and he cites a *baraita* that desribes rabbinic etiquette in this matter.

117. bQiddushin 70a.

118. bAvodah Zarah 24b.

119. A number of scholars, including Saul Lieberman, Arthur Marmorstein, Louis Ginzberg, Victor Aptowitzer, and Solomon Schechter, argue that *Baraita de-Niddâ* is a sectarian work that incorporates Karaite practices (see Dinari, "Customs Regarding *Tûm'at Niddâ*," in *Tarbiẓ* 49 (1979–80), 305 and nn. 26, 28, and 29. Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Menstruants and the Sacred," in Sarah B. Pomeroy, ed., *Women's History and Ancient History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 281, dates it to sixth- or seventh-century Palestine, based on stylistic similarities to other Palestinian legal codes of that period. However, Lauren Eichler, "The Cultural Poetics of Menstruation" (BA dissertation; Princeton University, 1994), 25 n. 89, reports that Cohen's current view is that the text published by Horowitz—that is, the main version of *Baraita de-Niddâ* available to us—is probably a pseudipigraphic work written in Ashkenaz in the twelfth or thirteenth century. This shift is due to Geniza scholar Neil Danzig's not having found any trace of *Baraita de-Niddâ* among the Geniza documents and fragments that he has studied. Professor Danzig presently is aware of one, and possibly two, Geniza fragments of *Baraita de-Niddâ* (oral communication, February 25, 2000).

CONCLUSION

1. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), 95-97; Ivan Marcus, *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981), passim. For an interesting discussion of why *ḥasîdē Ashkenaz* were ascetic mainly in their penances but not in their daily practice, see Haggai Ben-Arzi, "*Perîšût* in the *Book of the Pious*" (Hebrew), in *Da'at* 11 (1983), 39–45.

2. See Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, trans. Allan Arkush (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 229–233, esp. 230 n. 65.

3. See Lawrence Fine, *Safed Spirituality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 11–16.

4. See David Biale, "The Longing for Asceticism in the Hasidic Movement" (Hebrew), in I. Bartal and I. Gafni, eds., *Ẓrôs, Ērûsîn, ve-Issûrîm* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1998), 213–224.

5. See Alan Nadler, *The Faith of the Mithnagdim: Rabbinic Response to Hasidic Rapture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997), 78–102, particularly 88–102.

6. See, for example, Hillel Goldberg, *Israel Salanter: Text, Structure, Idea* (New York: Kav, 1982), 138.

7. Thus, for example, Allan Lazaroff, "Bahya's Asceticism against Its Rabbinic and Islamic Background," *JJS* 21(1970), 24–31, catalogs the effect of Sufism on Bahya's thought. Concerning possible parallels to twelfth-century Provençal Jewish asceticism in the rise of the Cathar movement, see Scholem, *Origins*, 231–232. Robert Chazan, "The Early Development of *Ḥasidut Ashkenaz*," in *JQR* 75 (1985), 199–211, and esp. 209–211, suggests similarities between Christian religious movements and Jewish proto-pietism in eleventh-century Northern Europe.

8. Nisan Rubin, "From Monism to Dualism: The Body–Soul Relationship in the Perception of the Sages" (Hebrew), *Da'at* 23 (1989), 56–57.

9. mBava Batra 2.7.

10. bBava Batra 24b.

11. In his novellae to Bava Batra 24b, s.v. אה.

12. See Solomon Schechter, ed., *Saadyana* (Cambridge: Deighton and Bell, 1903), 80–113.

13. See Joseph Dan, *Sifrût ha-Mûsār veha-Derûš* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1975), 133. In particular, the form of penance employed by *ḥasîdē Ashkenaz* called *teŝûvat ha-mišqal*, "the weighted penance," identified all sin with physical pleasure and physical suffering as its antidote. On this see Dan, *Ḥasîdût Aŝkenaz be-Tôledôt ha-Maḥaŝāvā ha-Yehûdît* (Tel Aviv: The Open University of Israel, 1990), 2:62.

14. See nn. 2 and 3.

15. See n. 5.

This page intentionally left blank

Bibliography

Abel, F-M. *Les Livres des Maccabees*. Paris: Gabalda, 1949.

Abraham b. Isaac Av Bet-Din of Narbonne. *Sēfęr Hā-Ęškôl*. Ed. Z. B. Auerbach. Halberstadt, n.p., 1868.

Abrahams, Israel. *Studies in Pharasaism and the Gospels: First Series*, 1914; repr. New York: Ktav, 1967.

Albeck, Hanokh. *Męḥqārîm bi-Beraitā ūve-Tôsęftā ve-Yaḥasān la-Talmûd*. 1944; repr. Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1969.

Alon, Gedalyahu. *Męḥqārîm be-Tôledôt Yisrā'ēl*. Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1957–1958.

———. *Tôledôt ha-Yehûdîm be-'Ęręz Yisrā'ēl bi-teqûpat ha-Mišnâ weha-Talmûd*. Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1977.

Amit, Y. "Perpetual Naziriteship: The Migration of a Motif" (Hebrew). In *Te'uda* 4 (1986): 23–36.

Anav, Zedekiah ben Abraham. *Šibbolē ha-Lęqęt*. Ed. S. Buber. Vilna: n.p., 1887.

Anderson, Gary. "Celibacy or Consummation in the Garden? Reflections on Early Jewish and Christian Interpretations of the Garden of Eden." In *HTR* 82 (1989): 121–148.

Aptowitzer, Victor. "Deux Consultations des Gueonim dans Le Pardes." In REJ 57 (1909): 245–251.

Apuleius. *The Golden Ass*. Trans. Jack Lindsay. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962.

Arbesmann, Rudolf. "Fasting and Prophecy in Pagan and Christian Antiquity." In *Traditio* 7 (1949–1951): 9–32.

Ashley, T. R. *The Book of Numbers*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993.

Avi-Yonah, M. *The Jews under Roman and Byzantine Rule*. (New York: Schocken; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1984.

Ayali, Meir. *Pô'alîm ve-'Ŭmānîm: Melakhtām u-Ma'amādām be-Siprût Ḥazal*. Givatayim: Yad la-Talmud, 1987.

