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## RABBINIC JUDAISM

The rabbinic movement in its earliest phase is to be identified with Pharisaism. The Pharisees are portrayed by Josephus as being critical of the Hasmonean priesthood. Their expression was at first political (Josephus, *Ant.* 13 §§ 88–298) and could extend to violent action, as in the demand that the counselors who advised Alexander Jannaeus to kill some of their sympathizers should themselves be executed (Josephus, *War* 1.110–113) At base, however, the orientation of the Pharisees was towards the achievement and maintenance of purity. The purity they strived for had fundamentally to do with making offerings, people, and priests fit for the cult of sacrifice in the temple. For that reason, the issues of the personnel of the priesthood, the sorts of animals and goods that might be brought, and their permitted proximity to all sources of uncleanness were vitally important.

By the dawn of the Common Era, the Pharisees found a distinguished teacher in Jerusalem in the person of Hillel. Hillel is justly famous for the dictum, uttered some twenty years before Jesus, 'That which you hate, do not do to your fellow; that is the whole Torah, while all the rest is commentary thereon' (*b. Shab.* 31a). The story is striking, but it can also be misleading. First, Hillel in the tale is talking to an impatient proselyte, who wished to learn the Torah while standing on one foot; his impatience has just won him a cuff with a measuring rod from Shammai, the rabbi with whom Hillel is programmatically contrasted in Mishnah. Obviously, Hillel has no overt desire to reduce the Torah on the grounds of principle, and he goes on to tell the proselyte, 'Go and learn it.' In other words, the Gentile is told that the revelation to Moses is the expression of the best ethics, and for that reason the whole should be mastered.

In any case, Hillel was understood among the Pharisees as having come to prominence for adjudicating quite a distinct issue: whether the Passover could be sacrificed on the sabbath. Hillel first offers a scriptural argument for accepting the practice: since other forms of priestly service are permitted, so is the slaying of the lamb. His hearers are unimpressed, until he simply states that he learned the position in Babylon, from Shemaiah and Abtalion, distinguished predecessors in the movement. Their authority is sufficient to displace the current leaders of Pharisaic opinion, the sons of Bathyra (cf. *t. Pesaḥ.* 4:13, 14; *y. Pesaḥ.* 6:1; *b. Shabb.* 19:1; *b. Pesaḥ.* 66a, b).

This story may appear arcane, but it is redolent of Pharisaic culture. Throughout the history of the rabbinic movement, biblical interpretation was not conducted for its own sake, nor was it properly speaking the purpose of discussion. The aim was rather to discover the Torah in both the traditions of the sages and in the sacred scripture. Hillel consistently involved himself in cultic questions and disputes in Jerusalem. His position also is said to have convinced another teacher, Baba ben Buta, to provide cultically correct beasts in great numbers for slaughter, with the stipulation (against the school of Shammai) that the offerer must lay hands on the victim immediately prior to the killing (cf. *t. Ḥag.* 2:11; *y. Ḥag.* 2:3; *y. Beṣa* 2:4; *b. Beṣa* 20a, b).

The basis of Hillel's authority was not as much scriptural expertise as his mastery of what he had been taught by previous masters. He embodies the Pharisaic principle that the 'chains' of their tradition were normative for purity. Such chains were understood to have been developed from Moses to Ezra, after that by 'the men of the great congregation,' and then by teachers who were generally invoked as 'pairs' (*m. Avoth* 1:1–18). The last 'pair' was Hillel and Shammai, from which point the Pharisees acknowledged that division increased in Israel (*b. Sota* 47b; *b Sanh.* 88b; *t. Sota* 14:9; *t. Ḥag.* 2:9; *t. Sanh.* 7:1; *y. Ḥag.* 2:2; *y. Sanh.* 1:4). The notion of primeval unity disturbed by recent faction is probably mythical, but it is plain that the Pharisees developed their oral tradition by means of a structured understanding of the past as well as by mnemonic techniques.

