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RABBI YOCHANAN AND HIS HOMILIES

(A DIGEST)

- Erwin L. Herman

Rabbi Yochanan bar Nappacha was physically a large man whose ^{imposing} ~~pretentious~~ appearance attracted immediate attention. He possessed unusual beauty, a brilliant mind and a strong pleasant voice, a combination that thrust him into communal leadership. Although he was conscious of his own merit, Rabbi Yochanan was deeply humble, constantly aware of his infinitesimally small role in God's great universe. His faith in the Almighty was unshakable, but he subjected it constantly to his own penetrating inspection. As a result, the religion he professed and preached was belief predicated on logic and founded on trust. It was a religion that went far beyond principles for it emphasized practice and application. Rabbi Yochanan recognized the duties he had to fulfill during his lifetime and he acted in accordance with them in his relations with man as with God. He firmly believed that all creatures were equal in the sight of God, so much the more so must they be in man's view. He despised those who practiced social inequality, and relished social protocol that brought respect to persons who deserved respect. Rabbi Yochanan was a keen student of psychology and applied this ability to his understanding of Biblical personages as well as of the people with whom he associated. He judged the actions of a person in light of that one's total personality; if there was a noticeable discrepancy, he weighed the evidence carefully to determine the truth. He was a strong believer in the in-

fluence of practice and habit, and credited environment with much of the shaping of the personality. And he understood the workings of a guilty conscience.

Rabbi Yochanan esteemed wisdom highly, and encouraged his listeners to face problems squarely, seeking to understand them and so answer them. Prayer and ritual practice were essential components of his religion, but he could not stand the haranguing that took place in the academies over petty details. To avoid these, he suggested that we look to nature for a proper pattern of behavior. The quality of leadership that he possessed he tried to impart to others; he preached that the Lord will help those who intimate that they are willing to make an attempt to help themselves. Rabbi Yochanan was candid in his dealings with his followers and he preached directly to them. As a teacher, he was kind and tolerant and understanding, beloved in his generation. As a preacher, he was outstanding not only in his own time, but for all time. Alert and imaginative, sensitive and resourceful, he had contributed a treasury of homilies as an inheritance for all generations.

With grateful thanks to Mr. (Mrs.)
RABBI YOCHANAN BAR NAPPACHA
and his family, Hebrew Union College
as his loyal and devoted
disciple in the preparation of
this book.
HIS HOMILIES

Hebrew Union College

Erwin L.^{ee} Herman
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER ONE. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.....	2
CHAPTER TWO. RABBI YOCHANAN, THE HOMILIST.....	5
CHAPTER THREE. ^{Hin} GOD CONCEPTION <i>of God</i>	17
CHAPTER FOUR. ^{Hin} FORN CONCEPTION <i>of God</i>	23
CHAPTER FIVE. ISRAEL AND THE COVENANT.....	28
CHAPTER SIX. IMMORTALITY AND THE WORLD TO COME.....	31
CHAPTER SEVEN. PALESTINE: EXILE AND RETURN.....	33
CHAPTER EIGHT. RITUAL AND PRAYER.....	35
CHAPTER NINE. ^{ethical} THE WAY OF LIFE.....	39
CHAPTER TEN. CONCLUSION.....	42
NOTES AND REFERENCES.....	44

Legend is both help and hindrance to the student of history. While it perpetuates personalities, it clothes them in garments of half truths and whole truths, of exaggerations and realities, of desired traits and realized traits. The line of distinction that divides 'what was' from 'what might have been' is all but erased by the enthusiasm of the legend bearers. The task of one who would delineate personalities from legend is, therefore, made doubly difficult. Not only must he attempt to understand the subject of his investigations, but he may also endeavor to distill fact from fiction. This process of distillation, based almost totally on the subjective analyses of materials by the student, transposes the result of his labors from the category of science into the category of imaginative writing.

Rabbi Jochanan bar Nappacha, Palestinian ^mhora of the second generation, has become one of the many heroes of Jewish legend. His life, his studies, his personality, his achievements, his ideas - all these have been recorded and transmitted to us in the rabbinic writings. But what of them was chronicled with the pen of the historian and what of them stemmed from the imaginative faculty of the story teller? The author of this paper feels that he is unequipped to answer these questions. His purpose, therefore, is to attempt to define the personality of Rabbi Jochanan bar Nappacha based on statements made by Rabbi Jochanan, attributed to Rabbi Jochanan, and concerning Rabbi Jochanan as they are found in the Aggadic literature.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

