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TITLE "The Historical Development of Pharisaism: a History Text
for Teenagers Utilizing Primary Sources"

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"THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF PHARISAISM:
A HISTORY TEXT FOR TEENAGERS UTILIZING
PRIMARY SOURCES"

by

Julian I. Cook

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Hebrew Letters and
Ordination

HEBREW UNION COLLEGE-JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION

June, 1972

Referee, Professor Ellis Rivkin

This thesis is dedicated to my
loving wife, Susan, without whose
patience, understanding, and help
it could never have been written

DIGEST

This thesis is intended to be a textbook for actual classroom utilization by Jewish High school students. The students are exposed to primary source materials selected by the author, and, through the discovery method, are encouraged to draw their own conclusions as to the significance of the data presented. The text is divided into sections for the student, containing the sources and thought-provoking questions, and sections for the teacher, containing guiding comments for classroom discussion.

The author had two goals in mind in writing such a textbook. The first is to acquaint the Jewish teenager with a significant period in Jewish history. The material presented for investigation includes pertinent data on the events leading to their dominance of Jewish life, as well as information on the period preceding the Pharisees. The author utilizes portions from the Jewish Bible (The Pentateuch, Job, Psalms, and Proverbs), The Apocrypha (Ben Sira, I and II Maccabees), The New Testament (Matthew, Mark, and the Epistles of Paul), the works of Josephus (The Life, The Jewish War, The Antiquities, and Against Apion) and Tannaitic sources (the Mishnah and Baraitot from the Talmud).

The second goal of this textbook is to evaluate the process of change within Judaism. Utilizing the Pharisees as a model for problem-solving, the student is asked to extrapolate the principles of dynamic change which he can apply in his own struggle of coming to grips with modern Jewish life. They are led to understand that the Pharisees brought about a revolution in Judaism, partly necessitated by the weakness of the previous Jewish system in coping with the needs of the people, and partly by the changes occurring in the world at large which compelled Judaism to meet new challenges.

After an introduction laying the groundwork for the study by setting up the problem and by outlining the methodology, the thesis takes up the investigation of the Aaronide-Pentateuchal phase of Judaism. The student is confronted with biblical texts so that he may understand the Aaronide system of authority and the major beliefs operative prior to the emergence of the Pharisees. Then the student examines the records of the transfer of authority from the Aaronides to the Pharisees, and studies their religious principles. Finally, he is asked to relate what he has learned about the Pharisees and the dynamics of change to the context in which he finds himself.

The author has drawn upon the scholarly work of Dr. Ellis Rivkin who pointed out the revolutionary nature of Pharisaism. This thesis establishes, for the high school student, an understanding of this revolution and appreciation of the dynamics of change within Judaism.

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PREFACE - TO THE TEACHER

This textbook is unique among religious school materials. It is based on a number of assumptions that will require some departures from traditional teaching methods in Jewish education. First, it presumes that the best way to understand a particular period of history is not to read abridged accounts of that period by modern writers, each with his own bias, but to go directly to the sources: the ancient authors writing about their contemporary society. This book is thus based on primary text material written some two thousand years ago. While this is on the one hand a more exciting approach to history, it is at the same time more difficult, because we frequently are confused by language and idioms unfamiliar to us, by the absence of data that the author and his audience took for granted but are unavailable to us, and by that author's own prejudices and assumptions.

Second, this textbook is based on the assumption that youngsters of high school age are mature enough to engage in deductive reasoning; that is, that they can draw their own conclusions based on the information available to them. Therefore, this text is built around the discovery method. They will study the text, they will confront some probing questions, and they will supply the answers. Of course, in dealing with such a broad area in a limited program, I have necessarily made decisions. A certain degree of selectivity is inevitable because some passages have been chosen for inclusion while others have not.

Third, this textbook presumes a moderate background of Jewish education on the part of the students. This is an advanced course, but, at the same time it recognizes the students' limitations. The student should have a general understanding of the contents of the entire Jewish Bible, especially

the Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses). He should have an awareness of the chronology of early Jewish history. He should know the basic institutions, customs, and beliefs of Biblical Judaism. During the course of study, the student should be equipped with a modern translation of the Bible, including the Apocrypha and preferably the New Testament as well. Reference works available to him should include a translation of the Mishnah, a good Jewish history, and such other books included in the bibliography as the teacher finds useful.

Finally, this textbook presumes that there are youngsters who are interested in the Pharisaic period. Of course, many of them may never have even heard of the Pharisees, let alone be interested in something so far removed as two thousand years. But it is not so far removed in relevance. The Pharisees brought on a revolution in Judaism which radically reshaped it for all time. It is the basis for much of the Judaism that these youngsters now know. But more importantly, it is a paradigm for the dynamic of change that has constantly taken place in Judaism, particularly for those changes that are and will be taking place in their own lifetimes. It gives us a great insight into the whole process of change in religion. The Pharisees grappled with the same basic problems of religion that our youth are grappling with. To the extent that our young people will revolutionize Judaism, they will imitate the Pharisaic solution, not in content, but rather in form.

All this means, then, that something special is required of the teacher. The teacher must help the student understand the primary texts, by

clarifying their meaning and providing additional information outside the student's realm of knowledge. The teacher must guide the students through the texts and enable them to arrive at their own conclusions. And the teacher must strive to make the ideas put forth relevant to the lives of the students. Then the student will have gained not only an understanding of the Pharisees, but a methodology for historical study and an awareness of the whole process of change.

Chapter 1

AN INTRODUCTION (TO THE STUDENT)

Okay, so you are going to study about the Pharisees. I won't go so far as to say you "want" to study about the Pharisees because you may not even know who the Pharisees were. But then again, if you knew about the Pharisees, there wouldn't be any point in having a course about them, right? Yet you are now reading the Introduction and you probably want to know, why in the world should I be studying the Pharisees? That's a very legitimate question, with a not so obvious answer.

We could say that because the Pharisees were a distinctive group of Jews, they should be studied by anyone who wants to understand the total Jewish experience. But that's not a satisfactory answer for you, who want a reason besides the fact that they were "there." So were the Samaritans, the Karaites, the Sabbateans, and others, yet you probably will have little reason to study these groups. And the Pharisees were more than just "there."

We could say you should study the Pharisees because they were the forerunners of Orthodox Judaism, which in turn is the forerunner of Reform Judaism, and to understand who and what you are as a Reform Jew, you need to know who your ancestors were. But this is also probably not a satisfactory answer for you, because you're more concerned about here and now, and about where you are going, then what happened thousands of years ago. And the Pharisees were more than just the predecessors of Orthodox Judaism.

We live in a world of constant change and development. Things are happening very rapidly. Only yesterday man was just learning how to fly,

and now we have jets and rockets, and man has set foot on the moon. Only yesterday adding machines were invented, and today we have giant computers which have taken the place of man in many cases, and even gone far beyond man's capabilities in others. Only yesterday man discovered penicillin, and today he is performing kidney and heart transplants. Only yesterday the lightbulb was invented and today we have nuclear power. There is no limit to what lies ahead, no limit to the amount of change that will take place in your lifetime.

With all this change taking place, you wonder what place religion has in your lives. Specifically, you, and all of us, wonder what relevance our Judaism has for us in today's world. You are perhaps critical of many things, doubtful, angry, or just plain apathetic. Judaism may seem old-fashioned, out of step with the times, a pain in the neck for the kind of life you want to lead. You may very well think that Judaism has to change too, just as the world is changing. But how shall it change, what shall it become? What is our role in this change?

This my friends, is why we are going to study the Pharisees!

The Pharisees occupied a place in history somewhere from about two centuries Before the Common Era to about the second century of the Common Era. Thus, they came into being just as Biblical Judaism was collapsing and the influence of the advanced Greek and Roman societies was taking firm hold of the civilized world. Life was changing very rapidly then, too. New discoveries were being made, new life-styles were becoming popular, new ideas and beliefs and morals all converged on a small group of people living in Palestine and trying to remain loyal to their ancient way of life. Biblical Judaism was not a match for this new world; it was outmoded, old-fashioned, and inflexible.

We want to study the Pharisees because they were the ones who transformed Biblical Judaism into something more vibrant, dynamic and meaningful to meet the challenges of their changing world. In short, they revolutionized Judaism; they actually carried out a revolution, though this fact is not recorded in the history books covering this period. We want to study the Pharisees because they provide us with a model of change in Judaism which can be very helpful to us as we in our own time struggle with change and development. This is the best reason for studying the Pharisees: discovering our own directions for the future in light of the possibilities opened up by the Pharisaic revolution.

There is a problem, however, that poses an obstacle to our understanding who the Pharisees were: there is very little we have to go on for concrete evidence. What there is is sometimes quite confusing, and has led scholars to draw many different and contradictory conclusions. They have not only hidden the significance of their revolution, but often have even created a negative impression of the Pharisees. Thus, to many people, the term "Pharisee" means "hypocrite." For instance, let's look at Webster's Third New International Dictionary:

PHARISAICAL: resembling the Pharisees esp. in strictness of doctrine and in rigid observance of forms and ceremonies; making an outward show of piety and morality but lacking the inward spirit; censorious of others' morals or practices; FORMAL, SANCTIMONIOUS, SELF-RIGHTEOUS, HYPOCRITICAL.

Where did such a negative definition as this originate? Most likely, the public bases its knowledge of the Pharisees on passages in the New Testament, like this one from Matthew:

"Then said Jesus to the crowds and to his disciples, 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi by men....But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in.'"²

Obviously, Matthew is pretty hostile towards the Pharisees, and the dictionary definition seems to be in agreement with the picture painted here. But look at the beginning of the passage again. What strikes you as unusual? What factual information does Matthew give about the Pharisees?

Matthew says that "the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat." Moses, you will recall, is one of the central characters of the Bible. Indeed, we call the first five books of the Bible, "The Five Books of Moses" because he presumably wrote them down for the Israelites under God's direction. Moses was the supreme leader of the Israelites during the Exodus period and the prototype of all Jewish leaders to come. If the Pharisees "sit on Moses' seat," then surely they must have occupied a pretty important position in Jewish society in Jesus' time. What's more, Matthew relates that Jesus instructed his followers to "practice and observe whatever they tell you," despite the fact that he didn't like them. Does this not also testify to their authority?

But the real question is, how did they ever come to sit on Moses' seat, i.e., to have that supreme kind of authority? Did Moses ever speak of the Pharisees? Did Moses ever turn over his authority to the Pharisees? Does the Bible even once mention the Pharisees? No! You can look high and low, you will not find them.

Thus, we have a problem to investigate with the following limits:

on the one hand, we have a document, the Bible, which does not so much as mention the Pharisees, while on the other hand we have a later document, the New Testament, which indicates that there not only was a group called the Pharisees (whom the early Christians didn't like very much) but that they exercised Mosaic authority. Somewhere in-between the Pharisees must have come into being.

Before we leave this passage, there is one more thing to note. Is Jesus (or Matthew) talking just about the Pharisees? No, he couples them with a group called "scribes." We have no information as yet as to who these scribes were, but we will investigate that later. Were they the same as the Pharisees, or were they a different group? But be that as it may, the scribes are never mentioned in the Pentateuch either.

The New Testament isn't our only source of information on the Pharisees (or of problems either). Another source is the Jewish historian, Josephus, writing at the end of the first century C.E. for a Graeco-Roman audience. Josephus was a Pharisee, in his own words, and a general in the Jewish army which fought against Rome. After the Roman victory, Josephus went to live in Rome and he wrote first a history of the War of the Jews against the Romans and then a much longer history from creation till the outbreak of the war against Rome. His historical perspective wasn't always good, and many have questioned his loyalty to Judaism, but he is one of the very few sources of contemporary writings on the Jews between the Bible and the New Testament. Besides, in his last work, Against Apion he wrote a beautiful defense of Judaism against its detractors.

Here is an account which Josephus gives us of an incident that occurred during the reign of the Hasmonean ruler John Hyrcanus (134-104 B.C.E.) involving the Pharisees.

Then a certain Jonathan, one of Hyrcanus' close friends, belonging to the school of Sadducees, who hold opinions opposed to those of the Pharisees, said that it had been with the general approval of all the Pharisees that Eleazar had made his slanderous statement; and this, he added, would be clear to Hyrcanus if he inquired of them what punishment Eleazar deserved for what he had said. And so Hyrcanus asked the Pharisees what penalty they thought he deserved--for, he said, he would be convinced that the slanderous statement had not been made with their approval if they fixed a penalty commensurate with the crime--, and they replied that Eleazar deserved stripes and chains; for they did not think it right to sentence a man to death for calumny, and anyway the Pharisees are naturally lenient in the matter of punishment. At this Hyrcanus became very angry and began to believe that the fellow had slandered him with their approval. And Jonathan in particular inflamed his anger, and so worked upon him that he brought him to join the Sadducean party and desert the Pharisees, and to abrogate the regulations which they had established for the people, and punish those who observe them. Out of this, of course, grew the hatred of the masses for him and his sons, but of this we will speak hereafter. For the present I wish merely to explain that the Pharisees had passed onto the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses, for which reason they are rejected by the Sadducean group, who hold that only those regulations should be considered valid which were written down (in Scripture), and that those which had been handed down by former generations need not be observed. And concerning these matters the two parties came to have controversies and serious differences, the Sadducees having the confidence of the wealthy alone but no following among the populace, while the Pharisees have the support of the masses.³

What observations can you now make about the Pharisees? You should easily be able to draw several conclusions:

- a) The Pharisees are contrasted with a group, or "school" or "party" called the Sadducees. The Pharisees were also thought of as a "school" or "party."
- b) The Sadducees are new to us, for we do not find any references to them in the entire Bible.

- c) Hyrcanus, in deserting the Pharisees and joining the Sadducees, "abrogates" their regulations. Hence, we must conclude that the laws of the Pharisees had been operating before this time.
- d) The Pharisees had the support of the masses, while the Sadducees were the party of the wealthy.
- e) The regulations associated with the Pharisees had been handed down through the generations and were not written in the Bible. The Sadducees rejected these regulations because they refused to recognize their authority. For the Sadducees only the laws written down in the Pentateuch were held to be binding. Because of these differences over which laws were authoritative. The Pharisees and Sadducees opposed each other.

Just as in Matthew, we note that the Pharisees were a group with great authority. Yet there are still many perplexing problems; we still don't know who they were or where they came from.

A different kind of source that we must look at is the Tannaitic literature, particularly the Mishnah. Though it wasn't until 200 C.E. that the Mishnah was actually written down, its contents were transmitted orally for several hundred years, some going back as early as two hundred years Before the Common Era. Thus, some of the material in the Mishnah is by the Pharisees themselves, and the whole work, and later the Talmud, are products of the Pharisaic revolution. Here is an example of this type of literature:

The Sadducees say, We cry out against you, O ye Pharisees, for ye say, 'The Holy Scriptures render the hands unclean,' (and) 'The writings of Hamiram do not render the hands unclean.'
 Rabban Johanan b. Zakkai said, Have we naught against the Pharisees save this!-- for lo, they say, 'The bones of an ass are clean, and the bones of Johanan the High Priest are unclean.'

They said to him, As is our love for them so is their uncleanness-- that no man make spoons of the bones of his father or mother. He said to them, Even so the Holy Scriptures: as is our love for them so is their uncleanness; (whereas) the writings of Hamiram which are held in no account do not render the hands unclean.⁴

This is a rather technical passage, and we can't really discuss its meaning at this point. What is important is that it deals with a controversy between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, who seem bitterly opposed to one another. And the basis for their disagreement is not political (as we might suppose using our modern definition of "party") but religious.

This, then, is the task that lies ahead of us: we want to discover who the Pharisees were, how they came into being, and what they did. Unfortunately, we can't go back in history to confront our subjects directly and ask them all the questions we have raised. We must ask the texts, since they are the only indications of the answers we seek, and if they can't supply them, we must resign ourselves to ignorance in those areas.

This, then, will be our procedure: we will systematically look at all the sources available to us. We will start with the period directly preceding the Pharisees, when they as yet didn't exist, so that we can see how Judaism looked before the Pharisaic revolution. We will try to understand what problems there were that necessitated change, and then what the Pharisees actually did in the way of revolutionizing Judaism.

The texts will be before you, and you will draw your own conclusions. Questions will be posed to stimulate your thinking, but answers will not be given. Occasionally, we will look at what modern scholarship has to say about our subject, but for the most part you will be your own scholar. You may want to consult additional material outside that supplied in this text-

book to give you a broader perspective. Most importantly, you must open your mind for the discovery process, for a full and creative confrontation with another world. Put your mind to work exploring the possibilities of new understanding.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 1

1. Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged, 1966, p. 1694.
2. Matthew, 23:1-7, 13. (All Biblical passages, including references from books of the Old Testament and the New Testament, as well as books of the Apocrypha, are taken from The Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version, Oxford University Press, New York, 1965.)
3. Josephus, Antiquities, XIII, 293-9. (All passages from the works of Josephus are taken from the Loeb Classical Library collection of his complete works in nine volumes, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1967. The Roman numerals refer to the books into which each work is divided, while the Arabic numerals refer to the small sections of the Greek text.)
4. Mishnah Yadayim, 4.6. (All Mishnaic passages are taken from the translation by Herbert Danby, Oxford University Press, London, 1958. Talmudic passages are from the Soncino Press edition edited by Isadore Epstein, London, 1938.)

Chapter 2

PENTATEUCHAL JUDAISM

In the period immediately preceding the emergence of the Pharisees, there was a well-defined societal structure organized around the laws and values of the Pentateuch (Five Books of Moses). We are going to look now at the Apocryphal book Ben Sira, or Ecclesiasticus, which depicts life in Judea at the height of this period. Ben Sira probably wrote his book around 270 B.C.E., though some scholars date it as late as 180 B.C.E.¹

The leader of his brethren and the pride of his people was Simon the high priest, son of Onias, who in his life repaired the house, and in his time fortified the temple. He laid the foundations for the high double walls, the high retaining walls for the temple enclosure. In his days a cistern for water was quarried out, a reservoir like the sea in circumference. He considered how to save his people from ruin, and fortified the city to withstand a siege. How glorious he was when the people gathered round him as he came out of the inner sanctuary! Like the morning star among the clouds, like the moon when it is full; like the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and like the rainbow gleaming in glorious clouds; like roses in the days of the first fruits, like lilies by a spring of water, like a green shoot on Lebanon on a summer day; like fire and incense in the censer, like a vessel of hammered gold adorned with all kinds of precious stones; like an olive tree putting forth its fruit, and like a cypress towering in the clouds. When he put on his glorious robe and clothed himself with superb perfection and went up to the holy altar, he made the court of the sanctuary glorious. And when he received the portions from the hands of the priests, as he stood by the hearth of the altar with a garland of brethren around him, he was like a young cedar on Lebanon; and they surrounded him like the trunks of palm trees, all the sons of Aaron in their splendor with the Lord's offering in their hands, before the whole congregation of Israel. Finishing the service at the altars and arranging the offering to the Most High, the Almighty, he reached out his hand to the cup and poured a libation of the blood of the grape; he poured it out at the foot of the altar, a pleasing odor to the Most High, the King of all.

Then the sons of Aaron shouted, they sounded the trumpets of hammered work, they made a great noise to be heard for remembrance before the Most High.

Then all the people together made haste and fell to the ground upon their faces to worship their Lord, the Almighty, God Most High.

And the singers praised him with their voices in sweet and full-toned melody.

And the people besought the Lord Most High in prayer before him who is merciful, til the order of worship of the Lord was ended; so they completed his service.

Then Simon came down, and lifted up his hands over the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, to pronounce the blessing of the Lord with his lips, and to glory in his name; and they bowed down in worship a second time, to receive the blessing from the Most High.²

With all your soul fear the Lord, and honor his priests. With all your might love your Maker, and do not forsake his ministers.

Fear the Lord and honor the priest, and give him his portion as is commanded you: the first fruits, the guilt offering, the gift of the shoulders, the sacrifice of sanctification, and the first fruits of the holy things.³

If one sacrifices from what has been wrongfully obtained, the offering is blemished; the gifts of the lawless are not acceptable.

The Most High is not pleased with the offerings of the ungodly; and he is not propitiated for sins by a multitude of sacrifices.

Like the one who kills a son before his father's eyes is the man who offers a sacrifice from the property of the poor.

The bread of the needy is the life of the poor; whoever deprives them of it is a man of blood.

To take away a neighbor's living is to murder him; to deprive an employee of his wages is to shed blood.

When one builds and another tears down, what do they gain but toil?

When one prays and another curses, to whose voice will the Lord listen?

If a man washes after touching a dead body, and touches it again, what has he gained by his washing?

So if a man fasts for his sins, and goes again and does the same things, who will listen to his prayer?

And what is to be gained by humbling himself?

He who keeps the law makes many offerings; he who heeds the commandments sacrifices a peace offering.

He who returns a kindness offers fine flour, and he who gives alms sacrifices a thank offering.
 To keep from wickedness is pleasing to the Lord, and to forsake unrighteousness is atonement.
 Do not appear before the Lord empty-handed, for all these things are to be done because of the commandment.
 The offering of a righteous man annoints the altar, and its pleasing odor rises before the Most High.
 The sacrifice of a righteous man is acceptable, and the memory of it will not be forgotten.
 Glorify the Lord generously, and do not stint the first fruits of your hands.
 With every gift show a cheerful face, and dedicate your tithe with gladness.
 Give to the Most High as he has given, and as generously as your hand has found.
 For the Lord is the one who repays, and he will repay you sevenfold.
 Do not offer him a bribe, for he will not accept it; and do not trust to an unrighteous sacrifice; for the Lord is the judge, and with him is no partiality.
 He will not show partiality in the case of a poor man; and he will listen to the prayer of one who is wronged.
 He will not ignore the supplication of the fatherless, nor the widow, when she pours out her story.⁴

Have mercy, O Lord, upon the People called by thy name, upon Israel, whom thou has likened to a first-born son.
 Have pity on the city of thy sanctuary, Jerusalem, the place of thy rest.
 Fill Zion with the celebration of thy wondrous deeds, and thy temple with thy glory.
 Bear witness to those whom thou didst create in the beginning, to fulfill the prophecies spoken in thy name.
 Reward those who wait for thee, and let thy prophets be found trustworthy.
 Hearken, O Lord, to the prayer of thy servants, according to the blessing of Aaron for thy people, and all those who are on the earth will know that thou art the Lord, the God of the ages.⁵

Now we have some information on the operational Jewish society in Ben Sira's time. You should be able to draw a few conclusions at this point.

- a) Who are the leaders of the people, the top rung of the hierarchy?
- b) What kind of status are they accorded?
- c) What is their function in this society?

- d) Where does their authority come from?
- e) What do they do for the people?
- f) What is the nature of the people themselves-
 How do they relate to God?
 How do they relate to these leaders?
 What kind of life do they lead?

GUIDING COMMENTS (For Teacher's edition only)

1. The leaders of this society are obviously the priests, the descendants of Aaron, Moses' brother, who is ordained as the first priest in the Pentateuch. The top position was held by the High Priest, who in Ben Sira's time, was Simon. (There is a question as to whether this was Simon I or Simon II, which relates to the problem of dating Ben Sira. See footnote 1.)
2. These priests, and especially the High Priest, are accorded a very high status. Notice the details given in the description of Simon in the first passage. Observe the adjectives, ("pride," "glorious") that the author uses to describe Simon and the whole pageant that is taking place. Furthermore, the people are exhorted to "honor the priests" in the same breath as "fear the Lord." The priests are very important people indeed.
3. The priests' functions are to minister to God at the temple. They performed the rituals of sacrifice at the altar, they conducted the service there, they pronounced the blessings

of God over the people, they prayed to God on behalf of the people.