The term 'Pharisee' is probably an outsiders' name for the movement, and may mean 'separatist' or 'purist'; participants in the movement appear to have referred to their ancient predecessors (after Ezra) as 'the sages' or 'the wise,' and to their more recent predecessors and contemporaries as 'teachers' (cf. *rab* in *m. Aboth* 1:6, 16; *sophistes* in Josephus, *War* 1.648). The normal, respectful address of a teacher was 'my great one,' or

'my master,' rabbi. Jesus is so addressed in the Gospels more than by any other designation; moreover, he had a characteristic interest in purity, and a dispute concerning appropriate sacrifice in the temple cost him his life. That Jesus' followers called him 'rabbi' (Matt. 26:25, 49; Mark 9:5; 10:51; 11:21; 14:45; John 1:38, 49; 3:2; 4:31; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8) is a straightforward deduction from the Gospels as they stand; that he is most naturally (if broadly) to be categorized among the Pharisees of his period is an equally straightforward inference. When, during the course of the twentieth century, scholars have expressed reservations in respect of that finding, they have had in mind the danger of identifying Jesus with the rabbinic movement after AD 70, which was more systematized than before that time, and which amounted to the established power within Judaism. Unfortunately, anxiety in respect of that anachronism can result in the far greater error of bracketing Jesus within 'sectarian' Judaism (as if 'orthodoxy' existed in early, pluralized Judaism), or – worse still – of placing him within no Judaism at all.

During the time of Hillel and Shammai, and until AD 70, Pharisaic teaching was targeted at the conduct of the cult in the temple, but its influence was limited. Nonetheless, Pharisees appear to have succeeded reasonably well in towns and villages, even in Galilee, where they urged local populations to maintain the sort of purity which would permit them to participate rightly in the cult. Josephus' colleague in the armed resistance against Rome (and archrival), John of Gischala, may well have been representing Pharisaic interests when he arranged for Jews in Syria to purchase oil exclusively from Galilean sources (*War* 2.591–593). In any case, it does appear plain that some Pharisees supported the revolt of 66, while others did not. But while many priests and Essenes perished in the internecine strife of the revolt and in the war with the Romans, and while the aristocracy of scribes and elders in Jerusalem was discredited and decimated, the Pharisees survived the war better than any other single group. They were well accepted locally, had long ago accommodated to some marginality, and survived with their personnel and their traditions comparatively intact.

Rabbinic literature itself personifies the survival of the movement in a story concerning Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. According to the story, Yochanan had himself been borne out of Jerusalem on the pretense he was dead, only to hail Vespasian as king; when he really did ascend to power, Vespasian granted Yochanan his wish of settlement in the town of Yavneh, the group of Rabbi Gamaliel, and medical attention for Rabbi Zadok (cf. *b. Gittin* 56a, b). In that Josephus claims similarly to have flattered Vespasian (*War* 2.399–408), and to have seen in his coming the fulfilment of messianic prophecy (*War* 6.310–315), the tale is obviously to be used with caution, but it remains expressive of the rabbinic ethos.

With the foundation of academies such as the one at Yavneh after AD 70, we may speak of the transition of Pharisaism to Rabbinic Judaism. The rabbis, those who directly contributed to rabbinic literature and to the Judaism which is framed by that literature, belonged to a movement much changed from the popular puritanism of the Pharisees, initially for reasons not of their own making. The sort of leadership which a Yochanan ben Zakkai might offer became suddenly attractive, in the absence of priestly, Essene, or scribal alternatives. The target of the tradition's application became correspondingly wider, as the pharisaic/rabbinic programme was applied, not simply to issues of purity and sacrifice, but to worship generally, ethics, and daily living. To Yochanan is explicitly attributed the view that the world, which had been sustained by the law, the temple, and deeds of faithful love, now was to be supported only by the last two of the three (*Aboth R. Nat.* 4). Moreover, he specifically adjudicated, on the basis of his tradition and scripture, how feasts might be kept in the gathering for reading, prayer, and discussion which was called a 'congregation' or 'synagogue' (*kenesset*, also applied to buildings erected for the purpose of such gatherings; cf. *m. Sukk.* 3:12; *m. Rosh Hash.* 4:1, 3, 4). The development of that sort of worship, as a replacement for activity within the temple, was not without analogy during the period prior to AD 70. Mishnah (*m. Ta'an.* 4:2) envisages a system in which Priests, Levites, and lay people alike gathered in local synagogues while their representatives were in Jerusalem. The priestly system of 'courses' of service was perhaps the germ of such piety: it allowed for a substantial population of priests, which it divided into twenty-four courses. While a few priests from each group were chosen to officiate in Jerusalem during the course of the week which the group was appointed to cover, the remainder may have gathered and read the appropriate lections in the villages of Judaea and Galilee where they normally lived (1 Chron. 24:1–19; Josephus, *Ant.* 7.365). The inclusion of the faithful in Israel generally in such meetings was a natural development under the rabbis, and general meetings for prayer and instruction had long been a customary feature of Judaism in the Diaspora. The development of worship in synagogues as something of a replacement for worship in the temple was therefore natural, although dramatic.