In the field of rabbinic literature there are but sparse gleanings that tell of the life of Rabbi Jochanan bar Nappacha. (1.) What little has been recorded is a story of sadness. The father of Rabbi Jochanan died before the birth of his son; his mother died soon after. (2.) Left an orphan, he was raised by his grandfather, a man familiar with the academies of learning. Perched on the shoulder of his grandfather, the young Jochanan would listen in awe to the expositions of Rabbi Simeon ben Elazar. (3) But of even greater importance than these moments were the hours that he spent in the presence of Rabbi Jehudah Hanasi. Although he could not fully understand the words of this great teacher because of his extreme youth, Rabbi Jochanan nonetheless cherished the impressions he received from his lectures. (4) During the next several years Rabbi Yochanan became a student in the academies and his teachers were the leaders of his generation. (5) He must have been an apt pupil, for when Rabbi Chanina, one of his instructors, once saw a throng flocking to the school of Banna'ah to hear Rabbi Yochanan, he exclaimed: "Blessed be God that he has shown me the fruits of my life's work; for I taught him everything of Agada except Proverbs and Ecclesiastes". (6)

Whether due to a difference of opinion with this same Rabbi Chanina or not, Rabbi Yochanan moved from Sepphoris, his birthplace, and established his seat of learning at Tiberias. Because of the force of his personality and the depth of his wisdom, his Yeshiva became the center of Palestinian Jewry. (7)

The success that Rabbi Yochanan achieved in the realm of learning could not bring him complete happiness; his private life was filled with tragedy. He lived to see all ten⁽⁸⁾ of his sons die, while his only daughter was disappointed in love. Rabbi Yochanan bore the scars of these tragedies the rest of his life.⁽⁹⁾ It was reported that seldom, if ever, did he smile, and often he would burst into tears. A late Midrash tells that Rabbi Yochanan cried before his death.⁽¹⁰⁾ When one of his pupils asked why he was crying, he said that he feared that he might have to give account in the world to come for having no son. Rabbi Yochanan seemed to be castigating himself for this constantly. It was his habit to carry with him a bone or a tooth of one of his dead children⁽¹¹⁾ and so his grief never came to an end.⁽¹²⁾

Rabbi Yochanan was also a very poor man. He possessed but one piece of property and this he sold in order to better apply himself for his study of Torah. Chiya bar Abba, his pupil, chided him for not saving for his latter days and Rabbi Yochanan retorted: "Is it easier in your eyes that I have sold something that was created in six days than that I have purchased something that was given in forty days and forty nights?"⁽¹³⁾ When Resh Lakish, his dear friend and brother-in-law, prevented him from sustaining a loss in the sale of the property, Rabbi Yochanan chided him with the statement: "All the limbs are dependent upon the heart and the heart is dependent upon the purse."⁽¹⁴⁾ In expounding Eccl 9:16 "...the wisdom of the poor man is despised", Rabbi Yochanan may well have been considering his own person when he explained: "And was the wisdom of Rabbi Akiba, who was poor,

despised? What the verse means is the old man who sits and is
 impoverished of words..." (15)

Certain other personal traits^{are discernible} in the statements of Rabbi Yochanan. Not all of them are complimentary. Rabbi Yochanan was, for example, both petulant and egotistical. He became adamant when one of his colleagues would quote his words and omit his name. Just this led to his spat with Rabbi Elazar. To those who practiced the omission of an author's name Rabbi Yochanan applied the verse "Reb not the weak because he is weak, neither crush the poor in the gate". (16) He declared further: "May I be worthy that my words" (17) be spoken in the academies and the schools".

Rabbi Yochanan possessed great beauty about which numerous legends have been woven. His shortcomings lay in the manner in which he esteemed his own beauty. The story is told that Rabbi Yochanan visited Rabbi Elazar ben Padath who was ill. Rabbi Elazar was weeping and Rabbi Yochanan sought to know why. When Rabbi Elazar explained that he was in tears because he realized that such beauty as Rabbi Yochanan possessed would ~~not~~ rot in the ground, Rabbi Yochanan replied, "For this one should weep". (18)

II

RABBI YOCHANAN THE HOMILIST

Rabbi Yochanan enjoys the unusual reputation of being among the leading teachers of Agada as well as Halakha. He, himself, emphasized the importance of Agada and declared that in order to learn it one must have constant access to it, which requires that it be in book form. ⁽¹⁹⁾ For this reason he carried a book of Agada with him. ⁽²⁰⁾ Commenting on the basic qualification one needs possess in order to be an expounder of Torah, Rabbi Yochanan declared that whoever speaks words of Torah publicly and does not please his listener had best not speak them at all. ⁽²¹⁾

In order to understand fully why Rabbi Yochanan is considered a leader of Agadic teaching, it is necessary to investigate his homilies. A cursory examination of these should suffice to demonstrate the deftness and the versatility of this preacher as he handles the Biblical texts. ⁽²²⁾ Unfortunately, there are no extant sermons, as such, for us to analyze; there remain mere extracts, homiletical fragments, parables and analogies disconnected from their ^{con}texts.