Baeck, Leo. *The Pharisee and Other Essays*. Trans. from the German. New York: Schocken, 1947.

Baer, Yizhaq (Fritz). *Yisrā'ēl bā-'Amim*. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1955.
Baillet, Maurice, ed. *Qumran Grotte 4, III* (*4Q482–4Q520*), *Discoveries in the Judean Desert 7*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.
Bar-Ilan, Meir. "The Nature and Origins of *Megillat Ta'anît*" (Hebrew). In *Sinai* 98 (1996): 114–137.
Baron, Salo. *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*. 18 volumes. New York: Columbia University Press; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1952–.
Bassfreund, J. "Zur Redaktion der Mischna." In *MGWJ* 51 (1907): 291–322, 429–444, 590–608, 678–706.
Baumgarten, Albert. "The Name of the Pharisees." In *JBL* 102 (1983): 411–428.
Baumgarten, Joseph M. "4Q502, Marriage or Golden Age Ritual?" In *JJS* 35 (1983): 125–135.
———. "The Qumran-Essene Restraints on Marriage." In Lawrence H. Schiffman, ed., *Archaeology and History of the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigal Yadin*, 13–24. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989.
Beer, Moshe. "Talmud Torah ve-Derekh Erez." In *Šenātôn Bar-Ilan* 2 (1964): 134–162.
———. *Rāšût ha-Gôlâ bîymē ha-Mišnâ veha-Talmûd*. Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1976.
———. *Amôrā'ē Bābęl*. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University, 1982².
Ben-Arzi, Haggai. "*Perîšût* in the *Book of the Pious*" (Hebrew). In *Da'at* 11 (1983): 39–45.
Ben-Sasson, Hayyim Hillel. *Hagût ve-Hanhāgâ*. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1959.
———. "Haside Ashkenaz Regarding the Distribution of Material Acquisitions and Spiritual Resources among Humanity" (Hebrew). In *Zion* 35 (1970): 61–79.
Ben-Yehuda, Eliezer. *Millôn ha-Lāšôn hā-'Ivrît*. 8 volumes. Ed. N. Tur-Sinai. New York: Thomas Yosselof, 1959.
Berg, Charles. *The Unconscious Significance of Hair*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1951.
Bergmann, J. "Die stoische Philosophie und die jüdische Frommigkeit," In *Judaica Festschrift Hermann Cohen*, 145–166. Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1912.
Berkovits, Eliezer. *Crisis and Faith*. New York: Ktav, 1976.
Berlinerblau, J. *The Vow and "Popular Religious Groups" of Ancient Israel*, JSOTS 210. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996.
Berman, Dennis. "Hasidim in Rabbinic Tradition." In Paul Achtemeier, ed. *Society of Biblical Literature 1979 Seminar Papers*, 2:15–33. Missoula: Society of Biblical Literature, 1979.
Biale, David. *Eros and the Jews*. New York: Basicbooks, 1992.
———. "The Longing for Asceticism in the Hasidic Movement" (Hebrew). In I. Bartal and I. Gafni, eds., *Ęrôs, Ērûsîn, ve-Issûrîm*, 213–224. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1998.
Blidstein, Gerald. *Honor Thy Father and Mother: Filial Responsibility in Jewish Law and Ethics*. New York: Ktav, 1975.
Bokser. Baruch. "*Me'al* and Blessings over Food: Rabbinic Transformation of Cultic Terminology and Alternate Modes of Piety." *JBL* 100 (1981): 557–574.
———. "Wonder-Working and the Rabbinic Tradition: The Case of Ḥanina ben Dosa." In *JSJ* 16 (1985): 42–92.
Boyarin, Daniel. *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.
———. *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
———. *A Radical Jew*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.

———. *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
Boyce, M., ed. and trans. *Textual Sources for the Study of Zoroastrianim*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
Brenton, L., ed. and trans. *The Septuagint and Apocrypha: Greek and English*: S. Bagster and Sons, 1851; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, n.d.
Bright, John. *Jeremiah: Introduction, Translation, and Notes*. Anchor Bible, volume 21. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965.
Brock, Sebastian. "Jewish Traditions in Syriac Sources." In *JJS* 30 (1979): 212–232.
Brongers, H. A. "Fasting in Israel in Biblical and Post-Biblical Times." In H. A. Brongers et al., eds., *Instruction and Interpretation: Studies in Hebrew Language, Palestinian Archaeology and Biblical Exegesis*, Oudtestimentische Studien Vol. 20, 1–21. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977.
Brown, Peter. *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, Lectures on the History of Religions, New Series, number 13. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
Büchler, Adolph. "The Fore-Court of Women and the Brass Gate in the Temple of Jerusalem," *JQR* X (1898): 678–718.
———. *The Political and Social Leaders of the Jewish Community in Sepphoris in the Second and Third Centuries*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1909.
———. *Types of Jewish–Palestinian Piety from 70 BCE to 70 CE: The Ancient Pious Men*. 1922; repr. New York: Ktav, 1968.
———. *Studies in Sin and Atonement*. London: Oxford University Press, 1928.
———. "Notes and Observations about Women's Status in the Book of Judith" (Hebrew). In idem, *Studies in Jewish History*. London: Oxford University, 1956.
Burkert, Walter. *Ancient Mystery Cults*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987.
Bynum, Caroline Walker. *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987.
Carteledge, Tony W. "Were Nazirite Vows Unconditional?" In *CBQ* 51 (1989): 409–422.
Castelli, Elizabeth. "Asceticism—Audience and Response." In Wimbush and Valantasis, *Asceticism*, 178–187.
Chadwick, Owen, ed. and trans. *Western Asceticism*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958.
Charlesworth, James, ed. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1985.
Chazan, Robert. "The Early Development of *Ḥasidut Ashkenaz*." In *JQR* 75 (1985): 199–211.
Cohen, Jeremy. *"Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master It": The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989.
Cohen, Shaye J. D. "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism." In *HUCA* 55 (1984): 27–53.
———. *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987.
———. "Adolf Harnack's 'The Mission and Expansion of Judaism,' Christianity Succeeds Where Judaism Fails." In B. Pearson, ed., *The Future of Early Christianity*, 163–169. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
———. "Menstruants and the Sacred." In Sarah B. Pomeroy, ed. *Women's History and Ancient History*, 273–299. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

———. "The Place of the Rabbi in Jewish Society of the Second Century." In Lee Levine, ed., *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, 157–173. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992.