The transition from Pharisaism to Rabbinic Judaism, however, was not accomplished immediately after AD 70, nor was it only a matter of the same movement with the same personnel carrying on in a totally new environment. The environment *was* new, of course, and favored the emerging authority of rabbis uniquely. But the Pharisees of the period before 70 also were sufficiently flexible to accommodate an influx of priests and scribes into their ranks. The priestly interest of the Pharisaic movement, of course, was historic and organic, and the references to priests in stories and teachings

from the time of Yochanan (cf. Rabbi Yosi the Priest, *m. Aboth* 2:8) and well into the second century is striking. Moreover, the consolidation of the rabbis' power after AD 70, predicated as it was on local influence, could only be assured by means of the control of local adjudication, as well as worship and study. The tendency of scribes to align themselves with the Pharisees, together with priestly adherents and sympathizers with the movement, assured the emergence and the success of the rabbis. At the same time, the triumph of rabbinic authority assured the continuing influence of the priests in decisions regarding purity, in blessings, and in receipts of payment of redemption and of tithe, while scribal influence, in the production of written materials and the convocation of formal courts, is also striking. Nonetheless, the functional consolidation of the power of the old groups and factions was only achieved during the time of Rabbi Judah during the second century, with the emergence of a patriarchate recognized and supported by the Romans.

In the wake of AD 70 and the Roman confiscation of the tax formerly paid for the temple, neither Jerusalem nor its environs were amenable to the maintenance of a hub of the movement, and even Yavneh was eclipsed during the second century by centers in prosperous Galilee, such as Usha and Beth Sheʿarim. Later, metropolitan cities such as Sepphoris and Tiberias were the foci of leadership. There was at first nothing like a central leadership, or even a common policy, but Rabbinic Judaism was constituted in the Pharisaic, priestly, and scribal quest for the purity of the nation. The health of the movement required a shift from the highly personal authority of the Pharisees to some notion of learned consensus. Just that shift is reflected in a Talmudic story concerning a great teacher, Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus. The story has it that, against a majority of his colleagues, Eliezer held that a ceramic stove, once polluted, might be reassembled, provided the tiles were separated by sand. The majority taught that the result would be unclean; such materials should never be used again. Eliezer's correctness was demonstrated by a tree which was uprooted at his behest, by a stream which ran backwards at his command, by a building he similarly demolished, and by a voice from heaven. Despite all that, the majority held that its decision was binding (*b. B. Mes.* 59a, b). As the rudiments of an institution emerged, Eliezer's personal authority clearly diminished; the rabbis of the second century were to stress a rational, consensual achievement of purity, and by the time of the Talmud that was held to be a greater purity than charismatic authority could achieve.

The historic concern for the temple as the actual focus of purity nonetheless resulted in a final, and nearly disastrous, attempt – encouraged by some rabbis – to free and restore the holy site. The most prominent rabbinic supporter of that attempt was a student of Eliezer's renowned for his expertise in the tradition, Aqiba. Aqiba supported the claims of one Simon bar Kosiba to be the new prince of Israel, acting in conjunction with a Priest named Eleazar. Simon's supporters referred to him as Bar Kokhba, 'son of a star,' projecting onto him the messianic expectations of Numbers 24:17, while his detractors came to know him as Bar Koziba, 'son of a lie.' His initial success and military acumen are attested in letters he sent to his commanders during his revolt and regime, which lasted from AD 132 until 135. In the shape of Hadrian, the response of the empire was even more definitive than it had been in AD 70. The remnants of the temple were taken apart, and new shrines – idols according to the principles of Judaism – were built in the city; Jerusalem itself was now called Aelia Capitolina, Jews were denied entry, and Judaea became Syria Palaestina.

The rabbis survived by disowning the aspirations embodied by Aqiba, but keeping much of his teaching. 'Aqiba, grass will grow out of your jaw, before the son of David comes' (*y. Taʿan.* 4:7; *Lamentations Rabbah* 2.2.4); that is to say, the Messiah is to be of David, not of humanity's choosing, and his time cannot be pressed. But the greatness of the rabbinic response to national defeat, and their consequent redefinition of Judaism consisted less in their formulation of a particular teaching regarding messianism (which emerges in any case from time to time in many forms of Judaism) than in their textual constitution of a form of thought, discipline, and life, the Mishnah.