4. The priests' authority comes from God through his "laws" and "commandments." God is the Lord of all, "the judge," who has the power over man to punish and "reward those who wait" for him. He is a God to be pleased through the offering of sacrifices, "for all these things are to be done because of the commandment." The Aaronides (the priests) are charged with carrying out God's will.
5. The priests' role is one of intermediation. The people do not sacrifice, nor conduct the service, nor utter the blessings of God. Only the priests do these things. They are the professionals to whom the people must come to reach God, and they in turn provide security for the people in knowing that God has placed his sanctuary in their midst, in Jerusalem, and that he "rests" there.
6. The people, then, relate to God through their relationship with the priests. They bring their sacrifices and their hopes and aspirations to the priests, and the priests, as it were, relate them to God. While we don't have very detailed information, we could surmise that this is a simple agricultural society, since the sacrifices all consist of produce. No provision is made for a city-dweller or craftsman to fulfill his obligation to God: there probably weren't any.

Now there are some other questions which we must consider. Why are the Aaronides (the priests) in the leading position? Just as Matthew stated that the Pharisees "sit in Moses' seat," it appears from Ben Sira that the priests "sit in Moses' seat." What happened to Moses? What does Ben Sira say?

From his descendants the Lord brought forth a man of mercy, who found favor in the sight of all flesh and was beloved by God and man, Moses, whose memory is blessed.

He made him equal in glory to the holy ones, and made him great in the fears of his enemies.

By his words he caused signs to cease; the Lord glorified him in the presence of kings.

He gave him commands for his people, and showed him part of his glory.

He sanctified him through faithfulness and meekness; he chose him out of all mankind.

He made him hear his voice, and led him into the thick darkness, and gave him the commandments face to face, the law of life and knowledge, to teach Jacob the covenant, and Israel his judgments.

He exalted Aaron, the brother of Moses, a holy man like him, of the tribe of Levi.

He made an everlasting covenant with him, and gave him the priesthood of the people.

He blessed him with splendid vestments, and put a glorious robe upon him.

He clothed him with superb perfection, and strengthened him with the symbol of authority, the linen breeches, the long robe, and the ephod.

And he encircled him with pomegranates, with very many golden bells round about, to send forth a sound as he walked, to make their ringing heard in the temple as a reminder to the sons of his people; with a holy garment, of gold and blue and purple, the work of an embroiderer; with the oracle of judgment, Urim and Thummim; with twisted scarlet, the work of a craftsman; with precious stones engraved like signets, in a setting of gold, the work of a jeweler; for a reminder, in engraved letters, according to the number of the tribes of Israel; with a gold crown upon his turban, inscribed like a signet with "Holiness," a distinction to be prized, the work of an expert, the delight of the eyes, richly adorned.

Before his time there never were such beautiful things. No outsider ever put them on, but only his sons and his descendants perpetually.

His sacrifices shall be wholly burned twice every day continually.

Moses ordained him, and anointed him with holy oil; it was an everlasting covenant for him and for his descendants all the days of heaven, to minister to the Lord and serve as priest and bless his people in his name.

He chose him out of all the living to offer sacrifice to the Lord, incense and a pleasing odor as a memorial portion, to make atonement for the people.

In his commandments he gave him authority in statutes and judgments, to teach Jacob the testimonies, and to enlighten Israel with his law.

Outsiders conspired against him, and envied him in the wilderness, Dathan and Abiram and their men and the company of Korah, in wrath and anger.

The Lord saw it and was not pleased, and in the wrath of his anger they were destroyed; he wrought wonders against them to consume them in flaming fire.

He added glory to Aaron and gave him a heritage; he allotted to him the first of the first fruits, he prepared bread of first fruits in abundance; for they eat the sacrifices to the Lord, which he gave to him and his descendants.

But in the land of the people he has no inheritance, and he has no portion among the people; for the Lord himself is his portion and inheritance.⁶

- a) How does Ben Sira view Moses? What was his role in Jewish history?
- b) How does Ben Sira view Aaron? What was his role?
- c) What comparison based on Ben Sira can you make between Moses and Aaron?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. Moses was definitely a special person in Jewish history. He went up to Sinai and spoke with God "face to face" (see the detailed account in Exodus). He was greatly beloved by God, and God "chose" him out of all mankind for his special mission, to reveal God's commandments to the people.

2. Aaron was also a special person, one with whom God made "an everlasting covenant" and "gave him the priesthood of the people." God did great things for Aaron: He "blessed him," "clothed him," "encircled him," "chose him out of all the living," and "gave him authority in statutes and judgments." Moreover, such beauty and splendor had never been before, but it was now guaranteed to Aaron and his descendants perpetually."

Aaron's duties were to "minister to the Lord," to bless the people in God's name, and, through sacrifice, "to make atonement for the people." This last is perhaps most important and it amplifies what we have already seen: the priests are intermediaries between the people and God. The people may not make atonement for themselves; only the Aaronides may do that.

One the last point: the priests are to receive the first fruits of the farmers and may eat the sacrifices. "But in the land of the people he has no inheritance." The priests may not be landowners; they may not compete with the farmers.

3. The most striking characteristic of this passage is the comparison made between Moses and Aaron. A quick look at the Pentateuch will reveal what a central role Moses played, while Ben Sira only devotes five verses to him in his book. He also accords that greatest of Patriarchs, Abraham, only three verses, while David and Solomon, great kings who appear in page after page of the books Samuel and Kings, each receive eleven verses. But he recounts the glory of Aaron in seventeen verses, as we have just read. (We also read the passage about Simon, the

descendant of Aaron in Ben Sira's time, amounting to 21 verses.) Clearly, Aaron and Simon are the great heroes of the Jews in Ben Sira's mind.

While Moses received the revelation from God, and transmitted it to the people, Aaron, in a way, is the revelation itself, the embodiment of all the laws and commandments. Moses spoke God's will; Aaron performed it. Moses existed once; Aaron exists in every generation. Moses was favored by God, but Aaron had authority. Moses was "sanctified," but Aaron was "ordained." Moses himself ordained him and annointed him: Moses gave over his seat to him.

At this point it would be well to put this picture into an historical framework. This period began with the return of the Jews from Exile under the auspices of the Persian Empire. After many years of wrestling with the problem of how to organize effectively the restored Jewish community, a coalition of priestly leaders, whom we shall call the Aaronides, succeeded in promulgating the Pentateuch which put ultimate power in their hands. We know (from Deuteronomy and the books of Samuel and Kings) that before the Exile three groups vied for power: the kings, the prophets, and the priests (who weren't necessarily descendants of Aaron but rather part of the larger group of Levites). By writing, arranging, and structuring the Pentateuch, the Aaronides undercut the authority of the rival groups and elevated themselves into Moses' seat. They won the support of the masses by assuring them they had no interest in being landowners themselves, as we saw in the last passage, and by guarantying the peasantry that they would not lose their land through debt-slavery. In return for financial support, the Aaronides offered their priestly services of intermediation and expiation to the people.

This system also appealed to the Persians because it promised to keep order in the realm, allowed the peasants to pursue their livelihood in peace,

and to enjoy prosperity, and offset dangerous movements towards independence inherent in any attempt to restore the Davidic monarchy. The Temple was the central institution in Judean life, and as such served the people, the priests, and the Persians well.

How did the Pentateuch support the Aaronides? Let's see.

And he said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and worship afar off. Moses alone shall come near to the Lord: but the others shall not come up with him."⁸

Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, far off from the camp; and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose up, and every man stood at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the door of the tent, and the Lord would speak with Moses. And when all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the door of the tent, all the people would rise up and worship, every man at his tent door. Thus, the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tent.⁹

"Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests-- Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar. And you shall make holy garments for Aaron your brother, for glory and for beauty. And you shall speak to all who have ability, whom I have endowed with an able mind, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him for my priesthood."¹⁰

(After Moses has built the tabernacle)

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting, because the cloud abode upon it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. Throughout all their journeys, whenever the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the people of Israel would go onward; but if the cloud was not taken up, they they did not go onward till the day that it was taken up.¹¹

And the Lord said to Moses, "Phinehas the son of Eleazar, son of Aaron the priest, has turned back my wrath from the people of Israel, in that he was jealous with my jealousy among them, so that I did not consume the people of Israel in my jealousy. Therefore say, 'Behold, I give to him my covenant of peace; and it shall be to him, and his descendants after him, the

covenant of a perpetual priesthood, because he was jealous for his God, and made atonement for the people of Israel."¹²

"And it shall be a statute to you for ever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves, and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you; for on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord. It is a sabbath of solemn rest to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; it is a statute forever. And the priest who is anointed and consecrated as priest in his father's place shall make atonement wearing the holy linen garments; he shall make atonement for the sanctuary, and he shall make atonement for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonement for the priests and for all the people of the assembly. And this shall be an everlasting statute for you, that atonement may be made for the people of Israel once in the year because of all their sins." And Moses did as the Lord commanded him."¹³

The Lord said to Moses, "Say to Aaron and his sons, Thus you shall bless the people of Israel: you shall say to them,

The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

"So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them."¹⁴

Now what can we learn from these passages?

- a) What was Moses' original status, and how was it altered?
- b) How was authority over the people to be passed on in future generations?
- c) What is the role of the Aaronides?
- d) Is this role in agreement with Ben Sira's testimony?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. We see, in the first two passages, that Moses was the ultimate leader of the Israelites. He alone could approach God at Mt. Sinai;

he was the one to enter the tent of meeting when the pillar of cloud descended upon it, indicating God's presence. God spoke to Moses "face to face, as a man speaks to his friend." Moses was the intermediary between God and the people.

We note, however, that after Aaron has been ordained as God's priest, and after Moses has completed the construction of the tabernacle according to God's commandments, he is actually excluded from the tabernacle, from God's presence. This tabernacle was the Temple of the Wilderness; now only the Aaronides were fit to minister there.

2. Moses was a leader of the prophetic type: he had no special birthright, and was chosen by God for his special mission, as were all the other prophets, only because of his superior quality and devotion. Prophetic leadership was not hereditary. We note in the second passage that Joshua, the son of Nun acted as an apprentice to Moses at the tent of meeting. He was destined to take over leadership during the conquest of Canaan. But he was not Moses' son.

However, the priesthood was hereditary; not only was Aaron and his son Eleazar promised this, but later God renewed his covenant with the Aaronides with Phinehas, Aaron's grandson. This passage makes clear that this is a perpetual right of Aaron's descendants. There is little mention of Joshua in these passages concerning the Aaronides.

(It must be noted that during the process of structuring the Pentateuch the coalition of Aaronides were not able to eliminate the unfortunate

episode of Aaron and the Golden calf since they were forced to leave untouched whatever segments of the Pentateuch had already gained sacred authority. But what they did do was to offset the negative implications by burying the story between long passages affirming again and again God's wish that Aaron and his sons enjoy control of the priesthood. Moreover, the detailed account of the rebellion of Korah and the Levites vividly portrayed the fate that awaited any group which might seek to challenge Aaronide authority.)

3. What did the priests do? In one passage we see the institution of a new holiday, Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), on the tenth of the seventh month. This, and the first day of the seventh month (later Rosh Hashanah), became the central holidays, superseding in significance the three agricultural and historical Festivals. Yom Kippur was set aside as the day for expiation, in which the role of the priests as intermediaries was dramatically displayed in public. This role of seeking expiation for the people, as we mentioned, had formerly belonged to the prophets. Now the people looked exclusively to the priests for atonement; they sought God in his holy Temple. The priests, in turn, gave assurance to the people that God cared for them by bestowing God's blessing upon them.

We should also note the stress put upon the collective "people of Israel" and the Hebrew plural for "you" in these passages, indications that expiation and blessing are collective acts.

4. So far, all these Aaronide passages in the Pentateuch coincide well with what we know from Ben Sira: the priests, the Aaronides,

occupy the central role in this religious system, and they act as intermediaries for the people with God. We may therefore conclude that the Pentateuch served as the divine underpinning of Aaronide supremacy.

Let us now return to Ben Sira to learn more about the Aaronide period.

What, for example, were some of the beliefs or creeds of this religious system?

O death, how bitter is the reminder of you to one who lives at peace among his possessions, to a man without distractions, who is prosperous in everything, and who still has the vigor to enjoy his food!

O death, how welcome is your sentence to one who is in need and is failing in strength, very old and distracted over everything; to one who is contrary and has lost his patience!

Do not fear the sentence of death; remember your former days and the end of life; this is the decree from the Lord for all flesh, and how can you reject the good pleasure of the Most High?

Whether life is for ten or a hundred or a thousand years, there is no inquiry about it in Hades....

Have regard for your name, since it will remain for you longer than a thousand great stores of gold.

The days of a good life are numbered, but a good name endures for ever.¹⁶

Stretch forth your hand to the poor, so that your blessing may be complete.

Give graciously to all the living, and withhold not kindness from the dead.

Do not fail those who weep, but mourn with those who mourn.

Do not shrink from visiting a sick man, because for such deeds you will be loved.

In all you do, remember the end of your life, and then you will never sin.¹⁷

Turn to the Lord and forsake your sins; pray in his presence and lessen your offenses.

Return to the Most High and turn away from iniquity, and hate abominations intensely.

Who will sing praises to the Most High in Hades, as do those who are alive and give thanks?

From the dead, as from one who does not exist, thanksgiving has ceased; he who is alive and well sings the Lord's praises. How great is the mercy of the Lord and his forgiveness for those who turn to him!

For all things cannot be in men, since a son of man is not immortal.

What is brighter than the sun?

Yet its light fails.

So flesh and blood devise evil.

He marshals the host of the height of heaven; but all men are dust and ashes.¹⁸

The prayer of the humble pierces the clouds, and he will not be consoled until it reaches the Lord; he will not desist until the Most High visits him, and does justice for the righteous, and executes judgment.

And the Lord will not delay, neither will he be patient with them, till he crushes the loins of the unmerciful and repays vengeance on the nations; till he takes away the multitude of the insolent, and breaks the scepters of the unrighteous; till he repays man according to his deeds, and the works of men according to their devices; till he judges the case of his people and makes them rejoice in his mercy. Mercy is as welcome when he afflicts them as clouds of rain in the time of drought.¹⁹

a) What does Ben Sira, and his contemporaries, think about the finality of death?

b) What does he say about God's role in death and his justice?

Does God reward and punish, and if so, how and when?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. Death is definitely a major problem in human life, the struggle between man's finite limitations and his infinite striving. It is a fear that always haunts him, an unknown factor that must always be taken into consideration. Mankind has always asked, why do people die? A considerable amount of the teachings of most religions are devoted to coping with this problem.

Ben Sira tells us that the Jews in his time accepted the finality of death as the will of God. Each man's days are "numbered." Man was created from dust and will return to dust; he is not immortal. The only thing that lives on after him is his good name. One must not fear death, because it is inevitable; sometimes it occurs for the better, putting an end to the misery of sickness, while at others it comes just when a person is enjoying life most. These are the breaks.

2. Man's very life is in the power of God. "This is the decree from the Lord for all flesh." Just as God created life, so does he continue to have dominion over it. But God is just and merciful, for he does reward the righteous and punish the wicked. God "judges the case of his people," and "repays man according to his deeds." That is, the divine sentence can be prolonged through the adherence to a righteous way of life and the performance of good deeds. Man is urged to "remember the end of your life," to be mindful of the need to keep away from sin. Furthermore, God is forgiving to the man who repents in sincerity. Notice the powerful imagery which likens God to a judge.

Now that we have examined the operative belief system for Ben Sira's time, once again we must turn to the Pentateuch to see the basis, the groundwork for this philosophy.

"If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them, then I will give you your rains in their season, and the land shall yield their fruit.

And your threshing shall last to the time of vintage, and the vintage shall last to the time of sowing; and you shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land securely.

And I will give peace in the land, and you shall lie down; and none shall make you afraid; and I will remove evil beasts from the land, and the sword shall not go through your land....

And I will have regard for you and make you fruitful and multiply you, and will confirm my covenant with you....

But if you will not harken to me, and will not do all these commandments, if you spurn my statutes, and if your soul abhors my ordinances, so that you will not do all my commandments, but break my covenant, I will do this to you: I will appoint over you sudden terror, consumption, and fever that waste the eyes and cause life to pine away. And you shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it; I will set my face against you, and you shall be smitten before your enemies; those who hate you shall rule over you, and you shall flee when none pursues you."²⁰

And because he loved your fathers and chose their descendants after them, and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in to give you their land for an inheritance, as at this day; know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. Therefore you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the Lord your God gives you forever.²¹

And if you will obey my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. And he will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you shall eat and be full.

Take heed lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, and the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and he shut up the heavens, so that there be no rain, and the land yield no fruit, and you perish quickly off the good land which the Lord gives you.²²

How do these passages compare to the ones we read from Ben Sira?

- a) Is God seen as exercising the same or a different kind of power?
- b) What are the rewards and punishments?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. We see in these passages the same kind of philosophy as that expressed in Ben Sira. God has the ultimate power over man-
"know therefore this day, and lay it to your heart, that the Lord is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other." God rewards those who follow his laws and commandments, those who lead the righteous life, and he punishes those who sin by not obeying his will.
2. Furthermore, the rewards and punishments are physical and pertain to this world. There is no hint of immortality and a life after death, a heaven or hell. If man obeys God he can expect, a) long life, b) material happiness (abundant produce from the land), and c) many children who will inherit these blessings. On the other hand, if a man strays from God's ordinances, he can expect divine wrath to descend upon him. He will be tortured and deprived of material well-being, and he will "perish quickly." Man is at God's mercy.

We have focused in on the priestly class and their functions in Judean society, and on the religious beliefs popular in Ben Sira's time. What about the rest of the people, and even Ben Sira himself? What was their place in society?

There are indications in the text that Ben Sira was a scribe, and that his book is devoted to instruction and wisdom. He may have had a school of his own where he taught the lessons he finally wrote in his book. Here is what he says about his profession.

The wisdom of the scribe depends on the opportunity of leisure; and he who has little business may become wise. How can he become wise who handles the plow, who glories in the shaft of a goad, who drives oxen and is occupied with their work, and whose talk is about bulls?

He sets his heart on plowing furrows, and he is careful about fodder for the heifers.

So too is every craftsman and master workman who labors by night as well as by day; those who cut the signets of seals, each is diligent in making a great variety; he sets his heart on painting a lifelike image, and he is careful to finish his work.

So too is the smith sitting by the anvil, intent upon his handiwork in iron; the breath of the fire melts away his flesh, and he wastes away in the heat of the furnace; he inclines his ear to the sound of the hammer, and his eyes are on the pattern of the object.

He sets his heart on finishing his handiwork, and he is careful to complete its decoration.

So too is the potter sitting at his work and turning the wheel with his feet; he is always deeply concerned over his work, and all his output is by number.

He moulds the clay with his arm and makes it pliable with his feet; he sets his heart to finish the glazing, and he is careful to clean the furnace.

All these rely upon their hands, and each is skilful in his own work.

Without them a city cannot be established, and men can neither sojourn nor live there.

Yet they are not sought out for the council of the people, nor do they attain eminence in the public assembly.

They do not sit in the judge's seat, nor do they understand the sentence of judgment; they cannot expound discipline or judgment, and they are not found using proverbs.

But they keep stable the fabric of the world, and their prayer is in the practice of their trade.

On the other hand he who devotes himself to the study of the law of the Most High will seek out the wisdom of all the ancients, and will be concerned with prophecies; he will preserve the discourse of notable men and penetrate the subtleties of parables; he will seek out the hidden meanings of proverbs and be at home with the obscurities of parables. He will serve among great men and appear before rulers; he will travel through the lands of foreign nations, for he tests the good and the evil among men.

He will set his heart to rise early to seek the Lord who made him, and will make supplication before the Most High; he will open his mouth in prayer and make supplication for his sins. If the great Lord is willing, he will be filled with the spirit of understanding; he will pour forth words of wisdom and give thanks to the Lord in prayer.

He will direct his counsel and knowledge aright, and meditate on his secrets.

He will reveal instruction in his teaching, and will glory in the law of the Lord's covenant.

Many will praise his understanding, and it will never be blotted out; his memory will not disappear, and his name will live through all generations.

Nations will declare his wisdom, and the congregation will proclaim his praise; if he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand, and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him.²³

Wisdom will praise herself, and will glory in the midst of her people.

In the assembly of the Most High she will open her mouth, and in the presence of his host she will glory:

"I came forth from the mouth of the Most High, and covered the earth like a mist.

I dwelt in high places, and my throne was in a pillar of cloud.

Alone have I made the circuit of the vault of heaven and have walked in the depth of the abyss.

In the waves of the sea, in the whole earth, and in every people and nation I have gotten a possession.

Among all these I sought a resting place; I sought in whose territory I might lodge.

"Then the Creator of all things gave me a commandment, and the one who created me assigned a place for my tent. And he said, 'Make your dwelling in Jacob, and in Israel receive your inheritance.'

From eternity, in the beginning he created me, for eternity I shall not cease to exist.

In the holy tabernacle I ministered before him, and so I was established in Zion.

In the beloved city likewise he gave me a resting place, and in Jerusalem was my dominion.

So I took root in an honored people, in the portion of the Lord, who is their inheritance."²⁴

- a) What conclusions can you reach concerning the stratification of society? Who were the scribes, and how do they fit in?
- b) What is the role of "wisdom?"

GUIDING COMMENTS:

- 1) The scribes are obviously a special class. They are not the priests, they do not function in the temple or serve as intermediaries.

But they are definitely a higher class than the peasant, artisan, or tradesman. Their study depends on the availability of leisure time. Their work does not, as does that of the laborer, "rely upon their hands," but rather on their minds. The common man has no place in the "council of the people," nor do they "sit in the judge's seats." But the scribe "will serve among great men." He occupies a place in society somewhere between the common man and the priest.

An important activity of the scribal class is the "study of the law." They apparently, however, have no authority over the law, no ability to change it, nor do they seek such authority. Instead, they engage in discourse and the subtleties of the prophecies, parables, and proverbs, that is, "wisdom." They serve God through teaching wisdom, rather than through ministering at his Temple. For this, they are praised by the people and rewarded with a good name. The scribe meets the requirements of the Pentateuch by being a righteous person deserving of God's rewards.

- 2) Wisdom is accorded an independent existence apart from man, and apart from the Pentateuch, and is often personified in the Jewish literature of this time. It is a creation of God himself and comes to coexist with him in the divine world. (Later, the Midrash identifies Torah with Wisdom, and views it as the blueprint whereby God created the world.) Wisdom dwells among the Jews; it is their special possession, a further link between the people and God. God is thus the source of both the Pentateuch and

Wisdom. As such Wisdom cannot challenge the Pentateuch or Aaronide supremacy.

"Ben Sira solves the problem of the status of wisdom by refusing to see it as a problem. Wisdom underwrites the Law, reinforces it; it does not challenge it. The literality of the Torah is not jeopardized; the words of the Pentateuchal text are not subjected to scrutiny. The Pentateuch is assumed to be the fruit of Wisdom; it need not be proved such through exegesis. It is self-evident."²⁵

This then, is the picture of Jewish life at the height of Aaronide supremacy. It is a life governed by the Pentateuch and centered around the Temple cult. The priests, the descendants of Aaron, are God's ministers; they are intermediaries between God and the people. They perform the expiation of sins through the sacrificial rites, and bestow the Lord's blessings on the people. God rewards the righteous man with long life and material well-being, and he punishes the wayward through afflictions and even death.

All wisdom needed to lead a righteous life is contained in God's revelation, the Pentateuch, which is taught and interpreted by the class of scribes, who also occupy a high place in society, though secondary to the priests. The scribes do not challenge the priestly authority; they acknowledge it and praise it.