Dagron, Gilbert, ed. and trans. *Vie et Miracles de Sainte Thècle: Texte Grec, Traduction et Commentaire*. Subsudia Hagiographica, No. 62 Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1978.

Dahood, Mitchell J. *Psalms*. Anchor Bible. Volumes 16–17A. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966–70.

Dan, Joseph. *Sifrût ha-Mûsār veha-Derûŝ*. Jerusalem: Keter, 1975.

———. *Ḥasîdût Aŝkenaz be-Tôledôt ha-Maḥaŝāvā ha-Yehûdît*. 2 volumes. Tel Aviv: The Open University of Israel, 1990.

Danzig, N. *Māvô le-Sēfęr Halākhôt Pesûqôt*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993.

Delitsch, Franz. *Jewish Artisan Life in the Time of Jesus*. Trans. B. Pick. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1883.

Dessler, Eliyahu. *Strive for Truth*. Trans. Aryeh Carmell. Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1978

Diamond, Eliezer. "The Editing of Dialogue in Rabbi's Mishnah." Paper delivered at the Association for Jewish Studies Conference in Boston, 1986.

———. "Hunger Artists and Householders: The Tension between Asceticism and Family Responsibility among Jewish Pietists in Late Antiquity." In *USQR* 48 (1994): 29–47.

———. "An Israelite Offering in the Priestly Code: A New Perspective on the Nazirite." In *JQR* 88 (1997): 1–18.

Dinari, Yedidyah. "Customs Regarding *Tûm'at Niddâ*. Hebrew. In *Tarbiẓ* 49 (1979–1980): 302–324.

Dombrowski, D. A. "Asceticism as Athletic Training in Plotinus." In *ANRW* II.36.1, 701–712. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1987.

Downing, F. Gerald. *Christians and Cynic Origins*. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992.

Driver, G. R. "Three Technical Terms in the Pentateuch." In *JSS* 1 (1956): 97–105.

Droge, A. J., and James D. Tabor. *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among the Christians and Jews in Antiquity*. New York: Harper San Francisco, 1992.

Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Trans. Jospeh Ward Swain. New York: The Free Press, 1965.

Eichler, Lauren. "The Cultural Poetics of Menstruation." B.A. dissertation. Princeton University, 1994.

Elbogen, Ismar. *Jewish Liturgy*. Trans. R. Scheindlin. New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1993.

Elliot, Dyan. *Spiritual Marriage: Sexual Abstinence in Medieval Wedlock*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993.

Elm, Susanna. *"Virgins of God": The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Elman, Ya'akov. "The Suffering of the Righteous in Palestinian and Babylonian Sources." In *JQR* 80 (1990): 315–339.

———. "Babylonian Baraitot in the Tosefta and the 'Dialectology' of Middle Hebrew." In *AJS Review* 16 (1991): 1–29.

———. *Authority and Tradition: Toseftan Baraitot in Talmudic Babylonian*. Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1994.

I. Etkes. *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Truth of Torah*. Trans. J. Chipman. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993.

Epstein, Jacob Nahum. "On the Language of *Nezîrût*" (Hebrew). In *Sēfēr Magnes*, 10–16. Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1938.

———. *Mebo'ôt le-Sifrût ha-Tannā'îm*. Ed. E. Z. Melamed. Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Tel Aviv: and Dvir, 1957.

———. *Māvô' le-Nûsaḥ ha-Mišnâ*. 2 volumes. Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1964².

Eshel, Ben Zion. *Yišûvē ha-Yehûdîm be-Vāvçl bî-Teqûfat ha-Talmûd: Onomastikon Talmudi*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979.

Feeley-Harnik, Gillian. *The Lord's Table": The Meaning of Food in Early Judaism and Christianity*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994.

Feldman, David. *Birth Control in Jewish Law: Marital Relations, Contraception, and Abortion as Set Forth in the Classic Texts of Jewish Law*. New York: New York University Press, 1968.

Fine, Lawrence. *Safed Spirituality*. New York: Paulist Press, 1984.

Fine, Steven. *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997.

Finkelstein, Louis. *Jewish Self-Government in the Middle Ages*. With a foreword by Alexander Marx. 1924; repr. New York: Feldheim, 1964.

Fischel, Henry ed. *Essays in Greco-Roman and Related Talmudic Literature*. New York: Ktav, 1977.

Fishbane, Michael. *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985.

Fitzmeyer, Joseph A. *Romans*, Anchor Bible, volume 23. New York: Doubleday, 1993.

Fraade, Steven. "Ascetical Aspects of Ancient Judaism." In Arthur Green, ed., *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible through the Middle Ages*, 253–288. New York: Crossroad, 1988.

Fraenkel, Yonah. *'Iyyûnîm be-'Olāmô šęl sippûr hā-'Aggādâ*. Tel-Aviv: Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Memuehad, 1981.

Francis, James A. *Subversive Virtue: Asceticism and Authority in the Second-Century Pagan World*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.

Frankel, Zechariah. *Mebô' Ha-Yerûšalmî*. 1870; repr. Jerusalem: n.p., 1967.

Frazer, James. *Folklore in the Old Testament: Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend and Law*. 3 volumes. London: Macmillan, 1918.

Freyne, Sean. "The Charismatic." In W. E. Nickelsburg and J. J. Collins, eds., *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, 223–258. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980.

Friedman, Mordechai. *Ribbûy Nāšîm be-Yisrā'ēl*. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Tel Aviv University, 1986.

Friedman, Shamma. "Concerning Historical Aggadah in the Babylonian Talmud" (Hebrew). In idem, ed., *Sēfęr ha-Zikkārôn le-Rabbî Šā'ûl Lieberman*, 119–164. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993.

