THE RABBINIC CONCEPTION OF TORAH

A study in Jewish theology

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

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This thesis is a study of the Talmudic material referred to in the listing under the rubric torah in Frankel's Talmudic index [illegible]. The main purpose of the essay is to ascertain the content of the Talmudic Torah ideas and their inter-relations, not their historical background or development. As a secondary problem George Foote Moore's hypothesis that Jewish theology was crystallized in the Tannaitic period is tested by noting the results of a comparison of the Tannaitic with the Amoraic material.

The analysis of the idea of Torah, the Torah traditions and their content, rationality, and function, and the study thereof, its motivation, importance, sufficiency, consequences and pedagogy, reaches the following conclusions:

Torah is the word used to describe those directions God has given man for living. Though existing in many parts, it is but a single harmonious thing. It is thoroughly rational because it can be understood by all and is fully revealed. Though Torah has endless possibilities for expansion these are all contained within the original system and hence the developments are another harmonious segment of Torah.

Creation comes to be as a logically necessary correlate to the previous creation of Torah. Man, the fulfiller of Torah, is the most important creation. By analogy, Israel is the most important nation. This man-Torah relation is the purpose of the existence of the universe.

Man's only motive for studying Torah should be an understanding of this. Study is important, but it does not preclude work. It is an instrument, not an end. Yet, God freely rewards, in His love, one who studies. The rabbis even were interested in the pedagogy of Torah.

Furthermore, since the content of the Amoraic material differed only

insignificantly from the Tannaitic, this study corroborates Moore's hypothesis.

The thesis closes with an analysis of future paths of theological investigation.

Contents

Introduction

This age is accustomed to think of Jewish religious thought around the ideas of God, Torah, Israel and Man. Within each of these major divisions of Jewish theology there are problems for the modern Jew. Some of these have historic precedent. In the Middle Ages the Jewish idea of God was subject to a complete re-consideration in terms of the scholasticism of the day. Then too the role of Israel in the world and the Torah in relation to Israel required rethinking. Yet, while there has been a rather violent change in thought, at least among the thinkers, at some times in Judaism, rarely has there been so violent a change in practice, even among the masses, as in the past century. Some satisfactory solution of the problems involved in thinking of God, Israel and Man has been achieved, but not with the doctrine of Torah. Among liberal Jews there is no practical religious authority, and this often makes it seem as if there is no recognition of Divine Authority as well. Liberal Judaism has not made clear what its concrete interpretation of Torah is, what Torah means for the life of the modern Jew.

Before one can define Torah today, he should understand what it meant to our ancestors. They fathered the idea. They lived it. They bequeathed it to us as a goal.

Among the reasons which prompted me to study the Talmud in my investigation of Torah was the thought that a significant incidental problem could be investigated at the same time. George Foote Moore's "Judaism" is based on the idea that Jewish theology was crystallized in the Tannaitic period. If there was no significant change in the Amoraic period, Moore's thesis is thus incidentally substantiated. Torah is an excellent area for such a study, for the crucial challenge to Judaism in the Tannaitic-Amoraic period was from the anti-nomianism of both Christianity and Gnosticism. This historical background is discussed below.

This reason for choosing the Talmudic material to investigate is secondary to the desire to know what the Talmud has to say about Torah - specifically, systematically and in theological implication. The secondary problem is not directly pursued and is mentioned again only in the "Conclusion."

Reference to "rabbis" or "rabbinic" in this study is a reference to the teachers of the Talmud. No other source than the Talmud is quoted and discussed herein.

Having chosen a broad theme, it was necessary to severely delimit the material to be treated. The basis for this investigation is the list of passages under the heading "torah" in Frankel's מבוא ירושלמי. The mass of material referred to there has been collected, systematized and, where necessary, interpreted.

Besides the general limits which the very conception of the study force upon it, several others should be specifically kept in mind.

First, Frankel's index is not completely reliable. It includes many things that are of no significance (midrashim which simply play on suggested readings of the textual consonants and have nothing to do with "Torah" whatsoever) and leaves out others of great importance (such as the story of the miracles and the rationality of the Torah in B. M. 59b). Whatever is not referred to in the index is not in this paper, except insofar as other researches happened to bring me into

contact with it (as in the case of B. M. 59b). Nonetheless, considering the great amount of material covered and the number of pages in the Talmud scanned to find the index references, the coverage should be complete.

Second, the materials covered the idea of Torah, the traditions of Torah and the study of those traditions. Because the rabbis referred to the aspect of doing the Torah with a special word, mitzvot, this aspect of Torah is not fully covered here. Frankel included these materials under a special rubric. They have therefore entered only incidentally into this study.

Third, time and the nature of this thesis made it impossible to investigate numerous interesting sidepaths. For example, how are good deeds and mitzvot related; what are the dibre soferim specifically and what is their place in the Oral Tradition; what specifically are the halachot lemoshe misinai, and what is their place in the Oral Tradition?

Fourth, the rabbis assumed the theology of the Bible and the generations who preceded them in their thinking. The purpose of this paper is

to treat of their explicit statements, which report their conscious theology, not the assumptions which underly it. It is assumed that the reader is sufficiently cognizant of the theological context of the rabbis that he can understand what they mean when they are quoted.

Fifth, the main purpose of this essay is theological, not historical. It is the specific content of the ideas and their inter-relations which are to be sought, not their historical development. The body of this work omits all attempts to supply the historical background of either single statements or general ideas.

Nonetheless, it would be impertinent to deal with rabbinic ideas and not know of the historical factors which were important in their production. This is especially true of the rabbinic concept of Torah. The extensive materials available on this abstract idea, and the extreme passions they contain, indicate that the idea of Torah was a living problem to the rabbis.

Basic to this entire investigation is an understanding of the challenge to Judaism from both within and without. The Sadducees had denied

the Pharisaic concept of the Oral Tradition. Paulinian Christianity and Gnosticism denied the value of any Law.

The rabbinic tradition which has survived is of Pharisaic origin. The controversy with the Sadducees was not finally ended until far into Amoraic times. The Pharisaic tradition is naturally strongly apologetic upon the center of the controversy - the Oral Tradition.

Gnosticism and Paulinian Christianity said simply that the Law was of no value. The Christian challenge was more biting because it proceeded upon the Jewish doctrine of the suspension of Torah upon the advent of the Messiah. The rabbis were challenged to defend both the continuing validity of Torah and their interpretation of it. The entire discussion of the role of the prophet in the determination of the law and the emphasis upon the continuous development of Torah are specifically related to this. Indeed, the entire investigation must be seen in this light.

It is assumed then in the following treatment that the reader is sufficiently oriented in

the historical beckground of this period that the material can be investigated from a purely theological view.

The material has been organized around both rabbinic interests and modern problems. The idea of Torah, and its specific rabbinic usages are given first. Upon this basis an investigation of the Torah traditions takes place, their content, rationality and function. The other half of this work is a consideration of the study of those traditions, its motivation, importance, sufficiency, consequences and pedagogy.

For the sake of brevity, statements have been quoted only at that point in this study to which the specific intention of the statement is directed. Where points can only be demonstrated by the implications of certain statements, it has been necessary to use them several times. If every point were to be proved by every possible reference, the substantial proofs would become unnecessarily boring.

This phenomenon testifies to the interrelatedness of rabbinic thought and makes many of the parts of this study tied up with another. It is

only with difficulty, for the sake of specific clarity in modern terms, that differentiations can be made. As a result, some questions must necessarily be dropped at one point in the discussion and concluded on the basis of a thought developed later on. Thus, the endlessness of the Torah is discussed in the chapter on "Content but is not finished until the following chapter on "Rationality," etc.

The few secondary materials which are available will not be referred to in this work. These materials were read after the results of these researches had been reached and did not materially effect those conclusions. The other writers have written on subjects of different scope, both as to subject matter and source material. Since they were in no way responsible for the present state of this essay, I have not even included them in the "Bibliography."

What is Torah?

In Ber. 63a the following passage occurs: Bar Kappara said that all the discussions of the Torah depend on Prov. 3.6 - "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct thy paths." This is Bar Kappara's understanding of the nature of torah, and from it the definition adopted in this study is drawn.

There are two essential parts to Judaism, the religion. First, is man's acknowledgment of the existence of the One God. But this is a God who has intentions and purposes. To know that He is but not what He wills would be not to know His real existence at all. In Judaism God's revelation of His existence is inseparably coupled with His revelation of His will. The second step, resulting from the acknowledgment of His existence, is the receipt of His will for man's life. To emphasize the all inclusiveness of God's directions, Bar Kappara's statement is followed by one of Raba, saying that the acknowledgment of God should take place even when committing a transgression. Then too God directs man - to cease his wrongdoing and repent.

The first part of this idea is clearly illustrated by R. Acha b. Jacob's deductions from Ez. 14.5 (according to Mar? a master?). He says that idolatry is so heinous that one who rejects it is as one who acknowledges the entire Torah (Kid 40a). The rejection of idolatry is the essence of Torah, for it implies the acceptance of the One God. One who believes in Him will surely want to do His will.

The second phase is shown in the statement of [redacted] Shab. 114a that the Torah teaches derech eretz, that it is important to change one's clothes. God gives directions for every part of human life. This is most graphically substantiated by the following passage in Ber. 62a. When Ben Azzai chided R. Akiba for claiming he learned three things from R. Joshua in a privy Akiba replied, "Still it is Torah, and I needed to learn." The same story is then repeated with R. Judah challenging Ben Azzai. Thus too, R. Kahana hid himself under Rav's bed and heard the latter's conduct during intercourse. When Kahana teased his master, then and there, about his behavior, Rav

bid him leave, on the grounds that Kahana had been improper. Kahana's reply was, "Still it is Torah and I needed to learn."

The basis of Judaism then is the idea that to know God is to be able to know His will for man's life.

Torah proper is the second part of this idea - the directions which God has for man. The word Torah should be understood as meaning "directions." This is clearly its theological significance. Etymologically it is the sense of יָרָה. It is upon this definition of torah that the present investigation is founded. No further attempt is made to establish its validity, rather this whole work is testimony to its legitimacy.

The word torah is occasionally used in the Talmud in this abstract sense of "God's directions." Mostly it refers to the traditions of those directions, received and transmitted by the Jews, both orally and in writing. It is not always possible to distinguish between torah in the sense of "Torah idea" or "Torah traditions." It is helpful, however, to keep that distinction in mind.

Recognizing that a certain amount of ambiguity must occur, the following usage is followed in this study: the word "Torah" is used to denote the idea of torah, while the words "The Torah" are used when the reference is to the specific records thereof.

These directions of God are both for this world and for men. It is there and by them that they are fulfilled, as subsequent chapters show. What is more, the rabbis frequently speak of a man's acquiring "torah." The reference here is not objective acquisition - owning the records, parts of "The Torah." It is clearly subjective, but includes more than the possession of the idea of God giving directions. It refers to a subjective possession of the records, that is, "learning" therein.