Rabbis such as Aqiba had taught their own norms, which came to be known as *halakhoth* (from *halakhah*, 'way'), and had their disciples learn them by heart. A disciple (*talmid*) might himself internalize what he learned, his teacher's *mishnah* ('repetition'), and proceed to promulgate both it and his own *halakhoth*. But after the failure of Bar Kokhba, the rabbis engaged in an extraordinary, synthetic effort, under Rabbi Judah ha-Nasi (or, 'the Prince,' albeit in stark contrast to Bar Kokhba's aspirations), to combine the *mishnayoth* commonly held to be worthy.

Certain features of the work are both striking and of paradigmatic importance for Rabbinic Judaism. First and foremost, the Mishnah represents earlier traditions pressed into a dialectical relationship; argument exists in an eternal present between positions which previously had been separated by time and/or geography. Precisely that invitation to dialectical reasoning concerning purity, unconstrained by history or chronology, is the principal contribution of Mishnah. Then, however, it must be said that the often uneven synthesis is presented in a definite plan of tractates, which typically address the topic of their title, arranged within orders (*sedarim*). Each order presupposes the agricultural activity the rabbis came to see as normal and normative for Israel. As rabbis, they implied, we speak of the purity we may achieve for a temple which should always

have been, but we do so in the knowledge that the Israel we address and which supports us is more a collection of farms than a nation. Paradoxically, however, Rabbi Judah's move from Beth She'arim to Sepphoris signaled the emergence of rabbinic authority within cities, and in close association with Roman power. In reading the Mishnah, anachronism must be taken into account at several levels.

The radical centralization accomplished under Rabbi Judah ranks with Ezra's reform among formative events in the history of Judaism. But where Ezra's programme was located in a particular city (which could only be Jerusalem), Judah's was headquartered in one or another (whether Beth She'arim or Sepphoris), but located in the mind. The Mishnah which emerged was a pattern of reflection which enabled any rabbi anywhere to join in the reflection and the discipline of keeping or making Israel pure. Sanctity in that sense could become the project of the learned in any place. The emergence of Mishnah, of course, called into question its status as compared to scripture, and the revolt under Bar Kokhba radically raised the issue of the status of those works which had promised the speedy rebuilding of the temple after AD 70 (cf. 2 Esdras and the Targum of Isaiah). The priestly canon, represented (although oddly counted) by Josephus (*Against Apion* 1 § 39), had already called for the recognition of twenty-four books, and the rabbis could both invoke the support of that group and control messianic yearnings by insisting that those who read books 'outside' that canon would have no part in the world to come (*m. Sanh.* 10:1). Nonetheless, the issue of messianism was more accidental than systemic: it needed to be addressed by the rabbis, and it was definitively addressed, but the crucial matter was the relationship between scripture and Mishnah. That relationship required several centuries to resolve.

Midrash may be said to be a category of thought and literature which seeks the resolution of scripture with the teaching of the rabbis. It is true – as is frequently reported – that the noun derives from the verb *darash*, which means to 'inquire,' but that fact is largely beside the point. Formally, any midrash will cite the scriptural locus under consideration, somewhat in the manner of the *pesherim* of Qumran, but typically exegesis is not the point of the exercise. Rather, the citation becomes an occasion to invoke the rabbinic teaching which may be associated with scripture at that juncture. The relative autonomy of that teaching from any text is usually apparent in what are called the Tannaitic or halakhic midrashim. 'Tannaitic' refers to the Tannaim ('repeaters' the rabbis of the Mishnaic period, although the ascription is traditional), while 'Halakhic' refers to the substance of their teaching. Such documents include two midrashim on Exodus, each called the *Mekhilta* (which means 'measure'); one is ascribed to R. Ishmael and another to R. Simeon ben Yochai, both of whom lived during the second century. Leviticus receives similar treatment in *Sifra*, and Numbers and Deuteronomy in *Sifre*.

The influence of R. Ishmael is apparent in the attribution to him (as to Hillel earlier) of 'rules' (*middoth*) of interpretation. The rules by no means govern what rabbis may teach, but they do represent the evolving grammar of the association of that teaching with scripture. Formally, the *middoth* set out the patterns of similarity, analogy, and logical categorization which might permit scriptural patterns to be adduced in support of a given teaching or assertion. Their application may be observed within rabbinic discussion, but they are more in the nature of a description of the sort of inference involved in interpretation than they are the programme by which that association was effected. The clear impression conveyed by *Mekhilta* (in both traditions), *Sifra*, and *Sifre* is that the biblical text is an occasion for the exposition of fundamentally rabbinic ideas and modes of thought.