We find that Rabbi Yochanan employed five different kinds of texts: Transparent, Obscure, Allegorical, Relative and Pictorial. ⁽²³⁾ To demonstrate this usage we may note the following:

TRANSPARENT TEXT: "The thought of which is capable of wider application! Deut 9:10 "...and on them was written according to all the word s which the Lord spoke to you in the mount...". Comment: Why is this written: It teaches us that the Holy One Blessed be He showed Moses all the fine points of the interpretation of the Biblical

Law and of the writers and what the writers in the future would originate. ⁽²⁴⁾ This explanation of an obviously clear text enabled Rabbi Yochanan to demonstrate the idea of Revelation.

Ps 95:7 "If, today, you would but hearken to His voice!" Comment: The Holy One said to Israel: Even though I have given a definite period for the time of the redemption to come; nonetheless, even if you repent but one day, I shall bring it, though it is not its time to come. ⁽²⁵⁾ Emphasizing the word "today", Rabbi Yochanan is able to teach the meaning of repentance with this otherwise simple text.

Isa 59:21 "...My words...shall not depart from out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed...from henceforth and forever". Comment: Whosoever is a Talmid Chacham and his son is and his son's son, the Torah will never leave his seed. ⁽²⁶⁾

OBSCURE TEXT: "...with difficulties of a linguistic, ethical, logical or theological character."

Ezek 41:22 "The altar...was of wood...and He said unto me: 'This is the table that is before the Lord'. Comment: As long as the Temple stood, the altar atoned for Israel; but now each man's table makes atonement for him. ⁽²⁷⁾ Apparently disturbed by the use of two different words to express the same object, Rabbi Yochanan derived this splendid homily.

Eccl 9:16 "...The poor man's wisdom is despised..." Comment: And was the wisdom of Rabbi Akiba, who was poor, despised? What this verse really means is the old man who sits and is impover-

(28)

ished of words. This verse if taken literally, could be proved false. Rabbi Yochanan draws upon experience to clear the misunderstanding that might occur with a literal translation.

Gen 24:1 "And Abraham was old, well stricken in age." (The Hebrew *וְהָיָה אֲבְרָהָם זָקֵן* is translated freely as "well stricken in age". Its literal meaning is "he arrived in days") Comment: What is *וְהָיָה*? It means that he arrived at the curtain of the door that separates this world from the world to come and he was able to peer through this curtain. (29)

ALLEGORICAL TEXT: "...in which the subject is substituted with another, suggestively similiar to it."

Jer 5:6 "Therefore a lion out of the forest doth slay them, a wolf of the deserts doth spoil them, a leopard watcheth over their cities, Everyone that goeth out thence is torn to pieces..." Comment: the lion is Babylonia, the wolf, Medea, the leopard, Greece; "everyone that goeth out", is Edom. (30)

Gen 29:2 "And he looked and behold, a well...and lo, three flocks of sheep lying there by it. For out of that well, they watered the flocks. And the stone upon the well's mouth was great." Comment: The well is Sinai; the "three flocks" - Priests, Levites and Israelites; "watered" - so from Sinai did we hear the Ten Commandments; "the great stone" - the Divine Spirit. (31)

Sos 8:8-10 "We have a little sister and she hath no breasts; what shall we do for our sister in the day that she be spoken for? If she be a wall, we will build upon her turrets of silver; and

if she be a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. I am a wall and my breasts like the towers thereof. Then was I in his eyes as one that found peace." Rabbi Jochanan interpreted: "We have a sister" - this, Sodom; "and she hath no breasts" - in that Sodom did not suckle Mitzvahs and good deeds. "What shall we do for our sister?" - on the day that the Court on High decrees that she be burned by fire. "If she be a wall, we would build upon her" - this is Israel. The Holy One said: if the Israelites established their deeds as a wall, we shall build upon it and we shall save them. "If she be a door" - but if they cast off these deeds like a door, "we shall enclose her with a cedar board" - of what form will it be: just as this one (the door) will not stand for more than an hour, ~~sh~~ shall I not be established above Israel for more than one hour. She said, "I am a wall" - Israel said to God: "Master of the world! I am a wall." - we shall erect Mitzvahs and good deeds as a wall. "And my breasts are as towers." - that in the future we shall establish bands and bands of righteous men like ourselves in Your world. "Then was I in his eyes as one that found peace." - Why: since all the nations in the world accosted Israel and said to them: If it is so, then why did He exile you from His land, and why did He destroy His Temple? And then Israel would answer them: we are like a princess that went to enjoy the first festival after marriage at her father's house, but who finally would return to her own home in peace. (32)

RELATIVE TEXT: "whose significance is manifest only when viewed in relation to another verse."