This usage is common. R. Hilkiah says (Y. Ber. 60a) that one who makes his torah intermittent destroys the covenant. This too is Shammai's thought of Ab. 1.15. In Kid. 32a-b Raba is reported to have said that God can renounce the honor due Him since the world is His and

Torah is His, but a rabbi cannot, since the Torah is not his. Afterward (sic!) Raba interpreted Ps. 1.2 to mean that Torah does indeed become his. The change proves the insistence of the rabbis upon man's ability to acquire torah. A most graphic example of this use of torah is in Hag. 15b where Acher's daughter begs Rabbi to remember her father's torah and not his deeds. The word torah clearly is used to mean "learning."

This latter case introduces us to the rabbinic juxtaposition of torah and mitzvot, good deeds, or other formulas of doing. For examples see Ab. 3.11, Ber. 31a, 33b, and Pes. 50b. Since the word torah took on this sense of learning in The Torah, the questions involved in the performance of Torah were referred to under the term mitzvot. This is a study of the passages under Frankel's rubric torah, the entire aspect of torah contained in other technical terms has been left out as explained in the introduction.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the verb לָמַד when used with torah means "study." All the passages in which the phrase occurs can

mean this, and many must. For a particularly obvious example see Ber. 11b where the intention of study is noted and then the phrase used to describe it is עסק בתורה. The usage עוסקין occurs frequently, obviously in reference to study. Ab. Z. 17b, Ber. 8a, 61b, 63b and, of course, the entire section on study in this work are testimony to this understanding.

Torah in its subjective sense of "learning" is also used in other ways, as in Ab. 4.14 and Yeb. 46a where the phrases "place of torah" and "children of torah," occur respectively.

To indicate this specific sense of torah it is translated as "Learning." The use of these terms "Torah" and "The Torah" and "Learning" should help clarify the different areas of rabbinic thinking on torah.

Accordingly there are two parts to this paper. The first part deals with the rabbinic conception of Torah and The Torah (since, as noted above, it is largely impossible to separate them.) The second part deals with the acquisition thereof - the rabbinic conception of Learning.

Contents

The Torah consists of many parts and it is important to know both what these are and how they are related.

The Pentateuch is not only part of The Torah, but is often referred to as torah. This usage is derived from the narratives of the Pentateuch themselves and was common to Judaism long before the Talmud. The following Talmuic references demonstrating this are added for the sake of completeness: Y. Meg. 1.5, Ned. 22b cf. San 99b. A similar usage is found in Meg. 3.1 and Ab. Z. 2a where the phrase sefer torah is used. A particularly interesting example occurs in B. K. 17a where R. Judah is challenged by R. Nehemiah. There the word torah is first used in the sense of a scroll of the Pentateuch, and later as The Torah entire. The Pentateuch, as the source and cornerstone of the Torah is discussed later in this chapter.

The Prophets and Writings are also considered part of the Torah. In Ber. 22a and M. K. 16a, its parallel, they are listed among "the words of The Torah." In San. 101a Song of Songs is considered an integral part of the Torah. In

B. B. 13b permission is given to bind these books with a Pentateuch, for they are considered equal to it. This inclusion of Prophets and Writings in The Torah is proved too by the fact that they are occasionally quoted as proof texts when such are required from "The Torah." In M. K. 5a, Ezekiel is quoted; in San. 37a, Song of Songs; and in San. 91b, Joshua.

These books are not the same as the Pentateuch for the latter was given by God on Sinai. Yet these books were given an equal status. According to the rabbis there can be nothing in them which is not in the Pentateuch. In Taan. 9a R. Jochanan asks Resh Lakish's son if there can be a matter in the Writings which is not hinted at (much less openly stated) in the Pentateuch. The answer is, "Impossible." Meg. 14a holds a baraita which says that the prophets neither added nor detracted from what was written in the Pentateuch except the reading of the book of Esther.

If one could find such an innovation or contradiction the book could not be part of The Torah and allowed into the Bible. Hag. 13a

and its parallels, Shab. 13b and Men. 45a tell of the problem of the canonization of Ezekiel. The rabbis saw that it plainly contradicted the Pentateuch that it was admitted to the Canon. Ben Sirach, on the other hand, although it does not contradict the Pentateuch, was eliminated because it contained nonsense (San. 100b). (Predisposition must have had considerable to do with these rulings. By rabbinic times Ezekiel was considered holy and Ben Sirach not, because of its Sadducean notes. This was the cause of the decisions, for the logic in both cases is neither clear nor rigorous.)

Furthermore, even inner contradictions might be considered a valid reason for declaring a book unholy. In Shab. 30b Ecclesiastes is challenged on this ground. The final reason for its acceptance is that its first and last words are part of Torah, again not a convincing argument. A more interesting reasoning is given in challenging the holiness of Esther (Meg. 7a). The question is whether the book was written by the holy spirit or not. The immediate answer is

that it was and no further clarification of this criterion is made. Additional information is given by the controversies over Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs as noted in Yod. 3.5, Meg. 7a and its parallel in Tos. Yod. 2.14. The alternative to a holy book - one written by the holy spirit - is one written out of the individuals own wisdom. It is on this basis that R. Simeon b. Menasya rules Song of Songs to be holy, and Ecclesiastes unholy. It is because Prov. 30.6 is interpreted to show that Solomon wrote nothing of his own wisdom that Ecclesiastes is finally considered to be a holy writing.

There is very little to be learned from these cases about the requirements for admission to the Written Tradition. There does not seem to be a constant set of criteria for all cases. Thus,-is it impossible to derive lessons from the nonsense of Ben Sirach? Is Isaiah not self-contradictory? Yet these discussions illustrate at least the general idea that the essential statement of Torah is to be found in the Pentateuch and all other parts of the Written Tradition must be in harmony with its words and spirit.

The Oral Tradition too is an integral part of the Torah. In Ber. 5a mishnah and gemara are listed as part of The Torah in addition to Pentateuch (Decalogue specifically noted), Prophets and Writings. In Ber. 33a and its parallel in M..K. 16a halachot, aggadot, mishnah, and midrash are listed. Talmud is included in the former list but in the latter gemara is used instead. Unfortunately the exact scope of these various fields is never delineated - probably because their expansion was a living actuality for the rabbis. (Except, of course, in the Amoraic period, the Mishnah.) The inability to decide whether The Torah is mainly Written or Oral in Git. 60a-b is eloquent testimony to this point.

Both the Written and the Oral Traditions were present in historical fact before anyone realized that there were two traditions. The rabbis were the creators and maintainers of the Oral Tradition. It is no wonder that they stressed its greater importance. Twice in Y. Ber. 8b it is said that the words of the scribes

are dearer than the words of the Pentateuch. The idea is repeated in San. 8a, and Er. 21b. The latter is followed by a story of Akiba who was in prison and yet risked his life to carry out this principle. It is the interesting implication of Men. 29b that Akiba is a greater man than Moses.

Yet this should not be taken to mean that the rabbis reduced the Bible to an inferior place. To the contrary, as the story in M. K. 5a demonstrates, they were most eager to have a textual sanction for a ruling, even if it was only from a prophet. Their stress upon the Oral Tradition must be understood as part exaggeration to secure its position and part legal technicality to force acceptance in practice.

The rabbis were firmly convinced that there were endless possibilities for the extension of the Oral Tradition. This is the point of Raba's interpretation of Ecc. 12.12 (Er. 21b). Ber. 40 gives R. Zeira's interpretation of Ex. 15.26 proving this point. The wonderful mathematics of Mari b. Mar as quoted by R. Chisda show the

great size of The Torah as compared to this puny universe and hence its boundlessness (Er. 21a). The doctrine is most positively stated in Hag. 3b where R. Joshua at P'kin states that The Torah actually keeps on increasing in size. This thought is implicit in the entire discussion of the need for continuous study in the chapter on "Pedagogy."

The question then arose, why should there be two sources of the truth? Much as the philosophers of the Middle Ages attempted to reconcile revelation and reason, so the rabbis attempted to reconcile the Written and the Oral Traditions. That one can conceive of these in reality as two distinct torot is demonstrated clearly by Shammai's reply to the gentile in Shab. 31a. He says that there are two torot, the Written and the Oral. It is only natural then that Raba's dialectic should contain the question, "Why was it not all written?" (His answer there, Er. 21b, is that of the making of many books there is no end and so it could not all be written for there would never be an end of making books. The same kind of answer might be given as to why it was not all oral, because

then it would be impossible to remember it all. This answer is homiletically good; theologically and practically valueless.)

The first step in reconciling the two is the recognition that The Torah is God's. This means that it is His work and of special interest to Him. This idea is recorded in Pes. 87b and an especially clear example is given in the Moses-Satan story in Shab. 88b. The Divine origin and content of The Torah were stressed by the rabbis of the Tannaitic period as witness the unusual statement in San. 10.1. The rabbis of the Talmud continued this thought with no less interest. (See San. 99a where the Gemara to this part of that Mishnah begins.) The passages emphasize the matter so strongly that I but note them and pass on.

The next step is that the Pentateuch was especially designed by God to be expounded and new legal rulings derived from it - that the Oral Tradition was foreseen in the Written. God is pictured as tying the crowns to the letters of the Pentateuch for R. Akiba in Men. 29b and

Shab. 88b. It is held that even the stories were intended for instruction (San. 99b.) In San. 99a the assertion that God did not make the Pentateuch and its every facet for exposition is considered sufficiently reprehensible to bar one from the after life. Nothing in the Pentateuch is superfluous, but everything is a part of God's directions to (Y. Ber. 60a, e. g. San. 99b.) (This corroborates what has been said of the Pentateuch having endless possibilities of extension.) This seems too to be the intent of Ab. 5.22 and B. B. 116a, when R. Jochanan b. Zakkai speaks of torah shelemah.

Once this is believed there is no difficulty in saying that both traditions were given at the same time on Sinai. R. Levi b. Chama said R. Simeon b. Lakish proved from Ex. 24.12 that the Decalogue, Pentateuch, mishnah, Prophets, Writings and gamara were all given to Moses on Sinai (Ber. 5a.) In Er. 21b R. Chisda emphatically states that though there were two traditions, there was but one giving. This is what is implied in the chain of tradition as listed in Ab. 1.1.

A minor note to the contrary may be found in Men. 29b where it is implied that Moses does not understand Akiba's methods of exposition. Does this mean that Moses did not know the Oral Tradition? It means at least that he did not know the rabbinic logic. This deduction from one story cannot be considered a refutation of their belief that both traditions were given at the same time on Sinai.