Gafni, Isaiah. "The Institution of Marriage in Rabbinic Times." In David Kraemer, ed., *The Jewish Family: Metaphor and Memory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1989.

———. *Yehûdē Bābęl bit-Teqûfat ha-Talmûd*. Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1990.

———. "Between the Land of Israel and Babylonia: The World of the Talmud and Ideological Confrontation in the Historiography of the Modern Period" (Hebrew). In *Zion* 62 (1997): 213–242.

Gartner, Ya'aqov. "Fasting on *Rosh Hashanah*: The Origins of This Custom and Its Development" (Hebrew). *Ha-Darom*, Tishrei 5733 (1972), 125–162.

———. "Concerning 'Fasting on the Sabbath'" (Hebrew). *Tarbiẓ* 54 (1984), 454–455.
———. "Fasting on Rosh ha-Shanah in the Geonic Period" (Hebrew). In *Gilgullē Minhag bā-Ôlām ha-Halākhâ*, 74–88. n.p.: Hemed, 1995.
———. *Gilgûlē Minhāg be-'Olam ha-Halākhâ*. N.p. Hemed, 1995.
Geiger, Abraham. Letter to Y. Blumenfeld. In *Oṣar Nḫmād* 2 (1857): 100.
———. *Urschrift und Uebersetzungen der Bibel in ihrer abhangkeit innern Entwicklung von der das Judentums*. Breslau: Hainauer, 1857.
Gibson, J. C. L. *Textbook of Syrian Semitic Inscriptions. Volume III: Phoenician Inscriptions Including Inscriptions in the Mixed Dialect of Arslan Tash*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982.
Gilat, Y. D. "Fasting on Shabbat" (Hebrew). *Tarbiz* 52 (1983): 1–18.
———. *R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus: A Scholar Outcast*. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1984.
———. "Response to Y. Gartner" (Hebrew). *Tarbiz* 54 (1984): 456–457.
Ginsberg, H. L. "Psalms and Inscriptions of Petition and Acknowledgement." In *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume*, 159–171. New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945.
Ginzberg, Louis. *The Legends of the Jews*. Trans. Henrietta Szold. 8 volumes. 1909; repr. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968.
———. *Pērûsîm ve-Ḥiddušîm li-Yerušalmî Berākhôt*. 3 volumes. 1941; New York: Ktav, 1971.
———. *An Unknown Jewish Sect*. Trans. Ralph Marcus et al. Foreword by Eli Ginzberg. Moreshet Series No. 1. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1976.
Ginzberg, Louis, ed. *Ginzē Schechter, Volume II*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1928.
Goerwitz, Richard L. "What Does the Priestly Source Mean by יופרע את הראש?" In *JQR* 86 (1996): 377–394.
Goldberg, Abraham. *Mābo' le-Mišnâ ve-Tôsefṯā*, ed. M. Assoulin. Jerusalem: Akademon, 1970.
———. "The Tosefta—Companion to the Mishnah." In Shmuel Safrai, ed., *The Literature of the Sages—First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*, 283–302. Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.
Goldberg, Arnold. "Entwurf einer formanalytschen Methode fur die Exegese der rabbinischen Taditionsliteratur." In *FJB* 5 (1977): 1–41.
———. "Distributive und kompositive Formen: Vorschlage fur die descriptive Terminologie der Formanalyse rabbinischer Texte." In *FJB* 12 (1984): 147–153.
———. "Form-Analysis of Midrashic Literature as a Method of Description." In *JJS* 36 (1985): 159–174.
Goldberg, Hillel. *Israel Salanter: Text, Structure, Idea*. New York: Ktav, 1982.
Goldin, J., trans. *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955.
Goodblatt, David. "The Babylonian Talmud." In *ANRW* II (1979) 19.2: 287–288. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1979.
Goodman, Martin. *State and Society in Roman Galilee*. Totawa: Rowman and Allanheld, 1983.
Gray, G. R. *Numbers*. International Critical Commentary, volume 12. New York: Scribner's, 1920.

Green, William Scott. "Palestinian Holy Men: Charismatic Leadership and Rabbinic Tradition." In *ANRW* 2. 19.2, 619–647. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1979.
Greenstein, Edward. "The Riddle of Samson." In *Prooftexts* 1 (1981): 237–260.
Grimm, Veronika. *From Feasting to Fasting, the Evolution of a Sin: Attitudes to Food in Late Antiquity*. London: Routledge, 1996.
Grintz, Joshua M. *Sefer Yehudit: Taḥazoret ha-Nosaḥ ha-Mekori be-Tseruf Mavo, Perushim u-Maftehot*. Yerushalayim: Mosad Bialik, 1957.
Guillaumont, Antoine. "A propos du celibat des Esseniens." In *Homage a Andre Dupont-Sommer*, 395–404. Paris: Adrien Maisonneuve, 1971.
Halevi, Judah. *The Kuzari* (*Kitab al Khazari*)*: An Argument for the Faith of Israel*. Trans. H. Hirschfeld. 1905; repr. New York: Schocken Books, 1964.
Halivni, David. "On the Supposed Anti-Asceticism or Anti-Nazritism of Simon the Just." In *JQR* 58 (1967–1968): 243–252.
———. *Meqôrôt u-Mesôrôt: Sēdeṛ Mô'ēd*. Jerusalem: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1975.
———. "Doubtful Attributions in the Talmud" (Hebrew). In *PAAJR* 46 (1979–1980): Hebrew section, 67–83.
Hall, T. C. "Asceticism (Introduction)." In J. Hastings, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1:63–69. New York: Scribner's, 1910.
Hammer, R., trans. and comm. *Sifre: A Tannaitic Commentary on the Book of Deuteronomy*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986.
Hardman, Oscar. *The Ideals of Asceticism: An Essay in the Comparative Study of Religion*. London: SPCK, 1924.
Harpham, Geoffrey Galt. *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993.
Hartman, Louis, and Alexander Di Lella, eds. *The Book of Daniel*, Anchor Bible volume 23. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1978.
Harvey, Warren Zev. "The Pupil, the Harlot and the Fringe Benefits." In *Prooftexts* 6 (1986): 259–264.
Hayes, Christine. *Between the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.
Heinemann, Isaac. *Darkē hā-Aggādâ*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1970.
Heinemann, Joseph. *Prayer in the Talmud*. Trans. Richard Sarason. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977.
Hengel, Martin. *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*. Trans. J. C. G. Grieg, ed. J. Riches. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996.
Hershler, Moshe, ed. *Šitâ lehā-Rab Abrāhām al-Sebîllî*. Jerusalem: Makhon ha-Talmud ha-Yisraeli ha-Shalem, 1967.
Hezser, Catherine. "Apopthegmata Patrum and Apophthegmata of the Rabbis," in *La Narrativa Cristiana Antica: Codici Narrativi, Strutture Formali, Schemi Retorici*, 453–464. Rome: Estratto, 1995.
———. "Der Verwendung Der Hellenitischen Gattung Chrie in Frühen Christentum und Judentum." In *JSJ* 27 (1996): 371–439.
Higger, Michael. *Ôṣār ha-Beraitôt*. 10 volumes. New York: Debe Rabbanan, 1938–1948.
Hildesheimer, E., ed. *Sefer Halākhôt Gedôlôt, Vol. I*. Jerusalem: Meqize Nirdamim, 1971.
Holladay, W. L. *Jeremiah 1: A Commentary on the Book of Jeremiah Chapters 1–25*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
Irani, K. D. "The Conceptual Basis for Interaction between the Ancient Traditions of