We do not discover in any of Ben Sira's words, any indications of a rival or coexisting religious system. The Temple and the priests are sole guardians of God's truths. We find no evidence for the existence of the synagogue, no individual, direct prayer, no rabbis, no Pharisees. Some scholars have argued that the synagogue originated during the Babylonian Exile in response to the absence of the Temple, that it was brought back to Judea by the returning Jews, and that it subsequently existed alongside

the Temple. Surely, if there were such an institution, Ben Sira would have mentioned it, either approvingly or disapprovingly. But Ben Sira is silent on this matter. How can we say that there was a synagogue in Ben Sira's day when there is no evidence that it existed?

26

We now conclude our investigation of Ben Sira, which has proven to be a valuable source for our study. But does it present the whole story? Was this Pentateuchal Judaism satisfactory for everyone? Did it meet all the needs of the people? Was it strong enough to withstand change? For these and other questions, we must seek answers elsewhere.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 2

1. For the reasoning behind this dating, see Ellis Rivkin, "Ben Sira and the Non-Existence of the Synagogue," Appendix A, pp. 35-36.
2. Ben Sira, 50:1-21.
3. Ibid., 7:29-31.
4. Ibid., 34:18-35; 14.
5. Ibid., 36:12-17.
6. Ibid., 45:1-22.
7. For a more detailed account of the Aaronides and their revolution, see Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, pp. 21-41.
8. Exodus, 24:1-2.
9. Ibid., 33:7-11.
10. Ibid., 28:1-3.
11. Ibid., 40:34-37.
12. Numbers, 25:10-13.
13. Leviticus, 16:29-34.
14. Numbers, 6:22-27.
15. See Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, pp. 31-33.
16. Ben Sira, 41:1-4; 12-13.
17. Ibid., 7:32-36.
18. Ibid., 17:25-32.
19. Ibid., 35:17-20.
20. Leviticus, 26:3-6,9,, 14-17.
21. Deuteronomy, 4:37-40.
22. Ibid., 11:13-17.
23. Ben Sira, 38:24-34.
24. Ibid., 24:1-12.
25. Rivkin, "Ben Sira and the Non-Existence of the Synagogue," p. 26.
26. For a full discussion of this problem, see the entire article by Rivkin, ibid.

Chapter 3

A SEARCH FOR NEW ANSWERS

Now that we have an understanding of the system operative under the Aaronides we must look for indications of unrest or dissatisfaction which might ultimately lead to the need for a different system. We noticed that Ben Sira was a champion of wisdom. But he was not the only scribe who wrote a wisdom book. There is a whole section of our Bible, called the Writings, which is often referred to as "Wisdom Literature." It includes such books as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Psalms, and Job. These books were probably written very close to the time when Ben Sira wrote his work and they bear a great resemblance to it.

For instance, let's compare a passage from Ben Sira with one from Proverbs.

The foot of a fool rushes into a house, but a man of experience stands respectfully before it.

A boor peers into the house from the door, but a cultivated man remains outside.

It is ill-mannered for a man to listen at a door, and a discreet man is grieved by the disgrace.

The lips of strangers will speak of these things, but the words of the prudent will be weighed in the balance.

The mind of fools is in their mouth, but the mouth of wise men is in their mind.

When an ungodly man curses his adversary, he curses his own soul.

A whisperer defiles his own soul and is hated in his neighborhood.

1

Wise men lay up knowledge, but the babbling of a fool brings ruin near.

A rich man's wealth is his strong city; the poverty of the poor is their ruin.

The wage of the righteous leads to life; the gain of the wicked to sin.

He who heeds instruction is on the path to life, but he who rejects reproof goes astray.

He who conceals hatred has lying lips, and he who utters slander is a fool.

When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is prudent.

The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the mind of the wicked is of little worth.
 The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of sense.²

How many similarities can you find in these passages? Are the form and style comparable? What about the content?

Ben Sira contains much proverbial material. I have selected only one example which happens to coincide with one from Proverbs because both deal with the contrast between the wise man and the fool. Both are really small segments of long lists of short sayings. They are practical sayings, designed to keep a man out of trouble. They are reflective of popular psychology.

Ben Sira's book also contains psalm material, as in this passage:

What is man, and of what use is he?
 What is his good and what is his evil?
 The number of a man's days is great if he reaches
 a hundred years.
 Like a drop of water from the sea and a grain of sand
 So are a few years in the day of eternity.³

Compare that with this passage from Psalms:

When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast established; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou dost care for him?
 Yet thou hast made him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory and honor.
 Thou hast given him dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the sea.⁴

Again, there are many similarities. Both authors struggle with the perplexing problem of man's place in the universe. Man is mortal, finite. His life span is insignificant compared to the endless duration of the universe. God is infinite and his powers are infinite. Yet God created man

and gave him a special place in his universe, and the history of man in the Bible is one of tension between man and God. The authors of the Psalms grapple with this tension.

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.
 Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hast
 formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to ever-
 lasting thou art God.
 Thou turnest man back to the dust, and sayest, "Turn back,
 O children of men!"
 For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when
 it is past, or as a watch in the night.
 Thou dost sweep men away; they are like a dream, like grass
 which is renewed in the morning: in the morning it flourishes
 and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.
 For we are consumed by anger; by thy wrath we are overwhelmed.
 Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins
 in the light of thy countenance.
 For all our days pass away under thy wrath, our years come
 to an end like a sigh.
 The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by
 reason of strength fourscore; yet their span is but toil and
 trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.⁵

O Lord, rebuke me not in thy anger, nor chasten me in thy wrath.
 Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing; O Lord, heal
 me, for my bones are troubled.
 My soul also is sorely troubled.
 But thou, O Lord- how long?

Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me for the sake of
 thy steadfast love.
 For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in Sheol who
 can give thee praise?⁶

He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High, who abides in
 the shadow of the Almighty, will say to the Lord, "My refuge
 and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust."
 For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from
 the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and
 under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a
 shield and buckler.
 You will not fear the terror of the night, nor the arrow that
 flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor
 the destruction that wastes at noonday....
 Because he cleaves to me in love, I will deliver him; I will
 protect him, because he knows my name.
 When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in
 trouble, I will rescue him and honor him.

With long life I will satisfy him, and show him my salvation.

Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes; and I will keep it to the end.

Give me understanding, that I may keep thy law and observe it with my whole heart.

Lead me in the path of thy commandments, for I delight in it.

Incline my heart to thy testimonies, and not to gain!

Turn my eyes from looking at vanities; and give me life in thy ways.

Confirm to thy servant thy promise which is for those who fear thee.

Turn away the reproach which I dread; for thy ordinances are good.

Behold I long for thy precepts; in thy righteousness give me life!

Let thy steadfast love come to me, O Lord, thy salvation according to thy promise; then shall I have an answer for those who taunt me, for I trust in thy word.

And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth, for my hope is in thy ordinances.

I will keep the law continually, forever and ever.⁸

- a) What is the mood of the Psalmist? What does he seek?
- b) What answer does the Psalmist put forth for his fellow man?
- c) How do these Psalms comport with the philosophy of the Aaronides which we discovered in Chapter 1?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. The Psalmist seems deeply troubled over man's lot. He is, in a sense, expressing man's fears of life itself- its troubles, its uncertainties, its limitations. The only thing that is certain is that he will die, and that is the greatest fear because his life is so short. What he needs is some assurance, some comfort. He wants to know that he will be secure and have some protection from the forces that try to destroy him.
2. The Psalmist finds his answer in God. Man needs God, who brought him into the world. He posits a sense of personal and individual

communion with the Power that sustains life. The kind of God he believes in is a personal God, one who cares for the individual, who will "answer him," "be with him," "rescue him." Thus, the Psalmist offers the individual a way of articulating his personal longings, agonies, and confusions. He suggests that by remaining loyal to God, by trusting in him and obeying his will, God will reward man with his loving protection. The dead can't praise God- only the living, and surely God desires that he should be praised.

3. The Psalmist does not depart from the Aaronide philosophy. Indeed, he is simply amplifying its meaning for the individual who has brought his sacrifices and has sought expiation through the divinely ordained priesthood. God is still the ultimate authority who rewards and punishes according to his will as revealed in his Torah. There is no challenge to the law or to the Temple cult.

The only modification is the increased emphasis on the individual and his inner yearnings, doubts, and struggles. This is a process that we saw at work in Ben Sira, where the scribes are engaged in the learning and teaching of Wisdom, and in the composing of Psalms. The wisdom literature, including the Psalms, is characterized by the search for individuality and meaning in man's existence.

The Temple system tended to view the people as a group--Israel--and afforded to them a direct communion with God through priestly intermediation. It was a system which had been developed to fit

the needs of a rather primitive, agricultural society. But events were changing the face of the Near East. Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.E.), in conquering this area, transformed it in fundamental ways. Greek civilization penetrated the ancient Near East and established as its beachhead the Greek type city, the polis. Commerce and trade expanded; cultural contacts exposed the Judeans to alternative philosophies. Though holding fast to their religion, Jews could not block out new thoughts and ideas. The polis dramatized for all a new kind of urban life, sustained by alluring and potent ideologies.

Little wonder, then, that the scribes were encouraged to search out their inner selves and to seek reassurances that their individual existence was important to God. It was, however, a search with limits, predefined by the Pentateuch, as we shall see.

With these new developments in mind, let us examine more critically the kind of answer that the Psalmists of this period proposed. What limits did they assume?

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.⁹

Praise the Lord.
Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who greatly delights in his commandments!
His descendants will be mighty in the land; the generation of the upright will be blessed.
Wealth and riches are in his house; and his righteousness endures forever.¹⁰

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;

the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the
eyes;

the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
the ordinances of the Lord are true, and righteous
altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold;
sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.
Moreover by them is thy servant warned; in keeping them
there is great reward.¹¹

The Lord reigns; let the peoples tremble!
He sits enthroned upon the cherubim; let the earth quake!
The Lord is great in Zion; he is exalted over all the peoples.
Let them praise thy great and terrible name!

Holy is he!

Mighty King, lover of justice, thou hast established equity;
thou has executed justice and righteousness in Jacob.

Extol the Lord our God; worship at his footstool!

Holy is he!

Moses and Aaron were among his priests, Samuel also was
among those who called on his name.

They cried to the Lord, and he answered them.

He spoke to them in the pillar of cloud; they kept his
testimonies, and the statutes that he gave them.

O Lord our God, thou didst answer them; thou wast a for-
giving God to them, but an avenger of their wrongdoings.

Extol the Lord our God, and worship at his holy mountain;
for the Lord our God is holy!¹²

How does the viewpoint expressed in these passages compare with our
previous conclusions concerning the Aaronides?

- a) What is man's duty?
- b) What role does God play?
- c) What role does the Temple, together with its cultic
system and its priests, play?
- d) How does the individual fit into this scheme?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. Man, in these passages from Psalms is definitely obligated to
obey God's laws and commandments, and to praise and extol God,

the Holy One. Such a man is truly blessed, for the laws are "perfect," "right," "pure," etc.

2. God, in return for man's righteousness and praise, will reward him with the blessings of material wealth and many descendants ("in keeping them there is great reward"). Moreover, God will answer his people when they cry out to him, and forgive or avenge according to their sincerity. God is supreme and above all he is just.
3. The people are exhorted to "worship at his holy mountain"; the Temple is the place for divine worship. The Pentateuch, which contains all the injunctions concerning worship and sacrifice, and which underwrites the authority of the priests, is the paramount guide. Moses, Aaron, and Samuel are the prototypes of the righteous individuals who heed God's laws. There are no indications that the centrality of the Aaronide institutions being challenged or threatened.
4. The individual is indeed more free to vent his personal feelings-- his hopes, fears and aspirations-- through literature such as this, or maybe even through private prayer. And he is assured that God cares for him and will reward him for his individual righteousness. But he must still support the Temple and the priests, he must still obey the laws scrupulously, he must still put his complete faith in God's justice. In other words, as long as the individual did not challenge the Pentateuch as God's revelation, or the Aaronides as God's sole authorities on earth, the individual was free to express himself and ponder the human condition.

These may have been satisfactory answers for some, but not necessarily for all. The more society developed, the more it moved towards urbanization, the more the individual felt threatened and in need of security. And the more he came into contact with other civilizations, the more he began to question the answers his society gave him. Where was the evidence for God's justice? Were, indeed, the righteous rewarded in this world, and were the wicked in fact punished? Could the individual actually control his fate by his actions? You need only examine our world as you know it to discover that this is not necessarily true. It is not surprising, therefore, that a work such as the book of Job was a natural step in the individual's struggle to understand reality.

There were probably two authors of the book of Job. One supplied the mythological folk-tale that comprises the framework of the story at the beginning and at the end. The second was a poet-philosopher, who probably lived during the period we are now dealing with, whose agonizing search comprises the main body of the book.

Job has been smitten with just about every conceivable misfortune known to man.

After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth.

And Job said: "Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night which said, 'A man-child is conceived.'"

Let that day be darkness!

May God above not seek it, nor light shine upon it.

Let gloom and deep darkness claim it.

Let clouds dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.

That night--let thick darkness seize it!

Let it not rejoice among the days of the year, let it not come into the number of the months.

Yea, let that night be barren; let no joyful cry be heard in it.

Let those curse it who curse the day, who are skilled to rouse up the Leviathan.
 Let the stars of its dawn be dark; let it hope for light, but have none, nor see the eyelids of the morning; because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb, nor hide trouble from my eyes."¹³

Job's first friend, Eliphaz, answers:

Is not your fear of God your confidence, and the integrity of your ways your hope?
 Think now, who that was innocent ever perished?
 Or where were the upright cut off?
 As I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.
 By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of his anger they are consumed.
 The roar of the lion, the voice of the fierce lion, the teeth of the young lions, are broken.
 The strong lion perishes for lack of prey, and the whelps of the lioness are scattered...
 Can mortal man be righteous before God?
 Can a man be pure before his Maker?
 Even in his servants he puts no trust, and his angels he charges with error; how much more those who dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, who are crushed before the moth.
 Between morning and evening they are destroyed; they perish forever without any regarding it.
 If their tent-cord is plucked up within them, do they not die, and that without wisdom? ...
 As for me, I would seek God, and to God would I commit my cause; who does great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number; he gives rain upon the earth and sends waters upon the fields; he sets on high those who are lowly, and those who mourn are lifted to safety.
 He frustrates the devices of the crafty, so that their hands achieve no success.
 He takes the wise in their own craftiness; and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end.
 They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope at noonday as in the night.
 But he saves the fatherless from their mouth, the needy from the hand of the mighty.
 So the poor have hope, and injustice shuts her mouth.
 Behold, happy is the man whom God reproves; therefore despise not the chastening of the Almighty."¹⁴

Job responds:

Teach me, and I will be silent; make me understand how I have erred.

How forceful are honest words!
 But what does reproof from you reprove?
 Do you think that you can reprove words, when the speech
 of a despairing man is wind?
 You would even cast lots over the fatherless, and bar-
 gain over your friend.
 But now, be pleased to look at me; for I will not lie
 to your face.
 Turn, I pray, let no wrong be done.
 Turn now, my vindication is at stake.
 Is there any wrong on my tongue?
 Cannot my taste discern calamity?
 Has not man a hard service upon earth, and are not his
 days like the days of a hireling?
 Like a slave who longs for the shadow, and like a hireling
 who looks for his wages, so I am allotted months of emptiness,
 and nights of misery are apportioned to me....
 What is man, that thou dost make so much of him, and that
 thou dost set thy mind upon him, dost visit him every morning,
 and test him every moment?
 How long wilt thou not look away from me, nor let me alone
 till I swallow my spittle?
 If I sin, what do I do to thee, thou watcher of men?
 Why hast thou made me thy mark?
 Why have I become a burden to thee?
 Why dost thou not pardon my transgression and take away my
 iniquity?
 For now I shall lie in the earth; thou wilt seek me, but I
 shall not be.¹⁵

Then Bildad the Shuhite answered:
 "How long will you say these things, and the words
 of your mouth be a great wind?
 Does God pervert justice?
 Or does the Almighty pervert the right?
 If your children have sinned against him, he has delivered
 them into the power of their transgression.
 If you will seek God and make supplication to the Almighty,
 if you are pure and upright, surely then he will rouse himself
 for you and reward you with a rightful habitation.
 And though your beginning was small, your latter days will
 be very great....
 Behold, God will not reject a blameless man, nor take the
 hand of the evil doers.
 He will yet fill your mouth with laughter, and your lips with
 shouting.
 Those who hate you will be clothed with shame, and the tent of
 the wicked will be no more."¹⁶

Job again responds:

God will not turn back his anger; beneath him bowed the helpers
 of Rahab.

How then can I answer him, choosing my words with him?
 Though I am innocent, I cannot answer him; I must appeal
 for mercy to my accuser.
 If I summoned him and he answered me, I would not believe
 that he was listening to my voice.
 For he crushes me with a tempest, and multiplies my
 wound without cause;
 he will not let me get my breath, but fills me with bitterness.
 If it is a contest of strength, behold him!
 If it is a matter of justice, who can summon him?
 Though I am innocent, my own mouth would condemn me;
 though I am blameless, he would prove me perverse.
 I am blameless; I regard not myself; I loathe my life.
 It is all one; therefore I say, he destroys both the
 blameless and the wicked.
 When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity
 of the innocent.
 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the
 faces of its judges--if it is not he, who then is it?¹⁷

Then Zophar the Na'amathite answered:

"Should a multitude of words go unanswered, and a man full
 of talk be vindicated?
 Should your babble silence men, and when you mock, shall
 no one shame you?
 For you say, 'My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in
 God's eyes.'
 But oh, that God would speak, and open his lips to you, and
 that he would tell you the secrets of wisdom!
 For he is manifold in understanding.
 Know then that God exacts of you less than your guilt deserves.
 Can you find out the deep things of God?
 Can you find out the limit of the Almighty?
 It is higher than heaven--what can you do?
 Deeper than Sheol--what can you know?
 Its measure is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea....
 If you set your heart aright, you will stretch out your hands
 toward him.
 If iniquity is in your hand, put it far away, and let not
 wickedness dwell in your tents,
 Surely then you will lift up your face without blemish; you
 will be secure, and will not fear.
 You will forget your misery; you will remember it as waters
 that have passed away.
 And your life will be brighter than the noonday; its darkness
 will be like the morning."¹⁸

Then Job answered:

"No doubt you are the people, and wisdom will die with you.
 But I have understanding as well as you;
 I am not inferior to you.

Who does not know such things as these?....

Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this?

In his hand is the life of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind....

Lo, my eye has seen all this, my ear has heard and understood it.

What you know, I also know; I am not inferior to you.

But I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to argue my case with God.

As for you, you whitewash with lies; worthless physicians are you all.

Oh that you would keep silent, and it would be your wisdom!"¹⁹

Why do the wicked live, reach old age and grow mighty in power? Their children are established in their presence, and their offspring before their eyes.

Their houses are safe from fear, and no rod of God is upon them. Their bull breeds without fail; their cow calves, and does not cast her calf.

They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance.

They sing to the tambourine and the lyre, and rejoice to the sound of the pipe.

They spend their days in prosperity, and in peace they go down to Sheol.

They say to God, "Depart from us!" We do not desire the knowledge of thy ways.

What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?

And what profit do we get if we pray to him?"

Behold, is not their prosperity in their hand?

The counsel of the wicked is far from me."²⁰

Then Eli'hu said:

"Hear my words, you wise men, and give ear to me, you who know; for the ear tests words as the palate tastes food. Let us choose what is right; let us determine among ourselves what is good.

For Job has said, 'I am innocent, and God has taken away my right; in spite of my right I am counted a liar; my wound is incurable, though I am without transgression.'

What man is like Job, who drinks up scoffing like water, who goes in company with evil doers and walks with wicked men? For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing that he should take delight in God.'

Therefore, hear me, you men of understanding, far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that he should do wrong.

For according to the work of a man he will requite him, and according to his ways he will make it befall him.

Of a truth, God will not do wickedly, and the Almighty will not pervert justice....
 Would that Job were tried to the end, because he answers like wicked men.
 For he adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God.
 The Almighty--we cannot find him; he is great in power and justice and abundant righteousness he will not violate.
 Therefore men fear him; he does not regard any who are wise in their own conceit."²¹

What is the struggle going on within this author, as seen in the dialogue between Job and his "friends?"

- a) What is the dominant world-view, as represented by the "friends?" What do they think of Job?
- b) What is Job's argument? How does he challenge this belief system?
- c) Is Job an atheist?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. Each of Job's "friends", in slightly different language, share the common view, as we have already discovered, that God is completely just in his administration of earthly affairs, and he rewards the good and punishes the evil. Man's only hope therefore is to obey the Lord. To keep man in line, God "reproves" and "chastens" him, but he is merciful to those who love him and are upright. Everything that happens in the world is a direct result of God's will.

One who finds himself, then, in Job's situation, utterly afflicted, has obviously sinned in some way, bringing God's wrath upon him.

The "friends" are angered and disgusted with Job's continued

protestations of innocence, and, rebuking him, counsel him to correct his wrongdoing, repent, and appeal to God for mercy.

They have no sympathy for his apparent faithlessness, and really do not understand his challenge. No man, insignificant as he is, can rightfully question God, who is infinite, whose plans are beyond man's understanding.

2. Job argues that he is innocent, he protests that he has lived a righteous life. He laments his lot, the lot of all men, who are destined to live in a seemingly irrational world where they are constantly buffeted by misfortune and misery. He agonizes over the reality apparent in experience: there is no justice in the world.

Though the "friends" are representative of majority opinion, Job denies that he is inferior in understanding. He becomes sarcastic at their refusal to accept reality and their adherence to unviable traditional theology.

Moreover, Job also complains that God is inaccessible to man. He has no proof that God cares for him as a person, that he can be called upon in time of trouble. In short, Job believes in the validity of experience and with this he challenges traditional theology, which seems to ignore what experience is constantly making known.

3. Job is not an atheist. By his own words, he believes in God, believes in his creative power, and believes in man's insignificance compared with God. But he denies that God is just; there is no justice. The good are not rewarded, neither are the wicked punished. Nor does God take notice of or care for the individual. His

"friends" cannot understand him because they do not understand a concept of God without the components of Justice and Mercy.

These were heretical notions for Job's contemporaries.

How does the author of Job resolve the tension that he has spent thirty-five chapters exploring? We look now at some concluding passages.

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind; "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?
Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you and you shall declare to me.
Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.
Who determined its measurements--surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?
On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?"²²

And the Lord said to Job:

"Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
He who argues with God, let him answer it."
Then Job answered the Lord:
"Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer thee?
I lay my hand on my mouth.
I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further."
Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:
"Gird up your loins like a man; I will question you, and you declare to me.
Will you even put me in the wrong?
Will you condemn me that you may be justified?"²³

Then Job answered the Lord:

"I know that you can't do all things, and that no purpose of thine can be thwarted.
'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.'
I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees thee; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."²⁴

In these passages, Job finally is able to confront God.