The conclusion is that as there is one giving, there is one thing given - One Torah. Since God is one, it would be surprising not to find his directions one. In Hag. 3b, Ex. 30.1 is used to prove this specific point. A baraita is Shab. 31a tells how a heathen once asked Shammai how many torot the Jews have. Shammai replied that there are two, the oral and the written. The heathen replied that he believed the written but not the oral and would be a Jew on condition that he was taught only the written, not the oral. Shammai scolded him and ejected him from the house. Hillel, however, accepted him as a student and the first day taught him

the first few letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The second day he reversed what he had taught him. The heathen protested that he had been taught differently on the first day. To this Hillel replied, "Need you not then rely on me? Then rely on me also for the Oral torah."

Shammai rejected the proselyte because he could not think of teaching the Written Tradition without adding what was in the oral. Hillel proved to the proselyte that he must receive even the Written Tradition from his teacher. He therefore need not be afraid to receive also the Oral.

There is more to this story than the removal of a psychological barrier. The Written Tradition itself is not clear. The student must always rely upon a teacher's understanding of it - and so on back in the pedagogic succession. What the student learns of the so-called "Written Tradition" is inevitably an Oral Tradition about some writing. Here too Torah is one.

There is but one Torah, though for convenience sake it can be considered part Oral and part

Written. There can be no contradiction between them for they are not different but one.

This reconciliation is like its philosophic parallel. The Middle Ages found no contradiction between reason and revelation but each a support to the other. They speak of the same thing in different ways. The rabbinic reconciliation is able to go further and think of the two traditions as one historical thing.

Yet another question may be raised. How is this consonant with the historical fact that all Torah is not known at once? is not known in The Torah?

There are two answers to this question. First, that some parts of the Torah were at once time forgotten and only later recalled. The second is that some laws were made to be practiced at once and others only later. Thus these later laws are not made known until a later period. Both explanations uphold the position that The Torah was all given at one time and then attempt to explain the historical pattern.

The former explanation is elucidated extensively in Tem. 16a where it is said in one spot that 1700 rules derived by kal vechomer were forgotten in the days of mourning for Moses. These were restored, according to R. Abbahu, by Othniel b. Knaz by his ability in argument. (Note that this is by rational means and not by revelation. Cf. the next chapter.) There too R. Judah reports Samuel as saying that 3000 halachot were forgotten in the days of mourning for Moses. R. Judah also says that when Moses took leave of Joshua the latter's pride caused him to get 300 doubts in the place of 300 halachot. This idea is also introduced as a possible answer to this problem as discussed in Shab. 104a. There the gemara also interprets Lev. 27.34 to say that a prophet after Moses may make no innovation, but since it is not known which laws were to be practiced when, the prophets came and ruled on this. The role of the prophet is thus both explained and delimited. It is exactly this kind of role which is ascribed

to Ezekiel in M. K. 5a. There Rabina and R. Ashé discussed R. Simeon b. Pazzi's use of Ez. 39.15 as a basis in The Torah for marking graves. To Rabina's question about our source for this before Ezekiel, R. Ashé said (in accord with R. Chisda's view that such and such another thing is not learned from torat moshe but from the words of Ezekiel by Buzi) that it was first surely learned by simple oral tradition and then Ezekiel came and geve us a text. The instance is firm that a prophet does not introduce any new thing into the Torah.

The problem of the rationality of a continually expanding system is discussed in the next chapter.

The Oral Tradition is not to be considered as completely free for extension as the limitation of the prophetic role shows. It has natural boundaries which the process of transmission has maintained about it (Ab. 3.13.) R. Joshua says in Hag. 3b that The Torah is like mails which are fast and may not be manipulated by the individual. Only restrictions may be added which keep the original bound of The Torah from being

transgressed (the fence around the law in Ab. 1.1.)

Biblical verses have only one accepted rabbinic legal interpretation for each part worthy of comment. This too prevents an unintended extension of The Torah. New interpretations of the Bible are not looked down upon as witness the story in San. 102a. There the rabbis note, without disparagement, that Ahijah and Jeroboam stood in the field and gave interpretations which no ear had ever heard before, as the rabbis interpret 1 K. 11.29. Yet they bitterly condemn one who does not interpret the Bible accordingly to the general rabbinic understanding (see Ab. 5.8 and 3.11.) The last phrase of the latter מגלה פנים בתורה is a technical term referring to illegitimate exposition of the Bible. In San. 99a it is referred to those who deny the Divine origin of The Torah. It is thus violently disapproved. If the specific meaning of the phrase were known the area of what is legitimate and illegitimate exposition would be clarified. Unfortunately its meaning is never made clear. The dispute as to its reference in San. 99a is valueless.

The phrase is probably to be understood as meaning "one who shows himself (his face) in (interpreting) The Torah." This means that he allows his personal thought to explain the text rather than give the explanation of the halachah or, if there is none, allow the material to speak for itself (from the rabbinic point of view.) This thought would be directly analogous to the reason noted above for wanting to keep Ecclesiastes out of the Canon, that Solomon's own wisdom was in it, not God's. Illegitimate exposition of The Torah is that which does not indeed transmit what God originally gave, but which puts into it what one man intends. This theological interpretation of legitimate and illegitimate exposition is the limit of what can be done with this question in this study.

Behind all the discussions of this chapter are the historical influences both of the Pharisee-Sadducee controversy and the anti-nomianism of Gnosticism and Paulian Christianity.

The Rationality of the Torah.

The rabbis believed that the Torah was rational, if by that term is mean understandable in terms of human thought. In Ber. 54b and in its parallel Kes. 103b R. Chanina states that if the Torah were forgotten in Israel he would be able to restore it by his ability in logical thought. The simple use of logic, rabbinic logic, could unravel it again.

The Bible speaks in the language of men, it is held in Ber. 31b. It is understandable by all by virtue of their natural human capacity to think. The Torah as a whole is as understandable. In Sheb. 3.1, R. Simeon revises a halachah on the basis that the law must always be understandable by all. Ab. 3.9 notes that one is not held responsible for what is too hard for one. In Shab. 32a-b it is stated that the most difficult laws are given precisely to the most ignorant, hence the whole law can be clear to everyone. If the most ignorant can understand the most difficult part of Torah, how much the more can the normal law be understood by normal men. Despite diversity

of opinion one can learn Torah by applying one's reason. Hag. 3b boldly says that the law was given by One Shepherd, hence it is one (sic!) and the individual is not to fear the confusion of opinion but to sift the various opinions and accept that which seems most right to him! Reason is the criterion for deciding. Here the rationality of the Torah is manifest indeed.

This ability to understand The Torah and even to evaluate it with one's mind is not exclusively a Jewish talent but is true of gentiles as well. R. Meir in Ab. Z 3b (see also its parallel in B. B. 38a and Hag. 13a) states that a gentile can occupy himself in Torah and thus become equal in status to the High Priest. Another example of the ability of gentiles to study, understand and evaluate the Torah is given in B. K. 38a where the story is told of two Roman commissioners who studied the Torah and found it perfect except in one case. The Torah may be understood and appreciated by all men, because it is rational, as are men.

It is obvious then that there can be no contradiction in the Torah. The discussion on

the canonization of Ezekiel, etc., and the relation of the Oral Tradition to the Written is explicit proof of this. The rabbis do take it for granted and spend much of their time explaining what seems to the untrained mind to be an inconsistency. A good example, in that it is rather open, occurs in Meg. 2b.

The Torah is not only understandable but the rabbis act as if it were complete. Were there a crucial part of The Torah not given, no decision on any subject could be made lest the missing laws nullify all decisions and actions. The rabbinic belief that all The Torah is in their possession is a part of their belief in the rationality of The Torah. In B. M. 59b there occurs the striking story where miracles and even a Heavenly Voice are denied valid significance in a legal discussion. The Torah was given to man and it is his business and no one else's, not even Heaven's, to apply it. This too seems to be the background for the statement attributed to Joshua at the time of Moses' death in Tem. 16a.

However, there are some contradictory - that is anti-rational - notes in the Talmud. Hag. 13a notes that there are secret things while Er. 31a describes The Torah as being so great that the entire universe is but 1/3300th of it; hence, how is it to be comprehended? The former probably refers to aggadic matters (metaphysical?) and the latter is a simple exaggeration attempting to show the greatness of The Torah. The comment in R. H. 31b that Moses himself received but 49 of the 50 gates of understanding seems more impressive although it too is not explicitly understandable. Does the interpretation of 1 Ki. 11.29 in San. 103a also testify to this point? It is not clear.

The seeming inconsistency of having a Torah which is complete but which is yet endless of exposition must here be raised as it was in Shab. 88b by R. Judah in the name of Rav. Although new things are being learned in The Torah they are only extensions of a system set up and established by God long previous. The system is

perfect and without inconsistency. It was given by God into the hands of man. The system of direction is called Torah and it was made so that extensions would continually be produced. These extensions were foreseen in the setting up of the system. It was because they believed the complete system had been revealed that they could make a decision and fully believe that it was indeed God's decision. It is this which is clearly the purpose of the story in B. M. 59b, as shown by the poignant epilogue. It is this which is the intellectual cornerstone for all action from The Torah without specific individual revelation.

It is upon this basis too that I believe one must understand what seems impossible in a Divine System, the abrogation of one of its parts. (See the cases in Ber. 9.5, Y. Ber. 60a, Tem. 14b, Yoma 69a.)

The Torah is indeed God's own precious possession, but it is man's by right and it is designed for man's world. In San. 91b, R.

Judah says that not teaching a person a halachah is robbing him of his heritage from yet the six days of Creation! There too R. Chana b. Bizna says in the name of Simon the Pious that such a one is cursed even by the embryo in its mother's womb. The Torah belongs to each man by right. Further, its contents refer to this world and so it finds its full meaning only here. In Shab. 88b Moses proves to the angels who do not wish a mortal to take The Torah from its place in heaven that it belongs more properly on earth. It is an adornment in heaven. On earth it is a practical necessity for the fulfilling of God's will. It is no wonder then that in Shab. 30a and Kes. 103b scholars are represented as disliking death for then they must cease study. Even as the Torah was used to create this world (Ab. 3.14), so it is essential to this world - and it is this-worldly.

The Torah is therefore a livable doctrine (Suk. 32a) and it does not contradict the reasonable life. Hence when there is an emergency

situation, but only then, it may be abrogated. What is more, it is only in such an emergency situation that the need to abrogate it could conceivably arise. It is because The Torah is given to man to live by that man may, to live by it, annul part of it. One may not annul those things without which there can be no life of Torah at all. The purpose of Torah, to live by God's directions, could not at all be achieved by giving up the central commands.

This rationality extends even a step further - to the very words of The Torah themselves. Considering the overwhelming importance of The Torah, the rabbis treat its words with amazing naturalness. The words themselves, as words, are nothing (San. 36b) and thus may not become defiled by lepers and others who are unclean (Ber. 33a and its parallel M. K. 16a.) This can be said of The Torah, one word of which is equal to the entire universe (Y. Peah 1.1) for it is a part of The Lord God's own directions for man's life.