Rabbi Jochanan asked: "hy is the chapter on Sotah (wife's suspected

of adultery) in Num 5:11ff so near the chapter about the tithes and fiftieths (given for sin) in Num 5:5ff? To teach us that whoever has tithes and fiftieths and does not give them to the priest, in the end he will be compelled to give them to the priest because of his wife, (33)

Deut 20:19 "...for is the tree of the field man..." can be understood only in connection with that which preceded it in the same verse: "...though mayest eat them, but thou shalt not cut them down..." and with that which follows in the next verse: "...only the trees that...are not for food, them thou mayest destroy and cut down...". Comment: if a scholar is respectable, from him "you may eat", you must not destroy him. But if he is not respectable, you must destroy him and cut him down. (34)

PICTORIAL TEXT: "in which a word or phrase is traced in vivid colors by the preacher."

Prov 27:18 "Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof."

Comment: What are the words of the Torah compared to a fig-tree? Whenever and while a man uses the fig-tree, he finds figs on it. So it is with the Torah: whenever a man thinks about the words of the Torah he finds in them good reason. (35)

Jer 11:16 "The Lord called they name a leafy olive tree..."

Comment: why is Israel compared to an olive? Just as the olive gives its oil only when it has been pressed, so Israel does not become better and improved until it has been punished. (36)

Our intention in citing these examples is to demonstrate the versatility of approach Rabbi Nachman used in his endeavor to teach from Scriptures. But he was not content with approaches

alone. He embellished^h his discourses with clever introductions and elucidating illustrations. In preaching on the text, (Gen 1:14) "Let there be lights", Rabbi Yochanan began by introducing his sermon with Ps 104:19 "Who appointed the moon for the seasons", saying: Only the circle of the sun was created to give light. If so why was the moon created? For the seasons, in order to sanctify by its calculations the New Moons and the New Year. (37) From the springboard of this introduction, Rabbi Yochanan entered into a discussion of his original text.

A further example of his using an introductory verse taken from the Haglographa, but in this instance used to explain another passage from these same Writings, is this: in introducing a chapter from the Book of Esther, Rabbi Yochanan began with the verse (Ps 98:3) "He hath remembered His Mercy and His Faithfulness towards the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God". When did all the earth see the salvation of the Lord? During the days of Mordecai and Esther. (38)

As deftly as he manipulated a text, so brilliantly ~~xxxx~~ did Rabbi Yochanan create unforgettable parables and legends to illuminate his ideas. Our literature abounds with illustrations attributed to him. The following examples give a fairly representative demonstration of the rabbi's keen imagination and of his sensitive response to Scriptures.

(39)

Example

Isa 1:23 "Neither does the cause of the widow come before them." Originally a man would go up to Jerusalem for judgement. The judge would tell him to do certain labors to pay for the expenses of trial; but even after doing them, the man would go away disappointed.

The widow who would approach this man would ask: what was the outcome of your case? He would reply that even though he had paid all the expenses, still he lost his case. Then the widow would say: if he who is a man received no satisfaction, then I who am but a woman will certainly not receive satisfaction. (40)

ANALOGY

Ex 3:2 "...And he looked and, behold, the bush burned..." Just as they placed the bush as a fence around the garden, so is Israel a fence, a restraint, against transgression for the World. (41)

PROVERB

Abel was stronger than Cain, for Scripture uses the word (Gen 4:8) only to show that Abel delivered himself up to Cain. Abel said to him: there are but two of us in the world; what are you going to tell father? He had pity on him, but Cain got up immediately and slew him. Therefore, we have the proverb: "When thou hast done good to an evil person, though hast done evil to thyself". (42)

PARABLE

Ps 36:10 "For with thee is the fountain of life; in thy light do we see light." Rabbi Yochanan likens this to one who walks upon the way in the falling shadows of the evening sun. Another comes out, lights a candle for him, then extinguishes it. A second person comes along and repeats this performance. The walking one then declares: from now on I shall wait for the light of the morning. Just so does Israel say to the Holy One, Blessed be He: Master of all worlds, we made a light for you in the days of Moses and it was extinguished; ten lights in the days of Solomon, and they were extinguished. From now on we shall wait only for thy light. (43)