- a) How does God respond to Job's argument?
- b) What is the significance of Job's answer?
- c) Is the ultimate challenge really resolved?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. God's answer consists of a reinforcement of the dominant theology: God is infinite, all-powerful, and man is simply unable to understand his ways. We notice that God never actually accuses Job of a moral fault, but he does criticize him for his insolence. God articulates an underlying theme that self-righteousness leads man to condemn God ("will you condemn me that you may be justified?"). When God says, "Gird up your loins like a man, "he seems to be saying, you are being childish and self-pitying. Men don't question God's motives.
2. Job, in the end, submits. He admits that he was wrong in suspecting God, and he humbles himself. For while God has not vindicated him, has not judged him innocent, he has come to him personally. The conclusion therefore, stresses the conviction held by the writers of wisdom books that God cares for the individual. Job is satisfied that he has been accepted by God; he is not an insignificant, anonymous creature, lost in the universe.
3. But the ultimate challenge, the truth of experience, is not fully resolved. Where is the proof that the righteous are rewarded in this world, and the wicked are punished? The author of Job was unable to supply the answer, because it was not as yet part of

the Jewish belief system. "The righteous Job confronts Pentateuchal belief that righteousness is rewarded in this world with the disturbing evidence of his own tribulation. Job needs immortality to save the idea of God's justice, but the solution evades him."²⁵ Immortality, the belief that some part of man would live on beyond death and continue to exist in another world, was alien to Pentateuchal Judaism. But it was very much at home in Greek philosophy which the Jews were about to encounter with such directness that hitherto unthinkable thoughts alone seemed to offer Jews a way out.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 3

1. Ben Sira, 21:22-28.
2. Proverbs, 10:14-21.
3. Ben Sira, 18:8-10.
4. Psalms, 8:3-8.
5. Ibid., 90:1-10.
6. Ibid., 6:1-5.
7. Ibid., 91:1-6, 14-16.
8. Ibid., 119:33-44.
9. Ibid., 1:1-2.
10. Ibid., 112:1-3.
11. Ibid., 19:7-11.
12. Ibid., 99.
13. Job, 3:1-10.
14. Ibid., 4:6-11, 17-21, 5:8-17.
15. Ibid., 6:24-7:3, 17-21.
16. Ibid., 8:1-7, 20-22.
17. Ibid., 9:13-24.
18. Ibid., 11:1-9, 13-17.
19. Ibid., 21:1-3, 9-10, 13:1-5.
20. Ibid., 21:7-16.
21. Ibid., 34:1-12, 36-37, 37:23-24.
22. Ibid., 38:1-7.
23. Ibid., 20:1-8.
24. Ibid., 42:1-6.
25. Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, p. 48.

Chapter 4

CRISIS AND REVOLT

Great changes took place in the Near East as a result of the advent of the Greeks. Following Alexander the Great, the Empire was divided among several rulers, each vying for the same kind of control Alexander once had over the whole. Judea was continually the scene for conflicts between two of these rival dynasties, the Seleucids (based in Syria) and the Ptolemies (based in Egypt). One of the Seleucid rulers, Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.E.), is particularly famous for his role in subjugating the Jews. You may remember, in your previous studies, that he was the ruler whose actions brought on the Maccabean revolt (165 B.C.E.). Unfortunately, much of what is learned in elementary history books on this period has been watered-down or mythologized or both, clouding the reality of what actually happened.

To arrive at a clearer understanding of the influence of the Hellenistic Empires on Judea, as well as the Jewish reaction to it, we will look at some passages from the the Books of Maccabees to be found in the Apocrypha, and probably written during the first century B.C.E. We shall also read some passages from the Antiquities written by the Jewish historian Josephus.

After Alexander, son of Philip, the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated Darius, king of the Persians, and the Medes, he succeeded him as king. (He had previously become king of Greece.) He fought many battles, conquered strongholds, and put to death the kings of the earth. He advanced to the ends of the earth, and plundered many nations. When the earth became quiet before him, he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up. He gathered a very strong army and ruled over countries, nations, and princes, and they became tributary to him.

After this he fell sick and perceived that he was dying. So he summoned his most honored officers who had been brought up with him from youth, and divided his kingdom among them while he was still alive. And after Alexander had reigned twelve years, he died.

Then his officers began to rule, each in his own place. They all put on crowns after his death, and so did their sons after them for many years; and they caused many evils on the earth.

From them came forth a sinful root, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of Antiochus the king; he had been a hostage in Rome. He began to reign in the one hundred and thirty-seventh year of the kingdom of the Greeks.

In those days lawless men came forth from Israel, and misled many, saying, "Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles round about us, for since we separated from them many evils have come upon us." This proposal pleased them, and some of the people eagerly went to the king. He authorized them to observe the ordinances of the Gentiles. So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil.¹

About this same time the high priest Onias also died, and Antiochus gave the high priesthood to his brother; for the son whom Onias had left was still an infant. But we shall relate all the facts concerning this son in the proper place. Jesus, however,--this was the brother of Onias--was deprived of the high priesthood when the King became angry with him and gave it to his youngest brother, named Onias; for Simon had three sons, and the high priesthood came to all three of them, as we have shown. Now Jesus changed his name to Jason, while Onias was called Menelaus. And when the former high priest Jesus rose against Menelaus, who was appointed after him, the populace was divided between the two, the Tobiads being on the side of Menelaus, while the majority of the people supported Jason; and being hard pressed by him, Menelaus and the Tobiads withdrew, and going to Antiochus informed him that they wished to abandon their country's laws and the way of life prescribed by these, and to follow the king's laws and adopt the Greek way of life. Accordingly, they petitioned him to permit them to build a gymnasium in Jerusalem. And when he had granted this, they also concealed the circumcision of their private parts in order to be Greeks even when unclothed, and giving up whatever other national customs they had, they imitated the practices of foreign nations.²

When Seleucus died and Antiochus who was called Epiphanes succeeded to the kingdom, Jason the brother of Onias obtained the high priesthood by corruption, promising the king at an interview three hundred and sixty talents of silver, and from

from another source of revenue, eighty talents. In addition to this he promised to pay one hundred and fifty more if permission were given to establish by his authority a gymnasium and a body of youth for it, and to enroll the men of Jerusalem as citizens of Antioch. When the king assented and Jason came to office, he at once shifted his countrymen over to the Greek way of life. He set aside the existing royal concessions to the Jews, secured through John the father of Eupolemus, who went on the mission to establish friendship and alliance with the Romans; and he destroyed the lawful ways of living and introduced new customs contrary to the law. For with alacrity he founded a gymnasium right under the citadel, and he induced the noblest of the young men to wear the Greek hat. There was such an extreme of Hellenization and increase in the adoption of foreign ways because of the surpassing wickedness of Jason, who was ungodly and no high priest, that the priests were no longer intent upon their service at the altar. Despising the sanctuary and neglecting the sacrifices, they hastened to take part in the unlawful proceedings in the wrestling arena after the call to the discus, disdaining the honors prized by their fathers and putting the highest value upon Greek forms of prestige. For this reason heavy disaster overtook them, and those whose ways of living they admired and wished to imitate completely became their enemies and punished them. For it is no light thing to show irreverence to the divine laws--a fact which later events will make clear....

After a period of three years Jason sent Menelaus, the brother of the previously mentioned Simon, to carry the money to the king and to complete the records of essential business. But he, when presented to the king, extolled him with an air of authority, and secured the high priesthood for himself, outbidding Jason by three hundred talents of silver. After receiving the king's orders he returned possessing no qualification for the high priesthood, but having the hot temper of a cruel tyrant and the rage of a savage wild beast. So Jason, who after supplanting his own brother, was supplanted by another man, was driven as a fugitive into the land of Ammon.³

Now on the fifteenth day of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-fifth year, they erected a desolating sacrilege upon the altar of burnt offering. They also built altars in the surrounding cities of Judah, and burned incense at the doors of the houses and in the streets. The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire, Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. They kept using violence against Israel,

against those found month after month in the cities. And on the twenty-fifth day of the month they offered sacrifice on the altar which was upon the altar of burnt offering. According to the decree, they put to death the women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' necks.

But many in Israel stood firm and were resolved in their hearts not to eat unclean food. They chose to die rather than to be defiled by food or to profane the holy covenant; and they did die. And very great wrath came upon Israel.⁴

Two years later, as it happened, in the hundred and forty-fifth year, on the twenty-fifth day of the month which by us is called Chasleu, and by the Macedonians Apellaios, in the hundred and fifty-third Olympiad, the king went up to Jerusalem, and by pretending to offer peace, overcame the city by treachery. But on this occasion he did not spare even those who admitted him, because of the wealth of the temple, but through greed--for he saw much gold in the temple and an array of very costly dedicatory-offerings of other kinds--, and for the sake of taking this as spoil, he went so far as to violate the treaty which he had made with them. And so he stripped the temple, carrying off the vessels of God, the golden lampstands and the golden altar and table and the other altars, and not even forbearing to take the curtains, which were made of fine linen and scarlet, and he also emptied the temple of its hidden treasures, and left nothing at all behind, thereby throwing the Jews into deep mourning. Moreover, he forbade them to offer the daily sacrifices which they used to offer to God in accordance with their law, and after plundering the entire city, he killed some people, and some he took captive together with their wives and children, so that the number of those taken alive came to ten thousand. And he burnt the finest parts of the city, and pulling down the walls, built the Akra (citadel) in the Lower City; for it was high enough to overlook the temple, and it was for this reason that he fortified it with high walls and towers, and stationed a Macedonian garrison therein. Nonetheless there remained in the Akra those of the people who were impious and of bad character, and at their hands the citizens were destined to suffer many terrible things. The king also built a pagan altar upon the temple-altar, and slaughtered swine thereon, thereby practicing a form of sacrifice neither lawful nor native to the religion of the Jews. And he compelled them to give up the worship of their own God, and to do reverence to the gods in whom he believed; he then commanded them to build sacred places in every city and village, and to set up altars on which to sacrifice swine daily. He also ordered them not to circumcise their children, threatening to punish anyone who might be found acting contrary to these orders. He also appointed overseers who should assist in compelling them to carry out his

instructions. And so, many of the Jews, some willingly, others through fear of the punishment which had been prescribed, followed the practices ordained by the king, but the worthiest people and those of noble soul disregarded him, and held their country's customs of greater account than the punishment with which he threatened them if they disobeyed; and being on that account maltreated daily, and enduring bitter torments, they met their death.⁵

Having read these somewhat complicated passages, let's try to sort out the details to make sense out of what happened. Obviously, we are reading Jewish sources which are antagonistic to the Greeks in general, and Antiochus in particular. Therefore, we must ask ourselves truthfully, how much can Antiochus be blamed?

- a) How did the process of Hellenization (becoming Greek-like) begin? What part did the people and the local leadership play?
- b) What actually transpired in the fight for leadership among the Jews?
- c) What was the leadership trying to accomplish, and how successful were they?
- d) How did the internal situation in Judea affect Antiochus' rule?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. The author of I Maccabees, in our first passage, begins to relate the process of Hellenization in Judea. He blames it on "lawless men (who) came forth from Israel," and not upon Antiochus, despite his hatred for him. It was the people themselves who built a gymnasium, a central feature of Greek life, and who desired to hide the fact that they were

Jews. The leaders, the priests, were perhaps foremost in the desire to adopt the Greek culture.

2. The fight for the High Priesthood is a crucial turning point in Jewish-Greek relations, but the facts, as Josephus gives them, are quite confusing. Jason, brother of the High Priest Onias, actually purchased his office from Antiochus. This in itself was corrupt, but it was also illegal, from the point of view of the Pentateuch, since the High Priesthood was to be passed from father to first-born son. A brother could not take the office as long as Onias had a son, which he did. But Jason, as a Hellenizing Jew, subverted the law so that the goals of Hellenistically-inclined Jews might be attained.

Jason, however, was in turn supplanted by Menelaus, who paid Antiochus an even higher price for the High Priestly office. (Josephus refers to him as Jason's brother, but this is probably a mistake, for in II Maccabees we learn that Menelaus was the brother of Simon, the Captain of the Temple, and a member of the Tobiad family. As such he did not even belong to the High Priestly family.) Menelaus seems to have pursued a course of even greater Hellenization and total disregard for Jewish sensibilities.

3. The Jewish leadership, especially under Menelaus, seems to have been intent on introducing more than just Greek ideas and culture; they were actually trying to convert Jews into Greeks. They hoped Antiochus would turn Jerusalem into a Greek city, a polis, and extend to the Hellenizing Jews all the rights and privileges that followed from polis citizenship. They were bent on accomplishing

this goal even to the point of ruthlessness, and of compromising with monotheism, and they seem to have been pretty successful in convincing Antiochus that they meant business.

The role of the Tobiads is central to this development. The Tobiads were the new aristocracy: tax farmers and merchants whose wealth had been gained through the expansion of Hellenism and who had been largely responsible for making Jerusalem a thriving metropolis. In the process of moving from an agricultural society to an urban society, the Tobiads had maneuvered for control, and had their hands in all sorts of things, including the Temple funds. But in order to expand their wealth and their control, they needed the privileges of a Greek city, they needed a foothold in the Greek world. It is in this light that we must view their attempt to make Jerusalem a polis.⁶

4. Obviously, Antiochus did not need much persuasion. Whereas the Ptolemies restricted polis-building to a few cities such as Alexandria, the Seleucids favored a building program as a means for preserving imperial rule over a widespread empire. This Hellenization process in Jerusalem, then, fit into Antiochus' plan perfectly.

He was aware that Rome had designs on the eastern Mediterranean coast, and believed she would eventually try to conquer all this territory. He was haunted by the defeat of his father, Antiochus III. He felt that one of the chief reasons for the Roman victory was that the eastern states were not united. He determined to prevent a repetition of this, by uniting Syria and Egypt into a single strong state under Seleucid rule. Thus his primary concern was to prevent Roman penetration into the Near East. In order to succeed with this policy, he sought to Hellenize his eastern lands to create a homogeneous state under strong central government.⁷

Antiochus, then, found the situation in Judea ripe for the process of Hellenization. It had actually been started by the Jews themselves, by forces within rather than from without.⁸ Backed by leadership, corrupt though it was from our vantage point, Antiochus moved in in full force, even to the point of total desecration of the Temple. He elevated Hellenization above Judaism and delivered the coup de grace to Aaronidism.

At this point we would like to know more about the Greek civilization that attracted the Jews so much, particularly the nature of the polis which they wanted so badly in Jerusalem itself. Unfortunately, none of our primary Jewish sources gives us a picture of what the polis was, so we will have to turn to secondary literature for a brief account.

The most prominent feature of the Greek cities of the classical period was their independence. The Greeks took it for granted that no city (polis) could exist except under conditions of liberty.... The Greek polis was not a city in our sense of the term, but a petty state.... In those cities which were conducted according to the rules of democracy (such as Athens), the whole people (the demos) participated in the exercise of power, and everyone had the right to express his opinion in the general assembly....⁹

Here too (in Palestine) the Greek town was first and foremost a polis from the juridical point of view-- an independent urban community with a council (boule) and magistrates appointed by the people, with authority to conduct its own financial, public and religious affairs in complete freedom.... Like all Greek cities, those of Palestine were also authorized to strike coins.¹⁰

The Greek polis, introduced by Alexander and his successors in the Near East, was a radically different kind of society structure promoting a radically different world-view. The polis was a self-governing entity which allowed its citizens to enjoy a considerable amount of legislative autonomy. The

polis citizens, not the gods, made the laws. Associated with and encouraged by the right to make laws was a high sense of individual independence. The polis citizen was schooled in a culture that fostered man's individuality and his tendency to press his powers to their height.¹¹

Now perhaps you can see why so many Jews were attracted to the Greek way of life. On the one hand, the new aristocracy, the Tobiads, for example, were eager for polis' rights so that they might expand their potentials for economic and political gains. Of importance to them were such elements as the right for a city like Jerusalem to mint its own coinage. On the other hand, the urban classes found them appealing from the standpoint of individual freedom. They could have a say in the government and the law-making process.

Under the Ptolemies there had been no concerted effort to Hellenize Judea, no granting of polis rights. The Jews were merely subjects of Egypt. Now under the Seleucids, more and more cities were granted polis rights, culminating in the attempt to Hellenize Jerusalem itself.

Pentateuchal Judaism was simply not able to deal with these new influences. It wasn't structured to give the individual the kind of freedom of thought and action that polis rights carried with them. It was, therefore, inevitable that the system broke down, and that the leadership, the priesthood, fell to corruption.

But, in their policy of forced Hellenization, the Jewish leaders, such as Jason and Menelaus, went too far. There were still many Jews loyal to Judaism. Though they desired change and accommodation with new modes of thought, they were not willing to have Jerusalem swept away entirely. They sought freedom and individuality, but through Judaism, not complete Hellenization. A revolt was in the making.

In those days Mattathias the son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the sons of Joarib, moved from Jerusalem and settled in Modein. He had five sons, John surnamed Gaddi, Simon called Thassi, Judas called Maccabeus, Eleazar called Avaran, and Jonathan called Apphus. He saw the blasphemies being committed in Judah and Jerusalem.... Then the king's officers who were enforcing the apostasy came to the city of Modein to make them offer sacrifice. Many from Israel came to them and Mattathias and his sons were assembled. Then the king's officers spoke to Mattathias as follows: "You are a leader, honored and great in this city, and supported by sons and brothers. Now be the first to come and do what the king commands, as all the Gentiles and the men of Judah and those that are left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be numbered among the friends of the king and you and your sons will be honored with silver and gold and many gifts."

But Mattathias answered and said in a loud voice: "Even if all the nations that live under the rule of the king obey him, and have chosen to do his commandments, departing each one from the religion of his fathers, yet I and my sons and my brothers will live by the covenant of our fathers. Far be it from us to desert the law and the ordinances. We will not obey the king's words by turning aside from our religion to the right hand or to the left."

When he had finished speaking these words, a Jew came forward in the sight of all to offer sacrifice upon the altar in Modein, according to the king's command. When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him upon the altar. At the same time he killed the king's officer, who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. Thus he burned with zeal for the law, as Phinehas did against Zimri the son of Salu.

Then Mattathias cried out in the city with a loud voice, saying: "Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!" And he and his sons fled to the hills and left all that they had in the city.¹²

Then said Judas and his brothers, "Behold, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it." So all the army assembled and they went up to Mount Zion. And they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, and the gates burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as on one of the mountains. They saw also the chambers of the priests in ruins. Then they rent their clothes, and mourned with great lamentation and sprinkled themselves with ashes....

They also rebuilt the sanctuary and the interior of the temple, and consecrated the courts. They made new holy vessels, and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple. Then they burned incense on the altar and lighted the lamps on the lampstand, and these gave light in the temple. They placed the bread on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they had finished all the work they had undertaken.

Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev in the one hundred and forty-eighth year, they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering which they had built. At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals. All the people fell on their faces and worshipped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and offered burnt offerings with gladness; they offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise. They decorated the front of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the chambers for the priests, and furnished them with doors. There was very great gladness among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was removed.

Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with gladness and joy for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev.¹³

And now that the generals of King Antiochus had been defeated so many times, Judas assembled the people and said that after the many victories which God had given them, they ought to go up to Jerusalem and purify the temple and offer the customary sacrifices. But when he came to Jerusalem with the entire multitude and found the temple desolate, the gates burned down and plants growing up by themselves in the sanctuary because of the desolation, he began to lament with his men in dismay at the appearance of the temple. Then he selected some of his soldiers and commanded them to keep fighting the men who guarded the Akra until he himself should have sanctified the temple. And when he had carefully purified it, he brought in new vessels, such as a lampstand, table and altar, which were made of gold, and hung curtains from the doors, and replaced the doors themselves; he also pulled down the altar, and built a new one of various stones which had not been hewn with iron. And on the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chasleu, which the Macedonians call Apellaios, they kindled the lights on the lampstand and burned incense on the altar and set out

the loaves on the table and offered whole burnt offerings on the new altar. These things, as it chanced, took place on the same day on which, three years before, their holy service had been transformed into an impure and profane form of worship. For the temple, after being made desolate by Antiochus, had remained so for three years; it was in the hundred and forty-fifth year that these things befell the temple, on the twenty-fifth of the month Apellaios, in the hundred and fifty-third Olympiad. And the temple was renovated on the same day, the twenty-fifth of the month of Apellaios, in the hundred and forty-eighth year, in the hundred and fifty-fourth Olympiad. Now the desolation of the temple came about in accordance with the prophecy of Daniel, which had been made four hundred and eight years before; for he had revealed that the Macedonians would destroy it.

And so Judas together with his fellow-citizens celebrated the restoration of sacrifices in the temple for eight days, omitting no form of pleasure, but feasting them on costly and splendid sacrifices, and while honouring God with songs of praise and the playing of harps, at the same time delighted them. So much pleasure did they find in the renewal of their customs and in unexpectedly obtaining the right to have their own service after so long a time, that they made a law that their descendants should celebrate the restoration of the temple service for eight days. And from that time to the present we observe this festival, which we call the festival of Lights, giving this name to it, I think, from the fact that the right to worship appeared to us at a time when we hardly dared hope for it. Then Judas erected walls around the city, and having built high towers against the incursions of the enemy, he placed guards in them; and he also fortified the city of Bethsura in order that he might use it as a fortress in any emergency caused by the enemy.¹⁴

We have just read a very brief account of the rebellion, which began in 168 or 167 B.C.E. The rededication of the Temple occurred in 165 B.C.E. The leaders of the rebellion are called Hasmoneans, the family name, or Maccabees, a name attributed to the great military leader Judah.

- a) Who were the Hasmoneans?
- b) What reason does our source give for beginning the rebellion?
- c) What is the origination of the Festival of Lights (now called Hannukah or the Feast of Rededication)?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. Mattathias is referred to as a "priest of the sons of Joarib."
There is no attempt to link him with the High Priestly family, even though as a priest he was an Aaronide. He and his family left Jerusalem because they couldn't stand the "blasphemies being committed" there, i.e., the total Hellenization. He is recognized in Modein as a leader of the people and one of the great men of the city.
2. Mattathias and his family refuse to take part in the forced conversion policies of the government (and, as we know, of the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem). He is determined to remain loyal to the laws of Israel and its covenant with God. He and his supporters are prepared to lay down their lives so that Judaism may not be destroyed entirely.
3. The Feast of Lights was observed as the celebration of the restoration of the Temple. You will notice that in neither source, Maccabees or Josephus, is there any mention of a "miracle." The restoration was accomplished after years of arduous fighting, and after days of cleaning the Temple. No hidden flask of oil was found. No light burned for eight days when it should have only burned for one. These were not stories that our authors knew. The legend of Hanukah apparently originated much later, after the reason for celebrating it eight days was forgotten. These authors say simply that it was celebrated for eight days.

A key to the answer is found at the beginning of the Second Book of

of Maccabees where the holiday is also called the "feast of booths." Obviously the Hasmoneans created a whole new holiday, and they modeled it after another festival, the Feast of Booths, which was already celebrated for eight days.

The restoration of the Temple did not, however, mean the rebellion was over. A war had been started, and the Seleucid rulers were not at all ready to give up control of Judea. Many years of battle lay ahead. Judah was killed in 160 B.C.E. and his brother, Jonathan, assumed the leadership. Meanwhile, a succession of rulers in Syria struggled to regain control, and in 145 Demetrius II came to the throne. After Jonathan died, the next brother, Simon, became the Hasmonean ruler, in 142, and he and Demetrius came to an agreement.

In view of these things King Demetrius confirmed him in the high priesthood, and he made him one of the king's friends and paid him high honors. For he had heard that the Jews were addressed by the Romans as friends and allies and brethren, and that the Romans had received the envoys of Simon with honor.

And the Jews and their priests decided that Simon should be their leader and high priest forever, until a trustworthy prophet should arise, and that he should be governor over them and that he should take charge of the sanctuary and appoint men over its tasks and over the country and the weapons and the strongholds, and that he should take charge of the sanctuary, and that he should be obeyed by all, and that all contracts in the country should be written in his name, and that he should be clothed in purple and wear gold.

And none of the people or priests shall be permitted to nullify any of these decisions or to oppose what he says, or to convene an assembly in the country without his permission, or to be clothed in purple or put on a gold buckle. Whoever acts contrary to these decisions or nullifies any of them shall be liable to punishment.

And all the people agreed to grant Simon the right to act in accord with these decisions. So Simon accepted and agreed to be high priest, to be commander and ethnarch of the Jews and priests, and to be protector of them all.¹⁵

What is the significance of this event? What has happened politically?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

Simon is here officially recognized by both the Greek ruler and by the Jewish people. His authority is confirmed as both the High Priest and as Ethnarch, political leader. Judea has been recognized by both the Seleucids in Syria and the Romans as an independent nation, free to maintain weapons and strongholds. Furthermore, this position is guaranteed to Simon, and his descendants, forever.