Despite the triumph of Rabbi Judah's experiment, the third century saw a crisis in the understanding of what might be done with Mishnah. The crisis is visible in two dilemmas. The first dilemma concerned scripture, as discussed above. The second was even more basic, in that it involved how the discussion occasioned by Mishnah was to be handled. If the former question turned on the issue of the rabbis' authority in respect of the past, as embodied in the canon, the latter question turned on the issue of their authority in respect of that of their successors. Mishnah undertook a dialectic of eternal purity, but how was that dialectic, once it was consigned to writing, to be related to rabbinic discussion in the present? Both dilemmas receive a tentative treatment in the Tosefta. The term means 'addition,' in that the corpus was seen as an addendum to the Mishnah in later centuries. In fact, however, the Tosefta is to some extent a fresh Mishnah, which incorporates the work of later rabbis, and brings their views into a pattern of discussion with those of the Tannaim. Nonetheless, the Tosefta is essentially conservative, in its reliance upon the materials of Mishnah, and it does not promulgate the radical notion – adumbrated in *Aboth*, a tractate appended to the Mishnah around AD 250 – that, alongside the Torah written in scripture, Moses received an oral Torah, which was passed on through the prophets and sages, and finally to the rabbis. Tosefta represents a greater comprehensiveness in its supplementation of the Mishnah, but it points to the necessity of the daring it lacks, to elevate rabbis not merely by including their teaching, but also by permitting them to engage directly in dialogue with their illustrious predecessors in scripture and memory.

The relative comprehensiveness of the Tosefta did not assure its triumph. Mishnah was not superseded by it, nor by any subsequent work within the rabbinic tradition. Moreover, the rabbis implicitly and formally accorded scripture privilege, in that the capacity to cite



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a text in order to demonstrate or illustrate a point was acknowledged. The problem of how to address the present with the eternal truth of the tradition (and vice versa) was met by means of an innovation. The rabbis, as expositors (Amoraim, as distinct from Tannaim), undertook to treat Mishnah as scripture, that is, to generate a commentary on Mishnah, which became known as Talmud (a noun which means 'learning'). The 'commentary' (as in the case of midrash) is more a matter of using text as an occasion on which to associate teaching than it is an exposition or exegesis, but the Amoraim triumphantly accomplished what the rabbis of the Tosefta did not: Mishnah was preserved, and at the same time its generative activity and logic were perpetuated in the present. The ideological advance which allowed that accomplishment was the doctrine that Torah was known orally, not only in writing.

The Talmud of Jerusalem (*c.* 400), or the Yerushalmi, was the last, great product of Rabbinic Judaism in Palestine (as it came to be called in the Roman period). Sociologically, it was difficult to maintain the sort of discipline of purity the rabbis practiced, and wished others to practice, in a territory recently vanquished by the Romans. The Hadrianic prohibition of circumcision may or may not have been a great impediment (depending upon time and place within the history of the Empire), but the incursion of Roman institutions and culture, even at a local level, was a reality from the second century in a way it was not earlier. Toward the end of the period of the Palestinian Amoraim, the very patriarchate which had sealed the victory of the rabbis, in the redaction of Mishnah, appears to have been more aligned with the local aristocracy. Progressive urbanization was not congenial to the maintenance of rabbinic power in Palestine. Moreover, Babylonia during the third century saw the rise of the Sassanids and their form of Zoroastrianism, whose policy toward the practice of Judaism was relatively tolerant. The economic life of the Jews in Babylon, in largely autonomous towns and villages, supported by agriculture, was better suited to the rabbinic ethos than the increasing syncretism of the Roman Empire from the second century. Particularly, the Sassanids encouraged or tolerated (in varying degrees over time) the formation of the academies which were the dynamos of rabbinic discussion, in places such as Sura, Pumbeditha, and Nehardea.

The rabbis of Babylon gave Judaism its distinctive character, at least until the modern period, which was and is conveyed in their monument (probably completed during the sixth century), the Babylonian Talmud, or the Babli. It is a more comprehensive and subtle treatment of the Mishnah than the Yerushalmi, often employing rich, narrative means which permit the contemporization of the rabbinic ethos. Each rabbi is here to some extent a Moses of his own, as when Moses himself is said to visit the academy of Aqiba, and to observe to God that the discussion is so complex, his own unworthiness is obvious (*b. Menaḥ.* 29b). But the rabbis are also respectful tradents, as when Rab Joseph of Pumbeditha, the blind master, acknowledges that, without the Targum, he would not understand scripture (*b. Sanh.* 94b). Their knowledge and expertise is functionally infinite: a rabbi can be consulted regarding the vision of God's chariot, how to make love, or to relieve constipation. Although the Talmud (and Babli, for practical purposes, is the Talmud) is vast, its very range is a succinct statement of its intent to transform the whole of life with the light of the Torah as interpreted by the rabbis.