Torah, Man and Israel

I have defined Torah as God's directions for man's life. The Torah is intimately connected with man and his life. The rabbinic understanding of Torah's place in the universe testifies to their view of man and his purpose.

The Torah was created before the world according to the rabbis as is taught in a baraita in Pes. 54a. (See too Ab. 3.14.) Furthermore, the world was created for The Torah as is stated in Ab. Z. 3a (see below) and in Pes. 68b. In the latter, R. Eleazar quotes a baraita which interprets Jer. 33.25 to say that if God had not made His covenant of day and night He would not have appointed His statutes for day and night - that, if not for The Torah and the study thereof, heaven and earth would not endure.

This view is put with remarkable clarity by Resh Lakish who is introduced parenthetically into Ab. Z. 3a. There his exposition of Gen. 1.31

is given. It states that the world was created only conditionally. If Israel accepted The Torah the world would continue. If not, the world would return to void and chaos.

These statements introduce certain significant avenues of rabbinic thought. First, The Torah as an ordering principle, which turns the chaos into cosmos. This idea, which is implicit in the rabbinic thoughts given above is explicitly acknowledged in a quotation from the Tana de Be Eliahu quoted in San. 97a. The teaching is that the world is to exist for 6000 years; 2 of chaos, 2 of The Torah and 2 of the Messiah. The role of Torah here is that of changing the universe of chaos and void into the universe we know, and preparing it for the advent of that further changed world, that of the Messiah. It is interesting to compare the neo-Platonic doctrine of the <u>logos</u> with this aspect of Torah. Although The Torah does not create the world so as to remove that action from the pure Godhead as in neo-Platonism, still it is through The Torah that the world comes to be.

It is almost as if the words void and chaos were used as the later Jewish mystics did indeed use them, to indicate some primordial matter, and that the Creation was produced by introducing some "form," or logos, into it. The Christian counterpart of the logos - Jesus - is the center of their religion. So Torah is the most important aspect of the Jewish religion. *

Second, the necessity of man. Though Torah existed independent of the world, yet because of its very nature a world had to be made and men placed in it. What good are God's directions for men if they are not given to them? This is the point of the story in Shab. 88b where Moses persuades the angels that The Torah belongs on earth.

From this one might think that the creation of men and the world followed as a necessity even for God, and hence God's freedom not to create man and the world was limited by the rabbis. They would have undoubtedly felt this to be an expression of His free will - that the creation of man was foreseen by God in the previous creation of Torah.

* Reference

The Torah and men stand in relation to one another - a necessary relation. The Torah can be fulfilled only by men. Men can fulfill their purpose in being created only by performing the Torah. This Torah-man relation is the purpose of creation. Had there been no Torah there would have been no creation of the world or men. Had men not accepted The Torah the world would not have endured.

Third, man's place in creation. Man holds an exalted place in nature because he is able to understand that God has a will for him and he is able to will to follow it. Since no other creature can do this man stands at the head of all that has been created. It is with him that the fate of the universe hangs. It is only because of his occupation with the Torah that the universe exists now (Ab. 1.2 and San. 26b in addition to the material quoted above.)

Fourth, the importance of man's freedom. Man's freedom to reject The Torah is not restricted in any way in these statements. Instead, the rabbis, by making the creation con-

ditional on man's free acceptance, have seemingly limited God's power - an astonishing emphasis!

Yet it is interesting how the rabbis understanding of history shows the opposite to have occured. According to them, Israel did at first refuse The Torah - their act of free will. But God did not end the world. Instead He forced The Torah upon them - His free will and an act of love. Eventually they see He is right and accept it freely. But of what value was their original freedom to refuse?

Israel is distinguished from all other nations because it possesses The Torah and busies itself in it (Meg. 15a.) The unusually perceptive exposition in Ab. Z. 2a-3a of the judgment of the nations at the end of days brings this out most clearly. At the judgment day the nations of the world send their leaders to explain their achievements and their special talents. The Romans tell of their excellence in making market places, public baths and ac-

quiring silver and gold! Then the other nations declare their special interest. Israel's alone will be defensible, the study and performance of The Torah.

The major reason why Israel alone follows The Torah is that the idea of Torah makes it impossible for heathens. The first step calls for one to acknowledge God and without this how can one accept His direction? Israel alone believed in the One God, it alone was interested in The Torah.

It is understandable then that the words of The Torah are not to be transmitted to a heathen (Hag. 13a.) He simply would not be able to treat them properly, not believing in the One God. (This is an Amoraic view, less liberal than R. Meir's statement about the gentile who studies Torah being equal to the High Priest, quoted in B. K. 38a and Ab. 2.3b. The fate of Palestine in the Amoraic period should be remembered in connection with this particularism.) Yet in this passage R. Amni gives as

the reason for this prohibition, with Ps. 147.20 as a proof, the fact that it was Israel and none other that was chosen to receive the Torah. Hence The Torah is to be preserved by Israelites and none others.

The doctrine that Israel was chosen from among all other nations to receive The Torah was put into the blessing which one was supposed to say before reading from the Pentateuch and is given in Ber. 11b. There R. Hamnuna calls it the choicest of all blessings and this is an indication of the importance and love which the rabbis taught the belief of Israel's choseness. R. Akiba says in Ab. 3.14 that Israel must be beloved for it was the people given The Torah, something which God, unlike man, was glad to be able to do (R.Zeira, others say R. Chanina b. Pappa, in Ber. 5a.)

Does this mean then that the rabbis defined Israel's choseness as being informed both by revelation and prophecy of the existence of God and His directions for life? This is a simple

interpretation of rabbinic thought which would suit modern Judaism well, but the rabbis of the Talmud expressed another more specific interpretation of God's choice of Israel.

In Shab. 88a it is recorded that R. Abdimi b. Chana b. Chisda proved from Ex. 19.17 that God forced Israel to accept The Torah. God raised Mt. Sinai over their heads and threatened them with immediate death if they would not take it. It would seem that Israel was not so much chosen as enslaved. That this story was not merely another aggadah but was well known and played an important part in rabbinic thinking is testified to by the discussion in Shab. 88a (see below) and its inclusion in the Ab. Z. 2a-3a story. In the latter God claims that at judgment the nations have occupied themselves with the wrong things. They ask God why He did not give The Torah to them. God's answer is that he did offer it, to which they reply that at least they did not take it and fail to establish it. God then repeats His question,

asking why they did not take The Torah. Their crushing reply is, "Did you suspend mountains over us?"

The rabbis apparently believe that God chose Israel by coercing them, and not others, to accept His Torah. But this Tannaitic doctrine, although accepted by the Amoraic teachers, was not found satisfactory by them. As R. Acha b. Jacob puts it in Shab. 88a, if this is true then there is a great protest against The Torah. His attitude is certainly correct, for Israel's choice would then mean only slavery. But this is the exact antithesis of what the rabbis felt. The Torah did not bind them to something they did not wish to do. It fulfilled their purpose in being alive. It enabled them to rise to the summit of the universe. Raba's reply there is both necessary and adequate. He states that in the days of Ahashuerus, Es. 9.27 as proof, the Jews took upon themselves of their own free will, that which their ancestors had once had forced upon them. (This story is fur-

ther discussed in the chapter on "Motivation.") The doctrine of Israel's choice reaches the rabbis' true feeling for both it and The Torah when God's choice of Israel becomes Israel's choice of God and The Torah as well.

It was for The Torah that Israel was chosen, and Israel's special relation to God lies only in its possession of and occupation with The Torah.

Why God chose Israel, and not another nation, is not made clear. In the story in Shab. 88b, where Moses denies he has been given The Torah, the implication is clear that The Torah is God's own intimate possession and is therefore too precious for any man to claim right to it. From this point of view, there is no possible condition for its giving but God's arational grace, love or mercy. The other point of view, developed more openly in Ab. Z. 2a-3a is that Israel was given The Torah because of its relative potential worth. The nations of the world were not given it because they could not even fulfill the 7 Noahitic commandments much less

the entire Torah. At the same time, it is proved there to the nations, that Israel has indeed fulfilled The Torah. Israel was given The Torah because it was known that Israel would fulfill it. The finishing blow to the relative worth of the nations is the part of the story that shows that even if they tried at the judgment they could not fulfill even a simple set of commandments.

Though there may be a doctrine of election by grace implied in some rabbinic thinking, there was a strong current of rabbinic thought which held that Israel was chosen to receive The Torah because of its merit of potential service.

Israel's place among the nations is directly comparable to man's place among created things. As man is greater than the rest of created things because he alone can know and follow The Torah, so is Israel among the nations. Here too it must be noted that Israel is not the purpose of creation, but Torah. The knowledge and ob-

servance of The Torah is always the criterion of Israel's worth. Yet Israel is necessary to Torah for it alone could fulfill The Torah.

Israel can claim in its favor the doing of The Torah an indication that Israel was chosen for merit and not out of love. It is thus that Israel pleads in the story in Er. 21b and it is thus that the attribute of justice is admonished in Meg. 15a. An even more striking statement is made in Mak. 3.16. There R. Chananiah b. Akashya is given as the author of a mishnah which states that God made The Torah great so that Israel might attain more זכות. Here it is not only assumed that Israel does acquire something before God by following The Torah, but that this was God's motivation for making The Torah so great. (This bears out the view previously stated that though The Torah was created and existed independently it was done with the subsequent necessary creation of the world and men in mind.)

This entire conception of acquiring זכות through the performance of Torah is further brought to the fore by the rabbinic idea that The Torah sustains man in general as well as Israel specifically. R. Joshua b. Levi is noted in Pes. 118a as comparing the 36 verses of Ps. 136 to the 36 generations whom God created in the world before the giving of The Torah. These generations God sustained by His love. This is all R. Joshua b. Levi says there, but the obvious conclusion is that since the time of the giving of The Torah God need not sustain men by His mercy, but can do so because of the זכות they gain in performing it.

The question of זכות will be considered in connection with the discussion of "Consequences." This chapter need only note further that the rabbis felt that the world is sustained because of those who fulfill The Torah. Not only are man and Israel exalted in the universe because of their relation to Torah, but those of Israel who fulfill it are the specific few for whom the entire cosmos is maintained. These thoughts are certainly a powerful rationale for the rabbis' own type of living.

Motivation

It has already been noted that the rabbis believed that one could acquire Learning. The answer to the question, "Why should one want to make Learning one's own?" seems almost given by the definition and consequent importance of Torah. Yet the rabbis had explicit answers to give to this question, and these are briefly noted here.