This is quite a revolutionary act, when you think about it. The Pentateuch had specifically commended that the High Priesthood could only be given to the descendants of Aaron, Eleazar and Phinehas. Yet the Hasmonean family did not have such a genealogy.

This is one of the first clues we have of the revolutionary transformation of Judaism that occurred during the Hasmonean Revolt. A High Priest was chosen from a family not entitled to hold that office according to the Pentateuch. Yet this new High Priest, Simon, was legitimized by a new leadership class that had emerged during the Hasmonean Revolt and began to shape a radically new form of Judaism. This class is known to us as the Pharisees, and it is to them that we must now turn.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 4

1. I Maccabees, 1:1-15.
2. Josephus, Antiquities, XII, 237-241.
3. II Maccabees, 4:7-17, 23-26.
4. I Maccabees, 1:54-64.
5. Josephus, op. cit., 248-255.
6. See Solomon Zeitlin, The Rise and Fall of the Judean State, Vol. I, p. 79.
7. Ibid., p. 77.
8. See Victor Tcherikover, Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews, p. 117-118.
9. Ibid., p. 22.
10. Ibid., p. 107-108.
11. Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, p. 43.
12. I Maccabees, 2:1-6, 15-28.
13. Ibid., 4:36-39, 48-59.
14. Josephus, Antiquities, XII, 316-326.
15. I Maccabees, 14:38-47.

Chapter 5

THE TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY

In our first chapter, we read a passage dealing with the Hasmonean John Hyrcanus. He was Simon's son and successor to both the High Priesthood and political leadership of the Jews. We saw that he had a falling-out with the Pharisees and that he abrogated their laws, which, we concluded, must have been in force before that time. In fact, the Pharisees themselves, as a group, must have come into existence before Hyrcanus in order to have gained such prominence.

The earliest reference to the Pharisees occurs in Josephus' account of the period of Jonathan, Judah's brother, who was the Jewish leader between 160-142 B.C.E. Josephus' knowledge of them, then, stems from the early Hasmonean period.

Now at this time there were three schools of thought among the Jews, which held different opinions concerning human affairs; the first being that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes. As for the Pharisees, they say that certain events are the work of Fate, but not all; as to other events, it depends upon ourselves whether they shall take place or not. The sect of Essenes, however, declares that Fate is mistress of all things, and that nothing befalls men unless it be in accordance with her decree. But the Sadducees do away with Fate, holding that there is no such thing and that human actions are not achieved in accordance with her decree, but that all things lie within our own power, so that we ourselves are responsible for our well-being, while we suffer misfortune through our own thoughtlessness. Of these matters, however, I have given a more detailed account in the second book of the Jewish History.¹

Three groups are discussed, and it is interesting to note what Josephus regards to be the philosophic differences between them.

- a) What do the Sadducees believe?
- b) What do the Essenes believe?
- c) What do the Pharisees believe?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. The Sadducees hold an extreme position that there is no such thing as Fate. (It was actually not a concept known to Biblical Judaism.) By this they mean that man's own actions determine his well-being or misfortune. Is this not the same idea expounded in the Aaronide sources we read-- the Pentateuch, Ben Sira, Psalms, and Job? If you are righteous, then you will be rewarded, but if you are wicked, you will be punished. The Sadducees maintain the traditional point of view.

2. The Essenes, on the other hand, are at the opposite extreme: Fate controls everything. There is some other force in the universe, independent of man's actions, which determines what happens to him. It doesn't matter how he strives for righteousness: Fate alone determines whether he fares well or badly. They might have sided with Job in charging that there is no justice, no rational explanation for good men suffering and bad men succeeding. (Josephus explains elsewhere the Essene belief in immortality in greater depth.)

3. The Pharisees take a middle position on this matter. They believe that some things are the work of Fate, while others are dependent upon man. But Josephus does not give us any details as to which events are controlled by what forces.

The Pharisees, we have found, were very popular and forceful, even to the point of having the Hasmonean ruler, John Hyrcanus, numbered among their

disciples and having some power to initiate laws for the nation. But after Hyrcanus broke with the Pharisees, in favor of the Sadducees, the former fell into hard times. The next leader, Alexander Janneus (103-76 B.C.E.) pursued a similar policy.

As for Alexander, his own people revolted against him-- for the nation was aroused against him-- at the celebration of the festival, and as he stood beside the altar and was about to sacrifice, they pelted him with citrons, it being a custom among the Jews that at the festival of Tabernacles everyone holds wands made of palm branches and citrons--these we have described elsewhere; and they added insult to injury by saying that he was descended from captives and was unfit to hold office and to sacrifice; and being enraged at this, he killed some six thousand of them, and also placed a wooden barrier around the altar and the temple as far as the coping (of the court) which the priests alone were permitted to enter, and by this means blocked the people's way to him.²

But after these conquests King Alexander fell ill from heavy drinking, and for three years he was afflicted with a quartan fever, but still he did not give up campaigning until, being exhausted from his labours, he met death in the territory of the Gerasenes while besieging Ragaba, a fortress across the Jordan. And when the queen saw that he was on the point of death and no longer held to any hope of recovery, she wept and beat her breast, lamenting the bereavement that was about to befall her and her children, and said to him, "To whom are you thus leaving me and your children, who are in need of help from others, especially when you know how hostile the nation feels toward you!" Thereupon he advised her to follow his suggestions for keeping the throne secure for herself and her children and to conceal his death from the soldiers until she had captured the fortress. And then, he said, on her return to Jerusalem as from a splendid victory, she should yield a certain amount of power to the Pharisees, for if they praised her in return for this sign of regard, they would dispose the nation favorably toward her. These men, he assured her, had so much influence with their fellow-Jews that they could injure those whom they hated and help those to whom they were friendly; for they had the complete confidence of the masses when they spoke harshly of any person, even when they did so out of envy; and he himself, he added, had come into conflict with the nation because these men had been badly treated by him. "And so," he said, "when you come to Jerusalem, send for their partisans, and showing them my dead body, permit them, with every sign of sincerity, to treat me as they please, whether

they wish to dishonour my corpse by leaving it unburied because of the many injuries they have suffered at my hands, or in their anger which to offer my dead body any other form of indignity. Promise them also that you will not take any action, while you are on the throne, without their consent. If you speak to them in this manner, I shall receive from them a more splendid burial than I should from you; for once they have the power to do so, they will not choose to treat my corpse badly, and at the same time you will reign securely." With this exhortation to his wife he died, after reigning twenty-seven years, at the age of forty-nine.³

Thereupon Alexandra, after capturing the fortress, conferred with the Pharisees as her husband had suggested, and by placing in their hands all that concerned his corpse and the royal power, stilled their anger against Alexander, and made them her well-wishers and friends. And they in turn went to the people and made public speeches in which they recounted the deeds of Alexander, and said that in him they had lost a just king, and by their eulogies they so greatly moved the people to mourn and lament that they gave him a more splendid burial than had been given any of the kings before him. Now although Alexander had left two sons, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus, he had bequeathed the royal power to Alexandra. Of these sons the one, Hyrcanus, was incompetent to govern and in addition much preferred a quiet life, while the younger, Aristobulus, was a man of action and a high spirit. As for the queen herself, she was loved by the masses because she was thought to disapprove of the crimes committed by her husband.

Alexandra then appointed Hyrcanus as high priest because of his greater age but more especially because of his lack of energy; and she permitted the Pharisees to do as they liked in all matters, and also commanded the people to obey them; and whatever regulations, introduced by the Pharisees, in accordance with the tradition of their fathers, had been abolished by her father-in-law Hyrcanus, these she again restored. And so, while she had the title of sovereign, the Pharisees had the power. For example, they recalled exiles, and freed prisoners, and in a word, in no way differed from absolute rulers. Nevertheless the queen took thought for the welfare of the kingdom and recruited a large force of mercenaries, and also made her own force twice as large, with the result that she struck terror into the local rulers around her and received hostages from them. And throughout the entire country there was quiet except for the Pharisees; for they worked upon the feelings of the queen and tried to persuade her to kill those who had urged Alexander to put the eight hundred to death. Later they themselves cut down one of them, named Diogenes, and his death was followed by that of one after the other, until the leading citizens came to the palace, Aristobulus among them-- for he was obviously resentful of what

was taking place, and let it be plainly seen that if only he should get the opportunity, he would not leave his mother any power at all-- , and they reminded her of all that they had achieved in the face of danger, whereby they had shown their unwavering loyalty to their master and had therefore been judged worthy by him of the greatest honours. And they begged her not to crush their hopes completely, for they said, after escaping the dangers of war, they were now being slaughtered at home like cattle by their foes, and there was no one to avenge them.⁴

Beside Alexandra, and growing as she grew, arose the Pharisees, a body of Jews with the reputation of excelling the rest of their nation in the observance of religion, and as exact exponents of the laws. To them, being herself intensely religious, she listened with too great deference; while they, gradually taking advantage of an ingenuous woman, became at length the real administrators of the state, at liberty to banish and to recall, to loose and to bind, whom they would. In short, the enjoyments of royal authority were theirs; its expenses and burdens fell to Alexandra. She proved, however, to be a wonderful administrator in larger affairs, and by continual recruiting doubled her army, besides collecting a considerable body of foreign troops; so that she not only strengthened her own nation, but became a formidable foe to foreign potentates. But if she ruled the nation, the Pharisees ruled her.⁵

- a) What kind of difficulty did Alexander have with the people, and how did this come about?
- b) What was the realization that Alexander came to?
- c) Having reestablished a relationship with the Pharisees, how would you characterize Salome Alexandra's reign?
- d) What information do we find about the Pharisees themselves?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. Alexander Janneus was obviously not very popular with the people. The first passage tells us that they revolted against him, mocked him and slandered him. They claimed his genealogy was not pure and hence he was unfit for the High Priesthood. Because of all

these insults, he slaughtered thousands of his opponents. On his death-bed, however, he makes an interesting confession. He admits that all his trouble with the people stemmed from the fact that he had treated the Pharisees so badly. The Pharisees, he tells his wife, were in control of the masses, and it was a mistake to so alienate them.

2. Alexander realized, before he died, that if the nation was to have peace, and if his wife, Salome Alexandra, was to be able to continue to rule, there would have to be a reconciliation with the Pharisees. In this he was an astute politician, and he was willing to chance the humiliation of his corpse for the sake of a political solution. He correctly foresaw that, once the Pharisees were placated, they would become staunch allies of the queen.
3. Salome Alexandra was able to rule with great success following her husband's death because she made peace with the Pharisees. She had the support of the people, was a good administrator, and strengthened the security of the nation. Yet all this had a price: the Pharisees were the real power behind the throne ("But if she ruled the nation, the Pharisees ruled her"), so much so that they were able to repay their opponents (undoubtedly the Sadducees, who had ousted them in the time of John Hyrcanus) by slaughtering them in turn.
4. The Pharisees enjoyed wide support of the masses, probably due to what Josephus terms their "reputation of excelling the rest of their nation in the observances of religion, and as exact exponents of the laws." Their political power thus stemmed from their religious

teachings. Under the queen they are able to reinstitute those laws which Hyrcanus had abrogated. What laws were these? Josephus only tells us that they were based on "the tradition of their fathers." (The Greek is paradosis, which we will have occasion to notice later.) We know also, from the passage in the first chapter, that these laws, handed down through the generations, were "not recorded in the Laws of Moses," and hence were rejected by the Sadducees. (You might review that passage at this point.) The power to enforce these special oral laws of theirs, then, must have been the crucial issue in the political struggles with John Hyrcanus and Alexander; for no sooner did Salome restore the Pharisees to favor than she reinstituted their oral laws.

Having briefly examined Josephus' record of the Pharisees struggle to reassert their authority over God's laws, we shall now approach the problem from an entirely different angle. At this point we turn to the New Testament, which in its own way testifies to the power and popularity of the Pharisees. Of course, these are accounts of events which occurred long before they were written down, and they are hostile towards the Pharisees, as we saw in the first chapter. But they are enlightening nonetheless.

The Epistles of the Apostle Paul are a good place to begin, because of what Paul says about himself.

If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to righteousness under the law blameless.⁶

For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I perse-

cuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it; and I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.⁷

- a) What does Paul say about himself, about his pre-Christian affiliation?
- b) What can we learn about the Pharisees from his testimony?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. By his own admission, Paul was deeply rooted in Judaism. He was a Pharisee, and as such he had taken a hard line against the new group who followed Christ. Like Josephus, he had been a devoted student of Judaism; hence he must have known Pharisaism intimately. We learn elsewhere in his epistles that he was charged by the Jewish leadership with seeking out and punishing those Jews who converted to Christianity. On one of his missions to punish such people, he himself underwent a conversion, becoming an ardent follower of Christ and one of the foremost shapers of Christian theology. (See Acts, 22.)
2. The most crucial statement that Paul makes is that he was "as to the Law a Pharisee." What can this possibly mean? Undoubtedly, at this time one couldn't just live according to the Law. "As to Law" represents a commitment to a particular approach to the Law. One must have held a position "as to the Law" either as a Pharisee or as something else (like, "as to the Law a Sadducee" or "as to the Law an Essene.") This agrees with what we have already learned from Josephus: the Pharisees had instituted non-written laws which the Sadducees rejected. Moreover Paul says he was "zealous...for the traditions (Paradosis) of my fathers," which again echoes the Pharisaic commitment to the unwritten laws

Josephus identified with the Paradosis of the Fathers. Paul, then, must, be alluding to those laws which were transmitted orally by the Pharisees and not contained in the Pentateuch.

Paul says that he was "as to righteousness under the Law blameless." This is not moral righteousness, but a legal kind. It means that he was in conformity with a legal system, that he was a law-keeper. But it was the Pharisaic Law that he was loyal to, not the Law in general.

We continue now with a few accounts of the life of Jesus as interpreted by the Gospels.

Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁸

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, "Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat."⁹

And they went into Capernaum; and immediately on the sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.¹⁰

Jesus said to them (to the Sadducees), "Is not this why you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God said to him, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong."

And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another and seeing that he answered them well, asked him "which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." And the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that he is one, and there is no other but he; and to love him with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And after that no one dared to ask him any question.¹¹

- a) Does Jesus reject Pharisaism?
- b) Over what do the Pharisees argue with Jesus?
- c) What are the Pharisaic doctrines seen in these passages?
- d) Are the scribes mentioned here the same scribes that are mentioned in Ben Sira?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. While Jesus may have charged the Pharisees of his time with being hypocrites, he certainly does not indict Pharisaism. All of his disciples are exhorted to follow scrupulously the laws and commandments as taught by the Pharisees, even to the point of exceeding the righteousness of the Pharisees themselves. One must be a Pharisee first, and then he may ascend to the higher level of righteousness taught by Jesus.

It should be noted here that everywhere the Pharisees are linked with the "scribes," and hence the two must be synonymous.

2. The Pharisees differ with Jesus first on the grounds that he and his disciples are neglecting part of "the tradition (paradosis) of the elders." (Again this paradosis appears as the hallmark of Pharisaism. The Pharisees are champions of tradition, a body of laws not written in Scripture.) Secondly, they differ with Jesus because he taught in the synagogue "as one who had authority, and not as the scribes." This does not mean the scribes (Pharisees) didn't have authority; we already know that they wielded great power among the Jews. But Jesus was teaching on his own authority, whereas the scribes taught as a group with scholarly authority. They were a class of scholars who, as teachers of the Law and the "traditions of the fathers," were regarded as the collective guardians of that law and tradition. They apparently felt Jesus was claiming an independent authority.

We also should notice that, in Jesus' time, while the Temple still stood, the synagogue was a well-established institution, where the Pharisees taught.

3. Jesus articulates two important doctrines with which the scribes, and hence the Pharisees, are in complete agreement. First, in opposition to the Sadducees, Jesus endorses resurrection. He bases it on a verse from the Bible. The Sadducees are in accord with the Aaronide belief that death is final, while Jesus and the Pharisees believe that the dead will rise again and the righteous will enter the "Kingdom of Heaven"; that is, they believe in immortality, the idea that sensitive spirits like Job had been

searching for so as to reconcile God's justice.

Secondly, Jesus asserts that the Shema is the central creed of Judaism. Man is required, first and foremost, to accept the sovereignty of God, the Kingdom of Heaven. Joined with this is the command to love one's fellow man. While both these commandments are written in the Pentateuch, they had not been singled out or elevated to such great importance by the previous spokesmen for Judaism, the priests and the wisdom authors. They did not dwell on these commandments in their literature, but rather on the centrality of sacrifice. Jesus and the Pharisees elevate these doctrines above the sacrificial system.

4. We have linked the scribes mentioned in these verses to the Pharisees, but what of this same term which we noted earlier in Ben Sira? Are these the same scribes? Ben Sira and his contemporaries were teachers of Aaronide law; they supported the Temple, the authority of the Priests, the literal Pentateuch, the doctrines of the mortality of men, of God's ultimate Justice, and his ability to reward and punish in this world. The scribes, however, who appear in the Gospels are Pharisees; for they expound the oral traditions of the Fathers as enjoying an authority equivalent to the Pentateuch. In contrast to Ben Sira they teach the immortality of the soul in the world to come and ultimately the resurrection of the dead and the superiority of non-sacrificial doctrines. In addition, they claim an authority apart from the priests, and they teach in the synagogues, not the Temple. They are obviously not the same group!

Another record of the transfer of authority comes from Pharisaic sources, namely, the Mishnah and Baraitot. (The Baraitot are Mishnaic-type passages which were not included in the final compilation of the Mishnah, but were preserved, in part, in the Talmud, and in the Tosephta and the Tannaitic Midrash.) Here we will see many of the revolutionary changes in Judaism that the Pharisees had brought about.

First of all, with regard to the point of view the Pharisees took "as to the law," we read the following:

Moses received the Law from Sinai and committed it to Joshua, and Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the Prophets; and the Prophets committed it to the men of the Great Synagogue.¹²

R. Johanan said: Standard measures and penalties are fixed by laws communicated to Moses on Sinai. But are the penalties written out in Scripture?—Rather: The minimum required for penalties is fixed by laws communicated to Moses on Sinai. It was also taught thus: The minima required for penalties are fixed by laws communicated to Moses on Sinai. Others say: The Court of Jabetz fixed them. But Scripture said: These "are the commandments," which means that no prophet is permitted to introduce any new law from then on;—Rather: They were forgotten and then they established them anew.¹³

For it was taught, Jose b. Jo'ezer of Zeredah and Jose b. Johanan of Jerusalem decreed uncleanness in respect of the country of the heathens and glassware. Simeon b. Shetah instituted the woman's marriage settlement and imposed uncleanness upon metal utensils. Shammai and Hillel decreed uncleanness for the hands.¹⁴

R. Nahman said: "Moses instituted for Israel the benediction 'Who feeds' at the time when manna descended for them. Joshua instituted for them the benediction of the land when they entered the land. David and Solomon instituted the benediction which closes 'Who buildest Jerusalem.' David instituted the words, 'For Israel Thy people and for Jerusalem Thy city,' and Solomon instituted the words, 'For the great and holy House.' The benediction 'Who is good and bestows good' was instituted in Jabneh with reference to those who were slain in Bethar. For R. Mattena said: On the day on which permission was given to bury those slain in Bethar, they ordained in Jabneh that 'Who is good and bestows good' should be said: 'Who is good' because they did not putrefy, and "'Who bestows good,' because they were allowed to be buried."¹⁵

Now, what conclusions can you make about the Pharisaic point of view
 "as to the law?"

GUIDING COMMENTS:

The first passage, from the tractate Avot, is one of the most famous in the Mishnah. It is a beautiful affirmation of the divine nature of the Oral Law (the "traditions of the fathers") which the Pharisees expounded, and of its equality to the Written Law. Even the title of this tractate itself, Avot, Fathers, (or, as it is sometimes called, Pirke Avot, Sayings of the Fathers) is indicative of which Law is meant. Its original title may very well have been "The Tradition (Paradosis) of the Fathers." Just as the Written Law originated with Moses at Sinai, so too the Oral Law. But it was transmitted through the generations from Moses to Joshua to the elders to the Prophets to the men of the Great Synagogue. There is no mention of Aaron or of his descendants! This transmission completely by-passes the line of priests so important in the over all scheme of the Pentateuch. It reemphasizes the important role played by the prophets, and it re-establishes the centrality of Joshua. For while an account in Numbers 27:18-23 gives dual leadership to Joshua and Eleazer, Aaron's son, the priests had so construed the final edition of the Pentateuch to exclude Joshua. Now the Pharisees were excluding the Aaronides from leadership.¹⁶

We also see, in the next passage from the Talmud, that the Sages were aware that certain laws which were being practiced had no basis in Scripture. Yet they were ascribed to Moses, even from Sinai, and

they were rationalized as having been forgotten and rediscovered. These, too, were "traditions of the fathers." Several laws are actually ascribed to certain individuals who lived during the early Pharisaic period: Jose ben Joezer, Jose ben Johanan, Simeon ben Shetah, Shammai and Hillel. Obviously these sages were part of a group which had the authority to add to the body of Oral Law. This is confirmed by the last passage, dealing with the origination of the blessings comprising the Grace after Meals. Just as David and Solomon were responsible for certain benedictions, so too were the Sages at Jabneh. (Jabneh was the headquarters of the rabbis after Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 C.E. and Bethar was the scene of the last stand of the Bar Kocheba rebellion, indicating that this process was still going on after 135 C.E.) None of the benedictions, by the way, are attributed to the Aaronides. The Pharisees were not only transmitters; they were innovators.

This Oral Law was a powerful new force which the Pharisees originated. To consolidate the strength of this theory of transmission, and to neutralize the ground for Aaronide support (the Pentateuch) the rabbis at Jabneh canonized the entire Bible. They thus elevated the historical writings (including Joshua) and the prophets to a position virtually equal to that of the Pentateuch. Yet the Oral Law was distinct from the Written Law.

This Oral Law was, in principle, a very different kind of law, because, unlike the Written Law, the Pentateuch, it enshrined an immutable principle, not immutable laws. This principle affirmed that the legitimate leadership had the authority to determine, in any given age, which written laws were operative literally, which operative laws are prescribed by the Oral Law, which non-operative at all. Those wielding authority twofold Law could ignore Pentateuchal Law, modify Pentateuchal Law, nullify Pentateuchal Law. Whereas not a jot or tittle

might be added to the Written Law, there was no such restriction as far as the Oral Law was concerned. The Oral Law was not a body of immutable legislation, but a concept and a principle that legalized permanent revelation through legitimate leadership.¹⁷

Just how this principle was actualized can clearly be seen in the following passages.

They delivered unto him elders from among the elders of the Beth Din, and they read before him out of the prescribed rite for the day; and they said to him, 'My lord High Priest, do thou thyself recite with thine own mouth, lest thou hast forgotten or lest thou hast never learnt.' On the eve of the Day of Atonement in the morning they make him to stand at the Eastern Gate and pass before him oxen, rams, and sheep, that he may gain knowledge and become versed in the Temple-Service.

The elders of the Beth Din delivered him to the elders of the priesthood and they brought him up to the upper chamber of the House of Abtinah. They adjured him and took their leave and went away having said to him, 'My lord High Priest, we are delegates of the Beth Din, and thou art our delegate and the delegate of the Beth Din. We adjure thee by him that made his name to dwell in this house that thou change naught of what we have said unto thee.' He turned aside and wept and they turned aside and wept.¹⁸

"He turned aside and wept and they turned aside and wept." He turned aside and wept because they suspected him of being a Sadducee, and they turned aside and wept, for R. Joshua b. Levi said: Whoever suspects good folks will suffer for it on his own body. Why was all this solemn adjuration necessary? Lest he arrange incense outside and thus bring it in, in the manner of the Sadducees.

