

Challenge and Transformation: Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism

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The years of Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine rule in Judea and of Sassanian rule in Babylonia were years of great challenge to the ongoing continuity of Judaism, and, at the same time, years of great accomplishment which resulted in the successful meeting of these challenges. By the time the period of Late Antiquity drew to a close, Judaism had survived the challenges of Hellenization, sectarianism, violent revolution, and even anti-Semitism. In addition, the development of Israelite religion into the rabbinic tradition took place in these very same years. The many transitions that took place in this period are what effectively made possible the long-term continuity of Judaism as an exilic religion, able to enter the medieval period with a new consensus on how to face the future and explain the past.

One God or Many? Judaism and Foreign Cultures

Already in the biblical period, and a major conflict concerned the very nature of Israelite religion. Was the God of Israel to be worshipped alongside other gods, or was He to be venerated exclusively? Along with this issue went the question of the centralization of worship. In an attempt to root out syncretistic worship and to control the priesthood, the Deuteronomic tradition, as followed by Hezekiah and Josiah, stood for limitation of sacrificial worship to the Jerusalem Temple. Further, only Zadokite priests (descendants of one of Solomon's high priests, Zadok) were to offer the sacrifices. Needless to say, those believing that the God of Israel was to be one among many saw no reason to centralize worship or to limit membership in the legitimate priesthood.

Behind these political and religious questions lay a larger cultural question which was to concern the Jews in the Second Commonwealth, namely, whether Israelite religion should be a total way of life which left no room for outside elements, or whether it was to be only a part of the life of the individual and the nation.

Nevertheless, this question was not a black and white one. The issue was never whether or not to reject outside influence. The question was rather whether to assimilate some elements not considered harmful or to allow the wholesale entry of foreign elements into the way of life of the Jews. Those seeking exclusive worship of God felt that adoption of foreign elements without restriction was nothing more than apostasy and the abandonment of Judaism. Others, against whom our sources so often polemicize, disagreed.

The Samaritans

This complex of issues was to manifest itself early in the Second Temple period. The returning Jews began to rebuild the Temple; the Samaritans offered to help and were rejected.

When we come to discuss the Samaritans, we are immediately plagued by the problem of sources. While the Bible describes the origins of Samaritanism, we must remember that the Scriptures were handed down by Jewish groups that were fundamentally anti-Samaritan. It is therefore probable that there is some bias in these materials. Second, all the Samaritans' own traditions appear in writings which are of very late date, and many of them have been clearly influenced by Islamic sources. Finally, the material in rabbinic literature and in Josephus is also subject to the claim of bias.

From these various sources, we can reconstruct the following account. The Samaritans were a mixed people made up of strains of Northern Israelites who had not been exiled in 722 B.C.E. and the various foreign nations that the Assyrians had brought into the area in an attempt to ensure that national aspirations could not again come to the fore. This mixed group, the Samaritans, had adopted a syncretistic form of Judaism. They seem to have maintained the old Northern traditions and to have combined them with those of the nations settled among them. More important, however, was the genealogical problem.

In First Temple times it was possible for foreigners to join the Jewish people in an informal way by moving physically and socially into the land and adhering to its religion and laws. During the exile, Judaism had been transformed from a nationality dependent on connection to the land and culture to a religion which depended upon descent. For how else could Judaism ensure its continuity when deprived of its homeland? The returning Jews from Babylonia could not accept the questionable genealogy of the Samaritans. On the other hand, there was not yet a system for religious conversion as developed later on in the Second Temple period. Hence, there was no choice but to reject the Samaritans, even had they agreed to abandon their syncretistic practices.

This issue had political overtones as well. The Samaritans attempted, although with limited success, to influence the Persian authorities to stop the building of the Temple and to limit the powers of the priestly and temporal government of the Jews. This split between the Samaritans and the Jews was final, the Samaritans remaining a separate community to this day.

The Samaritan problem was, no doubt, complicated by another long-smoldering issue. There can be no question that as far back as the earliest days of the monarchy, there was division between North and South. It was this division that eventually led, after Solomon's death, to the split of the kingdom.

The issue of the Samaritans in the Second Temple period may be viewed, to some extent, as a continuation of the North-South schism of the First Temple. Like their Northern predecessors, the Samaritans insisted on the right to sacrifice outside of Jerusalem. Evidence seems to point to their adoption of Aramaic at an earlier stage than their Judean counterparts. Under Persian rule, the Judeans had rejected the Samaritans due to their syncretistic worship and the presence among them of non-Israelite elements. Clearly, the Judeans had chosen to follow in the footsteps of those who believed that only the God of Israel was to be worshipped, and that this worship was to be done only according to the ancient traditions of Israel. The same question was to arise again in the Hellenistic period.

The issue of Hellenism, then, can be seen as a larger issue of openness to foreign cultures and influences, a conflict which was foremost in biblical times and which continued into the Second Temple period. As the constellation of world politics and culture changed, Judaism first found itself in confrontation with the Canaanite culture and then with the phenomenon of Hellenism.

Major Sects of the Greco-Roman Age and the Challenge of Hellenism

Generally speaking, there were five groups in the Jewish population of Palestine during the Hellenistic period. Many Jews in the Diaspora were very thoroughly

Hellenized. There was a small group who clearly believed that Jews ought to enter into the mainstream of Hellenistic culture. They believed that Greek educational and cultural forms ought to be imposed on the biblical heritage so that Jews might enter into the *cosmos* as Hellenistic citizens. Judaism would then become one of the Hellenistic cults, and the God of Israel just one of the many manifestations of Zeus, the major god of the Greek pantheon. After all, throughout the rest of the Hellenistic world, the local deities were identified with the gods of the Hellenic pantheon. It was against this extreme Hellenization that the Maccabees revolted. With time, those holding these views, whether in the Land of Israel or in the Diaspora, probably assimilated so totally into the Greek way of life that they and their descendants were lost to the Jewish people.

A second group of somewhat Hellenized Jews is that of the Greek-speaking Jews. Their primary loyalties were to the Jewish tradition, but their culture was very much influenced by the atmosphere in which they lived. Alexandria, Egypt, was certainly a center for this kind of Hellenization, typified by the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Bible) and the writings of Philo Judaeus (ca. 20 B.C.E.-40 C.E.), who attempted to synthesize the revelation of the Torah with Platonic thought. This moderately Hellenistic Judaism also found a place in Judea, as represented, for example, by Josephus and the Greek-speaking Jews of the Land of Israel. Many of the Greek books of the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha are products of this approach. Among this group were, no doubt, many aristocrats and members of the Sadducean priesthood.

In speaking of the Sadducees, the problem of sources is especially acute for the reasons mentioned above. Nonetheless, considerable data can be gleaned about the Sadducees, and in the main, it seems to be reliable. Josephus explicitly mentions the

Sadducees (along with the Pharisees and the Essenes) as existing as early as the time of Jonathan Maccabee (ca. 150 B.C.E.).

The most repeated characteristic of the Sadducees is their aristocratic aspect. Most of them were apparently priests or those who had intermarried with the high priestly families. The Sadducees derived their name from that of Zadok, the high priest of the Jerusalem Temple in the time of Solomon. It was this family of high priests who served at the head of the priesthood throughout First and Second Temple times, the only interruptions being when foreign worship was brought into the Temple and when the Hasmoneans took control. Further, according to Josephus, the Sadducees rejected the “traditions of the fathers” observed as law by the Pharisees. These traditions seem to have been a forerunner of the later Oral Law. For the reasons described above, it is difficult to evaluate the many legal differences between the Sadducees and the Pharisees mentioned in the tannaitic sources. The Sadducees also differed to some extent in theological matters with the Pharisees, a subject to which we shall return.

Closely allied with the Sadducees were the Boethusians. This group seems to have adopted similar views to those of the Sadducees. Scholars ascribe the origin of the Boethusians to Simeon ben Boethus, appointed high priest by Herod in 24 B.C.E. so that he would have sufficient status to marry Herod’s daughter Mariamne (II). There certainly were some differences between the Sadducees and the Boethusians, but it is probable that the Boethusians were a subgroup of the Sadducees.

It is clear that many of these Sadducean and Boethusian priests and their families were considerably Hellenized. They, therefore, represent the focal point of a group which

accepted many aspects of Hellenistic culture while remaining loyal to the Jewish tradition.

A third group may be said to have rejected almost all aspects of Hellenistic culture. This is not to say that they had not picked up Greek vocabulary in their Hebrew and Aramaic speech or that the intellectual traditions of the *oikuméne* (the Hellenistic world) had not affected them at all. Rather, this group seems to have remained primarily Near Eastern in culture. We refer here to the Pharisees. The name of this sect is derived from the Hebrew *perushim*, “separate.” This designation most probably refers to their separation from levitically impure food and from the tables of the *`am ha-`areš*, the common people, who were not scrupulous regarding the laws of Levitical purity or tithes.