the Jews and the Iranians." In S. Shaked and A. Netzer, eds., *Irano-Judaica III* 90–96. Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 1994.
Jacobowitz, Aharon, and Shmuel Eliezer, eds. *Šîṭa 'al Mô'ēd Qāton le-Talmîdô šęl Rabbēnî Yehî'ēl mip-Paris, Ḥēlęq Alęph*. Jerusalem: Harry Fishel Institute, 1937.
Jacobs, Louis. "Are There Fictitious Baraitot in the Babylonian Talmud? In *HUCA* 42 (1971): 185–196.
———. "How Much of the Babylonian Talmud Is Pseudepigraphic." In *JJS* 28 (1977): 46–59.
James, William. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. 1902; repr., New York: The Modern Library, n.d.
Jastrow, Morris. "The 'Nazir' Legislation." *JBL* 33 (1914): 270–284.
Jawitz, Ze'ev Wolf. *Meqôr ha-Berakhôt*. 1910; repr. Jerusalem: Kiryah Ne'emanah, 1966.
Jeremias, Joachim. *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*. Trans. F. H. Cave and C. H. Cave. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.
Jonas, Hans. 1991. *The Gnostic Religion*. Boston: Beacon.
Kadushin, Max. *The Rabbinic Mind*. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1952.
———. *Worship and Ethics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.
Kagan, Zipporah. "Divergent Tendencies and Their Literary Moulding in the Aggadah." In J. Heinemann and Dov Noy, eds., *Scripta Hierosolymitana XXII: Studies in Aggadah and Folk-Literature*, 151–170. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971.
Kalmin, Richard. "Quotation Forms in the Babylonian Talmud: Authentically Amoraic, or a Later Editorial Construct?" In *HUCA* 59 (1988): 167–187.
———. "Collegial Interaction in the Talmud." In *JQR* 82 (1992), 383–415.
———. "Talmudic Portrayals of Relationships between Rabbis: Amoraic or Pseudepigraphic?" In *AJSReview* 17 (1992): 165–197.
———. *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994.
———. *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity*. London: Routledge, 1999.
———. "Ancient Rabbinic Responses to the Threat of Communal Disaster." Unpublished paper.
Kaminka, A. "Les Rapports entre le rabbinisme et la philosophie stoicienne." In *REJ* 82 (1926): 233–252.
———. "Hillel's Life and Work." In *JQR* 30 (1939): 107–122.
———. "Judaism and Hellenism in the Ways of Rhetoric and Ethic" (Hebrew). In idem, *Meḥqārîm: Volume Two*, 42–69. Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1950/1951.
Kaplan, Julius. *The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud*. 1933; repr. Jerusalem: Maqor, 1973.
Kimmelman, Reuven. "The Conflict between R. Yohanan and Resh Laqish on the Supremacy of the Patriarchate." In *Proceedings of the Seventh World Congress for Jewish Studies*, 3: English section, 1–20. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981.
Klahr, B., ed. *Megillat Aḥîma'aṣ*. Jerusalem: Tarshish, 1973.
Koltun, Naomi. "Jewish-Christian Polemics in Fourth-Century Mesopotamia: A Reconstructed Conversation." Ph.D. Diss., Stanford, 1993.
Koltun-Fromm, Naomi. "Marriage or Celibacy: Which Does God Prefer? A Jewish–Christian Conversation in Fourth-Century Persian Mesopotamia." In *JJS* 47 (1996): 45–63.
Kraemer, David. "On the Reliability of Attribution in the Babylonian Talmud." In *HUCA* 60 (1989), 175–190.