Their first answer was that the acquisition of Learning is commanded by God, is part of The Torah. Such laws are found in the Written Tradition and are reemphasized in the Oral Tradition (Ab. Z. 3b1 and Kid. 30a-b.) In Ber. 11b the blessing used before study is recorded. It blesses the God who commands man to study. R. Jochanan in Ab. 3.8 uses this as the reason for being humble though one is learned. R. Chanina b. Teradion when asked by the Romans why he had studied did not resort to the miracles which had freed R. Eleazar b. Perata, but answered the charge in simple truth. He

said, "I have studied Torah because the Lord, my God, commanded me" (Ab. Z. 18b.) His courageous answer resulted in his burning, his wife's execution and his daughter's consignment to a brothel. Despite the consequences, which he must have known, he answered what he did because it was the truth. The rabbis certainly agree with him that man studies because God commands it.

The word command has a harsh connotation. It implies the doing of something against one's own will. It is to dispel any such thought that R. Samuel b. Nachmani's statement in Men. 99b may be noted with advantage here. There he says that study is not indeed a duty or a command. It is a blessing. One does not study against one's will but as the utilization of a privilege. The extent to which the rabbis believed in the absence of coercion is brought out by the poignant statement in Hag. 5b. Rabbi is reported to teach that God cries every day over one who can and does not study The Torah.

As a second answer the rabbis recognized that The Torah was intimately bound up with a man's soul. Since the fate of that soul hangs upon man's relation to The Torah, a man should know what The Torah bids him do (Ab. 3.8, 9 and Pes. 68b.) The idea is graphically put in Ab. Z. 3b and in Ber. 61b which compare man's need for The Torah to a fish's need for water. As striking in effect is the comparison of Israel and The Torah to a babe sucking milk from its mother's breast. (Y. Ber. 60a and Er. 54a-b)

These are, of course, but two explicit applications of the idea of Torah and its place in the universe to the life of man. It is again upon this theological foundation that the insistence upon purity of motivation is founded.

The rabbis believe that The Torah should be studied ערב. He who does this makes peace between the upper family and the lower (R. Alexandri.) He is as great as one who builds the Temples of heaven and earth (Rav.) He is as important as one who shields the entire world (R.

Jochanan, reported with the others in San. 99b.) (The latter statement holds the implication that the world exists because of righteous scholars.) The importance of study תורה is stressed not only by such statements of merit but by those holding forth special rewards. In San. 36b it is stated that such learning alone will abide. Suk. 49b says that only this kind of learning is really Torah, Torah of loving-kindness. Learning which is not acquired in this way is not Torah of lovingkindness. Shab. 63a says that success and greatness, even material rewards, are given by God to such students.

Directly connected with this is the rabbinic insistence that the quantity of study is not the criterion of the value of study. In Hag. 5b the story is told of R. Idi who was teased by the rabbis because he was able to study but one day a year. When he became aware of this the great Palestinian Amora R. Jochanan rebuked them by expounding Is. 58.2 to show that if one studies but one day a year scripture ac-

counts it into him as if he had done it for a whole year. In Ber. 5b, R. Eliezer comforts R. Jochanan who thought he was dying by telling him not to worry about not having made his Learning greater, for it was traditional that one whose learning is great and one whose learning is small are equal, as long as they directed their hearts to heaven.

Yet before an investigation into the meaning of the term תורה can properly begin it is necessary to appreciate the extreme importance which the rabbis explicitly attached to study. It is this passion for Learning which is the background for the idea of תורה and it is to this that attention is next turned.

Importance

The rabbis felt that Ab. 1.1 contained one of the oldest statements in the tradition. The men of the Great Synagogue are reported there to have said, "Raise up many disciples." One of the most respected rabbinic thoughts about The Torah is that it is important to teach it. This thought is extended to justify study for the purpose of teaching. In Ab. 4.5 R. Ishmael b. R. Jochanan b. Beroka states this quite plainly, as does Hillel in Ab. 1.13. In Ned. 55a, it is said in addition that one who studies in order to teach will be given Learning. This thought is corroborated in Suk. 49b where a variant view states (as a substitute for תורה, interestingly enough) that one either studies to teach, or else what he learns is not Torah of lovingkindness.

Probably no greater praise or incentive to teaching could be offered than is recorded in the great R. Jochanan's private prayer after the תפלה (Ber. 11b.) The closing blessing

was of God who teaches Torah to Israel, His people. What more can one say about the importance of teaching than that God Himself does it? It is in line with this thought that Ab. 4.12 says that respect for the teacher should be like respect for God - because God is the real teacher; because one's teacher gives one Torah, God's directions.

No wonder then that such praise (B. B. 21a) is heaped upon Joshua b. Gamala who established teachers in every town and made education compulsory for children at the age of 6 or 7. There are two ways of preserving Learning (see B. M. 85b and its parallel in Kes. 103b.) R. Chanina boasted that if Learning were lost in Israel he would restore it with his ability in argumentation. R. Chiyya replied that his method was to go to a town where there were no teachers, and supplying himself by working (so as not to use his Learning) he taught the children enough so that they could teach each other until he or another scholar would come and teach them more. Torah

is preserved through the brilliance of a few gifted minds or through the training of the entire community. There can be no doubt that the rabbis preferred the latter and stressed the importance of teaching in every way. This is but a logical deduction from their belief that The Torah, though God's was man's, every man's, by right.

So in B. M. 85a several stories are related showing the great lengths to which the rabbis would go to make a scholar. There too a tradition is recorded of no less than three different teachers - Tannaitic and Amoraic, Palestinian and Babylonian - that one who teaches his neighbor's son will be privileged to sit in the heavenly academy. One who teaches the son of an עם הארץ even if God has made a decree, He annuls it for such a one. This thought takes it for granted that a father should teach his son. The motif is found also in Kid. 30a where it is held that a grandfather need not teach his grandson, but if he does it is accounted

to him as if he had taught all the generations of his seed. To this R. Joshua b. Levi adds that he is considered as if he had himself received The Torah on Sinai. In San. 99b, Resh Lakish says that one who teaches his neighbor's son is considered by The Torah as the creator of that child. R. Eliezer says as the maker of the words of The Torah. Raba concluded, as if he had made himself. In Ber. 18a-b, R. Chiyya states that a dead man is called living if he was righteous, that is, one who gathered many scholars.

R. Simeon b. Yochai says (from personal experience) it is especially important to teach in the hour when men have abandoned The Torah. Such a one receives the reward of all who should have studied but did not. Interesting enough, Hillel holds the opposite view. In times of wide-spread learning, teach; but in times of ignorance, study. Both of these may be found in Y. Ber. 60a and a Hillel parallel in Ber. 63a. In any case there can be no doubt that the rabbis considered teaching a supreme obligation.

The rabbinic emphasis upon teaching is at least equalled by their interest in study. The highest possible praise is given to study too when it is said in Ab. Z. 3b, by R. Judah transmitting a statement of Rav's, that God Himself sits and studies for one fourth of the day. R. Joseph is reported in Ab. Z. 4b to have said that God studies the first third of the day. No higher ascription of importance could be made than to say that God, the Perfect One, Himself studies. It is probably with this in mind that the statement is made many times that when a man or men study God's presence is with them. There are statements made to this effect in Ab. 3.3, 4, 6 and in Ber. 6a.

The rabbis almost wore out the figure of the simile in attempting to adequately convey the importance they attached to study. In Ber. 8a, God is reported as saying that one who studies is as one who has redeemed "Me and My son Israel in the world." It is said in Hag. 5b that God cries over one who can and does not study.

There is no doubt in the rabbinic mind that study is more important than sacrifice. One proof, given in Shab. 30a and Mak. 10a is from Ps. 84.11. There God proves to David that one day of his study is better than 1000 sacrifices of Solomon. The other standard proof is derived from Joshua 5 (Er. 63b.) There rabbinic exegesis demonstrates that though there was a lapse in both the offering of the continual sacrifice and the study of The Torah, the Captain of the Lord's Host did not come to berate Joshua until Israel had stopped study. The cessation of the sacrifice was not of sufficient importance to bring him, but when Israel stopped studying he instantly appeared to rebuke Joshua. In Meg. 16b, Rav - some say Samuel - is reported to have said that study is more important than building the Temple, for as long as Baruch b. Neraiah was alive Ezra would not leave Babylon. R. H. 18a has an opinion that study will wipe out certain of God's decisions though sacrifice could not. This is Raba's view, but Abbaye adds to this, good deeds are necessary.

That this was not always the prevailing rabbinic opinion is revealed plainly in Meg. 3a where the gemara challenges an old kal vechomer of the school of Rabbi. They held that since even the Temple service was stopped to hear the reading of the Megillah, it was obvious that a minor activity like study should stop that students could hear the Megillah read. The gemara then rejoins, "And is the Temple service more important than study?" It then proves that it is not by giving the standard Joshua proof. In the days of the 5th and6th generations of the Tannaiim the tradition of Temple days, that study was less important, still lingered on. Yet, it was natural when the Temple was destroyed that the demands of a living, non-Temple, Judaism should make study more important than the Temple service. Study became a kind of substitute for sacrifice, as is noted below.

Two statements of the importance of study, stressing it to surprising lengths - even if the usage of making a point by exaggeration be known - occur in Meg. 16b. R. Joseph holds that study

is more important than saving a life! Mordecai is given as an example, for in the Ezra-Nehemiah geneologies he is first listed 4th but later 5th. His standing fell because after saving Ahashuerus' life and being promoted to the nobility he ceased to study. Not less startling is R. Isaac b. Samuel b. Marta's statement as transmitted by Rabbah, that study is more important than respect for parents! Jacob's absence from home for 14 years which was not punished is the proof. It is obvious that he must have been studying The Torah and this justified him.

This overwhelming emphasis upon the importance of Learning leads to two questions. The rabbis long discussed whether study and teaching are so important that work is precluded. The modern question is similar. Are study and teaching so important that they are an end in themselves? The former is treated here and the latter in the next chapter.

Some rabbis believed that the importance of study excluded time to work. In Ab. 3.5, R. Nechunya b. Hakanah said that one who takes upon himself the yoke of The Torah removes from himself

the yoke of politics and worldly occupation; but the same is true in reverse, that the politician and business man are freed of the yoke of study and teaching. R. Simeon B. Yochai holds that if a man studies, God will take care of his material needs and this may be applied not just to one man but even to all Israel (Ber. 35b.)

It seems likely that the rabbis thought of this as an ideal situation, but one which was not practical. R. Chiyya's private prayer concludes with the hope that God will make His Torah Israel's occupation (Ber. 16b). This same kind of wistful desire to have nothing to do but study is found in the first part of the story of Ulla's visit to Babylon as described in Pes. 87 b-88a.