For the Pharisees as well we face the problem of sources. Little can be said with certainty about the Pharisees in the pre-70 C.E. period. Three major characteristics seem to emerge from the sources before us. First, they represented primarily the lower economic classes. Second, and perhaps as a consequence of their social status, they were not really Hellenized. To be sure, certain Greek words or intellectual approaches may have been part of their lives. However, they viewed as authoritative only what they regarded as the ancient traditions of Israel. Third, they accepted the “traditions of the fathers.” The laws of purity, tithing, and Sabbath were of primary interest to the Pharisees.

The Pharisees first appear by name in the time of Jonathan Maccabee (ca. 150 B.C.E.). Many scholars have attempted to identify the Pharisees with the Hasidim who appear as allies of Judah in the Maccabean revolt. This theory, however, cannot be substantiated. Further, our knowledge of the Hasidim in this early period is very limited.

It is most probable that they were not really a sect or party, but rather a loose association of pietists such as is denoted by this term in Talmudic literature.

Rabbinic sources trace the history of the Pharisees back to the Men of the Great Assembly, who are said to have provided the religious leadership for Israel in the Persian and early Hellenistic periods. Some modern scholars have associated the Soferim (“scribes”) with the Men of the Great Assembly. The Soferim would then be forerunners of the Pharisaic movement. Unfortunately, historical evidence does not allow any definite conclusions here. All that can be said is that the Pharisees cannot have emerged suddenly, full-blown in the Hasmonean period. Their theology and organization must have been in formation somewhat earlier. How much earlier and in what form, we cannot say.

A fourth group seems to have eschewed Hellenism much more thoroughly than the Pharisees. While Pharisaic Judaism seems to have been Hellenized to at least a minor degree, the Dead Sea sect used no Greek words in its writings and, despite some views to the contrary, was in no way Hellenized. This sect was apparently founded at about the time of the Maccabean uprising. From the role of Zadokite priests in the legal teachings of the sect, one would assume that such priests made up the nucleus of the sect. The sect was founded by righteous Zadokite priests who were expelled from Temple service when the Maccabees arrogated to their family the right to officiate as high priests. This group went off to the desert where they lived at the shore of the Dead Sea in Qumran and some surrounding settlements. They left us a series of scrolls, dating primarily from the second and first centuries B.C.E., which clearly outline the life and doctrines of this sect.

Among the most important characteristics of the Dead Sea or Qumran sect is their rejection of the validity of extra-biblical traditions for the derivation of law. This group

derived its law solely from biblical exegesis, an activity which occupied a major part of the daily life of the sect. In this respect, they shared the Sadducean view. Further, many of their rulings and exegeses seem to represent the Sadducean/Zadokite trend in Jewish law.

It should be noted that the Dead Sea sect wrote down legislation. Later Talmudic sources forbade the writing of Oral Law and ascribed such a proscription to Second Temple times. There is no way of knowing whether the Pharisees would have written down their extra-biblical “traditions of the fathers.” We can say with certainty that no clearly identifiable Pharisaic legal manuscript from the Second Temple period has come down to us, but neither has any Sadducean manuscript.

Many scholars have identified the sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls with the Essenes described in Philo and Josephus. Indeed, this suggestion has the merit of solving the problem of why Josephus does not mention such a major sect as the Qumranites. The Essenes, however, cannot be identified with the Qumran sect except by correcting Josephus in light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Such a process is somewhat circular, so that the most we may say is that the sect of Qumran *might* be the Essenes. Josephus mentions Essenes as existing as early as 150 B.C.E., but we must remember again how much later he was writing. No information as to the founding of this group is given by Josephus, and no convincing etymology of the name has been proposed. Further, Josephus might have generalized numerous smaller groups under the heading Essenes. It is a pity, as well, that there is no mention of the Essenes in Talmudic literature—at least not by name. The most prominent characteristic of the Essenes seems to have been the community of property; some practiced celibacy.

With regard to the Hellenistic continuum, we have a problem concerning the Essenes. If they are to be identified with the Dead Sea sect, then Hellenistic influence would seem out of the question. If, however, they are a separate group, and Josephus' description is accurate, Hellenistic influence might account for many of their divergences from the Pharisaic approach. Further, Philo describes the sect of the Therapeutae, located at Lake Mareotis in Egypt, clearly an area of strongly Hellenized Judaism, and this sect has many affinities with the Essenes.

We have omitted discussion of a number of minor sects mentioned in rabbinic literature. Information on these is too scant, and it is often not possible to tell if we are dealing with an organized group or not.

All the groups we have discussed probably altogether accounted for less than ten percent of the Jewish population of Palestine in the Second Commonwealth. Who were the rest? Most people belonged to a class called by the Bible and the later Rabbis the *'am ha- 'areš*, "the people of the land." This group was primarily rural and of the lower economic class. Their faith was probably a simplified version of the teachings of the Bible, and their observance was similar to that of the Pharisees except that tithing and purity laws were widely disregarded. Nevertheless, we can safely assume widespread Sabbath observance and abstinence from forbidden foods. Regarding prayer and the status of the synagogue at this time, evidence is scant, and no definitive conclusions can be reached.

The *'am ha- 'areš* was probably affected by Hellenism only in regard to what we may call surface culture, i.e. some vocabulary terms of a technical nature, and material culture, as shown by the widespread finds of Greek pottery and wares in the Land of

Israel in this period. We know that after the Great Revolt of 66-73 C.E., the bulk of this group followed the Pharisees into the rabbinic movement. It may perhaps be said that this was only the end of a long process. This group, regarding Hellenism and the Hellenists as interlopers into their ancient way of life and culture, had greatest sympathy for the Pharisees in our period. Indeed, such an impression is certainly given by Josephus, but it may be the result of post-70 C.E. developments or of his own prejudices.

Centralization of the Cult

The issue of centralization of the sacrificial cult, i.e. the prohibition of all sacrificial except in the Jerusalem Temple, was linked to that of the exclusive veneration of the God of Israel. In order to ensure the proper worship of the Israelite God, the author of Deuteronomy, followed by Hezekiah and Josiah, prohibited worship elsewhere. Further, Josiah had reduced the priests from outlying areas, whose worship was often syncretistic, to a secondary status at Jerusalem. Ezekiel, in his vision of the restored Second Temple, for the same reason, expected only Zadokite priests to minister, with others relegated to a secondary status. This seems to have become the practice in Second Temple times.

Various exceptions to the centralization of sacrificial worship can be observed in the Second Temple period. Before investigating them we must note how insignificant these exceptions are. By and large, from the Josianic reformation on, Jews did not attempt to sacrifice except in Jerusalem. Hence, the Babylonian exiles made no attempt to sacrifice in Babylonia. Of the exceptions we will mention, only the Samaritans are

actually to be considered a sect. Nevertheless, the other examples provide the background for understanding the Samaritan position on this issue.

Three exceptions should be mentioned. In the Persian period, a Jewish garrison was established at Yeb or Elephantine (now Aswan) on the Nile. This garrison had a somewhat syncretistic cult including not only the God of Israel but some local gods as well. Their temple in Egypt included sacrifices offered to the God of Israel, who was the head of their pantheon. This cult was probably a late survival of the syncretistic worship of the *bamot* ("high places") of First Temple times.

A second Egyptian cultic place to the God of Israel is the so-called Temple of Onias at Leontopolis. Founded in the mid-second century B.C.E., this temple was probably established as the result of internecine strife among candidates for the high priesthood in Jerusalem. Its priests were Zadokites, and it was built on the model of the Jerusalem Temple. There is no reason to doubt its exclusive worship of the God of Israel, especially if the Talmudic traditions are to be accepted.

A third example is the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim. According to a report of Josephus, the veracity of which has been questioned by many scholars, this temple was also founded as the result of strife within the priesthood. Manasses, a brother of the high priest Jaddua, married Nikaso, daughter of Sanballat, governor of Samaria. Because of his marriage, Manasses was expelled from Jerusalem. His father-in-law built him a temple on Mount Gerizim (modern-day Nablus on the West Bank) with the permission of Alexander the Great. It seems, at the very least, that this date can be accepted for the building of the Samaritan temple. Additional confirmation comes from the papyri from Wadi el-Daliyeh which help to furnish a chronology of Samaritan rulers...

The exact details given by Josephus regarding the cause of the founding of this temple may be fictional. However, it certainly took place after the success of the Judeans in building the Jerusalem Temple. After all, the attempt of the Samaritans to join in the building of the Jerusalem sanctuary had been rebuffed by the Judean authorities. This rejection must have resulted in the founding of an independent temple.