Our Rabbis taught: There was a Sadducee who had arranged the incense without, and then brought it inside. As he left he was exceedingly glad. On his coming out his father met him and said to him: My son, although we are Sadducees, we are afraid of the Pharisees. He replied: All my life I was aggrieved because of this scriptural verse: "For I appear in the cloud upon the ark-cover." I would say: When shall the opportunity come to my hand so that I might fulfill it? Now that such an opportunity has come to my hand, should I not have fulfilled it? It is reported that it took only a few days until he died and was thrown on the dung heap and worms came forth from his nose. Some say: He was smitten as he came out of the Holy of Holies.¹⁹

If a man said, 'I will sin and repent, and sin again and repent,' he will be given no chance to repent. If he said, 'I will sin and the Day of Atonement will effect atonement,' then the Day of Atonement effects no atonement. For transgressions that are between man and God the Day of Atonement effects atonement, but for transgressions that are between a man and his fellow the Day of Atonement effects atonement only if he has appeased his fellow. This did R. Eleazar b. Azariah expound: "From all your sins shall ye be clean before the Lord"--for transgressions that are between man and God the Day of Atonement effects atonement; but for transgressions that are between a man and his fellow the Day of Atonement effects atonement only if he has appeased his fellow.²⁰

- a) How does the status of the High Priest as seen in these texts compare with the picture drawn by Ben Sira and with the literal commands of the Pentateuchal texts we read earlier?
- b) How does this view of the Day of Atonement compare with the passage from Leviticus we read in Chapter Two?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. In the first passage, from the Mishnah tractate dealing with the Day of Atonement, we see that the High Priest has been reduced to taking orders from the elders of the Beth Din. They are careful to instruct him in all his priestly duties as prescribed by the Oral Law so that when he carries through the liturgical order of the day he will not deviate from Pharisaic procedures. What more telling evidence of Pharisaic authority than instructing the priests as to how they were to carry out their duties!

A further insight is given in the elaboration of this passage in the Talmud. The High Priest had to be admonished because he

might be a Sadducee, and the Pharisees wanted to make sure he conformed to their procedures and not the Sadducean way. (The Sadducees believed he should light the incense outside the Holy of Holies, so as to create a smoke screen before he entered, while the Pharisees said it shouldn't be lit until he was inside.) The Pharisees thus brought the High Priest into submission to their authority, and they even created a legend, to scare off any would-be rebels, by threatening them with death. This is a far cry from the glorious display of pomp and authority by the High Priest in Ben Sira's time. The Pharisees are now in power, not the Aaronides. (The Beth Din, usually translated as "court," means law house, or legislature, corresponding to the Greek boule.)

2. The Day of Atonement itself has undergone change. In Leviticus we saw that it was a day for the priests to make atonement and expiation for the people. Now it is the Day itself which effects atonement for transgressions between man and God, and men themselves who make atonement for transgressions between men. The priests have absolutely no role to play, while the individual, who didn't have a role under the Aaronides, has a direct responsibility under the Pharisees. The centrality of the individual, ²¹ not the Temple, is affirmed.

The nature of the Law has changed. The authority of the priesthood

has changed. What else can we look for to indicate differences between the Pharisees and their predecessors? We can also examine the mode, the style of their teaching. You should be quite familiar by now with the various types of biblical literature. Review them at this point, and then compare them to the passages from the Mishnah that follow.

The School of Shammai say: They may not sell aught to a gentile or help him to load his beast or raise a burden on his shoulders unless there is time for him to reach a place near by the same day. And the School of Hillel permit it.

The School of Shammai say: Hides may not be given to a gentile tanner nor clothes to a gentile washerman unless there is time for the work to be done the same day. And all these the School of Hillel permit such time as the sun is up.

Rabban Simeon b. Gamliel said: In my father's house they used to give white clothes to a gentile washerman three days before Sabbath. Both the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel agree that men may lay down the olive-press beams or the winepress rollers.²²

After they have mixed him his first cup, the School of Shammai say: He says the Benediction first over the day and then the Benediction over the wine. And the School of Hillel say: He says the Benediction first over the wine and then the Benediction over the day.²³

A man may not go out with a sword or a bow or a shield or club or a spear; and if he went out with the like of these he is liable to a Sin-offering. R. Eliezer says: They are his adornments. But the Sages say: They are naught save a reproach, for it is written, "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."²⁴

The main classes of work are forty save one: sowing, ploughing, reaping, binding sheaves, threshing, winnowing, cleansing crops, grinding, sifting, kneading, baking, shearing wool, washing or beating or dyeing it, spinning, weaving, making two loops, weaving two threads, separating two threads, tying a knot, loosening a knot, sewing two stitches, tearing in order to sew two stitches, hunting

a gazelle, slaughtering or flaying or salting it or curing its skin, scraping it or cutting it up, writing two letters, erasing in order to write two letters, building, pulling down, putting out a fire, lighting a fire, striking with a hammer and taking out aught from one domain into another. These are the main classes of work: forty save one.²⁵

What new modes can you discover in this literature that you have not seen in the Pentateuchal or Wisdom literature we have studied?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. First, you should notice that varying points of view are expressed.

Here we see some disagreements between the Schools of Hillel and Shammai. (These were great sages who developed large followings, or schools, which their disciples maintained after them.) The atmosphere reflected is one of debate, of free expression of opinion. Very often the Mishnah indicates the majority or acceptable opinion, yet it records the minority opinions as well. Nor are schools of scholars the only participants in these debates, but individual scholars as well.

This is definitely not a biblical mode. In the Pentateuch, laws are laid down uniformly in God's name. Where did such a mode come from? We have already learned that the Greek world placed the responsibility of making laws upon the free citizens, and that democratic principles prevailed in some cities. The Greek academies, where Socrates and Aristotle and others taught, encouraged debate and a wide variety of opinions. The rabbis had their academies as well, very likely modeled after the Stoic pattern.

2. Next we must notice that the Mishnah is made up of a collection of very short items, arranged by subject matter. The Bible is in narrative form; laws are related to or embedded in historical experiences. There is no sense of history in the Mishnah; sages who didn't even live in the same period are juxtaposed if their sayings happen to concern the same subject.

The Pharisees created new forms to replace the narrative and poetic modes of the Bible. These new forms were the aggadah and the halachah. The halachah is a single bit of legislation, originally taught orally, which is not inherently connected to any other item nor to Scripture. Similarly, the aggadah is a single bit of lore, an anecdote describing an event or the example of a righteous individual's life. There is no sense of history,
27
no sense of time.

At the core of this mode is the understanding that laws change, and that the principles for deriving new laws are more important than the content. There is a great deal of abstraction in the Pharisaic literature, and full attention is given to the need for a consistent approach to law through the use of logic. This, too, is a departure from the biblical mode. Laws are always concrete; never abstract, nor are they subject to analysis or expressive of deductive modes of thinking; they are simply given, and they refer to very specific situations. In the Mishnah by contrast the Sages will even propose a hypothetical situation, just to test out the logic of their laws. Such concern for logic and consistency, and for the abstract principles rather than the historical specifics,

is another characteristic of the Greek dialectical modes of thought which the Pharisees had made their own.

3. Another new mode, linked with the process just discussed, is the proof-text method. In order to prove a point the rabbis would frequently draw upon a biblical verse which, because of its authoritative stature, lent credence to their argument. Since God is the source of law and lore in the Bible there is no need for proof-texting. And as for the Aaronides, we know from Ben Sira that they exercised their God-given authority by a literal reading of the Pentateuchal text. Thus Ben Sira never resorts to proof-texting either.

Because the Pharisees used these verses out of context, they are often twisted or forced to yield meanings seemingly far removed from the literal. But this technique was also used to extend and define biblical injunctions. Through this means the rabbis were even able to turn biblical verses into abstractions expressing broad legal principles, rather than limited specific applications.

The Bible was rooted in another age. The Jews in the Greco-Roman world needed new guidance. Biblical laws shaped for an agricultural society had to be modified so that they might function in an urbanized society. Hence, much of the Mishnah is concerned with adapting biblical law to more complex situations. For example, where the Bible merely enjoins man from working on the Sabbath, the Mishnah delineates what precisely is meant by "work." It lists 39 different categories that man must abstain from.

4. There are other examples as well of new modes of thought introduced by the Pharisees which we don't have space to consider. One more, briefly, would be the new names for God which the Pharisees coined. They frequently use such terms as Avinu She-ba Shamayim (Our Father who is in Heaven), Ha-Makom (The All-Present), or Shekhinah (The Divine Presence). They don't use the biblical names, such as Yahweh, Elohim, or Shaddai. This, too, is an important change, and the new names reflect a conviction that God is readily available to all men at all times in all places.

There can be no question, therefore, that the Pharisees brought about a real revolution in Jewish life. We have seen how they maneuvered politically in the time of the Hasmoneans to gain control over the affairs of state and the affairs of religion during the reign of Salome Alexandra. We have seen how they introduced a new concept of divine revelation: God had given two laws, not one, an Oral Law derived from the "traditions of their fathers" in addition to the Written Law. This Oral Law contained the principle of ongoing revelation which allowed the Pharisaic teachers to modify and innovate laws for Israel. We have seen how they differed with the Sadducees, those who continued the Aaronide commitment to the Written Law alone, and how they ultimately gained control even of the Aaronide domain- the priesthood. They introduced new ideas, such as resurrection, which the Sadducees bitterly opposed. They maintained a rival institution to the Temple, the Synagogue, where Judaism was taught according to the Pharisaic doctrines, and where individuals could pray to God without intermediation. We saw, also, that

they introduced new modes of discourse which allowed for debate and varying opinions, for the use of logic to extract principles of law which could be applied universally, and for continual refinement of the laws to meet new conditions.

If you understood how deeply committed the Jews had been to the Aaronides and the Pentateuch, and how the Aaronides were so entrenched in their position of power, protected by the definitive divine revelation and the sanction of the ruling empires, then you should be significantly impressed by what the Pharisees had accomplished. We call such an accomplishment, this transfer of authority, a revolution.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 5

1. Josephus, Antiquities, XIII, 171-173.
2. Ibid., 372-373.
3. Ibid., 398-404.
4. Ibid., 405-412.
5. Josephus, The Jewish War, I, 110-113.
6. Phillipians, 3:4-6.
7. Galatians, 1:13-14.
8. Mathew, 5:17-20.
9. Ibid., 15:1-2.
10. Mark, 1:21-24.
11. Ibid., 12:24-34.
12. Mishnah, Avot, 1.1.
13. Talmud, Yoma, 80a.
14. Talmud, Shabbat, 14b.
15. Talmud, Berachot, 48b.
16. See Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, p. 65.
17. Rivkin, The Dynamics of Jewish History, p. 35.
18. Mishnah, Yoma, 1.3,5.
19. Talmud, Yoma, 19b.
20. Mishnah, Yoma, 8.9.
21. See Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, p. 87.
22. Mishnah, Shabbat, 1.7-9.
23. Mishnah, Pesachim, 10.2.
24. Mishnah, Shabbat, 6.4.
25. Ibid., 7.2.
26. See Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, p. 60.
27. Ibid., p. 59-61. Also see Rivkin, "Pharisaism and The Crisis of the Individual in the Greco-Roman World," p. 22.

Chapter 6

THE PHARISAIC LIFE

Having achieved the transfer of authority, the Pharisees were able to consolidate their power and expand their influence over every aspect of Jewish life. Pharisaism became the dominant form of Judaism and eventually the only viable alternative. It spread beyond the boundaries of Judea to every place where Jews were located. Especially after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., the Sadducean form of Judaism became irrelevant. Judaism was now synonymous with Pharisaism.

What were the elements of Pharisaic doctrine? We have mentioned some in passing during the course of our investigation of their revolutionary rise to power; but now we should examine them in more detail. To begin with, let's take the Shema, which Jesus and the scribes agreed was the chief commandment.

From what time in the evening may the Shema be recited? From the time when the priests enter the Temple to eat of their Heave-offering until the end of the first watch. So R. Eliezer. But the Sages say: Until midnight. Rabban Gamaliel says: Until the rise of dawn. His sons once returned after midnight from a wedding feast. They said to him, 'We have not recited the Shema.' He said to them, 'If the dawn has not risen ye are still bound to recite it. Moreover, wheresoever the Sages prescribe "until midnight" the duty of fulfillment lasts until the rise of dawn.' The duty of burning the fat pieces and the members of the animal offerings lasts until the rise of dawn; and for all offerings that must be consumed 'the same day,' the duty lasts until the rise of dawn. Why then have the Sages said: Until midnight? To keep a man far from transgression.

From what time in the morning may the Shema be recited? So soon as one can distinguish between blue and white. R. Eliezer says: Between blue and green. And it should be finished before sunrise. R. Joshua says: Before the third hour: for so is it the way of kings, to rise up at the third hour. He that recites it from that time onward suffers no loss and is like to one that reads in the Law.

Twice each day, at the dawn thereof and when the hour comes for turning to repose, let all acknowledge before God the bounties

which He has bestowed on them through their deliverance from the land of Egypt: thanksgiving is a natural duty, and is rendered alike in gratitude for past mercies and to incline the giver to others yet to come. They shall inscribe also on their doors the greatest of the benefits which they have received from God and each shall display them on his arms; and all that can show forth the power of God and His goodwill towards them, let them bear a record thereof written on the head and on the arm, so that men may see on every side the loving care with which God surrounds them.²

The officer said to them (the priests), 'Recite ye a Benediction!' They recited a Benediction, and recited the Ten Commandments, the Shema, and the "And it shall come to pass if ye shall hearken," and the "And the Lord spake unto Moses." They pronounced three Benedictions with the people: 'True and sure,' and 'Abodah,' and the Priestly Blessing; and on the Sabbath they pronounced a further Benediction for the outgoing Course of priests.³

The morning Tefillah may be said any time until midday. R. Judah says: Until the fourth hour. The afternoon Tefillah may be said any time until sunset. R. Judah says: Until midway through the afternoon. The evening Tefillah has no set time; and the Additional Tefillah may be said any time during the day. R. Judah says: Until the seventh hour...

Rabban Gamliel says: A man should pray the Eighteen Benedictions every day. R. Joshua says: The substance of the Eighteen. R. Akiba says: If his prayer is fluent in his mouth he should pray the Eighteen, but if not, the substance of the Eighteen.⁴

- a) What is the significance of the Shema?
- b) What is the relationship between God and the individuals?
- c) What has happened to the Temple cult?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. The first passage, from the Mishnah tractate Berachot, is actually the very beginning of the Mishnah itself. It is the initial statement, testifying to its extreme importance for the Pharisees.

(Little wonder, then, that Jesus says it is the first commandment.) The Shema is more than a prayer: it is a confession of faith, the acknowledgement of God as the single Creator-Father-Redeemer of all men. In rabbinic terminology, it is the recognition of "the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Its importance is further emphasized by the rabbinic injunction to recite the Shema twice each day! This is no light matter, for even the times for reciting the Shema are specified, and should one happen to forget and miss that time, he is still obligated to recite it. While Josephus claims that this is a biblical injunction (he puts the words in Moses' mouth in his paraphrase of the events at Sinai) there is no such mention of the obligation to recite the Shema in the Pentateuch.⁵

2. This constant repetition was aimed at impressing upon the Jew a strong commitment to Pharisaic theology. This theology presupposed a strong bond between God and the individual, a relationship where God manifests "loving care" for each individual, as does a father, and where the individual gives thanks and pledges allegiance to his God. Prayer is the form of communication between man and God. God is present for man at every time, in every place.

This, again, is revolutionary, because no mention is made in the Pentateuch of the obligation for man to pray. Yet the repertoire of prayers incumbent upon the Jew was expanded by the Pharisees to include three daily services and a fourth on the

Sabbath. The Tefillah, or Eighteen Benedictions, made up the bulk of the service in which the individual praised, thanked, and petitioned God in a variety of ways. This too, was fixed, forcing the individual to internalize his relationship with God.⁶

3. In the third passage quoted above, a representative of the Pharisees is actually giving orders to the priests by which the synagogue service is superimposed upon the Temple service. The recitation of the various prayers are not an outgrowth of Temple worship; the Temple was solely dedicated to the sacrificial system. Prayer was an innovation of the Pharisees, a new phenomenon in which the Sadducean priests had to be instructed.

The destruction of the Temple gave the Pharisees the opportunity to develop fully the anti-sacrificial implications of their revolution. Though there was mourning for the destruction of the Temple, mourning was not over-indulged. Indeed, the Pharisaic teachers prohibited morbid grief over the destruction of the Temple. Henceforth the cult was to be preserved and venerated as a memento to an earlier age and not as a necessary institution. There was contemplation of its former glory, an academic concern with the legal minutiae of its operation, and pious verbalization of the hope for its restoration in the Messianic age. But no steps were initiated to restore it. Pharisaism had already stripped the cultus of an essential role in Judaism.⁷

The fixed daily prayer was part of an over-all internalization process which the Pharisees developed. It was a means for giving the individual greater comfort through the security of knowing that he had within himself the key to salvation. Here is how Josephus explained internalization:

Our legislator, on the other hand, took great care to combine both systems. He did not leave practical training

in morals inarticulate; nor did he permit the letter of the law to remain inoperative. Starting from the very beginning with the food of which we partake from infancy, and the private life of the home, he left nothing, however insignificant, to the discretion and caprice of the individual. What meats a man should abstain from, and what he may enjoy; with what persons he should associate; what period should be devoted respectively to strenuous labour and to rest--for all this our leader made the Law the standard and rule, that we might live under it as under a father and master, and be guilty of no sin through wilfulness or ignorance.

For ignorance he left no pretext. He appointed the Law to be the most excellent and necessary form of instruction, ordaining, not that it should be heard once for all or twice or on several occasions, but that every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble to listen to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it, a practice which all other legislators seem to have neglected.

Indeed, most men, so far from living in accordance with their own laws, hardly know what they are. Only when they have done wrong do they learn from others that they have transgressed the law. Even those of them who hold the highest and most important offices admit their ignorance; for they employ professional legal experts as assessors and leave them in charge of the administration of affairs. But, should anyone of our nation be questioned about the laws, he would repeat them all more readily than his own name. The result, then, of all our thorough grounding in the laws from the first dawn of intelligence is that we have them, as it were, engraven on our souls. A transgressor is a rarity; evasion of punishment by excuses an impossibility.

To this cause above all we owe our admirable harmony. Unity and identity of religious belief, perfect uniformity in habits and customs, produce a very beautiful concord in human character. Among us alone will be heard no contradictory statements about God, such as are common among other nations, not only on the lips of ordinary individuals under the impulse of some passing mood, but even boldly propounded by philosophers; some putting forward crushing arguments against the very existence of God, others depriving Him of His providential care for mankind. Among us alone will be seen no difference in the conduct of our lives. With us all act alike, all profess the same doctrine about God, one which is in harmony with our Law and affirms that all things are under His eye. Even our women-folk and dependents would tell you that piety must be the motive of all our occupations in life.⁸

We, on the contrary, notwithstanding the countless calamities in which changes of rulers in Asia have involved us, never even in the direst extremity proved traitors to our laws; and we respect them not from any motive of sloth or luxury. A little consideration will show that they impose on us ordeals and labours far more severe than the endurance commonly believed to have been required of the Lacedaemonians. Those men neither tilled the ground nor toiled at crafts, but, exempt from all business, passed their life in the city, sleek of person and cultivating beauty by physical training; for all the necessities of life they had others to wait on them, by whom their food was prepared and served to them; and the sole aim for which they were prepared to do and suffer everything was the noble and humane object of defeating all against whom they took the field. Even in this, I may remark in passing, they were unsuccessful. The fact is that not isolated individuals only, but large numbers have frequently, in defiance of the injunctions of their law, surrendered in a body with their arms to the enemy.

Has anyone every heard of a case of our people, not, I mean, in such large numbers, but merely two or three, proving traitors to their laws or afraid of death? I do not refer to that easiest of deaths, on the battlefield, but death accompanied by physical torture, which is thought to be the hardest of all. To such a death we are, in my belief, exposed by some of our conquerors, not from hatred of those at their mercy, but from a curiosity to witness the astonishing spectacle of men who believe that the only evil which can befall them is to be compelled to do any act or utter any word contrary to their laws. There should be nothing astonishing in our facing death on behalf of our laws with a courage which no other nation can equal. For even those practices of ours which seem the easiest others find difficult to tolerate: I mean personal service, simple diet, discipline which leaves no room for freak or individual caprice in matters of meat and drink, or in the sexual relations, or in extravagance, or again the abstention from work at rigidly fixed periods. No; the men who march out to meet the sword and charge and rout the enemy could not face regulations about everyday life. On the other hand, our willing obedience to the law in these matters results in the heroism which we display in the face of death.⁹

With us such maltreatment even of a brute beast is made a capital crime. And from these laws of ours nothing has had power to deflect us, neither fear of our masters, nor envy of the institutions esteemed by other nations. We have trained our courage, not with a view to waging war for self-aggrandizement, but in order to preserve our laws. To defeat in any other form

we patiently submit, but when pressure is put upon us to alter our statutes, then we deliberately fight, even against tremendous odds, and hold out under reverses to the last extremity.¹⁰

Nowadays, indeed, violation of the laws has with most nations become a fine art. No so with us. Robbed though we be of wealth, of cities, of all good things, our Law at least remains immortal; and there is not a Jew so distant from his country, so much in awe of a cruel despot, but has more fear of the Law than of him. If, then, our attachment to our laws is due to their excellence, let it be granted that they are excellent. If, on the contrary, it be thought that the laws to which we are so loyal are bad, what punishment could be too great for persons who transgress those which are better.

Now, since Time is reckoned in all cases the surest test of worth, I would call Time to witness to the excellence of our lawgiver and of the revelation concerning God which he has transmitted to us. An infinity of time has passed since Moses, if one compares the age in which he lived with those of other legislators; yet it will be found that throughout the whole of that period not merely have our laws stood the test of our own use, but they have to an ever increasing extent excited the emulation of the world at large.¹¹

Distinguished as he was by his noble birth, my father Matthias was even more esteemed for his upright character, being among the most notable men in Jerusalem, our greatest city. Brought up with Matthias, my own brother by both parents, I made great progress in my education, gaining a reputation for an excellent memory and understanding. While still a mere boy, about fourteen years old, I won universal applause for my love of letters; insomuch as the chief priests and the leading men of the city used constantly to come to me for precise information on some particular in our ordinances. At about the age of sixteen I determined to gain personal experience of the several sects into which our nation is divided. These, as I have frequently mentioned, are three in number--the first that of the Pharisees, the second that of the Sadducees, and the third that of the Essenes. I thought that, after a thorough investigation, I should be in a position to select the best. So I submitted myself to hard training and laborious exercises and passed through the three courses. Not content, however, with the experience thus gained, on hearing of one named Bannus, who dwelt in the wilderness, wearing only such clothing as trees provided, feeding on such

things as grew of themselves, and using frequent ablutions of cold water, by day and night, for purity's sake, I became his devoted disciple. With him I lived for three years and having accomplished my purpose, returned to the city. Being now in my nineteenth year I began to govern my life by the rules of the Pharisees, a sect having points of resemblance to that which the Greeks call the Stoic school.¹²

- a) How does Josephus compare the Jews and their laws with the non-Jewish nations and their laws?
- b) How does Josephus explain the reason for the Jews being the way they are?
- c) To whom does he compare the Pharisees?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. All but the last of these passages are taken from Josephus' work, Against Apion, which is a defence of Judaism in the face of criticism by non-Jews. Josephus counters these criticisms by arguing that the Jews have better laws and are more loyal to their laws than the Gentiles. Laws in the Greco-Roman world, as we learned earlier, were the products of the people themselves, civil laws to deal with specific situations. But the Jewish Law is a greater law because it is "immortal." It is not dependent on a particular society or age. It is of divine origin. (Josephus means, by Law, both the Written and the Oral Law. Though we know that the Oral Law was promulgated by the Pharisees, Josephus as a follower of the Pharisees believed, with them, that the Oral Law was, like the Written Law, revealed by God to Moses on Sinai.) Moses is the legislator par excellence, having the benefit of

divine wisdom which could foresee all eventualities. The excellence of these laws is further substantiated by their having withstood the test of time, and their increasing influence on non-Jews.