There is a parable about a king who desired to take for himself a woman of good and noble descent, so he sent a messenger to her to tell her. She said: I am not even worthy of being his hand-maid, yet I would like to hear it from him. When the servant returned to the king, he was smiling, but his musings were not heard by the king. The king who was quite bright, said: the messenger is smiling, so it seems as though she was receptive towards me. I cannot hear his musings, so she must have said: I want to hear it from his mouth. Just so is Israel a daughter of good lineage, while Moses is the messenger. The Holy One is the king. It was at that time that Moses brought the words of the people before the Lord. And then what does Scripture teach: that Moses told the words of the people to the Lord? No, for it says in Ex 19:9 "The Lord said, Lo I come to thee in a thick cloud that the people may hear when I speak with thee." Then it says, "Moses told the words of the people to God". (44)

It is like a King who had two chiefs of guard, one of whom was in command in the daytime, while the other was in charge at night. They used to quarrell with one another, each claiming that he ruled by day. The king called to the first one and said: Your bounds of duty shall be the day. And to the second he said, your bounds of duty shall be the night. Thus, (Gen 1:4,5), "God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light, day, and the darkness, he called night." (45)

LEGEND

At the time that Joseph took Benjamin and said to his brothers: the man in whose possession the goblet is found shall be my slave, Judah addressed him: you have taken Benjamin and he is peace in

his father's house. Immediately Judah became angry and cried out aloud, and his voice traveled four hundred districts until Chushim, the son of Dan heard it; and he leaped from the Land of Canaan, came to the side of Judah and together they cried out until the land of Egypt begged for them to stop. Concerning them it is written in Job 4:10, "the lion roareth and the fierce lion howleth." "The lion roareth" - that is Judah, (compare ~~of~~, Gen 49:9); "The fierce lion howleth" - that is Chushim, son of Dan, (compare Deut 33:22).⁽⁴⁶⁾

Ex 12:2, "This month shall be unto you as the beginning of months." The Holy One Blessed be He wrapped himself in the fringed Talith and placed Moses on one side and Aaron on the other. He called to Gabriel and Michael and had them act as announcers of the New Moon, saying to them: ^Whow do you see the moon? Before or behind the sun? North or South? How high is it? Then He said to them, "Just as you see it, so shall My children below determine the fullness of the year, with an elder, with witnesses, and with fringed talith."⁽⁴⁷⁾

How might that be necessary

These, then, are the basic techniques that Rabbi Yochanan employed in producing his magnificent homilies. Yet even to these he added more. He searched each word and investigated every letter of Scripture, and this analysis gave him new material with which to work in developing the meaning of Scriptures. For example, the unusual use of a letter in place of the common usage led him to speculate that the nations of the world are unable to enjoy "good" in its fullest sense.⁽⁴⁸⁾ An unnecessary letter, He, caused him to reason that it found its way into the word $\pi\tau\alpha\chi$ (Ex 3:3) to teach that Moses took five steps, five being the numerical equivalent of the letter.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Rabbi Yochanan enjoyed employing

numerical calculations as a means of unlocking the closed door of Scriptures. The Jews, he states, were punished with "Lamentations" because they transgressed the thirty-six prohibitions in the Torah that are punishable by excommunication. The Hebrew word for "Lamentation", אֲנָחָה is numerically equal to thirty-six. (50)

Furthermore, since Israel transgressed the conditions of Sinai, "she is become tributary", (Lam 1:1). In this instance Rabbi Yochanan compares the numerical value of אֲנָחָה "tributary" to that of סִינַי "Sinai" to arrive at his teaching. (51)

Whereas other preachers may have been content with such a wide assortment of devices with which to probe Scriptures and to please listeners, Rabbi Yochanan was constantly looking for new ways. He recognized that some Biblical words were used to express a key idea in addition to their literal meaning, and he noted many of these words together with their special connotations. (52)

He loved the Hebrew language and often made lists of words and their synonyms (53) which served both teacher and pupil alike.

Rabbi Yochanan was just as fond of interpreting Scriptures with the use of another fine technique. He would, in his exposition, use a word related to the word of a text but with a different meaning and thus would arrive at remarkable teachings. For example, when Scriptures read, (Josh 8:13), "and Joshua went that night into the midst of the valley (בְּתוֹכָהּ), Rabbi Yochanan taught that Joshua was walking in the profundity (בְּאֵמְקָהּ) of Halacha. (54) Or: (Prov 24:6)

"For with wise advice (חכמה) shalt thou make thy war." Rabbi Yochanan interprets "a man should always act as if he is a steersman (בזיה) on the lookout for the performance of a religious act. (55)

m Proper names afforded Rabbi Yochanan a broad field for the display of his linguistic and homiletic talents. We shall sight only several of these, for the technique he applied to ^{one} /was the same for all. 1Chron 26:24 mentions the name of "Shebuel, the son of Gersham", while in Jud 18:30 the name given is "Jonathan, son of Gersham". Rabbi Yochanan explained that he was called "Shebuel" (56) because he turned to God ($\text{שם שבו} = \text{שם שבו}$). Another example: "Palti" is written in 1 Sam 25:44 while the name is "Paltiel" in 2Sam 3:15. Rabbi Yochanan explained that in as much as God delivered him (שם שבו) from transgression, he was called "Paltiel", (57). The numerous examples of this type of Biblical investigation indulged in by Rabbi Yochanan would fill pages. It is sufficient to say that the acumen he displayed in this was as sharp and as penetrating as in each of the techniques he employed in trying to discover the real truth of the Scriptural word.