It is impossible to reconstruct the cult of the Samaritan temple since the texts we have are of so much later provenance. It seems, though, that only the God of Israel would have been worshipped there, and that the sacrificial system would have been very much in accord with the biblical cultic codes as found in the Samaritan version of the Pentateuch.

The Biblical Canon

An important area of divergence among the Jews of the Second Commonwealth concerns the biblical canon and text. By canon we mean those books which are considered authoritative and holy.

The Pharisees probably accepted as sanctified and authoritative the Torah, Prophets, and a corpus of writings. Only in Mishnaic times, however, was the final decision made on certain of the writings. The Sadducees were said by the Church Fathers to have accepted only the Pentateuch, yet there is no evidence for this claim. It seems that the Sadducees would have shared at least the canon of the Pharisees. It is also possible that they accepted even more books as authoritative. The canon of the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria, as evidenced by the Greek Bible (and followed in the Catholic tradition), includes the books classified as Apocrypha. These additional books

were written during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, some in Hebrew and most in Greek. Some of the apocryphal books are representative of the point of view of the Hellenistic Jews of Alexandria. It is therefore possible that the Hellenized Sadducees may have also been attracted to these books and included them in their canon. Some of the apocryphal books, on the other hand, were written in the last days of the Second Temple, and there seems little chance that the Sadducees would have considered these works canonical.

The Samaritans regarded as canonical only the Pentateuch. Some scholars have argued that this limited canon shows that the Samaritans broke away from normative Judaism before the Prophets had been canonized. This claim, however, has been seriously challenged.

At Qumran every biblical book has been found except Esther. There are also various apocryphal or pseudepigraphical books. The problem is that we cannot be sure whether the Dead Sea sect had a concept of canon. Some argue that at Qumran the canon was open, with new books being added at times. In our view there was a canon at Qumran, including all the books in our canon, but perhaps also including one or two additional books.

The Calendar

Still another aspect of the divergence among sects at this time is the calendar. In the history of religions, calendar reform or variation has often played a part in religious schisms. To mention some familiar cases, there is the Christian shift of emphasis from

Saturday to Sunday, the elimination of the intercalation of the month in the Moslem calendar, and the variations between the Eastern and Western Churches in Christianity. Such a variation or change is found in the Bible, and it will not surprise us to see a calendar dispute play a part in the Second Commonwealth as well.

Jeroboam, ruler of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (928-907 B.C.E.), had already attempted to use a calendric change as part of his efforts to separate the people of the Northern Kingdom from their Judean co-religionists. To this end, he postponed the celebration of Sukkot from the seventh to the eighth month. Even if this adjustment may have been more in accord with the agricultural realities of the North, with its somewhat colder climate than the South, the fact remains that his purpose was to complete the shift of allegiance from the sanctuary at Jerusalem to those of Beth El and Dan to shore up his political structure.

In Second Temple times, the major issue now revolved about whether to use a series of twelve lunar months periodically adjusted by intercalation of a thirteenth to constitute a year (lunar-solar) or to use a fixed calendar of thirty-day and thirty-one-day months, twelve of which would constitute the solar year (solar). While Jewish tradition assumes that the former was the ancient Israelite calendar, and that the latter was an innovation, rightly opposed, some scholars have held the less likely view that it was the lunar month which was the innovation. In any case, the calendar of the Pharisees must have been the lunar-solar, while the Dead Sea sect and the pseudepigraphic books of Jubilees and Enoch, both found in the Qumran library, followed solar calendars. (We cannot be sure about the Sadducees.) It is possible that this 364-day solar calendar had as

its purpose ensuring that the festivals would not fall on the Sabbath as this entailed numerous problems regarding Temple and home observance.

A related calendar dispute pertained to the date of the festival of Shavuot. The Bible commanded that forty-nine days be counted from the “day after the Sabbath” (Lev. 23:15). The Pharisees, according to later sources, took “Sabbath” here, based on context, to mean the first day of Passover (a day of rest, or “Sabbath”); hence, the fiftieth day after Passover was the date of Shavuot. The other groups took this passage as referring to the Saturday after either the first or last day of Passover. That these variant calendars were actually put into practice in the different groups is shown by the Habakkuk Commentary from Qumran, which tells of how the Jerusalem high priest confronted the leader of the sect on a day which the sectarians observed as the Day of Atonement.

Urbanization

The character of the various groups was also influenced by the degree of urbanization each group accepted, in an era in which the migration to large cities was a regular part of economic reality. In Second Temple times, not everyone was content with increasing urbanization and the changes it introduced into the agricultural way of life. Much later the Talmud was to remark that the signs of urbanization were robbery, sexual immorality, and deceitful oaths. The rural environment was regarded as fostering scholarship and the piety which went with it. This attitude must have been widespread in the Hellenistic and Roman period, as the mores of these foreign societies, with their disdain for sobriety and moderation, became increasingly familiar to the Jews of the Land of Israel. Unfortunately, the Sadducean priests, with time, seem to have surrendered

themselves totally to the lure of the city and its attractions. The Pharisees, despite the widespread support they had among city dwellers, must have stood fast against much of this. It was the Dead Sea sect that made clear its opposition in its writings, attacking the Jerusalem establishment for fornication, materialism, and impurity. This opposition was no doubt manifested in the way of life of the group that set up its headquarters at Qumran. To be sure, the sect allowed the use of wine, although we may assume that it shared the biblical view that wine had to be taken in moderation. Nonetheless, the sect had physically relocated in an environment which made contact with the evils of urbanism impossible.

Particularly important is the Dead Sea sect's view of property. While not rejecting the concept of private property so important to the society envisaged by the Hebrew Bible, the sect required that the use of all property belonging to members be common. In other words, the use of all property was shared while ownership remained in the hands of the individual. Certainly, an approach such as this would eliminate the need to accumulate large amounts of personal wealth, often at the expense of those less advantaged. Most important, it constituted a sharp denial of the materialistic attitude so prevalent in the increasingly Hellenized cities.

We have noted that it cannot be determined with certainty whether the Essenes and the sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls were one and the same. The Essenes, as described by Philo and Josephus, went even further than the Dead Sea texts. They denied private ownership and held all property in common. Indeed, such an approach would later be seen in the emerging Church. The Essenes clearly spurned urban materialism, and many are described as having shunned towns because of the immorality of their inhabitants.

We know from Josephus and the New Testament that in the period under discussion, there were also hermit-like holy men who had left society and separated themselves from its evils, but we must emphasize that this phenomenon is very different from that of organized groups.

We have pictured the Dead Sea sect as to a great extent anti-urban in its outlook. Even So, despite its sectarian organization and particular economic system, the settlement at Qumran and its offshoot at Ein Fashka in many ways may be regarded as a mini-city, or what might be called in Israel today a development town.

God, Man, and History

Another area in which the various sects disagreed was that of theology and the future of man. The Bible speaks of a Hades-like existence in Sheol after death. This kind of afterlife concept makes no distinction between body and soul, as the location of Sheol is below ground, and that is where Jews have always interred their dead. Indeed, the Bible regards the individual as a unitary being, making no distinction between man's physical and spiritual aspects.

When the Jews found themselves in the Hellenistic environment, the Greek concepts of body and soul began to have an influence on Judaism. If we can believe Josephus, the Sadducees, the most Hellenized group of Jews, rejected this concept, and, hence, retained the biblical concept of afterlife. While it is indeed hard to believe that the Hellenized Sadducees would have rejected this Hellenistic concept, it is possible. After all, the Sadducees were a very conservative group in religious matters. The Pharisees, gradually accepting the Greek division of body and soul, modified their concept of life

after death. They came to believe that the body ceased to function at death, while the intangible soul continued in existence. During this afterlife, people would be rewarded or punished. Eventually, the righteous would be resurrected to eternal life in the end of days. The views of the Essenes, as described by Josephus, are almost the same as those of the Pharisees. The Dead Sea sect had no problem with afterlife as they believed that they were living on the verge of the future age. They would still be alive for the dawn of the Messianic era. Nonetheless, they seem to have viewed the human being in the old biblical sense, making no distinction between body and soul.

Interesting in this connection is the question of fate and the free will of man. The Sadducees are said by Josephus to have believed in absolute freedom of the individual, with providence playing no part in the affairs of humans. The Essenes, according to him, believe that all is “in the hands of heaven.” The Pharisees are pictured as occupying a middle ground, believing that man’s free will interacts with the force of divine providence. Some scholars have questioned this schematization, believing it to be influenced by Josephus’ knowledge of Greek philosophy. Nonetheless, it is important to observe that the Dead Sea Scrolls deny man free will, and accept predestination. These texts go so far as to blame people for their transgressions, and yet to assert that it is predetermined whether one is to be in the camp of the “sons of light” or that of the “sons of darkness.” Apparently, along with the sect’s constant calls for repentance goes the idea that only those whom providence has so designated are capable of repentance.