Moreover, Josephus claims, non-Jews very frequently do not even know the laws of their own nations. They constantly violate their laws, many even making of it "a fine art." The Jews, on the other hand, both know their laws completely, every man, woman, and child, and obey them with remarkable consistency since they were impressed on the conscious of the child at a very early age. Even Jews in the Diaspora, outside Palestine, are equally informed and equally loyal. In short, "nothing has the power to deflect" the Jew from obeying his laws.

3. Josephus attributes the Jews' superior obedience to the fact that these laws have been "engraven on our souls." They have trained themselves diligently to preserve their laws, so much so that they are ready to face death rather than give up their loyalty. Furthermore, they are united in their religious beliefs, which makes for a great harmony among the Jews. (Of course, by this time, the various alternative forms of Judaism, such as Sadduceism had collapsed leaving Pharisaism triumphant.) The Gentiles do not have the benefit of similar harmony due to the proliferation of city-states throughout the Empire, each with its own customs and laws.

The superiority of Jewish law is further grounded in its all-encompassing character. It is not merely civil law; Jewish law reaches to every concern of the individual, every moment of his

life, because it is God's revelation of the road to eternal life. It lays down obligations concerning the individual's eating habits, his working habits, his home life. It is a total discipline for living. True, it requires great conviction and stamina, for it imposes heavy ordeals upon the Jew. Yet these ordeals are willingly undergone for the sake of the Law, and they make the Jew a better person for it. (The Lacedaemonians, by the way, are the Spartans, whom Josephus takes as the Greco-Roman model of a people who excel in endurance. By comparison with the Jews, the Spartans were soft. At least, so says Josephus.) This is all by way of saying that the Jews have internalized their laws--they have made them part of themselves.

An internal city engraved on the soul of the individual, this was the crucial achievement of the Pharisees. Citizenship was available to all who internalized the halakha system. It was a city fashioned for 'all who come under the wings of the Shekhinah,' a constitution for living persons, and not for a fixed place.¹³

3. In the last selection, Josephus, in writing for a Greco-Roman audience, likens the Pharisees to the Stoics. Now the Stoics were a group of Greek philosophers who held particular views on human conduct. They believed that virtue, or righteous action, is the only good, while vice is the only evil. They said that a wise man is one who is indifferent to the vicissitudes of life; pain and pleasure, wealth and poverty, success and failure. A man must learn to be self-sufficient and content with what is not in his power to change. They believed there was a power, called Providence, which governed the world with wisdom. Man

must learn to make his own will the same as the will and the purpose of the universe. In other words, he must internalize the universal standards. In addition, the Stoic was not committed to a particular country or city-state. He was a citizen of the world in which he looked to Wisdom to rule all mankind.

The Pharisees also found in the Hellenistic world lawmakers who were neither priests, kings, nor prophets, but rather statesmen, philosophers, or scholars. They were struck by the student-teacher relationship, alien to Israel but commonplace in the polis world and especially stressed by the Stoics. They were impressed with the flowering of personality all about them and the high evaluation placed on the individual and on his autonomy. The Stoic teaching of an inner standard, a reality impervious to the buffeting of the external world and the vagaries of chance and fortune, was especially impressive to them.¹⁴

Another area of concern for the Pharisees was the problem of divine rewards and punishments. We have already spent considerable time investigating the Aaronide position, and we also learned from our brief encounter with the New Testament that the Pharisees agreed with Jesus' belief in resurrection. Here, then, in somewhat more detail, is the Pharisaic doctrine.

The Jews, from the most ancient times, had three philosophies pertaining to their traditions, that of the Essenes, that of the Sadducees, and, thirdly, that of the group called the Pharisees. To be sure, I have spoken about them in the second book of the Jewish War, but nevertheless I shall here too dwell on them for a moment.

The Pharisees simplify their standard of living, making no concession to luxury. They follow the guidance of that which their doctrine has selected and transmitted as good, attaching the chief importance to the observance of those commandments which it has seen fit to dictate to them. They show respect and deference to their elders, nor do they rashly presume to contradict their proposals. Though they postulate that everything is brought about by fate, still they do not deprive the human will of the pursuit of what is in man's power, since it was God's good pleasure that there

should be a fusion and that the will of man with his virtue and vice should be admitted to the council-chamber of fate. They believe that souls have power to survive death and that there are rewards and punishments under the earth for those who have led lives of virtue or vice; eternal imprisonment is the lot of evil souls, while the good souls receive an easy passage to a new life. Because of these views they are, as a matter of fact, extremely influential among the townsfolk; and all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed according to their exposition. This is the great tribute that the inhabitants of the cities, by practising the highest ideals both in their way of living and in their discourse, have paid to the excellence of the Pharisees.

The Sadducees hold that the soul perishes along with the body. They hold no observance of any sort apart from the laws; in fact, they reckon it a virtue to dispute with the teachers of the path of wisdom that they pursue. There are but few men to whom this doctrine has been made known, but these are men of the highest standing. They accomplish practically nothing, however. For whenever they assume some office, though they submit unwillingly and perforce, yet submit they do to the formulas of the Pharisees, since otherwise the masses would not tolerate them.¹⁵

Of the two first-named schools, the Pharisees, who are considered the most accurate interpreters of the laws, and hold the position of the leading sect, attribute everything to Fate and to God; they hold that to act rightly or otherwise rests, indeed, for the most part with men, but that in each action Fate cooperates. Every soul, they maintain, is imperishable, but the soul of the good alone passes into another body, while the souls of the wicked suffer eternal punishment.

The Sadducees, the second of the orders, do away with Fate altogether, and remove God beyond, not merely the commission, but the very sight, of evil. They maintain that man has the free choice of good or evil, and that it rests with each man's will whether he follows the one or the other. As for the persistence of the soul after death, penalties in the underworld, and rewards, they will have none of them.

The Pharisees are affectionate to each other and cultivate harmonious relations with the community. The Sadducees, on the contrary, are, even among themselves, rather boorish in their behavior, and in their intercourse with their peers are as rude as to aliens. Such is what I have to say on the Jewish philosophical schools.¹⁶

For those, on the other hand, who live in accordance with our laws the prize is not silver or gold, no crown of wild olive or of parsley with any such public mark of distinction. No; each individual, relying on the witness of his own conscience and the lawgiver's prophecy, confirmed by the sure testimony of God, is firmly persuaded that to those who observe the laws and, if they must needs die for them, willingly meet death, God has granted a renewed existence and in the revolution of the ages the gift of a better life. I should have hesitated to write thus, had not the facts made all men aware that many of our countrymen have on many occasions ere now preferred to brave all manner of suffering rather than to utter a single word against the Law.¹⁷

No; suicide is alike repugnant to that nature which all creatures share, and an act of impiety towards God who created us. Among the animals there is not one that deliberately seeks death or kills itself; so firmly rooted in all is nature's law-- the will to live. That is why we account as enemies those who would openly take our lives and punish as assassins those who clandestinely attempt to do so. And God-- think you not that He is indignant when man treats His gift with scorn? For it is from Him that we have received our being, and it is to Him that we should leave the decision to take it away. All of us, it is true, have mortal bodies, composed of perishable matter, but the soul lives forever, immortal: it is a portion of the Diety housed in our bodies. If, then, one who makes away with or misapplies a deposit entrusted to him by a fellow man is reckoned a perjured villain, how can he who casts out from his own body the deposit which God has placed there, hope to elude Him whom he has thus wronged? It is considered right to punish a fugitive slave, even though the master he leaves be a scoundrel; and shall we fly from the best of masters, from God Himself, and not be deemed impious? Know you not that they who depart this life in accordance with the law of nature and repay the loan which they received from God, when He who lent is pleased to reclaim it, win eternal renown; that their houses and families are secure; that their souls, remaining spotless and obedient, are allotted the most holy place in heaven, whence, in the revolution of the ages, they return to find in chaste bodies a new habitation? But as for those who have laid mad hands upon themselves, the darker regions of the nether world receive their souls, and God their father, visits upon their posterity the outrageous acts of the parents. That is why this crime, so hateful to God, is punished also by the sagest of legislators.¹⁸

All Israelites have a share in the world to come, for it is written, "Thy people also shall be righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified," and these are they that have no share in the world to come: he that says there is no

resurrection of the dead prescribed in the Law, and he that says that the Law is not from Heaven, and an Epicurean.¹⁹

- a) What roles do Fate and human will play in man's destiny?
- b) What is the nature of the human soul?
- c) What are the differences in the Pharisaic and Sadducean ways of life?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. Earlier we read a passage from Josephus which compared to three schools of thought, depicting the Pharisees as those who believed in a balance between Fate and human actions. Here we see their philosophy described in greater detail, though sometimes difficult to comprehend. Josephus tells us, in one place, that "they postulate that everything is brought about by fate, still they do not deprive the human will of the pursuit of what is in man's power." Alternatively he states that they "attribute everything to Fate and to God; they hold that to act rightly or otherwise rests, indeed, for the most part with men, but that in each action Fate cooperates." Fate is basically that force which is responsible for events which have no rational explanation: the misfortunes of Job, for instance, who was innocent of wrongdoing. They cannot be ascribed to God, for that would nullify his attribute of Justice. On the other hand, the Sadducees, following the Aaronides, deny the workings of Fate and do ascribe all events to God, while maintaining that God is in fact just and man receives his proper rewards and punishments. But the Pharisees cannot go all the way in giving credit to Fate for this would

leave open the doors for totally irresponsible behavior by men: if men's actions have no bearing on his fate, why bother to be righteous? Hence the compromise which says events are brought about by both Fate and human actions. God desires that there be a "fusion" of the two. Man is still very much responsible for his own destiny because his future now also includes another world, the Olam haBah (the World to Come), where he will receive the ultimate judgement.

2. Without resurrection, this whole outlook on life would be ridiculous.

It is essential that the Pharisaic scheme include the immortality of the soul and the ultimate resurrection of the body. Clearly the Sadducees reject this notion, as did their antecedents, the Aaronides. They "hold that the soul perishes along with the body." The Pharisees say that after the body perishes, the soul lives on, receiving either "eternal imprisonment" or a reward even better than silver or gold, a reward of renewed life. Suicide, then, is a grave sin, because it is an offense against God. God gave man his soul, and, after death, the soul goes up to God, the Father, to await its restoration in this body which will never again suffer or die. It is on loan, as it were, to the body for a period of time in this world. It is not the body's prerogative to determine when its soul should leave it.

The threat of eternal punishment and the promise of eternal reward was far more effective in producing strong allegiance to the Law than earthly rewards and punishments. This leads Josephus to conclude that the Jews were absolutely committed to the Law

and were willing to "brave all manner of suffering" for its sake. Immortality of the soul and resurrection actually became an essential creed for Jews, as seen in the passage from Sanhedrin. One must believe in resurrection to receive the reward of eternal life and resurrection in the World to Come.

This passage from the Sanhedrin gives rise to two important points. Firstly, the salvation of the individual is independent of the community. In the Pentateuch, the people are judged. When they are wicked, they are collectively destroyed, whether through flood, famine, war, or divine fire. When they are good the entire nation prospers under benevolent leadership. But now "all Israelites have a share in the world to come," except for certain classes of individuals. It is, then, up to each individual to earn his eternal salvation.

Secondly, there is a turn towards universalism. Such items of particularism as the land of Israel and the Temple Cult are no longer viewed as essential; the concern is for the salvation of the individual, and the means for attaining it is the Law. The Pharisees offered the individual a new life, a better life, through loyalty to their system of a twofold law, Written and Oral. It made no difference where you lived; the Law was always available,
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even when the Temple was not. This universalism also created a new meaning for the concept of Israel.

...Now Israel meant a community aspiring to salvation through loyalty to the twofold Law. This concept of Israel was revolutionary. Being born into Israel was an opportunity, not a fulfillment. Being born a pagan was a disadvantage, but a pagan could attain eternal life and resurrection by 21 adopting the internalized constitution of the twofold Law."

3. The Pharisees were the popular party, having great influence over the common people. This is due in part, certainly, to the appeal of their philosophy, but perhaps also to their style of leadership. Josephus characterizes them as friendly and compassionate, concerned for the general welfare of the community, and moderate in their standard of living. On the other hand, the Sadducees belonged almost exclusively to the upper classes, with the haughty demeanor and rudeness towards the common man so characteristic of aristocracies. They were only tolerated by the masses, he tells us, because in matters of public religious concern they carried out the prescriptions of the Pharisees.

The centrality of the individual is further affirmed in the humanitarian orientation of the Pharisees.

How did they admonish the witnesses in capital cases? They brought them in and admonished them saying 'Perchance ye will say what is but supposition or hearsay or at secondhand, or we heard it from a man that was trustworthy. Or perchance ye do not know that we shall prove you by examination and inquiry? Know ye, moreover, that capital cases are not as non-capital cases: in non-capital cases a man may pay money and so make atonement, but in capital cases the witness is answerable for the blood of him that is wrongfully condemned and the blood of his posterity that should have been born to him to the end of the world....'

Therefore but a single man was created in the world, to teach that if any man has caused a single soul to perish from Israel Scripture imputes it to him as though he had caused a whole world to perish; and if any man saves alive a single soul from Israel Scripture imputes it to him as though he had saved alive a whole world. Again but a single man was created for the sake of peace among mankind, that none should say to his fellow, 'My father was greater than thy father'; also that the heretics should not say, 'There are many ruling powers in heaven.' Again but a single man was created to proclaim the

the greatness of the Holy One, blessed is he; for man stamps many coins with the one seal and they are all like one another; but the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed is he, has stamped every man with the seal of the first man, yet not one of them is like his fellow. Therefore every one must say, 'For my sake was the world created.'²²

The duty of sharing with others was inculcated by our legislator in other matters. We must furnish fire, water, food to all who ask for them, point out the road, not leave a corpse unburied, show consideration even to declared enemies. He does not allow us to burn up their country or to cut down their fruit trees, and forbids even the spoiling of fallen combatants; he has taken measures to prevent outrage to prisoners of war, especially women. So through a lesson has he given us in gentleness and humanity that he does not overlook even the brute beasts, authorizing their use only in accordance with the Law, and forbidding all other employment of them. Creatures which take refuge in our houses like suppliants we are forbidden to kill. He would not suffer us to take the parent birds with their young, and bade us even in an enemy's country to spare and not to kill the beasts employed in labour. Thus, in every particular, he had an eye to mercy, using the laws I have mentioned to enforce the lesson, and drawing up for transgressors other penal laws admitting of no excuse.²³

These are things for which no measure is prescribed: Peah, First fruits, the Festal Offering, deeds of lovingkindness and the study of the Law. These are things whose fruits a man enjoys in this world while the capital is laid up for him in the world to come: honouring father and mother, deeds of lovingkindness, making peace between a man and his fellow; and the study of the Law is equal to them all.²⁴

The consideration given by our legislator to the equitable treatment of aliens also merits attention. It will be seen that he took the best of all possible measures at once to secure our own customs from corruption, and to throw them open ungrudgingly to any who elect to share them. To all who desire to come and live under the same laws with us, he gives a gracious welcome, holding that it is not family ties alone which constitute relationship, but agreement in the principles of conduct. On the other hand, it was not his pleasure that casual visitors should be admitted to the intimacies of our daily life.²⁵

How do the Pharisees insure the welfare of the individual?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

First and foremost, the life of the individual is protected through very exacting laws. Before a man could be condemned for a capital offence, there had to be two witnesses to his crime. The witnesses were to be examined very carefully. Furthermore perjury itself was a capital crime, which acted as a strong deterrent to executing a man on false testimony. The Pharisees drew a great moral lesson from the creation story which spoke to them of the preciousness of each human life. The implications of this lesson extend to all manner of human interaction.

The Pharisees called upon all people to extend their mercy and charity to all who might be in need, whether Jew or gentile, man or beast. Compassion for present miseries, as well as anticipation of future distress, were necessary for the over-all well-being of civilization. There are no limits to which a man might go in performing "deeds of lovingkindness," and such a man's rewards are stored up for the world to come.

The Pharisees thus shifted the center of concern away from the Temple cult to social awareness and responsibility.

The Pharisees also took a position on the separation between affairs of government and religion.

When Herod had got the rule of all Judea into his hands, he showed special favour to those of the city's populace who had been on his side while he was still a commoner, but those who chose the side of his opponents he harried and punished without ceasing for a single day. Especially honoured by him were Polion the Pharisee and his disciple Samaias, for during the siege of Jerusalem, these men had advised the citizens to admit Herod, and for this they received their reward.²⁶

Quirinius, A Roman senator who had proceeded through all the magistracies to the consulship and a man who was extremely distinguished in other respects, arrived in Syria, dispatched by Caesar to be governor of the nation and to make an assessment of their property.... Although the Jews were at first shocked to hear of the registration of property, they gradually condescended, yielding to the arguments of the high priest Joazar, the son of Boethus, to go no further in opposition. So those who were convinced by him declared, without shilly-shallying, the value of their property. But a certain Judas, A Gaulanite, from a city named Gamala, who had enlisted the aid of Saddok, a Pharisee, threw himself into the cause of rebellion. They said that the assessment carried with it a status amounting to downright slavery, no less, and appealed to the nation to make a bid for independence. They urged that in case of success the Jews would have laid the foundation of prosperity, while if they failed to obtain any such boon, they would win honour and renown for their lofty aim; and that Heaven would be their zealous helper to no lesser end than the furthering of their enterprise until it succeeded-- all the more if with high devotion in their hearts they stood firm and did not shrink from the bloodshed that might be necessary. Since the populace, when they heard their appeals, responded gladly, the plot to strike boldly made serious progress; and so these men sowed the seed of every kind of misery, which so afflicted the nation that words are inadequate. When wars are set afoot that are bound to rage beyond control, and when friends are done away with who might have alleviated the suffering, when raids are made by great hordes of brigands and men of the highest standing are assassinated, it is supposed to be the common welfare that is upheld but the truth is that in such cases the motive is private gain. They sowed the seed from which sprang strife between factions and the slaughter of fellow citizens.... In this case certainly, Judas and Saddok started among us an intrusive fourth school of philosophy; and when they had won an abundance of devotees, they filled the body politic immediately with tumult, also planting the seeds of those troubles which subsequently overtook it, all because of the novelty of this hitherto unknown philosophy that I shall now describe. My reason for giving this brief account of it is chiefly that the zeal which Judas and Saddok inspired in the younger element meant the ruin of our cause.²⁷

As for the fourth of the philosophies, Judas the Galilean set himself up as leader of it. This school agrees in all other respects with the opinions of the Pharisees, except that they have a passion for liberty that is almost unconquerable, since they are convinced that God alone is their leader and master. They think little of submitting to death in unusual forms and permitting vengeance to fall on kinsman and friends if only they may avoid calling any man master.²⁸

R. Hanina the Prefect of the Priests said: Pray for the peace of the ruling power, since but for fear of it men would have swallowed up each other alive.²⁹

What can you determine to be the Pharisaic point of view with regards to civil and religious authority?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

The Aaronides, after the Return from Babylonia, set up a Theocratic rule whereby they maintained control over all matters of concern to Israel, both political and religious. This power was particularly abused in the period immediately preceding the Hasmonean Revolt, when the priests even went so far as to buy political privileges from the Seleucid kings.

The Pharisees established what might be called the "doctrine of two realms" whereby they left matters of state up to the civil ruler as long as their religious system was secure. John Hyrcanus was a serious stumbling block because he did interfere with their system by abrogating their laws, so the Pharisees arose in violent revolt against him and Alexander Janneus. But once Salome Alexandra made peace with them, they could go about teaching the pathway to salvation, the halacha, secure in knowing that the government would not tamper with them again.

Our examples quoted here give further evidence of the doctrine of the two realms. Despite the fact that Herod was a tyrant, the Pharisees admitted him into Jerusalem and supported him against his enemies. Bad though he might be, he did not pose a threat to the Pharisaic system

of salvation. But when Quirinius arrived to take a survey, the majority of Pharisees reaffirmed their position, while some, led by Judas the Galilean, rejected this doctrine of the two realms. He formed a new group, which Josephus calls the "Fourth Philosophy," which proclaimed it a religious obligation to oppose Rome violently. They were similar to the Pharisees in every other respect except for the doctrine of the two realms. The rest of the Pharisees did not see the Roman census as a threat to their religious practices. Furthermore, they regarded Judas as a troublemaker who would bring disaster to the Jews.

The Pharisaic position is summed up in the final quote from Avot: one should pray for the civil authorities because they keep order in the realm. Along these lines the Pharisees could work out a modus vivendi with the Romans, after the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E., so as to maintain their institutions such as the synagogue and Beth Din. Rome could govern any way it wished as long as the Jews were free to teach and follow their system of salvation.

The Pharisees were also responsible for the creation of two new institutions in Jewish life, the Synagogue and the Beth Din system. The latter consisted of the Beth Din Ha-gadol which was a deliberative and legislative body, and smaller units spread throughout the country, serving as judicial bodies. Not a great deal is known about the origination of either of these, but the following passages may give some clues as to their history.

What are the Maamads? In that it is written, "Command the children of Israel and say unto them, my obligation, my food for my offerings made by fire, of a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season"-- how can a man's offering be offered while he does not stand by it? Therefore the First Prophets ordained twenty-four Courses, and for every Course, there was a Maamad in Jerusalem made up of priests, Levites and Israelites. When the time was come for a Course to go up, the priests and the Levites thereof went up to Jerusalem, and the Israelites that were of the selfsame Course came together unto their own cities to read the story of Creation, and the men of the Maamad fasted four days in the week, from the second until the fifth day; and they did not fast on the eve of the Sabbath, because of the honour due to the Sabbath, nor on the first day of the week, that they should not go forth from rest and pleasure to weariness and fasting, and so be like to die.

On the first day they read from "In the beginning..." to "Let there be a firmament;" and on the second day, from "Let there be a firmament...." to "Let the waters be gathered together;" and on the third day from "Let the waters be gathered together..." to "Let there be lights;" and on the fourth day, from "Let there be lights..." to "Let the water bring forth abundantly;" and on the fifth day, from "Let the waters bring forth abundantly..." to "Let the earth bring forth;" and on the sixth day, from "Let the earth bring forth..." to "And the heaven and earth were finished." If it was a long section it was read by two, and if a short section, by one, both at Morning Prayer and at the Additional Prayer; but at the Afternoon Prayer they came together and recited it by heart like they would recite the Shema. At the Afternoon Prayer on the eve of a Sabbath they did not come together, because of the honour due to the Sabbath.³⁰

R. Eleazar b. Azariah says: The additional Tefillah may be said only with the local congregation. But the Sages say: Either with the local congregation or without them. R. Judah says in his name: Wheresoever there is a local congregation the individual is exempt from saying the Additional Tefillah.³¹

But if the judges see not how to pronounce upon the matters set before them-- and with men such things oft befall-- let them send up the case entire to the holy city and let the high priest and the prophet and the council of elders (gerousia) meet and pronounce as they think fit.³²

When Judas and the people heard these messages, a great assembly was called to determine what they should do for their brethren who were in distress and were being attacked by enemies.³³

When Jonathan returned he convened the elders of the people and planned with them to build strongholds in Judea, to build the walls of Jerusalem still higher, and to erect a high barrier between the citadel and the city to separate it from the city, in order to isolate it so that its garrison could neither buy nor sell. So they gathered together to build up the city; part of the wall on the valley to the east had fallen, and he repaired the section called Chaphenatha.³⁴

Thus Herod, his son, has killed Ezekias and many of his men in violation of our Law, which forbids us to slay a man, even an evildoer, unless he has first been condemned by the Synhedrion to suffer this fate.³⁵

Jose ben Joezer says: On a Festival-day a man may not lay his hands on the offering before it is slaughtered. Jose ben Jonanan says: He may. Joshua b. Perahyan says: He may not; Nittai the Arbelite says: He may. Judah b. Tabbai says: he may not; Simeon b. Shetah says: He may. Shemaiah says: He may; Abtalion says: He may not. Hillel and Menahem did not differ, but Menahem went forth and Shammai entered in. Shammai says: He may not lay on his hands; Hillel says: He may. The former of each of these several pairs were Presidents, and the others were Fathers of the Court (Beth Din).³⁶

- a) Considering the first two passages, how might the Synagogue have come about?
- b) What might have been the origin of the Beth Din?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

1. The origin of the Synagogue may be connected with the practice of community participation in the Temple service. It was the obligation of all Jews to offer sacrifices, but, since they were scattered throughout Palestine and it was impossible for everyone to go to Jerusalem, they sent representatives. The year was divided into twenty-four periods, and each geographical grouping sent a delegation, or Maamad, to perform the sacrifice for them. In order that all citizens might be enabled to participate in some

matters of policy, such as how to defend the country. While it was undoubtedly composed of many more ordinary citizens, it was probably presided over by the High Priest.