———. *Responses to Suffering in Clasical Rabbinic Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
Kramer, Ross. *Her Share of Blessings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
Kushelevsky, Rena. "The Legend of Ben-Dordaya: A Monotheistic Manifesto in Opposition to a Mythic Conception" (Hebrew). In *Meḥqerē Yerûšālayîm Be-Fôlqelôr Yehûdî* 18 (1995–1996): 7–18.
Laidlaw, James. *Riches and Renunciation: Religion, Economy and Society among the Jains*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
Lamm, Norman. *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah's Sake in the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin and His Contemporaries*. New York: Yeshiva University Press; Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1989.
Lane Fox, Robin. *Pagans and Christians*. New York: Knopf, 1987.
Lapin, Hayim. *Early Rabbinic Civil Law and the Social History of Roman Galilee: A Study of Mishnah Tractate Bābā' Mṣî'ā'*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
Lazaroff, Allan. "Baḥyā's Asceticism against Its Rabbinic and Islamic Background." In *JJS* 21 (1970): 11–38.
Leach, E. R. "Magical Hair." In *Man* 88 (1958): 11–20.
Leiman, Sid. "The Scroll of Fasts: The Ninth of Teveth." In *JQR* 74 (1983–1984): 174–195.
Leon, H. J. *The Jews of Ancient Rome*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1960.
Lerner, M. B. "Towards the Study of Appelations and Titles; 1. Abba" (Hebrew). In *Te'udah* 4 (1986), 93–113.
———. "The Tractate Avot," in Shmuel Safrai, *The Literature of the Sages—First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*, 263–276. Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.
Levin, Baruch. *In the Presence of the Lord*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1974.
———. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989.
———. *Numbers 21–36: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible, volume 4A. New York: Doubleday, 2000.
Levine, Lee I. *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity*. Jerusalem: Yad Yizhak Ben-Zvi Press; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1989.
———. *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.
Lewin, Binyamin M. *Iggeret Rav Sherira Gaon*. 1921. Repr. Jerusalem: Makor, 1972.
———. Ôṣar hag-Ge'ônîm. Haifa and Jerusalem: n.p.; Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1928–1962.
———. "Mi-Serîdē hag-Genîzâ, I: Pirqoi ben Baboi. *Tarbiẓ* 2 (1931): 383–405.
Licht, J. S. "Ṣom." In *Encyclopedia Miqra'it*, Vol. 6 (Jerusalem: Bialik, 1981[2].
———. *Pērûš 'al Sēfer be-Midbar Perāqîm 1–10*. Jesusalem: Magnes Press, 1985.
Lieberman, Saul. "Tiqqûnē Yerûšalmî—6." In *Tarbiṣ* V (1934): 97–110.
———. "The Martyrs of Caesarea." In *Annuaire de l'Institute de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 7 (1939–1944): 395–446.
———. "The Discipline in the So-Called Dead Sea Manual of Discipline," *JBL* 71 (1950): 199–206.
———. *Tôsefṯā' ki-Fešûṭâ[h]*. 10 volumes. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1955–1988.
———. "The Persecution of the Jewish Religion" (Hebrew). In Saul Liberman and

Arthur Hyman, eds., *Salo Baron Jubilee Volume*, Hebrew Section, 213–245. New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1975.
———. "Tašlûm Tôsęftā." In M. S. Zuckermandel, *Tôsęftā ʿal pi Kitvē Yad Erfurt u-Vienna*. Suppl. and rev. ed. Jerusalem: Wahrmann, 1975.
Lieu, J., J. North, and Tessa Rajak. 1992. *The Jews among Pagans and Christians*. London: Routledge. 1992.
Lowy, Sigmund. "The Motivation of Fasting in Rabbinic Literature." In *JJS* 9 (1958): 19–38.
Lucian (?). *de Dea Syria*. Trans. H. W. Attridge and R. A. Oden. Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1976.
MacMullen, Ramsay. *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966.
———. *Roman Social Relations: 50 B.C. to A.D. 284*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.
Mahler, Raphael. *ha-Qarāʾīm*. Merhavia: Sifriat Poalim, 1949.
Malina, Bruce. *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, rev. ed. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993.
Malter, Henry, ed. and comm. *Masseḵẖęt Taʾanît*. AAJR Publications, Vol. 1. New York: The American Academy for Jewish Research, 1930.
Mann, C. S. *Mark*. Anchor Bible, volume 27. New York: Doubleday, 1986.
Mann, Jacob. "A Tract by an Early Karaite Settler in Jerusalem," *JQR* n.s. 12 (1921–1922): 257–292.
———. *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs*. Repr. New York: Ktav, 1970.
———. *Texts and Studies*. 2 volumes. Repr. New York: Ktav, 1972.
Marcus, David. *Jepthah and His Vow*. Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech Press, 1986.
Marcus, Ivan. *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981.
Margaliot, M. "Festivals and Fasts in Palestine and Babylonia in the Geonic Period" (Hebrew). *Arẹšẹt* 1 (1944): 204–216.
Margaliot, M., ed. *Hilkhôt Ęrẹs Yisrāʾēl min hag-Genīzâ*. Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1973.
Marmorstein, Arthur. *The Doctrine of Merits in Old Rabbinic Literature and the Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*. 1920 and 1927; repr. New York: Ktav, 1968.
Marx, Albert. "Les Racines du Célibat Essénien." In *RQ* 7 (1970): 338–342.
Meir, Ofra. *Ha-Pôʾęṭîqā šęl Sippûrē Ḥazal*. Tel Aviv: Sifriat Poalim, 1993.
———. *Rabî Yehûda ha-Nāsîʾ: Diyuqnô šęl Manhîg bi-Mesôrôt Ęrẹs Yisrāʾēl u-Vāvęl*. Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz Hameuhad, 1999.
Metzger, David, ed. *Pērûsē Rabbēnû bar Hûšiʾēl lim-Meseḵẖęt Berakhot*. Jerusalem: Makhon Lev Sameah, 1990.
Meyer, Seligmann. *Arbeit und Handwerk im Talmud*. Berlin, n.p., 1878.
Milgrom, Jacob. *Studies in Levitical Terminology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.
———. "The *Tenûfâ*." In B. Z. Luria, ed., *Zer Li-Gevurot: The Zalman Shazar Jubilee Volume*, 38–55. Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1973.
———. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Numbers*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1990.
———. *Leviticus 1–16*, Anchor Bible, volume 3A, New York: Doubleday, 1991.
Minkowitz, M. "Iša Perûšâ u-Ṣebûʾîm še-Dômîm li-Perûšîm." *Hadoar* 54 (1974–1975): 136.
Montgomery, James A. "Ascetic Strains in Early Judaism." In *JBL* 51 (1932): 183–187.