In light of later developments, Messianism is of central concern. The extent to which Messianic belief is enshrined in the Hebrew Scriptures is the subject of great controversy. On the one hand, already by the time of Isaiah, there is the concept that there

will eventually arise a future Davidic king who will have excellent qualities and whose reign will usher in a period of great tranquility and peace. Further, the prophets foretell a great day of the Lord on which all the evildoers will receive their due. This day of the Lord will be accompanied by earth-shattering, cataclysmic events. The followers of the way of God will reign supreme at its conclusion. Finally, by the Second Temple period, as shown by the Book of Daniel, there was an apocalyptic notion that the deliverance of Israel would come only after a succession of divinely appointed kingdoms had reigned. After this, the Messianic era would dawn.

These ideas represent a complex of notions, and we must assume that in the First Temple period there were various differing views and conflicts regarding them. By the Second Commonwealth, fortunately, we can be more specific. First, we have various sectarian apocalyptic works such as are found in the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. It would seem that to many of these writers what was important was the idea of the coming of the Messianic age and not necessarily the personal Messiah. The apocalyptic groups emphasized the war and the punishment of evildoers that would inaugurate the coming end of days, while the Pharisees, we may presume, emphasized the utopian kingdom to be established by the Davidic Messiah.

Another position was taken by the Dead Sea sect and some pseudepigraphical texts. They believed that the coming age would indeed begin with a great war and punishment, yet they saw the leadership of the people in the hands of two Messianic figures. A priestly Messiah would take precedence and reestablish the Jerusalem sacrificial cult. Along with him, a Davidic Messiah would rule over the reestablished temporal kingdom. The precedence given to the priestly, or Aaronide, Messiah was, no

doubt, the result of the priestly origins and dominance of the Dead Sea group which we have already discussed.

Many scholars have taken the view that the Sadducees did not believe at all in Messianism. Their conclusion is based on the Sadducean denial of fate, divine providence, immortality of the soul, and resurrection. On the other hand, the Sadducees may have adhered more closely to First Temple sources and expected a more natural turn of events which would lead to the restoration of ancient Jewish glory.

Of course, the issue of Messianism really comes to the fore in the rise of Christianity. Early Christianity seems to have combined the apocalyptic view of the sects with a heavy emphasis on the Davidic Messiah, apparently the hallmark of the Pharisaic approach. From this combination emerged a concept that the Messianic era was in fact at hand as Jesus was identified as the Davidic Messiah. When his mission failed to bring about the expected results foretold in the Hebrew prophets, nascent Christianity revised those prophecies through the medium of exegesis and so was able to preserve the concept of the Messiahship of Jesus despite the disappointment. Christianity went even further and saw the Messiah as a divine or semi-divine being. Soon Christianity abrogated Jewish law and so took the steps which would separate it decidedly from Judaism. When this breach became fully apparent, the Christians realized the deep gulf separating them from Judaism and began to shift their mission toward the gentiles. The Christian view that Jewish law had been abrogated served to make gentile Christianity a realistic possibility.

Interrelation of the Sects

Palestine was a small country in which the bulk of the populace lived a simple rural life. Nevertheless, Judaism is a communally practiced religion, necessitating cooperation and consensus in the manner of discharging religious duties. For this reason alone, sectarian divisions might become sources of tension and aggravation within a community. Add to this a central sacrificial sanctuary, for control of which various groups might vie, and here are the necessary ingredients for the extension of sectarianism from the philosophical and intellectual realm into real conflict.

On the other hand, the common national heritage and a common foreign enemy often galvanized the people into overcoming and rising above their internal divisions. Further, most of the people belonged to the class called by the Talmud the *`am ha-`areš*, the common people. This class must have been for the most part unaware of the particular issues that separated the various sects.

Relations between the sects in the Greco-Roman period ranged from cordial disagreement to armed conflict. Let us survey a few examples.

The Maccabean revolt can certainly be seen as beginning with a civil war between pro- and anti-Hellenistic factions within Judea. This civil war eventually resulted in the arrogation of high priestly and royal powers by the Maccabees and their Hasmonean descendants. It was probably as a reaction to this usurpation that righteous Zadokite priests went to the desert to live at Qumran.

The Pharisees eventually raised their objection to the Hasmonean usurpation of the priesthood and kingship, and this resulted in the slaughter of many Pharisees by the Hasmonean king. At the same time, the Hasmonean rulers fought the Samaritans and destroyed the Samaritan temple on Mount Gerizim.

Many differences existed between the Pharisees and Sadducees in regard to Temple service. We know of later scuffles and even riots in the Temple regarding these practices. There is no reason to suspect that such conflicts did not erupt in earlier times as well.

On the other hand, the Mishnah portrays cordial dialogues between Pharisees and Sadducees regarding issue of Jewish law. Similar matters are irenically addressed in the MMT document from Qumran. There is again no reason to doubt that such discussions took place, especially in times when tensions were eased for one reason or another. Talmudic reports, however, paint the Boethusians as sabotaging the rabbinic proclamation of the new moon in an attempt to confuse the Pharisaic calendar, which the Boethusians regarded as illegitimate. We must remember, however, that the rabbinic dislike for the priestly house of Boethus may have colored their opinions of the Boethusians.

Relations between Jews and the early Christians seem to have been friendly at first. Many peaceful dialogues relating to religious matters are described in the New Testament accounts. As the divergences of Christianity from Judaism became increasingly clear, Jews and Christians began to turn against each other. This is already evident in the priestly opposition to Jesus. By the year 70 C.E., the Christian community of Jerusalem would see their national destiny as separate from that of the Jews. The messianic overtones of the revolt against Rome (of which we shall speak below) made it impossible for the Christians to participate fully in the revolt.

What was the impact of these conflicts on daily life? First, we know that some of the groups, namely the Pharisees and the Dead Sea sect, had special purity laws which

required that they eat only food prepared according to regulation. Sadducees would have observed similar laws in regard to the eating of Temple offerings. These groups would have abstained from the food of the *`am ha-`areš*, who were not careful in regard to purity or tithes. The social consequences of these differences are readily apparent. What needs to be stressed is that, with the exception of the priesthood, one could join another group simply by adopting the rules of the sect. These were not closed groups.

Regarding marriage, beginning in the early years of the Second Commonwealth, the genealogical conception of the Jewish people did not allow their marriage with non-Jews. Hence, marriage with the Samaritans was prohibited, and it remains even so today.

In the case of Christianity, the matter is more complex. Jews and Jewish Christians would probably have married one another in the early years of Christianity. Once Gentile Christianity became the norm, the Jews defined Christians as non-Jews and prohibited marriage with them. Beyond this, we know of no other prohibitions on marriage between the sects. On the other hand, the tendency of people to marry within their own socio-economic group must have operated then as it does today. Indeed, aristocratic and Sadducean priestly families tended to marry one another throughout our period.

Some Jews, those holding the views of extreme Hellenizers desiring complete assimilation into the mainstream of the Greco-Roman world, would have ignored the prohibitions on intermarriage. A small number of individuals would have also found themselves intermarrying for purely personal reasons.

There was, as we mentioned, some disagreement about the dates of holidays. We cannot be sure which dates were followed, except that the Sadducees must have

controlled Temple worship for much of our period. Rabbinic sources and Josephus, however, portray the Pharisees as in control, at least from the time of Salome Alexandra (76-67 B.C.E.). This account may be idealized, as it is hard to see the Sadducees accepting Pharisaic domination of the Temple. It is not impossible, though, that the immense popularity of the Pharisees gave them considerable leverage over the less popular Sadducean officials of the Temple.

In spite of these accounts of struggles, we must not lose perspective on the extent of these conflicts. Our sources tend to highlight contacts and disagreements. The fact is that there were considerable affinities among all the groups since they shared many religious principles and practices and a common nationality,

Foreign Rule and Revolt

In the last years of the Second Commonwealth, as Roman rule became more and more intolerable, different revolutionary groups began to spring up. Foreign domination was nothing new for the Jews. In First Temple times there never ceased to be disagreements about how to relate to the dominant empires. Often, it was assumed that a revolt against the Mesopotamian power would be supported by Egypt, or vice versa. More often than not, these were but vain hopes. Such an assumption led in part to Zedekiah's rebellion against Babylonia, which resulted in the destruction of the nation and its Temple in 586 B.C.E. Indeed, there can be discerned at this time pro-Egyptian and pro-Babylonian parties. The former counseled rebellion as their ally, Egypt, was expected to lend support. The latter, including the prophet Jeremiah, advised the king to pay tribute to Babylonia. After all, they reasoned, foreign or military domination was but a small

price to pay for internal self-government and the freedom to pursue their ancient way of life.