The scholar who wished to undertake his own investigation found Rabbi Yochanan a willing teacher. He was not averse to discussing his homiletic methods, and, consequently, established several general rules to follow. He declared that it is proper to take words from the beginning of one chapter and place them at the end of the preceeding chapter, if it is so required to substantiate a law. (58) If the evident meaning of a word is in doubt one should derive a meaning from a majority of sources. (59) Doubtful meanings may be clarified by employing the דיוקן דמיון , whereby the use of a word in one context explains that same word used in

(60) He taught, finally, that one may employ the method of abbreviation called, "Notarikon" in his investigation of Scriptures. Rabbi Yochanan demonstrated this in explaining that the word, **אני** at the beginning of the Ten Commandments is the abbreviation of the verse, **אני יהוה**, "I, Myself, will give it to be written". (61)

This in brief is the summary of how the homily was formed in the hands of this master preacher. We have confined ourselves in this summation to an outline of the major characteristics of Rabbi Yochanan's treatment of exposition. His striving to originate new methods was in keeping with his yearning for clear, rational understanding of the Holy Scriptures. Many of his new techniques, omitted from the preceding outline because of their uniqueness and their departure from the basic patterns, will rise to the surface of our study in the chapters that follow.

III

GOD CONCEPT

One cannot help but admire Rabbi Yochanan's deep and abiding trust in God. He taught one fundamental principle of belief, and this he stressed strongly, "Never let this verse depart from your mouth: (Ps 46:12), 'The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our high tower.'⁽⁶²⁾ While others put their trust in the stars,⁽⁶³⁾ for the Jew there was but one Influence guiding their destiny. While others put their trust in man, there is no man but the Holy One Blessed be He.⁽⁶⁴⁾ Indeed, how little are man's accomplishments in light of His. When a man wants to form an image, he begins with the head or the ears or one of the limbs and works until he is finished. But the Holy One created all of man at one time.⁽⁶⁵⁾ And when an earthly king seeks to build a palace, he constructs the lower part first, then he builds the upper upon it. But the Holy One created both the upper and the lower at one time.⁽⁶⁶⁾ A further example of God's greatness is noted in Rabbi Yochanan's addition to the Mishnaic statements that on the New Year all His children pass before Him: "And all of them are viewed with but one glance".⁽⁶⁷⁾ So great is the Lord whose light is as the light of the sun and who protects as a protecting shield⁽⁶⁸⁾ that even the nations who worship strange gods hold Him in deep respect.⁽⁶⁹⁾ But this should be so, for the idols of these people, too, do honor to Israel's God.⁽⁷⁰⁾

The greatness of God cannot be judged in terms of His might alone. For wherever you find the might of God mentioned you also find His patience.⁽⁷¹⁾ To this quality of long-suffering must be

added the attribute of mercy. (72) From those awful moments at Mount Sinai until Rabbi Yochanan's own time, God exercised His mercy in order to counter-balance His terrible might. When the Israelites recoiled with fear from hearing the Almighty speak at Sinai, He was made aware of their plight and, so, sweetened the speech for them. (73) Even at the time of His anger, the Lord remembers His compassion. (74) So desirous is He of being forever The Merciful One, He permits only the angels of mercy and of peace (75) to stand before Him; the angels of wrath are removed far from Him. God expresses his abhorrence of evil in that He will not even permit His name to be mentioned together with that which is evil. The name of the Holy One is recited only in connection with that which is good. (76)

Another manifestation of the Divine Mercy is God's willingness to accept the repentant. ^{sinners} The wicked are wicked only until they repent their evil; then they are joined to the righteous. Testimony (77) to this fact are the experiences of Menasseh and Ishmael. (78) Rabbi Yochanan conceived of three account books: for the totally righteous, for the totally wicked, and for the in-betweens. The books of the righteous and the wicked contained their verdicts, of life and death, respectively, at Rosh Hashone. The book of the in-betweens gave them ten days in which to repent. If by Yom Kippur they had repented, their names were to be added to the book of the righteous; if not, (79) they were condemned with the wicked. That God was willing to wait for the repentant ^{sinners} was not an isolated idea in Rabbi Yochanan's thinking. Actually he could not have thought otherwise. For his God was closely allied with mankind, it was essential that He be tolerant towards man. The God of Israel was totally different from the gods of the nations. While the idol worshippers