The prevailing opinion is clearly with the more practical point of view. Study and teaching are extremely important, but they should not be done to the exclusion of obtaining a sufficient livelihood. R. Gamaliel b. R. Judah the Prince said (Ab. 2.2) that the study of The Torah and

a worldly occupation together are beautiful for the two of them make sin forgotten, but all study that has not work with it is destined to lead to negligence and the obtaining of sin. R. Simeon b. Yochai's statement above is a response to a baraita which gives R. Ishmael's exposition of Dt. 11.14 and Joshua 1.8, that a man should have a worldly occupation. In reply to R. Simeon b. Yochai, Abbaye says there that many have done according to R. Ishmael and it was well with them, but with those who have done according to R. Simeon it has not been well. Raba seemingly agrees with Abbaye for he is quoted there as having said to his disciples that they were not to come before him in Nisan or Tishri. This that they might not be troubled for sustenance for the rest of the year (but, as Rashi explains) they might in these specially busy agricultural months earn enough to live on for the rest of the year.

Yet though the rabbis saw the necessity of work, they insisted that the study and teaching

of The Torah were primary. The Ab. d. R. Nathan states the importance of Learning over worldly occupation in terms of their appropriate rewards (chapter 28 p. 86.) R. Meir states it just as plainly in Ab. 4.10 where he says one should do little in business but occupy oneself mostly in study. What made it possible for Ecclesiastes to be accepted into the Bible was its opening lesson which was Torah (Shab. 30b) in saying that there is no profit to a man in his worldly pursuits, but there is in his study. Ulla, whose view was noted above, states that if one is concerned over his livelihood his knowledge of The Torah will diminish (San. 26b.) Raba - some say R. Jochanan - says similarly (Er. 55a) that a business man does not have Torah. R. Nehorai applied his beliefs about the permanent value of Learning and the ephemeral value of trade to the training of his son, teaching him the former but not the latter (Kid. 82b.)

In Amoraic times R. Jochanan was able to

say (Shab. 11a) that only R. Simeon and his colleagues had the privilege of not interrupting their studies for the מלאכה, because their study was their occupation, but he and his colleagues must break off their studies for both the קריאת שמע and the מלאכה. By. R. Jochanan's time (second generation of Palestinean Amoraiim) it was the general practice to work as well as study. Rabbah b. Ḥama said R. Jochanan said in the name of R. Judah b. Ilai (who is of R. Simeon b. Yochai's time and hence make one of our traditions doubtful) that former generations (sic!) made their study fixed and their work free and both were satisfactory, but for later generations who made their work fixed and their study free, neither was satisfactory for them.

The rabbis clearly believed that study and teaching though of the greatest importance must be supplemented by a worldly profession, though that is secondary. One might for further proof quote the professions of the various great teachers, but the above proofs are sufficient, I believe,

to demonstrate the general acceptance of this aspect of the rabbinic concept of Torah.

Sufficency

Now that the overwhelming importance which the rabbis attached to study is appreciated, the final question of the motivation for study may be posed. Does the importance of study and the emphasis of the rabbis upon not using one's Learning but studying תלמוד mean that study is to be considered an end in itself and not an instrumental value? A consideration of the relation of study to action, of learning The Torah to performing The Torah is necessary.

There are only two statements which claim that the study of The Torah is more important than its fulfilling. In Sot. 21a a baraita tells of R. Menachem b. Jose interpreting Prov. 6.23 to teach that study is more important than doing the commandments, for as a lamp protects only temporarily, so doing protects only temporarily, but study protects forever. (The statement should be understood as a pedagogic exaggeration to stress the special efficacy of Learning in bringing one

into the hereafter. This is discussed in the chapter on "Consequences.) The only analogous passage occurs in Shab. 31a-b where learning is called the inner key and the fear of God the outer key, but it would be foolhardy to consider this sufficient evidence that the rabbis believed study more important then performance.

Two individual opinions in absolute contradiction to these exist. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel's opinion is given in the incisive comment of Ab. 1.17 which says that not the exposition (דרש = technical term for the exposition of a Biblical text) but the doing is the essential thing. R. Akiba's no less direct comment in Ab. 3.15 is that the world is judged in goodness but all is according to the deed.

Another indication of the rabbinic answer is that the doing of good deeds does indeed add something to study. R. Chanina b. Teradion

assured R. Eleazar b. Perata that Perata would be freed of five counts while he would be detained on one, for Perata had good deeds, while he had only study (Ab. Z. 17b.) Rav Huna's devestating addition is that one who indulges in study alone is like one who has no God! The addition of good deeds to Learning as an additional benefit occurs very often in the Talmud.

Moreover, the rabbis believe that deeds not only add to Learning, they are more important even to the extent that Learning is dependent upon performance.

R. Chanina b. Dosa remarks (Ab. 3.10) that one whose deeds are more than his learning, the latter will endure, but not if the reverse is true. (The same is noted there with respect to fear of God. This juxtaposition corroborates the definition of Torah previously given.) Ab. 3.17 records a tradition that one whose wisdom excels his deeds is like a shallowly rooted tree with great boughs. Even a small wind can

blow it away. One whose deeds excel his wisdom is like a deeply rooted tree which will remain in its place though the strongest wind blow. The rabbis even explain away a Biblical passage (Dt. 5.1) which has learning and doing on an equal footing. The interpretation as given in Yeb. 109b by R. Papa is that the passage ascribes to one who does the commands the same merit as if he had studied them as well. To one who does not do them, though he studies them, it is accounted unto him as if he had not studied at all. This latter view contradicts the simple assertion in Ab. 5.14 that each gets its own reward, though it too says that deeds with study is best.

To these rather explicit rabbinic answers the following additional proofs can be adduced. In Ab. 4.13 a good name is considered as more desirable than learning. The serving of scholars is more important than scholarship itself (Ber. 7b.) Though teaching is considered a worthy motive for study, still the more complete ful-

fillment of doing other commands as well is considered better by R. Ishmael b. R. Jochanan b. Beroka in Ab. 4.5. R. Jose carried this thought even further in Yeb. 109b in saying that one who has studied and has taught The Torah to a student, even though that student does what The Torah says, if the teacher himself has not done, he receives no reward even from his study. There can be little doubt of the subordination of Learning to action among rabbinic values.

Moreover, the Learning is to be judged in terms of the action. In Ab. 3.17 the premise is set down that Learning and proper behavior are inseparably connected. Without Learning there is no proper behavior (which is why study is important) but without proper behavior there is no learning (which means that the criterion of Learning is action.) This idea is carried to its logical conclusion in R. Ami's reply concerning Doeg's Learning (R. Isaac's interpretation of Ps. 52.3 in San 106b.) He says that Doeg's knowledge was but from the lips

and outward. It was not real Learning. It could not have been considering what he did.

The implication is both obvious and necessary that Learning is important because it leads to performance of The Torah. This is specifically stated by Rabbi as quoted in B. K. 17a. There he is reported to have said that great is the study of Torah for it leads to action.

These results should occasion no surprise. The very definition of Torah would seem to make this outcome necessary. The Torah is God's direction for life. It is an instrument to be used in reaching a goal. It is important because it is God's own instrument for reaching the goal which He established. The study of those directions cannot be made more important than that at which those directions aim. The Torah is essentially practical, not academic.

The rabbinic view that The Torah is not an end but an instrument corroborates the former finding that both partners of the Torah-Man relation are necessary, though The Torah was created

by God first. In addition it helps us understand why the rabbis believed it did not preclude working.

If then study is less important than doing, what does the word לשמה mean? It has been widely thought to mean "as an end in itself," but in view of this discussion it must mean something different.

The passages previously cited show it means not using Learning for personal material gain - to make money, save one's life, etc. - but this is but a negative definition. Its positive content is never defined. I propose to translate it as "for what it is." One should study The Torah for what it is - God's directions for living. One's motives in study should be pure, that is not for any other purpose. But having learned what The Torah says, the student should do it or else he simply cannot have learned The Torah.

But the rabbis recognized that such a sufficient understanding of what The Torah *is* is not commonly to be found. They therefore

held that one who comes to study by extrinsic motives.should be encouraged, for he will eventually be led to study by intrinsic motives. This is Rab's view according to R. Judah in Pes. 50b and is repeated again in San. 105b. In accord with this R. Safra used to conclude his saying of the שמעתתא by praying that there be peace among those who study The Torah whether for intrinsic or extrinsic motives and that those who study it with the latter be brought to study it with the former (Ber. 16b.) In a discussion in Pes. 68b, the gemara notes two comments by R. Sheshet and R. Eleazar that in the beginning one studies The Torah for the benefit of one's soul. Most men start studying from selfish reasons, but they soon discover what The Torah is - God's directions for them and their lives - and so come to study it for what it is.

It is this thinking which must be taken as the background for the notion that God originally forced Israel to accept The Torah.

Israel first came to The Torah through a selfish motive - the desire to preserve its own life. It took Israel centuries to understand what The Torah was, but when they did they were willing to accept it נעשה. It is a simple case, though on a national scale, of the entire rabbinic thought that one is permitted to study from poor motives, for out of such study the material itself will make the best of motives take hold.

There is a psychoanalytic principle that it is a burden upon the individual to do any good, to follow any pattern of behavior given to him outside of his animal nature. Man is at the brute level a selfish animal. The Torah is difficult to acquire. The Tana de Be.Eliyahu is quoted in Ab. Z. 8b as saying that one must set oneself to study as an ox to a yoke and an ass to a burden. It is no wonder then that The Torah first had to be forced on men. Yet even understanding that this is a part of man's essential nature, the rabbis hold that man can

rise to a higher motivation. Man can shake off the shackles of selfishness by coming to learn his destiny and that which is required of him. Man can surmount his animal impulsions and freely learn to do the will of God.

Consequences

The only legitimate motive for study arises from an understanding of the relation of man and Torah in the scheme of creation. It is for this reason that the rabbis condemn using Learning for personal gain (as in Ab. 4.5.) The story of R. Tarfon in Ned. 62a demonstrates the extreme passion of rabbinic belief in this principle. Tarfon once revealed to a robber that he was the famous R. Tarfon. The robber fled then and Tarfon's life was saved. R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Chananiah that Tarfon was troubled for the rest of his life because he felt that even this was use of The Torah, and wrong. The rest of the passage lists condemnations of those who use their Learning.

But at the same time as the rabbis stressed that one's motives should, ideally, be pure in studying, they believed that good things did happen to the man who studied. The Oxford Universal English Dictionary defines "reward" as

" a return or recompense made to, or received by a person for some service, or merit, or for hardship endured." The person who is rewarded has placed his rewarder under some obligation to him, often a special obligation, which is discharged by means of the reward. It is not God who is obligated to man for the latter's study, but man who is obligated to God for having been created! Man's study is a normal action for his state and is not a merit or a hardship. As R. Jochanan b. Zakkai puts it in Ab. 3.8, "If you have studied The Torah much, do not ascribe good to yourself, for for this were you created." I therefore use the word "consequences" as a technical term to describe these after-effects of study. This avoids the sense of obligated recompense which seems always present in reward. What the full rabbinic understanding of these consequences was will be discussed at the end of this chapter, which enumerates them.