In the Maccabean uprising, the lines had been drawn more clearly. The rebellion had begun in a civil war regarding the extent to which Judea was to be Hellenized. At the outset there were the Hellenizers and their opponents. Once Antiochus stepped in and outlawed certain basic Jewish practices and defiled the Temple, the masses of Jews rallied behind the Maccabean family, leaving only the extreme Hellenizers and the armies of Seleucid Syria on the other side. Thus, the revolt became primarily that of the Jewish people against their Greco-Syrian overlords.

With Rome the situation was much more complex. Josephus speaks of the so-called Fourth Philosophy (alongside Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes). This group seems to have been identical with the Sicarii (“dagger-carriers”), who played so important a role in the revolt against Rome. These were primarily Galileans who, under Judah the Gaulanite, began to attack the Romans in 4 B.C.E. This faction must have continued its operations and stayed under the leadership of the same family through the Great Revolt of 66-73 C.E. They held that Israel had no master but God Himself and steadfastly refused to accept foreign domination, continuing an old Maccabean belief. Josephus states that these men agreed in other respects with the Pharisaic approach. It should be remembered that the revolt against Rome was brewing from the very start of the century, and guerilla groups such as the Sicarii were active throughout this period. The Fourth Philosophy, then, seems to be a Pharisaic-like group especially dedicated to the revolt against Roman domination.

Another group involved in the rebellion was the Zealots. Some have tried to see the Zealots identical with the Sicarii, but this view is unacceptable. After all, Josephus was himself a participant in the revolt and gives us very detailed accounts of the revolutionary groups and specifically differentiates them from one another.

The Zealots were a group that crystallized quite late in the revolt. Its main leadership came from lower-level priests of the Jerusalem Temple. Indeed, it was they who suspended the twice-daily sacrifice for the welfare of the Roman emperor act tantamount to a declaration of war (66 C.E.). Like the Sicarii their methods were those of terrorists. For both groups, extreme tactics, including assassination of moderate Jews whom they regarded as Roman sympathizers, ultimately may have caused the populace, at least in Jerusalem, to turn against them.

Simeon bar Giora and John of Giscala (Gush Halav in the Golan) stand out as individuals who led factions in the revolt. Both of these men seem to have been charismatic leaders who headed private armies. Simeon was closest in approach to the Sicarii and John to the Zealots, although these leaders cannot be identified with these two groups. Simeon seems to have embodied Messianic dreams to some of his followers, like the later Simeon bar Kosiba (bar Kokhba), who led the revolt against Rome in 132-135 C.E. John, on the other hand, seems to have been more moderate and was friendly with Simeon ben Gamliel, the leading Pharisee.

They are mentioned by Josephus only once in regard to the revolt. A certain John the Essene appears as a revolutionary commander. While there is no other direct evidence of Essene participation in the war, the reports that the Romans tortured the Essenes would seem to indicate that the Essenes had thrown in their lot with the rebellion. To be sure,

Philo had pictured the Essenes as pacifists, but we must assume that they saw this war as the eschatological battle and, therefore, that they had no qualms about participating in it.

We have discussed above the issue of whether the Essenes are to be identified as the sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Various theories regarding participation by the Qumran sect in the revolt have been proposed. The War Scroll has been seen as a description in eschatological terms of the already-brewing revolt. We do know that Qumran was destroyed during the revolt in 68 C.E.

Who opposed the revolt? The aristocratic leaders, most probably high-level Sadducean priests and their supporters, as well as the extremely Hellenized Jews supported Roman rule, from which, no doubt, they gained commercial and financial advantage. In addition, the moderate Pharisees believed that it was better to submit to the military domination of Rome than to risk subjecting their religious freedom and the Temple to the wrath of the Empire. Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, who established an academy at Yavneh in the last hours of the revolt, certainly took this view. It was as a consequence of the Pharisaic tolerance of Roman rule that the descendants of Rabban Gamliel were entrusted by the Romans with the internal self-government of the Jewish people, usually termed the Patriarchate.

What emerges from this picture is an alignment which cut across sectarian lines. It seems that the Sicarii represented those followers of the Pharisaic order who actively supported the revolt. This was despite the much more moderate, almost pacifist view of some members of the Pharisaic leadership. Whereas the upper-level Sadduceans would have preferred peaceful coexistence with Rome, it was lower-level priests, also of the Sadducean order, who formed the Zealots and effected the formal declaration of revolt.

Whereas the sectarian group at Qumran seems to have sat out the war, although ultimately engulfed and destroyed by it, some Essene sectarians were actively involved. While some Judeans saw the revolt as the culmination of the apocalyptic movements of Second Temple times, this was certainly not the view of most rebels or their supporters among the population. Finally, both rebels and moderates had urban and rural, rich and poor constituents. With all we have said, though, it is doubtful whether the revolt could ever have gotten as far as it did if not for the support of the majority of the Jewish population of Judea.

In this cursory survey, in which we have covered only a small number of issues, it is clear that Judaism in the Land of Israel during the Hellenistic period was variegated and certainly not monolithic. This situation continued until the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. The Talmud gives its reason for the destruction as the Jews' lack of ability to function as a unified people. In fact, rabbinic tradition looked askance at the entire phenomenon of sectarianism. Its view was that Pharisaism, the intellectual and religious approach the Rabbis had inherited, was in direct continuity with the Mosaic oral tradition. From the vantage point of rabbinic Judaism, everyone else was a schismatic. Had Israel only adhered to the tradition of the Pharisees, there would have been no Hellenization, no revolt, and no destruction. Just as the Deuteronomic editor of Kings saw the misfortunes of the Israelites in biblical times as stemming from deviation from the teachings of the Lord, so it was this deviation, in the form of the rejection of the true tradition, which led, in the Talmudic view, to the destruction in 70 C.E.

We must inquire here as to whether this evaluation is valid. We have seen that the issues raised by the sectarian movements in the Second Temple period were not, in

almost every case, new ones. Rather, they constitute a series of unresolved problems remaining from First Temple times. What was new was the venue. It was no longer the Israel surrounded by Semitic paganism that would argue these issues. It was now a nation of Jews first in the Persian, and then in the Hellenistic or Greco-Roman world. This new environment, culturally and historically, gave new impetus to some conflicts and modified others. By and large, though, it did not bring about the schisms; they were already present in biblical times.

So the sectarianism of the Second Temple period is really a continuation of earlier divisions. If so, can we speak of a normative tradition at any time in pre-rabbinic times? I think not. Despite the rabbinic ideal, it seems that the Jewish people always had room for differences and for movements within it. These could be religious, political, or socio-economic.

Were these divisions beneficial or harmful to Jewish life? There is no question that from a political or military point of view they were a disadvantage. Had the Jewish people been unified, there would have been a better chance of holding out longer against Rome, although there can be no question that enough Roman men and materiel would have eventually been victorious.

But Judaism was not meant to be simply a military or political entity. It was and is a way of relating to God and man, of bringing meaning and purpose to human existence, and of explaining the world around us. The emergence of the Jewish people into the Hellenistic period was in many ways analogous to its emergence into modern times. The world in which the Jews lived was suddenly changed. This new world intensified the old conflicts. At the same time, the Hellenistic environment created a greater need to answer

the pressing questions Judaism raised. As such, this was a period in which Judaism was not sure in which direction to go. What Judaism and the Jewish people needed was to experiment by playing out the results of the old conflicts to see how the various approaches would work in this new era. 'Thus, the sects were a proving ground from which emerged an answer to which way Judaism would move in the post-70 C.E. period.

It was the destruction in 70 C.E. which served as the time of decision. It must be remembered that the destruction of the Temple was not just a religious tragedy. By the time Jerusalem and the Temple fell, the entire country had been devastated by years of war and pillage. 'The entire socio—economic, political, and religious order had been overturned. Finally, the conflicts that had seethed above and below ground in Second Temple times needed to be resolved. It was here that history played its usual role. It decided.

Apocalypticism and the approach of such groups as the Essenes and the sect of the Dead Sea Scrolls had already served as the background for emerging Christianity. After all, these groups that had seen the end of days about to dawn. Their energies and many of their ideals, from an historical point of view, found their way into the nascent Christian Church, and these approaches were no longer to be considered Jewish. The mainstream of Jewish life would confront this approach again only in the guise of false-Messiah movements, most notably that of Shabbatai Zevi, or in the form of Christian conversionist preaching.