Their energy and their resources enabled the rabbis of Babylon to see to the completion of the standard recension of the Targumim (Aramaic paraphrases of the Bible), and to the publication of as definitive a form of the midrash as was ever produced. *Midrash Rabbah* presents not only the biblical books used for festal and commemorative occasions (Esther, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations), but also the Pentateuch. The confidence of the rabbis of Babylonia in their own ethos was so great that the 'comment' upon scripture might include explicit narrative concerning rabbis, as well as exposition and discourse. *Midrash Rabbah* was likely completed during the eighth century, and it represents the confidence that Torah, whether in scripture or Talmud, is fundamentally one. The interweaving of scripture and rabbinic teaching is also represented in the homiletic midrashim of a later period, the *Pesiqta Rabbati*, the *Pesiqta de-Rab Kahana*, and *Tanḥuma*.

The rabbinic period closes with the rise of Islam, and the subsequent reaction of the Geonim, the successors of the rabbis who maintained and extended rabbinic Judaism with a distinctively academic and sometimes rationalistic bent. Increasingly, their work is of a literary nature, and takes the rabbinic canon as a fact to be acknowledged, rather than achieved; moreover, a tendency toward philosophy and esoterism becomes manifest. The *Sefer Yesirah*, or 'book of formation,' is a good representative of a work which is transitional between the Amoraim and the Geonim, and was perhaps composed during the seventh century. It builds upon a mystical tradition which reaches back at least until Yoḥanan ben Zakkai, according to which it is possible to see the chariot (the 'Merkabah') of Ezekiel 1, and to know the structure of the Creation. But where the rabbis held that such experiments were a matter for private exposition (and then under tight controls, cf. *b. Shab.* 80b; *b. Ḥag.* 11b, 13a, 14b), the *Sefer Yesirah* commences a tradition of literary and rational esoterism, which is more typical of the Kabbalah of the Middle Ages than of the Judaism of the rabbis. The dialectic of the rabbis was rooted in the oral argument which produced their literature, and which their literature was designed to serve; when the logic of literary discourse takes over, the constitution of the Judaism which is reflected is no longer, strictly speaking, rabbinic.

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## RABBINIC RULES OF INTERPRETATION

Rabbinic tradition holds that biblical interpretation was pursued by following seven rules (or 'measurements,' *middoth*) promulgated by Hillel the Elder (*c.* 50 BC–AD 10; cf. *t. Sanh.* 7.11; *'Abot R. Nat.* [A] 37.10). That attribution is considered suspect; yet according to *Sifre Deut.* §2 (on 1:3) even Moses is said to have taught several of these rules. The seven are as follows:

(1) *Qal wa-ḥomer* (lit. 'light and heavy'). According to this rule, what is true or applicable in a 'light' (or less important) instance is surely true or applicable in a 'heavy' (or more important) instance. Such a principle is at work when Jesus assures his disciples (cf. Matt. 6:26 = Luke 12:24) that because God cares for the birds, as taught in scripture (cf. Ps. 147:9; *Pss. Sol.* 5:8–19), they can be sure that he cares for them. A similar saying is attributed to Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar: 'Have you ever seen a wild animal or a bird who has a trade?' (*m. Qid.* 4:14).

(2) *Gezera shawa* (lit. 'an equivalent regulation'). According to this rule one passage may be explained by another, if similar words or phrases are present. When Jesus took action in the temple precincts, he quoted phrases from Isaiah 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11: 'Is it not written that: my house shall be called a house of prayer for all the Gentiles? But you have made it a thugs' lair' (Mark 11:17). What has drawn these two passages together is the word, 'house,' which appears in the quotation drawn from Isaiah 56:7 and also appears in the part of Jeremiah 7:11 not quoted. Jeremiah 7 qualifies the sense of Isaiah 56. Examples of *gezera shawa* are common among the rabbis. Because 'its appointed time' is used of the daily sacrifice (Num. 28:2) and of Passover (Num. 9:2), one may infer that what applies to the one applies to the other (*b. Pesaḥ.* 66a). This rule was applied to haggadic interpretation. Several of the comparisons between Moses and Elijah delineated in *Pesiq. R.* 4.2 are based on the principle. For example, the appearance of the verb 'send' in Exodus 3:10 ('I will send you to Pharaoh') and Malachi 3:23 ('I will send you Elijah') legitimates comparison between these two great prophets. Both are called 'man of God' in Deuteronomy 33:1 and 1 Kings 17:18. Both were taken up to heaven, as implied by the use of the verb 'to go up' in Exodus 19:3 and 2 Kings 2:1.