must bring themselves near to their gods, the God of Israel brings Himself to His people. ⁽⁸⁰⁾ This personal relationship between the Almighty and His children is one of Rabbi Yochanan's most beautiful concepts. Its origin seems to have been the revelation at Sinai. At that time, Rabbi Yochanan explained, an angel brought forth each word of the Lord from His mouth, and presented it to each individual of Israel, saying, "Do you take it upon yourself to take this word of God? There are such and such laws in it, so many punishments in it, so many decrees, light and severe commandments and rewards in it." And the Jew would answer: Yes. The angel would then continue: Do you accept the Divinity of the Holy One? And the answer would be: Yes, yes. Immediately, the angel would kiss him upon the mouth. ⁽⁸¹⁾ This wonderfully proximate relationship between the Creator and His creatures even included a "give and take" clause by which God was willing to change His own plans in deference to the plans of the righteous. ⁽⁸²⁾

Rabbi Yochanan was quick to dispel the fears of those who believed that a Deity so accessible and so generous would require the impossible from man in return. In consonance with his total God-idea, he told the following: Moses heard three things from the mouth of God which startled him and made him retreat: at the time when God said to him (Ex 25:8) "and let them make Me a Sanctuary", Moses said to the Holy One: "Master of the World" (1KB:27) "behold Heaven and the Heavens of the Heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house....."; "Yet You say 'build Me a sanctuary'". The Holy One answered Moses: "It is not as you think, but merely twenty planks in the North, ten South and eight East, and I shall come down and I shall compass my Divine Spirit among them".

...at the time when God said (Num 28:2) "My food which is presented to Me for offerings made by fire." Moses said to the Holy One: "If I were to bring all of the animals in the world would they contain even one sacrifice? Or all the trees in the world, would they comprise one sacrifice?" The Holy One said to Moses: "Moses it is not as you think, but rather (Num/3ff) ^{28:} 'this is the offering made by fire which you shall bring in...'. Nor shall two be sacrificed at one time, as it says (Num 28:4) 'the one lamb ...in the morning, and the other...at dusk.'"

...and when He said (Ex 30:12) "Then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul...". Moses said to God: "Who is capable of giving a redemption for his soul?" And God answered: "Moses it is not as you think, but rather (Num 30:) ⁽⁸³⁾ 'This shall they give... half a shekel'". Rabbi Yochanan emphasized his convictions of loyalty to the Almighty declaring that even though a sword be ⁽⁸⁴⁾ upon a man's neck, that man must not remove himself from God.

In a relationship where both parties are constantly in such close contact, as are God and Israel, questions of difference must naturally arise. Rabbi Yochanan posed just such a question before His Creator-Companion. He told this parable: There was a wise man who opened a spice store for his son in a street of harlots. The common alleyway did its part, the craft did its part and the boy, a mere youth, did his part- and he led an evil life. His father finding him with a harlot began wailing, "I am your murderer". His friend who was with him said, "First you destroyed the boy and now you cry over him ! You ignored all other crafts and taught him only to be a vendor of spices; you ignored all other street s

and opened shop for him on the street of harlots. " So said Moses, "Master of the world you ignored the rest of the world and enslaved your children in Egypt where they served lambs. Your children learned from them and they then made a golden calf." Therefore, Moses said, "You have brought us out of the land of Egypt." * please keep in mind from where you brought us. (85)

Only one who is on intimate terms with His Creator, as was Rabbi Yochanan, would dare utter such words. In the eyes of the narrow minded it must have been considered sacrilege that a man presumed to call the attention of God to facts that He may have overlooked. (86) Not so our rabbi, whose God was reasonable and approachable.

Rabbi Yochanan drew a very distinct line of difference between approaching the Lord and comprehending His ways. It was not even given to Moses, greatest leader of them all, to understand fully the ways of God. Rabbi Yochanan taught that this situation was analagous to a doctor who had a pupil whom he taught all types of cures with the exception of one. The pupil complained that whereas his teacher had revealed to him most of the cures, he failed to tell him about that one. So said Moses to the Holy One (Ex 33:13) "Show me now Thy Ways that I may know Thee", and God showed them to him as it says (Ps 103:7), "He made known His ways unto Moses". Moses then said (Ex 33:18), "Show me I pray Thee, Thy glory" - show me the measure by which You guide the world. God replied, "You are unable to use My principles. The eye is white and there is a dark spot in the middle of it. Does man see with the white of his eyes? No, he sees only through the dark. And since you are unable to use even the light of your eyes, how could you possibly seek to use My ways." (87)