The Sadducean movement was so tied up with the priestly aristocracy and Temple worship that when the Temple was destroyed and the social order decimated, the priestly, Sadducean approach simply could not endure. Perhaps its emphasis on the primacy of the

Temple made its views untenable in the new situation. Perhaps it was the religious victory of the Pharisees and the attendant recognition of their political powers (which we shall mention below) 'which further weakened the Sadducees. There are some references to Sadducees in post-70 times in Talmudic literature, but, as we have said, these are often the result of Christian censors in the Middle Ages who changed words meaning "Christian" or "heretic" to "Sadducee."

What of the Pharisees? It seems that a combination of their religious and political views made them uniquely able to serve as the continuers of the Jewish tradition. On the political front, they had always counseled cooperation with the existing authorities, and it was through them after the catastrophe of 70 that the Romans set up a system of local Jewish self-government known as the Patriarchate.

On the religious front, of all the sects of the Second Commonwealth, the Pharisees seemed best able to command the allegiance of the common people, the *'am ha-'areṣ*. Most important, the Pharisaic approach to halakhah, Jewish law, was flexible. By allowing it to change with the times, at least in terms of practical applications, they made it a livable system, denying the later Pauline view that Jewish law was an insuperable burden. Thus, Judaism never faced the problems it might have, had a literalist approach to Jewish law become the norm. In regard to theological questions, the Pharisaic beliefs had long accorded with those of most Jews, for in times of trouble, the Jewish people longed to believe in such ideas as afterlife and the Messianic era. If life in this world was not what it should be, they would be rewarded in the next for their observance in this world. And so it was that after the destruction, the Pharisaic approach, as interpreted by the Rabbis of the Mishnah and Talmud, furnished the groundwork for

what we have come to call rabbinic or normative Judaism. This Pharisaic heritage in the Middle Ages, when Judaism faced the challenges of the Islamic and Christian worlds, was again able to prevail and to flourish by the process of organic, subtle, and imperceptible self-modification and adaptation. Rabbinic Judaism has again had to face alien values in the modern world. It still remains to be seen how the heritage of the Pharisees will continue, but there can be no question that it will.

The Rise of the Early Church

The earliest years of the Christian church unfolded during this period of decline and unrest. In these years what would later be called the "church" was in reality a Jewish sect, and it is in this context that it is treated here. The difficult economic and political conditions in Judea during the career of Jesus and in the period of the emerging church tended to encourage the rise of religious movements. In addition, the multiplicity of sects and movements in Second Temple Judaism provided a rich legacy which could serve as the basis for the Christian apocalyptic movement. These two factors together constituted the major influences on the rise of this new religious group and the schism which would eventually follow.

Indeed, Christianity was firmly anchored in the heritage of Second Temple sectarianism. Various sects, some of which are represented in the corpus of materials discovered in the Qumran caves, tell us of the extreme apocalypticism of some groups of Jews at that time. These groups hoped for the immediate revelation of a messiah who would redeem them from their misfortunes and tribulations. As time went on, and as political and economic conditions worsened, these groups became more and more

convinced that this messianic deliverance would be accompanied by a cataclysm. When Christianity came to the fore in the first century C.E., its adherents saw themselves living in the period of the fulfillment of biblical eschatological visions. It identified Jesus as the Davidic messiah who would usher in the eventual destruction of all evil.

Any study of the career of Jesus and the rise of the Christian church must acknowledge that Palestine in this period was the scene of the occasional messianic and prophetic figure. Among these was clearly John the Baptist, who, according to the New Testament, was the teacher and inspiration of Jesus. John preached repentance as well as the need for baptism (immersion) in the Jordan River as a one-time experience designed to bring about true repentance. (John was put to death in c. 29 C.E. by Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, who ruled Galilee and Peraea in Transjordan from 4 B.C.E.-39 C.E.) Statements regarding Jesus found in certain modern writers to the effect that he studied among Essenes or the Dead Sea sectarians must be rejected as purely speculative. Rather, Jesus was affected, as was early Christianity, by a variety of ideas in the air among the various sectarian groups, of which by chance only certain texts survive. The Qumran materials, if properly understood, provide this background for Christianity, showing that it was on the foundation of a Judaism like this, not that of the Pharisees, that the church was erected. Yet at the same time, some Pharisaic tendencies had a great impact on the church, as did Second Temple sectarian trends on rabbinic Judaism.

The immediate followers of Jesus in the early days of his career and soon afterwards gathered together in Jerusalem and formed (according to the Acts of the

Apostles) a small group which sought both to live as Jews and to accept the messiahship of Jesus. It was only later that the notion of the divinity of Jesus appeared, towards the end of the New Testament redactional process in the second half of the first century C.E. This group evolved from a coterie of Jews seeking to propagate the belief in Jesus as messiah to an apostolic group seeking to convert the world. Following the lead of Peter, Paul who convinced the fledgling church to formally open itself to gentile converts and brought to it the notion of a mission to the gentiles, transforming Christianity in the process.

The split between Judaism and Christianity did not come about simply or quickly. It was a complex process which took some one hundred years, starting from the crucifixion, and which has different causes and effects depending on whether it is looked at from the point of view of Judaism or Christianity. Further, the question of legal status as seen through the eyes of the Romans also had some relationship to this issue.

From the point of view of Christianity, the schism is not difficult to trace. In the earliest Gospel texts which picture Jesus as debating issues of Jewish law with the Pharisees no hostility is observed. The crucifixion is said to have been carried out by the Romans with the support of some (apparently Hellenized) priests. As we trace the history of the New Testament traditions, they move from disputes with Pharisees, scribes and chief priests, to polemics against the Jews and Judaism, from the notion of some Jews as enemies of Jesus to the demonization of the Jewish people as a whole. By some time in the first century the New Testament redactors clearly decided that they were no longer part of the Jewish people. Therefore, they described Jesus as

disputing with all the Jews, not just some, as would be appropriate to an internal Jewish dispute. Once the Christians saw the Jews as the "other," it was but a short step to the notion that the Jews were all responsible for the rejection of Jesus and, hence, for the failure of his messianic mission to be fulfilled.

From the point of view of Judaism, the matter is more complex. By this time, tannaitic Judaism was already the dominant form of Judaism, for the Pharisees had emerged from the revolt as the main influence within the Jewish community. After the destruction, the tannaim immediately recognized the need to standardize and unify Judaism. One of their first steps was to standardize the Eighteen Benedictions which, along with the Shema, constituted the core of the daily prayers. At the same time, they expanded an old benediction to include the *minim*, Jews with incorrect beliefs, which, in this period, meant the early Jewish Christians. In addition, the tannaim enacted laws designed to further separate the Jewish Christians from the community by prohibiting commerce with them and forbidding certain other interrelationships.

Hereafter, it is possible to trace the growing process of separation from the end of the first century C.E. until the period of the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-135 C.E.) in which the tannaim outlawed the writings of the early Christians, declaring that even if they possess Torah scrolls or texts with Divine names, these texts have no sanctity. This was clearly a polemic against the Gospels which must have been circulating in some form, even preredactional, by this time.

In the time of Paul, by about 60 C.E., the decision to open Christianity to gentiles had taken place, and the tannaim gradually found themselves facing a church the members of which were not Jews from the point of view of halakhah. To the Rabbis,

these were not Jews with incorrect views about the messiah. They were gentiles who claimed to be the true Israel. By the Bar Kokhba period, this process was complete.

Gentile Christianity had gained the ascendancy totally and now was virtually the only form of Christianity the Rabbis encountered. Jewish Christianity had been submerged. Then, the Rabbis termed the Christians *noserim* ("Nazarenes") and regarded them as a completely separate and alien religious group.

The third point of view, that of the Romans, can be traced as well. The Romans at first regarded the Christians as part of the Jewish people. As Christianity spread and took on a clearly different identity, as acknowledged by both Jews and Christians, the Roman Empire modified its view. The emperor Nerva (96-98 C.E.) freed the Christians (probably including the Jewish Christians) from paying the *fiscus judaicus*, the Jewish capitation tax decreed as a punishment in the aftermath of the revolt of 66-73 C.E. Clearly, the Romans now regarded the Christians as a separate group. The way was paved for the legitimization of Christianity as a licit religion. The decline of the old pagan cults coupled with the tremendous success of Christianity would eventually lead to the acceptance of the new faith as the official religion of the Roman Empire in 324 C.E.

Jewish Christian Relations in the Early Centuries

How did Jews and Christians relate once the final break had come about?