(3) *Binyan 'ab mikkatub 'eḥad* (lit. 'constructing a father [i.e., principal rule] from one passage'). According to this *middah* a general principle may be established from one verse or phrase. Other verses, which contain this key phrase, can be viewed as belonging to a family.

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Since God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, the revelation at the Burning Bush, 'I am the God of Abraham' (Exod. 3:14–15), implies that Abraham is alive. From this one text one may further infer, as Jesus did (Mark 12:26; Matt. 22:31; Luke 20:37), the truth of the general resurrection. Similarly, the rabbis taught that people who are to be put to death for the various offenses described in Leviticus 20:10–21 should be stoned, because the phrase 'their blood be upon them' that appears in these verses (vv. 11, 13, 16) also appears in a verse (v. 27) that describes an offense for which stoning is specifically commanded (*Sifra Lev.* §209 [on 20:13–16]). From Deuteronomy 19:15 ('by the mouth of two witnesses or by the mouth of three witnesses shall a matter be confirmed') Rabbi Simeon ben Shetach concluded that 'Whenever the Mosaic law speaks of a "witness" it refers to two unless it specifies one' (*b. Mak.* 5b).

(4) *Binyan 'ab mishene kethubim* (lit. 'constructing a father [i.e., principal rule] from two writings'). This *middah* functions as the one above, except that it constructs its general principle from two passages. When Paul argues that as an apostle of Christ he deserves his food (1 Cor. 9:1–14), he appeals to the general principle that the treading ox must be allowed to eat of the grain (Deut. 25:4) and to scripture's specific command that the priests receive a share of the burnt offering (Deut. 18:1–8). For a rabbinic example of this rule of interpretation, see *Mek.* on Exodus 21:26–27 (*Neziqin* §9), where on the basis of the two commands to compensate a slave for having lost either an eye or a tooth, one may infer that for any irreplaceable loss a slave must be set free.

(5) *Kelal uperaṭ uperaṭ ukelal* – (lit. 'general and particular, and particular and general'). This *middah* is based on the assumption that general principles can be inferred from specific statements in scripture, or that specific principles can be inferred from general statements. When Jesus replied that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord with all one's heart (Deut. 6:4–5) and to love one's neighbor as one's self (Lev. 19:18), he summed up in one 'general' commandment all the 'particular' commandments (Mark 12:28–34; Matt. 22:34–40). Commenting on Leviticus 19:18, Aqiba is reported to have said: 'That is the greatest principle in the Law' (*Sifra Lev.* §200 [on 19:15–19]).

(6) *Kayyoṣe bo bemaqom 'aḥer* (lit. 'to which something [is] similar in another place'). This *middah* is similar to the principle of *gezera shawa*, excepting that whereas the latter is limited to a common word or phrase, the former takes into account similar ideas or events, as well as common vocabulary. The principle is well illustrated in a Tannaitic discussion of the dividing of the sea. According to Rabbi Shemaiah: 'The faith with which their father Abraham believed in me is reason enough that I should divide the sea for them, as it is written: "And he believed in the Lord" [Gen. 15:6].' To this Rabbi Abtalyon adds: 'The faith with which they believed in me is reason enough that I should divide the sea for them, as it is written: "And the people believed" [Exod. 4:31]' (*Mek.* on Exod. 14:15 [*Beshallaḥ* §4]; cf. *Exod. Rab.* 23.5 [on 15:1]). Comparison with Galatians 3:6–9 is straightforward.

(7) *Dabar halamed me'inyano* (lit. 'a word of instruction from its context [or subject]'). According to this *middah* the meaning of a given passage may be clarified from its context. Rabbi Aqiba explained it accordingly: 'Every Scripture passage which is close to another must be interpreted with respect to it' (*Sifre Deut.* §131 [on 16:4]).

The *middoth* are essentially a compilation of the logical processes which had long been involved in the systematic correlation between scripture and tradition among the rabbis. How could the written text be held to support and embody the oral teaching? Once the theology of the single Torah was operative (even before it was fully articulated), the relationship between text and tradition was obviously crucial. The *middoth* distill logical operations by which that relationship was worked out.