Moore, George Foot. 1927. *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of the Tannaim*. 3 volumes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927.
Moreshet, Menahem. "The Hif'il in Mishnaic Hebrew as Equivalent to the Qal" (Hebrew). In *Bar-Ilan Annual* 13 (1976): 249–281.
Morrell, Samuel. "The Samson Nazirite Vow in the Sixteenth Century." In *AJSReview* (1984): 223–262.
Müller, M., ed. *The Sacred Books of the East*. Volume 3. New York: Christian Literature Company, 1898.
———. *The Sacred Books of the East*. Volume 12. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901.
Murray, Robert, "The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church," *NTS* 21 (1975), 59–80.
Mussafia, J., ed. *Tešûvôt ha-Ge'ônîm*. Lyck: n.p., 1864.
Musurillo, H. "Ascetical Fasting in the Greek Patristic Writers." In *Traditio* 12 (1956): 1–64.
Nadler, Alan. *The Faith of the Mithnagdim: Rabbinic Response to Hasidic Rapture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1997.
Naeh, Shlomo. "Regarding Two Hippocratic Concepts in Rabbinic Literature." Hebrew. In *Tarbiẓ* 66 (1996–1997), 169–185.
———. "Freedom and Celibacy: A Talmudic Variation on Tales of Temptation and Fall in Genesis and Its Syrian Background." In J. Frishman and L. Van Rompay, eds., *The Book of Genesis in Jewish and Oriental Christian Interpretation*, 73–89. Louvain, n.p., 1997.
Neusner, Jacob. "The Fellowship [*Haburah*] in the Second Jewish Commonwealth." In *HTR* 53 (1960): 125–142.
———. *A History of the Jews in Babylonia: II, The Early Sassanian Period*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966.
———. *A History of the Jews in Babylonia: III, From Shapur I to Shapur II*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968.
———. *Aphrahat and Judaism: The Chrisitan–Jewish Argument in Fourth-Century Iran*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971.
———. *A History of the Laws of Purity—Part Twenty-Two: The Mishnaic System of Uncleanliness*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1977.
———. *In Search of Talmudic Biography: The Problem of the Attributed Saying*. Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1984.
———. *Reading and Believing, Ancient Judaism and Contemporary Gullibility*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994.
———. *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature*. Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
Nietzsche, Friedrich. *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. Walter Kauffman. New York: Vintage Press, 1967.
Obeyesekere, Gannath. *Medusa's Hair: An Essay on Personal Symbols and Religious Experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981.
Olivelle, Patrick. *Samnyasa Upanisads: Hindu Scriptures on Asceticism and Renunciation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.
———. "Deconstruction of the Body in Indian Asceticism," in Wimbush and Valantasis, *Asceticism*, 203–207.
Olyan, Saul. "What Do Shaving Rites Accomplish and What Do They Signal in Biblical Ritual Contexts?" In *JBL* 117 (1998): 611–622.
Oppenheimer, A. "Separating First Tithes Following the Destruction of the Second Temple" (Hebrew). In *Sinai* 83 (1978): 284–285.

Perkins, Judith. *The Suffering Self: Pain and Narrative Representation in the Early Christian Era*. London: Routledge, 1995.
Philo of Alexandria. *On the Contemplative Life*. Trans. F. H. Colson. In *Philo, Volume 9*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1941.
Plevnick, Joseph. "Honor/Shame." In John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, eds., *Biblical Social Values and Their Meanings*, 95–104. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993.
Pope, Marvin H. *Job*, Anchor Bible, volume 15. New York: Doubleday, 1963.
Press, Yeshayahu. *Ẹrẹṣ Yisrā'ēl: Ẹnṣiklopędyâ Tôpôgraqfît Hîstôrît*. Jerusalem: Reuben Mass, 1946–1955.
Preuss, J. *Biblical and Talmudic Medicine*. Trans. F. Rosner. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993.
Qimron, Elisha. "Celibacy in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Two Kinds of Sectarians." In J. T. Barrera and L. V. Montaner, eds., *The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid 18–21 March, 1991*, 1:287–294. New York, E. J. Brill and Editorial Complutense, 1992.
Qimron, Elisha, and John Strugnell, eds., *Qumran Cave 4.V: Miqṣat Maʿaśe Ha-Torah*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.
Rosenthal, E. S., ed. *Yerûšalmî Nezîqîn*. Intro. and comm. Saul Lieberman. Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1983.
Rosenthal, Judah. "The Four Commemorative Fast Days." In Abraham Neuman and Solomon Zeitlin, eds., *The Seventy-Fifth Anniversary Volume of the Jewish Quarterly Review*, 446–459. Philadelphia: Jewish Quarterly Review, 1967.
Rouselle, Aline. *Porneia: On Desire and the Body in Antiquity*. Trans. F. Pheasant. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1996.
Rubenstein, Jeffery L. *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.
Rubin, Nisan. "From Monism to Dualism: The Body–Soul Relationship in the Perception of the Sages" (Hebrew). In *Daʿat* 23 (1989): 33–63.
Safrai, Shmuel. "The Holy Congregation of Jerusalem" (Hebrew). In *Zion* 22 (1957): 183–193. (= idem, *Bi-Yemē ha-Bayit uvi-Yemē ha-Mišnâ: Mẹḥqārîm be-Tôledôt Yisrā'ēl*, 171–181. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994).
———. "Teaching of Pietists in Mishnaic Literature." In *JJS* 16 (1965): 15–33.
Safrai, Shmuel, ed. *The Literature of the Sages—First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates*. Assen: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.
Saldarini, Anthony. *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach*. Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988.
Sanders, E. P. *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies*. London: SCM Press; Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990.
Sarna, N. M. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Exodus*. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1991.
Satlow, Michael. *Tasting the Dish: Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995.
Schaff, Phillip, and Henry Wace, eds. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers: Second Series*. 1896; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 1994.
Schechter, Solomon, ed. *Saadyana*. Cambridge: Deighton and Bell, 1903.
———. *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*. 1909; repr. Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 1993.
Scholem, Gershom. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York: Schocken Books, 1946.

———. *Origins of the Kabbalah*. Ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky. Trans. Allan Arkush. Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987.

Schürer, Emil. *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*. 4 volumes. Rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1973–1987.

Schwarzbaum, Haim. *The Mishle Shu'alim* (*Fox Fables*) *of Rabbi Brechiah ha-Nakdan: A Study in Comparative Folklore and Fable Lore*. Kiron, Israel: Institute for Jewish and Arab Folklore, 1979.