Several forms of evidence for this question exist, all of which point to a deterioration of relations and a rise of hostility. The early days of the schism were marked by questioning and debate. This is clear from accounts in both Rabbinic literature and in the

writings of the church fathers. Jews and Christians discussed such questions as interpretation of the Hebrew Bible and the authority of their respective traditions. Even in this literature, however, one can trace the rising tensions which would ultimately prevail between the two groups. At some point, probably connected with the Christianization of the Empire in the fourth century, the Christians began to approach their Jewish neighbors with a much greater degree of antagonism, especially in Byzantine Palestine. Physical attacks against Jews and their houses of worship were not unknown in this period. Whereas in earlier times, there was coexistence and harmony, by the fifth century anti-Semitic legislation was prominent in Byzantine codes. Jews were forbidden to build synagogues and to study the oral Law. The Jews were said to be the Christ-killers, and anti-Judaism was the norm in Christian preaching.

By the end of the Talmudic period, Christianity had taken up the classical positions of anti-Semitism which were to inform its relations with the Jews in the Middle Ages. Jews were able to resist only by comforting themselves in the belief that they were correct and that their suffering would end with the messianic redemption.

From Temple to Synagogue

The most central aspect of the transition from pre-destruction to post-destruction times was the change of the center of worship from Temple to synagogue. This change must be fully understood to grasp the essence of Rabbinic Judaism. In Temple times, the Jerusalem Temple was understood as a place where the Divine Presence could always be approached. In other words, it was the locus of God's abiding in Israel, in fulfillment of the biblical statement, "I will dwell among them" (Exod.

25:8). It was the sudden disappearance of this avenue of communing with God that was most tragic.

The question of the discontinuance of animal sacrifice itself is more complex. Certainly, animal sacrifice was perceived in the years leading up to the revolt and the destruction as the highest form of worship. Yet it was not the only form. Various evidence, including that of the Dead Sea Scrolls, demonstrates that the role of prayer was increasing constantly in Second Temple times. In the last years of the Temple, prayer had so extensively found its way into the Temple service that it was assigned a special place, a *proseuche* (a Greek term for a prayer room), in the Jerusalem Temple.

There is no evidence for the synagogue as an institution in Palestine before the first century C.E. Mentions of a synagogue in inscriptions from Hellenistic times in the Diaspora refer not to a prayer area (*proseuche* in Greek), but rather to a Jewish communal organization which managed the local affairs of the Jews in their Diaspora communities. The synagogue in its English meaning, a place of prayer, may first be observed in Palestine in the first century C.E. (Masada, Herodion and Gamla), and probably somewhat earlier in the Diaspora.

Where did Jews pray before the rise of synagogue buildings? We cannot be sure. It has been theorized that the synagogue had its origins in the Babylonian exile when the Jews first had to adapt to the lack of a Temple and animal sacrifice. Yet there is absolutely no evidence, literary or archaeological, for this theory. On the other hand, the history of post-biblical prayer begins early in the Hellenistic period, and perhaps even before. There must have been places for prayer, maybe in the town squares, but this is simply speculation.

Clearly, however, the concomitant development of the synagogue as an institution, along with the gradual ascendancy of prayer over sacrifice as a means of worship, prepared Judaism for the new situation that the destruction of the Temple would bring. When the Temple was taken away, its replacement had already been created. From that time forth the daily prayers would serve in place of sacrifice, and the synagogue, the "Temple in miniature," would replace the central sanctuary of Jerusalem. The Jew would look forward to the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of its system of worship. Yet the Jewish people was equipped with a portable system of worship which it could carry throughout its wanderings, and which would preserve the closeness to God which had once been symbolized and embodied in the Jerusalem Temple.

The Redaction of the Mishnah

Scholars have long debated the exact nature and history of the process that led to the redaction, arrangement and selection of the Mishnah, the first major document to emerge from and to represent the tannaitic tradition. The Mishnah was the only major text to be redacted in the tannaitic period itself, although other texts edited afterwards in the amoraic period (200-500 C.E.) depended heavily on tannaitic materials. The Mishnah became the formative document which shaped Talmudic Judaism, in turn, the basis for the development of the Jewish tradition in medieval and modern times. The redaction of the Mishnah by Rabbi Judah the Prince (c. 200 C.E.) represented the end of a process, although the extent of the contribution of Rabbi Judah should not be minimized.

Most modern scholars agree that the Mishnah originated in discrete statements, some attached to specific named authorities. Only a small part of the Mishnaic material is attributed to the period before the Roman conquest of Judea in 63 B.C.E. Between then and the period leading up to the Great Revolt of 66-73 C.E. are attributed materials relating to Hillel and Shammai and the Houses of Hillel and Shammai, the schools of tannaim ascribed to the students of these two preeminent sages.

With the destruction of the Temple and the shifting of the activity of the tannaim to centers at Yavneh, Usha, Bet Shearim and Sepphoris, profound changes occurred in the manner by which tannaitic material was transmitted. A process began of bringing together divergent views on issues into disputes and shaping the statements so as to reflect the divergence of opinion. Further, mnemonic formulations become more common, as students and teachers were expected to be familiar with an increasingly large body of oral tradition.

It is difficult to determine at what point in the history of the Mishnaic material the process of redaction began. By redaction, we mean the bringing together of diverse materials into blocks of material, assembled from disparate sources by a compiler. Sometime after the destruction, the approach of organizing the materials by subject became prominent. This opened the way to the development of large scale "essays" on topics of law. Later tradition and many modern scholars ascribe the basic subject classification into orders (Hebrew *sedarim*) and tractates (*massekhtot*) to Rabbi Akiva who flourished at the Yavneh academy ca. 80-132 C.E. Whether he himself is responsible for this concept is impossible to determine with precision. Yet the large number of highly developed treatises which remain embedded in, or which even

constitute, Mishnaic tractates from the period between the Great Revolt (66-73 C.E.) and the Bar Kokhba Rebellion (132-135 C.E.) proves that this approach, at least on the level of individual tractates, was evolving in his day. It was left for those who came after Rabbi Akiva at the academy at Usha to bring many tractates to a well developed state.

After the Bar Kokhba Revolt, the process continued with renewed vigor. Attempts were made to gather together traditions, as often happens after a tragedy of great proportion. Thus, many more tractates began to move toward completion while halakhic concepts developed over the years served as the basis for new organizational and redactional approaches. By the time Rabbi Judah the Prince began his work of final redaction, he had most probably inherited many almost completed tractates and a basic system of classification by orders. He completed the compilation of the individual tractates and placed them into the appropriate orders.

Rabbi Judah the Prince, known often as "Rabbi" in the Mishnah, the Rabbi par excellence, did not seek to create an authoritative code of law. Had he, we would have had to judge his work a failure. After all, the amoraim, the teachers of the Talmud (Gemara), set aside or modified so many of his rulings. He provided variant rulings on many subjects, explaining that his purpose was to keep options open for later courts of greater authority and wisdom. He intended to create a curriculum for the study of Jewish law. Yet he sought to point out which rulings he favored by providing information on majority and minority status or rulings, and by indicating the greater or lesser authority of individual tradents (transmitters of tradition) and decisors whose statements he included. He even placed materials in his text anonymously, the tradents

for which he was well aware of, in order to indicate the ruling he thought was to be followed. These views, by and large, he reproduced anonymously, or with the label "the opinion of the sages," where there was an individual who dissented.

The material was organized into six orders: Zera'im (Agricultural laws), Mo'Ed (Holy Occasions, Festivals), Nashim (Women, Marriage law), Neziqin (Damage and Civil law), Qodashim (Sacrifices), and Tohorot (Purification Rituals). Each order was comprised of a number of tractates. Today, these tractates are arranged roughly in size order within each order, at least in the Mishnah texts. The same order was later used for the Tosefta, and for the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds. Within the six orders there are a total of sixty-three tractates.

The Mishnah reflects the full variety of the Torah's laws, and that it is firmly anchored in a Temple centered reality in which priests, sacrifices and purity remain as important as Sabbath and festivals, civil law, marriage, and family. This does not mean that the Mishnah was created in the days of the Temple. Rather, it was edited in an atmosphere in which the restoration of that Temple-centered reality was still a living hope, and in which the conception of sanctity still flowed from that reality, even in its absence.

The oral law was believed by the tannaim to have been revealed by God at Sinai to Moses, alongside the written law. This should have required that the oral law be transmitted orally, and, indeed, it was so in the tannaitic period. At the same time, evidence exists that individual tannaim did keep notebooks in which they listed certain oral traditions. There was a debate throughout the medieval period on the question of when the Mishnah was written down. Some believed that Rabbi Judah the Prince

himself had recorded his Mishnah in writing, while others believed that the Mishnah was written down in Babylonia only at the end of the Talmudic period as the threat of the Islamic invasion became real and it was feared that the oral traditions would be lost. The problem is best solved by realizing that the oral law concept required that the publication of the Mishnah, its teaching, and its exegesis all be carried on in oral form. For this reason, the formal study in amoraic circles was based on oral tradition. The formal transition to the use of a written Mishnah as an object of teaching, study and exegesis took place only at the end of the amoraic period or later. Rabbi Judah the Prince, however, promulgated his Mishnah in oral form. To the Rabbis, what God had given orally had to be transmitted orally, and so it was with the Mishnah, the consummate summary of the oral law.