Tractate Avot tells us that Simon the Just was one of the last of the Great Assembly. Avot goes on to mention several pairs of individuals, from Jose ben Joezer and Jose ben Johanan through Hillel and Shammai, who passed on the tradition of the Oral Law, and tractate Hagigah tells us that these pairs were the Presidents and Fathers (or vice presidents) respectively of the Beth Din. All of these individuals must have been Pharisees, since the Beth Din affirmed the twofold Law. Josephus mentions the Sanhedrin in his account of the life of Herod. It had the power to condemn or exonerate people accused of committing crimes. Sanhedrin was the Greek term for Beth Din after the year 70, when it became something else. Before 70 it was called a boule.

The Pharisees also shaped Hellenistic materials to build their novel form of Judaism. Impressed with the law-making process exemplified in the Greek cities' boule, or legislative body, they created the Beth Din haGadol (Great Legislature) as the lawmaking, law-transmitting and law-confirming body of the scholar class-- an institution with no biblical prototype, but one that does resemble the boule.³⁸

Finally, two questions might be posed in concluding our study of the Pharisees: When did they begin, and how did they get their name?

There are absolutely no records of the organization of this school of thought. One possible thesis which we might explore revolves around the

personage of Jose ben Joezer of Zeredah, mentioned in our last excerpt. He isn't quoted much in the Mishnah, but we do have the following statements.

Simeon the Just was of the remnants of the Great Synagogue. He used to say: By three things is the world sustained: by the Law, by the Temple-service, and by deeds of lovingkindness.

Antigonus of Soko received the Law from Simeon the Just. He used to say: Be not like slaves that minister to the master for the sake of receiving a bounty, but be like slaves that minister to the master not for the sake of receiving a bounty; and let the fear of Heaven be upon you.

Jose b. Joezer of Zeredah and Jose b. Johanan of Jerusalem received the Law from them. Jose b. Joezer of Zeredah said: Let thy house be a meeting-house for the Sages and sit amid the dust of their feet and drink in their words with thirst.³⁹

When Jose b. Joezer of Zeredah and Jose b. Johanan of Jerusalem died, the grape clusters ceased, as it is written, "There is no cluster to eat, my soul desireth the first-ripe fig."⁴⁰

R. Jose b. Joezer of Zeredah testified that the Ayil-locust is clean, and that the liquid that flows in the shambles in the Temple is not susceptible to uncleanness; and that he that touches a corpse becomes unclean. And they called him 'Jose the Permitter.'⁴¹

Who was Jose ben Joezer and how does he fit into our picture?

GUIDING COMMENTS:

Jose ben Joezer is one of the men responsible for transmitting the Law (which we know to include both the Written and Oral Law, according to the Mishnah). He is also one of the first "pairs" that are designated as leaders of the Beth Din HaGadol. Simon the Just, mentioned shortly before him, may have been one of the High Priests during the heyday of Aaronide rule, or it may refer to Simon the Hasmonean. Those mentioned after him, such as Simeon ben Shetah and Hillel and Shammai (see Mishnah Hagiga, 2.2), were definitely Phariesses. Jose

probably died around 160 B.C.E. on the eve of the Hasmonean revolt.

Another passage, from the tractate Sotah, identifies him as the last of the eshkolot, or "grape-clusters." This vague term was probably some honorific title, and is used here seemingly to differentiate him from the zugot, or "pairs," that follow him. Somehow, a transitional state is indicated here.

Jose is called "the Permitter" because of some lenient rulings he issued. Obviously he was engaged in some modification of laws by presenting a divergent view, a process which was alien to Aaronide-Sadducean principles.

In addition, he is credited with the statement, "Let thy house be a meeting-house for the Sages"... "Sages" (hakhamim) is a term frequently used in the Mishnah itself to refer to the scholars in the Mishnah, the promulgators of the Oral Law, i.e., the Pharisees. The idea of a "meeting-house" also conjures up images of scholarly academies based on the Greek model, for teaching and discussing the Oral Law, as well as prayer.

Jose was obviously among the first Pharisees.

Now, as to the name "Pharisee" much has been written. Our English word is derived, via Greek, from the Hebrew, perushim, which means "separatists." Why were they called "separatists"? There are several theories.

Solomon Zeitlin believes that the name stems from the period of the Return from Babylonia. He suggests that the followers of the High Priest Joshua, the Zadokites (hence Sadducees), nicknamed them such because they believed in a universal God as opposed to an ethnic God.

We have indeed seen that the Pharisees had much more universalistic tendencies than their predecessors, but we have no evidence for their existing at such an early date. Ben Sira, writing long after the Return says nothing of them or their institutions.

Louis Finkelstein, another noted Jewish scholar, believes it was not intended in any derogatory sense at all, but rather was a term they themselves coined. It denoted a society that banded together to observe the laws in all their strictness, to separate themselves from the am ha-aretz,
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the common people who did not fully observe the laws.

Those of this opinion rely upon the following passage from the Mishnah:

For Perushim the clothes of an Am-haaretz count as suffering midras-uncleanness; for them that eat Heave-offering (Priests) the clothes of the Perushim count as suffering midras-uncleanness; for them that eat of Hallowed Things the clothes of them that eat Heave-offering count as suffering midras-uncleanness; for them that occupy themselves with the Sin-offering water the clothes of them that eat of Hallowed things count as suffering midras-uncleanness.
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Are these perushim Pharisees? Certainly one very important source, Josephus, does not refer to meticulous concern for ritual purity, or hostility to the common people, or exclusiveness, in any of his definitions of the Pharisees. Indeed, he remarks that they were the friends of the masses.

The term perushim appears very few times in the Mishnah, and in some places it is very difficult to conceive of them as being the Pharisees we have been talking about. Perhaps this is a problem of language akin to the distinction we make between democrats and Democrats. One word refers to people who believe in certain general principles like equality, freedom, justice, etc. The other word refers to a particular political party that

takes a position on specific issues or problems. One can be a democrat without being a Democrat, and presumably one might be a Democrat while not being a democrat. Confusing, maybe, but very pertinent to our investigation, because it is highly doubtful that these perushim are in fact the Pharisees. Let's look at another passage, which follows immediately after one we read in the introduction.

The Sadducees say, We cry out against you, O ye Pharisees, for ye declare clean an unbroken stream of liquid. The Pharisees say, We cry out against you, O ye Sadducees, for ye declare clean a channel of water that flows from a burial ground. The Sadducees say, We cry out against you, O ye Pharisees, for ye say, 'If my ox or my ass have done an injury they are culpable, but if my bondman or my bondwoman have done an injury they are not culpable'-- if, in the case of my ox or my ass (about which no commandments are laid upon me) I am responsible for the injury that they do, how much more in the case of my bondman or my bondwoman (about whom certain commandments are laid upon me) must I be responsible for the injury that they do! They said to them, No!-- as ye argue concerning my ox or my ass (which have no understanding) would ye likewise argue concerning my bondman or my bondwoman which have understanding?--for if I provoke him to anger he may go and set fire to another's stack of corn, and it is I that must make restitution!⁴⁵

This passage is typical of most of the instances where we find the term perushim used: in debate with the Sadducees. The Sadducees oppose the Pharisees, and the Pharisees oppose the Sadducees. They are differentiated on the basis of their positions as to what the Law is, just as we have found in the course of our study. These perushim are not pictured as confronting the am ha-aretz, but rather the Sadducees.

The term perushim really means Pharisees only when it appears in juxtaposition to the Sadducees. Where we might normally expect to find the Pharisees, namely in the Mishnah, where the Oral Law is set forth, we have other terms: the hakhamim (sages), the zugot (pairs), the soferim (scribes),

or individual scholars. Sometimes laws are even given anonymously. The Oral Law is only given in the name of the Pharisees when they are arguing with the Sadducees. In these types of passages they are never contrasted with the am ha-aretz, the common people.

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In other words, "Pharisee" was not a term they applied to themselves. Rather, it was a derogatory term used by the Sadducees who opposed the revolutionary doctrines of the Pharisees and therefore charged them with being perushim, i.e., separatists or heretics.

In summation, we can conclude that the Pharisees were revolutionaries who unseated the powerful priestly authorities. They were champions of the twofold Law, Written and Oral, which provided for ongoing "revelation," a principle for the continuous creation of laws to meet the needs of modern living. They gave new importance to the individual, allowing him to enter into a direct relationship with God, and giving him security in knowing that God cared for him personally. They innovated, creating new institutions to minister to the needs of their new brand of Judaism, the synagogue and the Beth Din, as well as a new hope for personal salvation, resurrection and the World to Come. They released Judaism from its ties to land and Temple making it a viable religion for the Diaspora. They probably began their activities in conjunction with the Hasmonean revolt and offered a viable response to the spreading influence of Hellenistic civilization. And they were called "Pharisees" by the Sadducees because they had "separated" themselves from the once-dominant form of Judaism, Aaronidism. They had to: they had created a new Judaism!

FOOTNOTES

Chapter 6

1. Mishnah, Berachot, 1.1-2.
2. Josephus, Antiquities, IV, 212-213.
3. Mishnah, Tamid, 5.1.
4. Mishnah, Berachot, 4.1,3.
5. See Rivkin, "Pharisaism and the Crisis of the Individual in the Greco-Roman World," p. 21.
6. See Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, pp. 57-58.
7. Ibid., p. 87.
8. Josephus, Against Apion, II, 173-181.
9. Ibid., 228-235.
10. Ibid., 271-273.
11. Ibid., 277-280.
12. Josephus, The Life, 7-12.
13. Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, p. 82.
14. Ibid., p. 67-68.
15. Josephus, Antiquities, XVIII, 11-17.
16. Josephus, The Jewish War II, 162-166.
17. Josephus, Against Apion, II, 217-219.
18. Josephus, The Jewish War, III, 370-376.
19. Mishnah, Sanhedrin, 10.1.
20. See Rivkin, op.cit., p. 85.
21. Ibid., p. 54
22. Mishnah, Sanhedrin, 4.5.
23. Josephus, Against Apion, II, 211-214.
24. Mishnah, Peah, 1.1.
25. Josephus, op. cit., 209-210.

26. Josephus, Antiquities, XV, 2-3.
27. Ibid., XVIII, 1-10.
28. Ibid., 23-24.
29. Mishnah, Avot, 3.2.
30. Mishnah, Ta'anit, 4.2-3.
31. Mishnah, Berachot, 4.7.
32. Josephus, Antiquities, IV, 218.
33. I Maccabees, 5:16.
34. Ibid., 12:35-37.
35. Josephus, Antiquities, XIV, 167.
36. Mishnah, Hagigah, 2.2.
37. Rivkin, The Shaping of Jewish History, p. 83.
38. Ibid., p. 67.
39. Mishnah, Avot 1.2-4.
40. Mishnah, Sotah, 9.9.
41. Mishnah, Eduyot, 8.4.
42. See Solomon Zeitlin, The Rise and Fall of the Judean State, Vol. I. pp. 10-12.
43. See Louis Finkelstein, The Pharisees, Vol. I. p. 76.
44. Mishnah, Hagiga, 2.7.
45. Mishnah, Yadayim, 4.7.
46. See Rivkin, The Dynamics of Jewish History, p. 40.

For a detailed analysis of the several references to the perushim and the support of these conclusions, see Rivkin, Defining the Pharisees: The Tannaitic Sources.

Chapter 7

A MODEL FOR PROBLEM-SOLVING

When we began this book, our motivation for studying the Pharisees was to learn something about the process of change. We sought a model for dealing with the problems of leading a meaningful Jewish life. We wanted to know more about the potentialities of creative religious expression open to us and capitalized upon by those great Jewish spirits of long ago.

Our problems are not new, since they are analogous to problems experienced in a wide variety of ways in the past. Judaism has a long history of grappling with change and of problem-solving, and by looking at one such solution in depth, as we have done, we have access to valuable know-how upon which to build. The Pharisees revolutionized Jewish life and ideology in their time, just as some of you may wish to do today. The specific areas of concern may have changed, but the underlying principles remain the same. Change is inevitable; man should never be satisfied for long with stagnation. The question is, how will we deal with change? How will we use it for our best advantage? We used the Pharisees for our model, and now we must evaluate our findings.

After a careful review of the preceding chapters, write down what you think you've gained from your encounter with the Pharisees. What principles can you find in their history that are applicable to our modern situation? What were their techniques of problem-solving and how did they cope with change? How do you foresee Judaism changing in the future? Give yourself a lot of time for these questions, think them through seriously, and answer them as honestly as you can.

GUIDING COMMENTS:

It is suggested that each student be given the opportunity to relate his or her conclusions to the group. A full discussion by all members of the class is to be encouraged. The comments below may be used freely as a summary after the students have expressed themselves.

For convenience, we might divide our summary into two areas: authority and service (what the Pharisees did for themselves and what they did for others). Of course, the two are interrelated, for in undercutting the previous authority, they inevitably gave to the people new possibilities for involvement, while in serving their fellow men they enhanced their own authority.

The authority of the old order was deeply entrenched. It was safeguarded by the Pentateuch which endorsed the Aaronide priestly Temple cult. It was fortified by the wealth of the upper-classes. It was protected by the might of the ruling powers. Yet, despite all these advantages, it was destined to crumble because it didn't continue to meet the needs of the people.

The Pharisees were able to understand the dynamics of authority and so succeeded in toppling that old order. In order to unseat the Sadducees, the Pharisees needed to alter their source of authority: the Law. Of course, they could not simply throw it out, or even rework its contents. The Written Law was sacred. Furthermore, the Pharisees believed in one God and in revelation. What they were able to do, however, was to create a new body of laws, the Oral Law, for which they provided an equally impressive pedigree. Thus our first lesson in the

dynamics of change is to find the source of authority and to modify it to fit the desired specifications.

The Oral Law was, however, a different kind of Law. Not only did it employ new modes (which were particularly suited to their society) but it contained a new principle: ongoing revelation. God had not, as the Written Law presumes, given a body of immutable laws for all times, but rather he gave authority to the leaders in every age to interpret the laws and innovate laws to meet the challenges of changing circumstances. The Written Law was closed, while the Oral Law was open-ended. Our second lesson, then, is that the source of authority must contain an element of flexibility if change is to be dealt with effectively without loss of the authority system.

The authority of the Pharisees was wielded by a scholar class made up of highly learned persons. This, too, was new, for the priests had established an hereditary rule with no guarantees of intellectual quality. The Pharisees insisted on the use of reason in governing the affairs of men. They appealed to man's highest potentials as a thinking being. (The Pentateuch and the other Aaronide texts, of course, are not totally irrational, but they do rely on reasoning which was highly vulnerable to rational criticism.) A third lesson we might learn is that a system of authority must be able to meet the highest standards set by a given society. For the Pharisees it was logic; for another age it could be something else, like emotion or genealogy.

Let us not overlook, either, the greater opportunities opened to gifted individuals by the Pharisees. Scholars were drawn from all

walks of life and achieved greatness on the basis of ability, not birth or wealth or social standing. The Sadducees were an aristocracy. The Pharisees had support from the masses because of the democratization which they initiated. This leads us to another lesson: authority must be confirmed by the majority of people as well as by any appeal to outside coercion, and the masses are more apt to endorse that system which best incorporates all the people on an equal footing.

In achieving a transfer of authority, the Pharisees also shifted the base of operations. They created the Synagogue, the Beth Din, new holidays, new customs and ceremonies. They played down the old institutions: the Temple and the sacrificial cult. They replaced institutions of grandeur and pagentry with ones that ministered to people's needs where they were. They demonstrated a concern for people in offering them hope and reassurance. A corollary to our previous lesson, then, is that to gain popular support, the authoritative system must serve the people, not merely those in power.

The Pharisees limited the scope of their authority through the doctrine of the two realms. They were satisfied to stay out of the political arena as long as their religious principles remained unchallenged by the State. They had realized that their energies could be most effective concentrated on one sphere of influence, rather than being diffused over a number of spheres. A sixth lesson we should learn from the Pharisees is that to be effective, authority must be directed towards a limited goal and be sufficiently realistic so that survival is possible.

Though the Pharisees adapted many ideas that had come to them from

the Hellenistic world, they were not Hellenizers; they did not abandon Judaism in order to participate in the modern world. While changing Judaism radically, they made sure it was still Judaism. This they accomplished by remaining loyal to the one God of Israel, by calling upon God as the ultimate authority to solve problems.

What exactly the term "God" has meant through the ages is a complicated issue, too broad for us to deal with within the scope of this inquiry. Jewish theology would be the subject for a different kind of course. Suffice it to say that each age has formulated its own God-concept, so that differing concepts of God may be simultaneously held by different groupings of Jews. Yet for all forms of Judaism, the term "God" has been called upon as the principle of unity which brings all diversity under a single sovereignty. This principle has provided the continuity between different religious systems which identify themselves as Judaism.

The Pharisees, in creating the Oral Law, did not appeal to a different God from the one who was credited with the Written Law: they appealed to the same authority, the same God. Thus we learn further from the Pharisaic model that, no matter how revolutionary the changes may be, no matter how foreign the ideas may be, they must ultimately appeal to the principle of unity in order to still be considered Judaism.

The other ingredient essential for creating change is that which I have termed "service." Any religious system must concern itself not only with establishing its authority, but also with offering the community it leads exciting and inspiring goals. This the Pharisees did

when they demonstrated such intense concern for the individual and his yearning for eternal life.

The Pharisees brought the individual closer to God by removing the intermediation of the priests and by setting up places of worship, synagogues, wherever the people were living. They assured him, in turn, that God cared for him personally and was ready to offer him eternal rewards. This, of course, won the Pharisees wide support from the people, but it also served the people well; it met their basic needs better than the previous system. Our next lesson, then, is that to serve the people best, a religious system must endeavor to bring its message down to the most personal level: the individual. The more the individual is involved, the more responsive he will be.

Doing for others was also part of the Pharisaic program. They emphasized social responsibility. They stipulated a broad range of obligations to society incumbent upon the individual, and not only to Jewish society, but the world in general. They recognized that the peace and welfare of each individual is inextricably bound up with everyone else's, and that moral principles are universally applicable. The unity principle does not govern Israel alone; it unifies the world. This lesson teaches us that, loyal to Judaism as we may be, we are part of a larger community with which we must establish a dynamic relationship.

For all their concern for the individual, however, the Pharisees did not isolate him from the community, nor, in the other extreme, enlarge the community so universally as to dilute its value. They fostered tight-knit community bonds. The synagogue was the focal point

for the community. More than just a house of prayer, it was also a house of study and a community assembly. Each community had scholars for the people to turn to for guidance. Members of the community had special responsibility to care for the welfare of their own. Hence we learn that, because people need each other, a religion must serve an organic community, in which individuals are brought together for common purposes.

The Pharisee gave impetus to a new understanding of the Law, as we have pointed out many times. It was no longer fixed and closed, but ongoing and open. In short it was flexible. Flexibility is also an important need for man. To serve man better, the Pharisees sought to complement his flexibility with the flexibility of laws. If change is inevitable in the human sphere, it must be built into the religious sphere. Flexibility means freedom from the rigid confines of the absolutism of the old order, and the Pharisees paved the way for considerable freedom for the individual. It was a far cry from the freedom we now enjoy, and there were certainly many stringencies involved, but relative to the system it replaced, Pharisaism removed many chains from its adherents. In the same way, Reform Judaism gave further freedom to the individual in the nineteenth century. We have come to expect ever-increasing levels of freedom, so maybe the regimen of Pharisaic life doesn't look so rosy. Yet, the Pharisees have taught us that as the individual becomes more and more the center of concern, and as he is given more and more responsibility, he must also be granted more freedom to determine his own halakhah, his own pathway.

The problem-solving paradigm, it should be noted, involves three

elements: preservation, adaptation, and creative innovation. That is, those ideas or customs which are still meaningful and relevant must be preserved for the sake of continuity. Ideas which have been developed by neighboring societies, and which may be seen as useful in furthering parallel goals, may be adapted and incorporated into another system. With the advance of civilization, completely new ideas or institutions have to be innovated to fill gaps for which there are no precedents. The mix of these three elements will depend upon the gravity of the problem to be solved.

These conclusions are not meant to be exhaustive, for we would hope the students will discover their own insights into the dynamics of change and problem-solving exemplified by the Pharisees. As to their application to contemporary Judaism, there is no end to the possibilities the student might discover. We would merely like to suggest the following issues as starting points for discussion:

1. The Synagogue: its organization, functions, and scope of activities.
 - a. Does the Synagogue serve the needs of all its members and how should it?
 - b. What authority does its leadership have and is it exercised in the best interests of the congregation?
 - c. What is the role of the rabbi and how could it change?
2. Worship
 - a. Does the prayerbook, any prayerbook, serve the needs of all the congregants?

- b. Are the present holidays still meaningful, or should there be new ones or none at all?
- c. What role does the individual play in the worship situation, and what should worship in general do for him?

3. Community

- a. Is there a strong community bond among Jews?
- b. Are there strong bonds between Jews and non-Jews in the larger community?
- c. Do the institutions of the Jewish community serve its needs?
- d. What should be the nature of the Jewish community?

4. Reform Judaism

- a. Do we have need for a new Platform or Guiding Principles for Reform Judaism, or any at all?
- b. What should be the relationship between Reform Judaism and other Jewish groups?
- c. What is Reform Judaism?
- d. Who is a Jew?

5. Ideology

- a. What should be the Ten Commandments?
- b. Does Judaism give an adequate answer for the workings of the world, and the role human will plays in man's destiny?
- c. What should be our attitude towards Israel?
- d. Are there absolute moral standards which must be adhered to by all?
- e. What sanctity does the Twofold Law have now?

This brings us to the end of our study of the Pharisees. Hopefully you have learned on two levels: understanding a particular historical period and a particular religious system, and understanding the dynamics of change in society. The technique of our investigation can be employed to study any period of history, any movement which has left records of their doings. The insights into change should prove valuable throughout your lives as you grapple with the constant problems of growth within Judaism. Do not think that you are alone in your struggle to find new meaning for Jewish identity. Know that others have wrestled with such problems before and that they are able to guide you with their wisdom. The challenge of creative Jewish life in the years ahead is yours, though it may be difficult. But as Rabbi Tarfon, a distinguished heir of the Pharisees, said (in Avot, 2:16), "It is not your part to finish the task, yet you are not free to desist from it."

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