The rabbis were very interested in retribution and so the idea of consequences to study is very natural to them. They differ only as to what God will do. (See Ab. 5.14 for an example.) One of the more general forms of God's action is His protection. He extends His grace to them that study (Er. 54b) and guards their souls (Men. 99b.) Such protection will be effective even during the pangs of the Messiah (San. 98b.) A more specific note is His special care for those who study at night (Ab. Z. 3b, Er. 18b, San. 93b and Tomid 33b.) In addition, God answers the student's prayers (Sot. 49a) and grants his desires (Ab. Z. 19a.) This even takes the form of material rewards of wealth and riches (Shab. 63a and Ab. Z. 19b.) As spiritual return God forgives the sins of those who study (Ber. 5a-b.) (This thought is in harmony with the doctrine that study is even more important than sacrifices, for study can atone for things sacrifices could not. Cf. R. H. 18a.)

Other consequences do not seem to come directly from God. In. Ab. 4.6, R. Jose b. Chalafta says he who honors The Torah will himself be honored. Raba, in M. K. 16b, says that even if one studies The Torah indoors it will proclaim his merit outdoors. In Ber. 14a, a statement of R. Jochanan's as quoted by R. Chiyya which says that one who studies will not get bad tidings in his sleep. Er. 54a affirms that it is good to study when one is ill or feels sick in a part of his body - to which R. Judah b. R. Chiyya notes that man's drugs are good for one or another limb, but God's drug, The Torah, is good for all the body. This belief in the curative powers of study prompted R. Joshua b. Levi to attach himself to lepers and other disease-ridden outcasts, saying that if study brings grace upon those who study, it will be effective for these too (Kes. 77b.)

The curative powers of The Torah are proved yet in another way. The יצר הרע was a

factual part of the rabbinic psychology and physiology. Though normal to man it was still to be conquered. A baraita is quoted in Kid. 30b which interprets Dt. 11.18 as calling The Torah a "perfect remedy," for at the same time as God created the יצר הרע. He created The Torah as its antidote. If one busies himself in study, the evil incliniation is in his power, but if not, it rules over him (so Gen. 4.7 is interpreted here.) R. Jochanan said in the name of R. Bana'ah, interpreting Is. 32.20, that Israel may be happy when it studies and does good deeds for then the evil inclination is given over into its power and not the reverse (Ab. Z. 8b.) R. Levi b. Chama said that R. Simeon b. Lakish said that one should oppose the evil inclination with the good, but if this does not work one should study (Ber. 5a.) (But note too that he admits by giving other remedies that this system is not foolproof.) R. Chama b. R. Chanina in Ar. 15b says that the cure of telling evil is study, but only if one is a scholar - if one is not a scholar

("cannot study?"; the meaning is not altogether clear) one loses one's mind.

This thought has great significance for the rabbinic doctrine of evil. If one follows and studies The Torah, he conquers the evil inclination. This is the essential movement of living, the struggle, with God's help, against one's worser part. But since the weapon of victory has been given, it is indecent to call God bad and the test unfair. The exercise of free will and the use of the instrument is all that one need do to win the struggle.

This doctrine that The Torah was created as an antidote for the evil inclination corroborates what has previously been said - God foresaw the need to create man when He created The Torah.

Whether it be because of study's curative powers for the body or the evil inclination, study is considered as lengthening one's days. Mak. 10a says quite boldly that while R. Chisda

was studying, the Angel of Death could not take him. This seems to be implied in Shab. 63a where R. Nachman b. Isaac is discoursing and in Ab. 3.7 where Hillel's thought is recorded. It is probably in this sense too that the interpretation of Prov. 8.6 in Shab. 88b is to be understood.

There is an entire series of opinions which conceives of "length of days" in terms of a future life. Both Peah. 1.1 and its parallel, Kid. 40a, hold that the effect of study is equal to that of the three other things whose reward one enjoys in this world and the next. In Shab. 10a, Raba calls leaving study for prayer deserting eternal life (sic!) for the life of the moment. Then too, those who put forth extra pains to study in this world will be repaid in the next. In Ab. Z. 3b other interpret Resh Lakish's statement about God protecting one who studies at night that such a student will get grace here and in the next world. R. Zeira in B. M. 85b

says that one who humbles or makes himself a servant in this world in order to study is great and freed in the next. In San. 100a, this thought is carried on by R. Judah b. R. Simeon who holds that one who blackens his face over The Torah in this world God will make his luster shine in the next. There too, R. Tanchum says that one who starves himself for study in this world God will sate him in the next. There are two simple statements that God rewards study in the next world (Ab. de R. Nathan, chapter 28, P. 86 and Ab. Z. 3a) which should be noted. In San. 7a the statement is made that the first thing one is judged for in the next world is whether one has studied or not. It is possible to read this into Ab. Z. 3a which pictures national judgment. Yoma 35b holds a baraita which states, at least, that the individual will be judged after death concerning his study. This is certainly what is behind R.

Nehorai's teaching his child The Torah rather than a profession because it alone will provide him with hope in his old age. It is possibly this too which is to be understood in Hag. 3b where R. Joshua at P'kin says that the Torah is a goad which leads its students from death to life. It seems logical to deduce from this that the rabbis believed Learning to be of particular efficacy in gaining one admission to the life to come.

After all this it is strange to find four comments on the adverse effects of study. Perhaps if the personal history of the authors were known they might be explicable but at their face value they simply stand against what must be considered the prevailing rabbinic view. In Ab. 2.10, R. Eliezer compares the words of the wise to coals and notes that one can be burned by them. In San. 26b, R. Hanan says that study weakens the student. (This latter is perhaps merely a recognition that the study of Torah requires effort. See the chapter on "Pedagogy.") In Y. Ber. 34a, it is noted that Resh Lakish transgressed the Sabbath boundary once because

he was studying, thus fulfilling Prov. 5.19 which is interpretaed to mean that The Torah makes foolish one who studies it. This idea occurs again in Er. 54b in connection with R. Eleazar b. P'dat who would study in the lower market place of Sepphoris but forget his cloak in the upper. To this latter story, however, the moral is added by R. Isaac b. Eleazar that God protects such a one for a man once went to grab the cloak and found a venomous snake in it.

The one possible explanation for these statements is that they are protests against too much study.

The rabbis also held that God punishes those who do not study. It was held that for their parents' lack of study, children die, croup comes and the sword comes, which is singularly unindividualistic retribution (Shab. 33b, 33b and 33a respectively.)

Furthermore, even ceasing from study for no good reason brings one great punishment.

Hag. 12b records R. Levi as having said that he who leaves study for idle chatter will inherit Gehinnom. In Ber. 63a, R. Tabi reports Josiah as saying that one who relaxes from study will have no strength to stand in the hour of trouble. Shab. 151 says that one who leaves study for a feast should have dung spread on his face. Raba in Ber. 5a says that one who suffers may well be suffering from neglect of study and should therefore examine his ways.

Generally, for the sake of contrast, the punishments to the evader are noted with rewards to the observant. R. Jonathan b. Jose says in Ab. 4.9 that one who fulfills The Torah from will eventually fulfill it in wealth, while one who neglects it in wealth poverty will eventually fulfill it in poverty. This seems to be what R. Meir's unclear statement of Ab. 4.10 implies. In Ber. 5a, Resh Lakish interprets Job 5.7 to mean that suffering departs from one who studies. To this R. Jochanan adds that it means too that God will send dreadful suffering upon one who can and does not study The Torah. In Meg. 15a, God

tells the attribute of Justice that The Torah is Israel's special source of merit. The reply to this is that the others will suffer. In Hag. 15b the story is told of Acher's daughter asking help of Rabbi, begging him not to remember her father's deeds but his Learning. A fire came down and consumed Rabbi's bench. Said Rabbi, "If it be so on account of those who dishonor her (Torah), how much the more so on account of those who honor her?"

This mass of evidence testifies to the rabbinic interest in the consequences which follow study. The question inevitable poses itself, if study follows naturally from existence, and if the understanding of that is the only proper motive for study, why this strong belief in consequent good fortune?

The question gives the answer. Study is ideally man's natural activity. God's natural activity to the good man is the bestowal of goodness. To the evil man He is naturally not beneficent.

These consequences then are God's freely given gifts to man. It is not that God is obligated to man, nor that the gifts must inevitably follow, but that God of His perfectly free nature does these things. If this sense of the word can be meant, one can say that God "rewards" study.

How then can we explain זכות? Its normal translation is "merit, virtue." Israel acquires it through Israel's fulfillment and study of The Torah. It is what makes Israel's judgment different from that of others.

It cannot mean "right" in the sense that because of it God is under obligation to Israel. It does mean "virtue" in the original sense of "manliness," for Israel has done what men should do. It does mean "merit" in the sense that where all others have not done what they should, Israel has acquitted itself of its debt of createdness. The term זכות in relation to The Torah refers to a value acquired not absolutely (against God) but relatively (compared to others in the world.)

This attempt to tie in the rabbinic view of the consequences of study with their other beliefs about Torah may draw from their words views of which they were unconscious, but it demonstrates that one can find a universal thought pattern which does, and perhaps did, underly their thinking.

Pedagogy

There can be no doubt that the rabbis generally recognized that there was difficulty involved in study. It is taught in a baraita in Ber. 33b that study is one of four things which require effort. Study is called a yoke in Ab. 3.5 and in the previously quoted passage in Ab. Z. 8b. Constant study is encouraged in Hag. 15a because the words of The Torah are easy to forget - which means their permanent possession is difficult. It is probably this thought too which is alluded to in Ber. 5a by R. Simeon b. Yochai (though it is possibly a purely personal comment.)

There is no king's highway to Learning. The individual must acquire it for himself. The gemara of Ned. 81a asks why scholars usually do not have sons who are scholars and R. Joseph's answer is lest it be thought that Learning is theirs by inheritance.

R. Jose in Ab. 3.13 says "fit yourself to

study The Torah for it is not an inheritance." The opposite is said in later times when the Amora R. Parnak quotes R. Jochanan to the effect that Learning will never cease from the life of one whose son and grandson are scholars. R. Jeremiah interpreted this to mean that it becomes hereditary. Perhaps tending toward the hereditary view is the Amora R. Berechiah's view that one who sees learning vanishing from his seed should marry the daughter of a scholar (Yoma 71a.) Yet it is obvious that this may be for environmental and educational reasons as in the case where the child's descent follows the mother because she is the child's teacher. So here the child becomes a scholar because the mother knows and loves scholarship.

Whether Learning is hereditary or not, there can be no doubt that the rabbis believed that every man should and could study profitably. R. Jochanan in Yoma 72b is quoted as saying that there are three crowns - of the altar, the ark and the table. Aaron deserved the

crown of the altar - priesthood. David deserved the crown of the table - monarchy. But the crown of the ark - Learning - is still waiting. Anyone who wishes may come and take it. In San. 101a the idea is clearly presented that there is something in The Torah for every mind. All the preceding chapters bear out this thought.