From Amoraic Interpretation to Talmudic Texts

The Talmuds (Gemarot) are complicated texts, originally constructed orally as part of the study sessions of the amoraim. These study sessions were organized around the formal curriculum provided by the Mishnaic tractates. In Palestine and Babylonia different Mishnaic tractates were selected for detailed study, and different emphases existed even within the various Palestinian and Babylonian schools. The Mishnaic tractates served as the basis for these discussions. Only occasionally do the amoraim base their discussions on a *baraita*' (tannaitic tradition outside the Mishnah) or on a Mishnah which has been quoted incidentally. For the most part, the Mishnah endows the Talmuds with their organizational framework.

The Mishnah was studied orally in amoraic times. A memorizer (known in amoraic times as a *tanna*, a teacher of the Mishnah and *baraitot*) was instructed to recite aloud the text to be studied. The discussion and analysis of that section of the Mishnah then ensued. There followed comparison and contrast with other tannaitic traditions, including Mishnah and *baraita*' material. This in turn led to various digressions and to the comments and glosses of various amoraim to the tannaitic texts under discussion. Some digressions were rather extensive, and sometimes included the aggadic analysis of related (or even unrelated) biblical material. In this respect, the record we have seems to preserve real discussions which often ranged beyond the specific topic at hand.

Typically, amoraic discussion of a Mishnah began with the citation of a contradiction from another Mishnah or a *baraita*' and then proceeded to resolve that contradiction. Indeed, at its origin, the main activity of "Talmud" was the resolution of contradictions in tannaitic materials. The resolution of a contradiction between the Mishnah and a *baraita* often serves as the jumping off point for more extensive discussion of the details of the law on the specific topic.

Another important aspect of amoraic analysis is inquiry into the Scriptural source (proof text) for a particular rule. The Mishnah, virtually devoid of biblical proof texts, had separated the law from its biblical origins. The amoraim and the later redactors of the halakhic midrashim (the so-called tannaitic midrashim) sought to reintegrate law and Scripture, to demonstrate that the written and oral laws constituted one unified revelation of God.

Had the process stopped there, the structure of the Talmuds would have been much simpler. Yet the process described here continued over generations, even

centuries. This led to the gradual development of what are called *sugyot*, Talmudic discussions, better essays, on specific topics. As generation after generation passed down their discussions to circles of later scholars, the discussions were augmented with the later scholars' comments and glosses. This process continued in both Babylonia and Palestine into the fifth century. At this point, the development of the Palestinian Talmud was virtually arrested by the onset of anti-Semitism and the difficult conditions which the Jews of the Byzantine Empire faced.

In Babylonia, however, the developing text of the Talmud was subjected to an additional process. It was at this time that the anonymous discussions of the Talmud, the *setam*, which weaves together and places into relationship all the earlier material, was intertwined in the text. In this way a more prolix and more easily understandable Talmud was achieved. This, indeed, was one of the several factors leading to the greater popularity and authority of the Babylonian Talmud. The redactors of the Babylonian Talmud who inserted these anonymous links and glosses also added some of the more extensive digressions, and provided the formulary introductions which allow us to identify Mishnah, *baraita'*, and the statements of individual amoraim. In essence, it can be said that up through the end of the fifth century, the vast majority of statements preserved in the Talmuds are with attributions, Rabbis in whose name the statement is cited. Thereafter, the bulk of the material is anonymous and serves to fill in gaps and make the whole a unified, sensible creation. In Babylonia, activity continued in the hands of the anonymous redactors. Then the final touches, including the occasional halakhic rulings ("the law is according to...") and some philological explanations were

added by the savoraim, interpreters, whose work continued up to the seventh century and even later.

While we know that some individuals kept written notes, the formal activity of the amoraim, like that of their tannaitic predecessors, was conducted orally. There is little information about the writing down of the texts of the two Talmuds. In fact, the specifics of that mystery cannot even be the subject of reasonable speculation. It can be said only that after the Islamic conquest (634 C.E.) written manuscripts of the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmuds are first mentioned, and the dissemination of these manuscripts continued throughout the Middle Ages until the rise of printing.

The Hegemony of the Babylonian Talmud

Central to the subsequent history of Judaism is the process by which the Babylonian Talmud gained hegemony and authority as the preponderant source of Jewish legal rulings and the main object of study for Jewish scholars. There are two aspects to this process, first, the displacement of biblical tradition as the central authority in Judaism, and second, the ascendancy of Babylonian, Diaspora tradition over the Palestinian.

The displacement of the Bible was a process long in the making. It was fear of such a development which led the tannaim to practice a system of oral teaching designed to highlight the greater authority of the written word. The Rabbis went so far as to prohibit the writing down of the oral law. Yet as the oral tradition became so extensive and complex, and as individuals kept private written texts, this distinction no longer held. More important, the ever-expanding, developing nature of the oral Law attracted the best minds, leaving the written Torah to serve as an object of elementary instruction,

midrashic exegesis, and technical grammatical study by a select few. By the amoraic period, the Rabbis openly asserted the superiority of the oral Law, and so it is natural that the Mishnah would become the central teaching to be studied. When the amoraic commentary in the form of the Talmuds became available, it was this material which became the new Scripture of Judaism, and the authority of the Bible was now defined in terms of how it was interpreted in the Rabbinic tradition. Scripture had been displaced by Talmud.

The second process, by which the Babylonian tradition attained ascendancy, is somewhat more complicated. The earlier Hellenistic Diaspora had also provided a competing approach to Judaism to that of the tannaim which was based in the Land of Israel. Yet Hellenistic Judaism lacked the necessary vitality, and failed to survive the rise of Christianity and the Christianization of the Greco-Roman world. The new Babylonian Judaism attained this vitality precisely because it was so strongly linked to that of Palestine and almost identical with it. Differences between the two concerned mostly detailed halakhic rulings or certain ideas prominent in Babylonian society that entered the Jewish tradition there.

Nonetheless, the primacy of the Land of Israel should have been expected to have guaranteed its Talmud first place. However, two factors militated against this development: first, the nature of the Palestinian Talmud itself, and second, the political history of Jewry under the Islamic caliphate in the seventh and eighth centuries.

The political conditions and resulting anti-Semitism in Byzantine Palestine led to an early end to the amoraic process at work creating the Palestinian Talmud. Not only did the amoraim not complete their task, but also the Talmud of the Land of Israel was

hastily compiled. The work of the anonymous scholars who wove together the traditions in the Babylonian Talmud has no parallel in Palestine, either because of the difficult historical conditions or because the final redactors saw their role otherwise. In any case, the Palestinian Talmud remained a more difficult text than the Babylonian.

From the point of view of later Jewish tradition, there was another factor which caused the Babylonian Talmud to attain dominance. There is a general medieval Jewish rule that the law follows the later authority. The Babylonian Talmud was redacted after the Palestinian. Many Jews believed, incorrectly we think, that the redactors of the Babylonian Talmud must have had at their disposal the work of the Palestinian amoraim and that they had consciously selected or rejected its views. Accordingly, many concluded, based on this principle, that the Babylonian Talmud had greater authority than the Palestinian.

It may simply be, however, that this halakhic argument is a post facto way of explaining what the forces of history had created on their own, namely the ascendancy of the Rabbinical authorities of Babylonian. The Jews of the Near East came under control of the Moslems after the Arab conquest of 638 C.E. The Rabbis of Babylonia found themselves living in the shadow of the rulers of the caliphate of Baghdad which initially ruled virtually the entire Islamic world, including most of world Jewry, and which thereafter held considerable sway even after the territorial fragmentization of the Islamic world. The Babylonian Rabbis quickly became, in the form of the Geonim, "eminences," de facto chief rabbis of world Jewry. They wielded the authority of the state to help enforce Rabbinic law and to spread the teachings of the Babylonian Talmud. In this effort they were greatly helped by the opportunity to piggyback onto the Islamic

postal system and administrative apparatus which made possible the wide-ranging influence of the Babylonian Geonim. The result, along with the factors we have already addressed, was the unquestionable hegemony of the Babylonian Talmud. Henceforth this would be the "Talmud" *par excellence* and the basis of all later development of Talmudic law and thought.

LOOK AT BOTTOM OF 268-9 FOR FINAL CONCLUSION

Palestinian text on p. 15.