Silver, Abba Hillel. *Where Judaism Differed*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1957.

Smith, W. Robertson. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: The Fundamental Institutions*. Intro. and notes Stanley A. Cook. 1927³; repr. New York: Ktav, 1969.

———. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites: Second and Third Series*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995.

Sokol, Moshe. "Attitudes toward Pleasure in Jewish Thought: A Typological Proposal." In J. J. Schacter, ed., *Reverence, Righteousness and Rahamanut*, 253–288. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1992.

Sokoloff, Michael. *Dictionary of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic of the Byzantine Period*. Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990.

Ṣorfatti, Gad Ben-Ami. "*Hasîdîm*, *'Anšē Ma'aseh*, and the Early Prophets." In *Tarbiẓ* 26 (1957): 126–153.

Speiser, Ephraim A. "Unrecognized Dedication." *IEJ* 13 (1963): 69–73.

———. "The 'Elative' in West-Semitic and Akkadian," In idem, *Oriental and Biblical Studies*, 468–493. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967.

———. *Genesis*, Anchor Bible, volume 1. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964.

Sperber, Daniel. *Minhāgē Yisrā'ēl: Volume I*. Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1990.

Spiegel, Shalom. "From the Language of the Liturgical Poets" (Hebrew). In *Ha-Doar* 42 (1962–1963): 397–399.

———. "Regarding the Polemic of Pirqoi ben Baboi" (Hebrew). In Saul Lieberman, ed., *Harry Wolfson Jubilee Volume: Hebrew Section*, 243–274. Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1965.

Stec, David M. *The Text of the Targum of Job: An Introduction and Critical Edition*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994.

Stern, M. *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, Volume I*. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974.

———. *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism, Vol. II*. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980.

Stern, S. "Attribution and Authorship in the Talmud." In *JJS* 45 (1994): 28–51.

Strack, Hermann Leberecht, and Paul Billerbeck. *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*. Munich: Beck, 1961.

Strack, Hermann L., and Gunter Stemberger. *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*. Ed. and trans. Markus Bockmuehl. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.

Strathmann, H. "Askese I (nichtchristlich)." In Franz Joseph Dolger and Hans Lietzmann, *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, 1: 749–758. Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950.

Tedesche S., and S. Zeitlin. *The First Book of Maccabees*. New York: Harper, 1950.

Thiering, Barbara. "The Biblical Source of Qumran Asceticism." In *JBL* 93 (1974): 429–444.

Urbach, Ephraim Elimelech. "Asceticism and Suffering in Rabbinic Thought" (Hebrew). In S. Ettinger, S. Baron, B. Dinur, and Y. Halperin, eds., *Sēfęr Yôvēl le-Yiṣḥāq Baer*, 48–68. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1961.
———. "Class Status and Leadership in the World of the Palestinian Sages" (Hebrew). *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences, Volume 2*. 38–74. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of the Science and the Humanities, 1968.
———. "*Mišmārôt* and *Ma'amādôt*." In *Tarbiẓ* 42 (1973): 304–327.
———. *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*. Trans. Israel Abrahams. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979.
Valler, Shulamit. *Našîm ve Nāšiyût be-Sifrût ha-Talmûd*. Tel Aviv: HaKibbbutz Ha-Meuhad, 1993.
Vermes, Geza. "Ḥanina ben Dosa." In *JJS* 23 (1972): 28–50, and 24 (1973): 51–64.
———. *Jesus the Jew*. London: Collins, 1973.
Viller, M., and M. Olphe-Galliard, "Ascèse. Ascétisme: III. L' ascèse chrétienne; A. Les origines scriptuaires." In *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique, et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, 1:960–964. Paris: G. Beauchesne, 1932–1995.
Visotzky, Burton. "Three Syriac Cruxes." In *JJS* 42 (1991): 167–175.
Vööbus, Arthur. *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient*. 2 volumes. Louvain: Catholic University, 1958.
Ward, Benedicta, trans. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*. Cistercian Studies Series Number 59. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1975.
Weber, Max. *Ancient Judaism*. Ed. and trans. H. H. Gerth and D. Martindale. London: Free Press, 1952.
———. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Trans. Talcott Parsons. New York: Scribner's, 1958.
———. *The Sociology of Religion*. Trans. E. Fischoff. Boston: Beacon Press, 1963.
Weinstein, Sara Epstein. *Piety and Fanaticism: Rabbinic Criticism of Religious Strigency*. Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997.
Weisman, Z. "Naziriteship in Scripture—Its Typology and Origins" (Hebrew). In *Tarbiẓ* 36 (1967): 207–220.
Weiss, Abraham. *le-Ḥēqer ha-Talmûd*. New York: Phillipp Feldheim, 1954.
Weiss, Isaac Hirsch. *Dôr Dôr Ve-Dôreshav*. 5 volumes. 1904; repr. Jerusalem: Ziv, n.d.
Weiss, J. G., ed., *Papers of the Institute of Jewish Studies London, Volume I*. Preface by J. Neusner. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989.
Williams, M. A. *Rethinking "Gnosticism: An Argument for the Dismantling of a Dubious Category*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996.
Wimbush, Vincent L., and Richard Valantasis, eds., *Asceticism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
Zaehner, R. C. *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1961.
Zaks, Nisan, ed. *Mišnâ—Zerā'îm*. Volume I. Jerusalem: Makhon ha-Talmudi ha-Yisre'eli ha-Shalem, 1972.
Zimmels, H. J. *Ashkenazim and Sephardim*. London: Marla Publications, 1976.
Zucker, M. "Reactions to the Karaite 'Mourners of Zion' Movement in Rabbinic Literature" (Hebrew). In J. L. Maimon, A. Weiss, and L. Finkelstein, eds., *Sēfęr ha-Yôvēl le-Rabî Hanokh Albeck*, 378–385. Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1963.
Zuckschwerdt, E. "Zur literarischen Vorgeschichte des priestlichen Nazir-Gesetzes (Num 6:1–8)." In *ZAW* 88 (1976): 191–205.

Index of Primary Sources

General Index