Furthermore, neither wealth nor poverty is an obstacle to study according to R. Jonathan b. Jose (Ab. 4.9.) The difficulties, yet the possibilities, are noted in San. 30a interpreting Prov. 31.39. The statement is made twice (Ned. 81a attributed by R. Zeira to R. Judah b. Bathyra) that one should be careful of the children of the poor for from them comes Learning. In Yoma 35b a baraita shows by a detailed analysis of examples that neither poverty nor wealth nor a sensual nature can justify not having studied on the day of judgment. Hillel indicts the poor, R. Eleazar b. Charsom the rich and Joseph the sensual.

Yet at the same time as there is no barrier

to study there are certain qualities which the good student will manifest. Since any man can acquire them, no one is barred from studying. One might even study without them, but without comparable efficacy.

As the first part of the definition of Torah implies, the first of these is the fear and respect of God. Rabbah b. R. Huna's attitude even more than his words in Shab. 31a-b testifies to this. Learning is made dependent upon fear of sin in Ab. 3.10 and other passages discussed in the chapter on "Sufficiency."

Rabbi says in Ab. Z. 19a that a man can learn well only that part of The Torah which his heart desires. The good student studies of his own free will as the entire discussion of אנס indicates. It is in accord with this, consciously or unconsciously, that the rabbis concentrated upon the consequences of study - inducements to a free will decision - rather than upon punishments for its neglect - coercion to ineffectual study, as the chapter on "Consequences" shows.

The previous discussion of Israel and the other nations makes it necessary to add here only that though in Tannaitic times it had been felt that the individual gentile might become learned in Torah, still in Amoraic times (cf. Ab. Z. 3a-3a, B. K. 38a and Hag. 13a) one of the prerequisites for study was that the proposed student be a Jew.

From all this it seems natural that the student is expected to have some respect for The Torah itself. (See Rav's rebuke of his student in San. 111a and Ber. 24b, San 101a and Sot. 35a.) This respect does not mean that the student is supposed to be satisfied with what he knows or what others have found out until this time. The opposite is true (Y. Ber. 60a - R. Jonah in the name of R. Jose b. Gezera.) In this context it is important to remember the discussion of the endless character of The Torah as discussed in the chapter on "Contents."

Willingness to teach is also considered

a quality of the good student as Raba states in Ned. 55a. The importance of teaching and its worthiness as a motive for study have already been noted in the chapters on "Importance" and "Sufficiency."

Humility, which the rabbis consider an essential attribute of the good student, has not previously been mentioned. In Taan. 7a many teachers are quoted to emphasize its importance. R. Chanina b. Idi says that Learning is as water, leaving the high places and going to the lowly. R. Oshaya compares it to water, wine and milk which can only be preserved in the cheapest vessels. R. Joshua b. Chanina relates the famous story about the princess who chided a rabbi for his outward appearance and was then shamed by her own inability to keep wine in vessels of precious metal. It is humility in the student which is the point of both R. Matna and Raba's exposition of Num. 2.18 in Er. 54a. Raba and R. Jochanan interpret Dt. 30.12 in Er. 55a as

saying that learning is not with the proud nor one whose self esteem is as broad as the sea. R. Jochanan's belief is restated in Sota. 21b. There too is a statement by R. Jose b. Chanina which calls for complete subordination of the self and its needs to study.

Two statements of other desirable characteristics conclude this discussion. In Yoma 75b comments of both R. Joshua b. Levi, Resh Lakish and R. Samuel b. Nachmani hold that the individual must be worthy of study or else he will not be successful therein. It is unfortunate that this is not further explained. Here too R. Chanina interprets Ps. 19.10 to mean that Learning remains only with one who is pure - married, that is.

The rabbis feel that the individual will probably study everywhere. R. Huna and Rabbah b. b. Chanah are quoted to this effect in Ber. 24b. Classes however should not be conducted in public (as Akiba did even in the emergency, Ber. 61b,) but in private as S. S. 7.2 is inter-

preted by the School of Onan (Suk. 49b and see M. K. 16a-b where Rabbi interprets the same verse in a similar way.) The seeming discrepancy is an historical development. The times of study also should be fixed as Shammai states in Ab. 1.15 and as R. Hilkiah says in the name of Simon the Picus in Y. Ber. 60a.

Two reasons given for continuous study from a purely pedagogic point of view should be noted. First is that Learning spoils by neglect (see "another explanation" Taan. 7a) and that one is supposed to keep it sharp in one's mouth at all times (Kid. 30a-b where a baraita interprets Dt. 6.7 to that effect.) There was even a tradition that The Torah was destined to be forgotten in Israel though this was later understood to mean a time when the halachah would not be clear or easily found (Shab. 138b.) Second, the possibility of endless exposition means , as R. Judah quotes Rav's statement, that one should never depart from the house of study for even an hour for something new may be expounded. Both the old

and the new require continuous study. As Peah. 1.1 says, study is one thing for which no measure was prescribed. R. Jonathan makes this point very well by exaggeration when he says in Shab. 83b, interpreting Num. 19.14, that one should not stop studying even at the hour of death. This is the effect of R. Simeon b. Pazzi's statement in Ab. Z. 18b that sleep is not considered more important than study.

This continual study is continually efficacious. R. Judah reported a tradition of our sages who when they entered Jabneh derived from Dt. 27.19 the lesson that every day The Torah is as dear to those who study it as it was on the day it was given on Sinai (Ber. 63b.) Raba (Er. 21b) interpreted Ecc. 12.12, a most anti-intellectual verse, to mean that one who meditates on the sayings of the wise always tastes meat! R. Chiyya in Er. 54a-b expounds Prov. 27.18 to say that The Torah is as a fig

tree. As one can search and find ever more fruit on a fig tree so every man who meditates over The Torah continually finds something in it. There too R. Samuel b. Nachmani interprets prov. 5.19 to agree with R. Judah's views. Further on there is the comparison of Torah giving man substance every hour as a babe is satisfied at its mother's breast (cf. Y. Ber. 60a.)

Some specific techniques for study are recommended by the rabbis. Study in groups and classes is considered best. This seems to be the implication of Ab. 4.14. In Ber. 63b, Dt. 27.9 is taught to prove this point and R. Jose b. Chanina deduces from Jer. 50.36 that those disciples of the wise who sit alone and study, a sword is upon them and they will become foolish (the latter is taught from Num. 13.11 as well.) In Taan, 7a, R. Jose b. Chanina is quoted as saying that one who studies The Torah alone will be dull. The idea behind this seems to be as Nachman b. Isaac say (Taan. 7a)

that one learns from another, even the greatest from the smallest. He quotes there Rabbis's famous comment about learning much from his teachers and more from his colleagues but the most from his students. A more moderate view is to be found in Ber. 6a where an interpretation of Ex. 30.34 proves that even an individual who studies The Torah is blessed with the presence of God.

The desirability of having a teacher is noted in Ab. 1.6 and 4.14. The former links with it the getting of a colleague. This is because the rabbis believe that the question and answer technique of the class is the best one. R. Samuel b. Nachmani encourages the asking of questions on the basis or Prov. 30.32 (Ber. 63b.) This method is often referred to by the rabbis as war, and the participants therein as the warriors. The martial passages of the Bible are appropriated to teach lessons about study. This is what is done with Is. 38.6 in San. 111b and the examples are numerous.

Another example of calling study war is R. Chiyya b. Abba's interpretation of Ps. 137.5 (Kid. 30b.) He concludes by saying the students do not stir from their study until they love each other again (Num. 31.19 as proof.)

In Er. 54a several stories are quoted which call for studying out loud. In Er. 54b it is assumed by all the discussants that it is good to use mnemonics in study. In Er. 54b a general statement calling for slow progress in study is questioned by both Rabbah and R. Nachman b. Isaac who hold study by means of rapid progress to be the general custom.

With this survey of the rabbinic view on the pedagogy of The Torah this investigation into the rabbinic view of Torah concludes.

Conclusions

The rabbis believed that God gave to man directions for living his life. They called these directions Torah.

Torah exists in several different forms. The Pentateuch, the rest of the Bible, and the Oral Traditions are all parts of it. They are parts, however, of a single thing, and there is consistency and harmony in all of it. As God, so Torah, is One.

The Torah is rational. It can be understood and comprehended by men. It is all given into the hands of men so that further specific revelation is unnecessary. The continual development of Torah is but another harmonious segment of Torah. What is newly learned is but the extension of a system which was given at one time in history.

The whole creation comes to be because of Torah. It is a logically necessary correlate of the previous creation of Torah. Man, who is the understander and fulfiller of Torah, is the

most important of created things. The man-Torah relation is the purpose of the universe. Israel is distinguished from all other nations by its Torah activity. Analogous to man's status among created things, Israel is the most important of the nations.

Man is expected to study Torah because he is man. This alone, in all purity, is to be his motive. Though study is of great importance, it is not paramount in the Jewish life, but an instrumental value. Its importance does not preclude man's duty to work. Yet God of His loving nature freely rewards the man who does what a man should do. The rabbis even have practical study suggestions to accord with their ideas of Torah.

It is readily apparent that excepting for our greater detail there is no difference between the view presented here and that given in Moore's study of the Tannaitic period. This paper has included Tannaitic as well as Amoraic material as an historical necessity. Every

organization of the material which was made to distinguish between the views of the two periods has produced nothing of value, except that the Amoraiim were a little more particularistic or interested in study. Similar attempts to discern distinctions between the Palestinian and Babylonian Amoraiim also proved conclusively that their conception of the Torah was the same.

Our incidental problem must receive the following answer: the terminus ad quem of the crystallization of Jewish theology as proposed by Moore is not challenged but supported by this study.

If the validity of this incidental conclusion be admitted, the path is opened to further steps in scholarship.

Is Moore's terminus a quo for the crystallization also accurate? One might think that the next step would be to compare Biblical with Tannaitic theology and by determining the differences find the date from which the theology actually

passed into crystallized form.

However, even on the surface there seem to be great and distinctive differences between Biblical and Tannaitic thinking. This is only a logical consequence of the historical time gap which exists between the two of which we know and can continue to know little or nothing. Since then the prior probability is great that such an investigation could produce nothing of great value respecting the crystallization, the next step lies in another direction.

If Moore's hypothesis is to be accepted as a working basis for historical studies in Jewish theology, will his study of that period be satisfactory for our new tasks? Comparisons would inevitably have to be drawn from it to previous or succeeding periods. Although the greatness and importance of Moore's pioneering work, upon which all students of Jewish theology must stand, cannot be denied, its inadequacy to the tasks to which it itself has brought us must be admitted. What is needed is not merely

a clear and understanding introduction into Tannaitic theology, but a definitive one. Such seems to me the next important step to be taken in the development of the history of Jewish theology. The next investigation logically to be undertaken would be the one which best leads toward that goal.

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