The formulation of the *middoth* comport well with their purpose. If scripture is Torah, then there must be coherent principles which may be inferred from one passage and applied to another. Small matters may illuminate weighty ones (the first *middah*); commensurate wordings imply commensurate meanings (the second *middah*); one or two passages may enunciate a systemic truth (the third and fourth *middoth*); the general and the particular are coordinate statements (the fifth *middah*); similarity between passages implies an identity of topic (the sixth *middah*); proximity between passages implies a shared context of meaning (the seventh *middah*). Such logical operations of inference and synthesis permit what is written and what is taught together to embody the single Torah, given to Moses and eternal in heaven.

The *middoth* find their natural center and purpose within Rabbinic Judaism The logical operations which they relate alone certainly could not have produced the varieties of midrash which are extant, nor would they have resulted in the coherent focus on the single Torah which is characteristic of Rabbinic Judaism. Both the variety and the coherence of the sources is explicable when it is appreciated that the *middoth* are a means to an end. The end is the synthesis of the teachings of the rabbinic sages with the Hebrew Bible: the systemic relation between the two is the axiom and the product of rabbinic interpretation.

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## RAD, GERHARD VON (1901–1971)

Born in Nuremburg, Germany, on October 21, 1901. He studied theology at Erlangen and Tübingen. He completed his doctorate at Erlangen in 1928 and then was a tutor there from 1929 to 1930. He finished his Habilitation at Leipzig under A. Alt in 1930 and then worked as *Dozent* and *ausserordentlicher* professor from 1930 to 1934. He was appointed a full professor of Old Testament at Jena in 1934. As a Franconian-Bavarian Lutheran, he struggled to defend the Old Testament during the rise of National Socialism and served the Confessing Church by traveling extensively to lecture and preach. Following military conscription, during which he was an American prisoner of war, he returned to academia as professor at Göttingen in 1945. In 1949, he was appointed professor at Heidelberg, retiring as professor emeritus in 1967. He died October 31, 1971 in Heidelberg.

Von Rad is one of the most influential Old Testament scholars of the twentieth century. His genius was to combine a thoroughgoing tradition-historical approach with a theological analysis of the Old Testament based on a salvation history (*Heilsgeschichte*) perspective. The culmination of this approach was expressed in his two-volume theology of the Old Testament published in the latter part of his career. This approach was an effort to preserve history as the interpretative control for any Old Testament theological analysis, thereby following the work of A. Alt and M. Noth. His approach was a counter to the rising biblical theology found in W. Eichrodt and others which used a theological theme as the interpretative center for an Old Testament theology.

The key feature of his Old Testament theology was a concentration on the historical development of Israel's history and the message each chronological stage or the various cultic institutions or traditions propounded. His Old Testament theology was an attempt to posit successive historical traditions as they grew and developed showing how each generation appropriated and developed previous tradition to their own new context. For von Rad, given the historical development of the Old Testament traditions, it was inappropriate to conceive a theological core as the key to the Old Testament's message or even to survey the Old Testament content according to theological themes. The Old Testament was composed of many different theologies related to the historical layers and the specific situation of each redactor. What von Rad's analysis led him to conclude theologically was that the primary witness of each historical redactor or tradition was to the mighty acts of God in history, salvation history. Using critical interpretative methods, von Rad reconstructed the historical traditions and their development which lie behind the canonical text and he explicated the witness of each tradition to *Heilsgeschichte*.

However, his influence was significant before he wrote his Old Testament theology. Through his pioneering application of redaction criticism alongside form criticism, he layered the historical traditions of the Pentateuch (or the Hexateuch as he preferred, adding the settlement texts as the sixth book). He proposed that the Deuteronomic tradition began with a small historical credo, such as Deuteronomy 26:5b–9; 6:20–24; or Joshua 24:2b–13. These creeds were composed of three historical events: (a) the promise to the patriarchs; (b) the Exodus from Egypt; and (c) the settlement in the Promised Land. The absence of the Sinai tradition suggested to him that this was a wholly separate and independent second tradition. Von Rad located these two traditions in a cultic context that was both ritualistic and institutional. The early Deuteronomic creedal tradition was actualized in the annual Festival of Weeks originally located at the Gilgal shrine. The Sinai tradition was commemorated in the autumn Feast of Booths (Succoth) originally placed in Shechem. As these traditions were loosed from their cultic milieu and imbibed in new contexts through retelling and adaptation, they were eventually combined, written down, and prefaced with the primeval history of Genesis 1–11 by the Yahwist. Eventually they found their final form through the redaction of various literary and cultic traditions which continued to retell and appropriate these historical 'confessions.' Through this tradition-history pro-