Even as all men are unable to understand the ways of the Lord, so do all men, wicked and righteous, receive His Divine Spirit. (88) He is a Just Judge, more objective in His decisions than earthly judges, who are encumbered by fear of higher authority. (89) The Highest Authority, naturally, fears nothing. He will, on the contrary, hearken to the pleas of His children, which prompted Rabbi Yochanan to pray, "May the Divine Mercy be greater than the Divine Justice." (90)

The Torah was the law of nature, and had the Torah not been given to Israel, we would have learned decency from the cat, abhorrence of robbery from the ant, chastity from the dove, and proper conduct from the bee. The Torah was one of God's most important gifts to the world, and it is accessible to all who avail themselves of it. Study of the Torah is therefore a requirement of Judaism. It is full of wisdom and sound advice. Much can be derived from it with diligent study. There is nothing that precedes study of Torah; nor is there anything that follows it. Even at the time of his death a man must be occupied with Torah, and in the future to come, there too will be no rest from a sense of study. But Torah study must not be regarded as mere academic pursuit. The student must be motivated by a sense of "standing in fire" for the Torah is divine wisdom.

Adding even greater emphasis to his concept of Torah study, Rabbi Yochanan made the astonishing statement that a man who is not occupied with Torah is like a tree without fruit. The student must be motivated by a sense of "standing in fire" for the Torah is divine wisdom. The student must be motivated by a sense of "standing in fire" for the Torah is divine wisdom. The student must be motivated by a sense of "standing in fire" for the Torah is divine wisdom.

IV

TORAH CONCEPT

Rabbi Yochanan could best express the relationship between God and Israel as a betrothal; the marriage document was the Torah. (91)
 It was the bond of union that maintained the faith of Israel in the Lord. For the Torah was Israel's refuge. (92) It was also her teacher and guide. Its laws were the laws of nature; and had the Torah not been given to Israel, we could have learned decency from the cat, abhorrence of robbery from the ant, chastity from the dove, and proper conduct from the cock. (93) The Torah was one of God's most important gifts to the world, (94) and it is accessible to all who avail themselves of it. (95) Study of the Torah is therefore a requirement of Judaism. It is full of reason and sound sense, (96) but these can be derived from it only with study. (97) There is nothing that precedes study of Torah; nor is there an end to the study. Even at the time of his death a man must be occupied with Torah, (98) and in the future to come, there too will he be led into the house of study. (99) But Torah study must not be considered as a mere academic pursuit. The student must be consciously aware that "he is standing in fire" for the Torah is dynamic and unique. (100)

Adding even greater emphasis to his concept of Torah study, Rabbi Yochanan made the astounding remark that the Mamser who is a student of Torah precedes an ignorant High priest. (101) He mollified this statement somewhat by declaring that the wise men who busy themselves with Torah are considered as if they were participating in the Temple ritual, (102) and as if they themselves are building the universe. (103)

The reward for the student of Torah was manifold. If one sought rest after having satisfied himself with Torah, there would be no evil tidings brought concerning him. (104) If one guarded the Torah, then his soul, too, would be guarded. (105) However, neglect of the Torah could prove catastrophic to the individual. His soul would be unwatched, (106) and he would fall into Hell. (107) Whoever is capable of occupying himself with Torah study and does not, upon him the Lord brings terrible punishments and disturbances; but even the youngsters attending school can avoid this calamity by applying themselves to Torah study. (108) Occupying oneself with this study is not sufficient however. It is necessary to make proper use of the learning. Whoever learns Torah but neither teaches it nor practices it, it were better for him had he never been born. (109) Moreover, one who makes profane use of the crown of the Torah is uprooted from the universe. (110) The mark of the righteous man is his ability to bring the fruits of his learning to others, both by example and by teaching. He was part of a larger community - Israel - and to it, he owed his allegiance. Rabbi Yochanan's awareness of the public is even better illustrated by his addition to the remark of one of the rabbis concerning the transgression that is permitted when one's life is at stake. Rabbi Yochanan added: this refers only to the time when there is no royal decree issued. But when the king has so ruled, a Jew must permit himself to be killed even for a light law. In private, one is permitted to avoid death; one gives his life if it is sought publicly. (111)

What was the Torah to which Rabbi Yochanan adhered with such tenacity? It was above all the Five Books of Moses. These were spoken by God and would endure forever. (112) But it also included the "Prophets" and the "Hagiographa" and the "Mishnah" and whatever

the writers in the future would originate, for all of these were revealed to Moses at one time during his sojourn at Sinai. (113)

Without the Oral Law, there could have been no covenant between God and Israel. (114)

In fact, there is not only a relationship between the words of the Torah and the words of the writers, but the words of the writers are the more beloved. (115)

The ease of familiarity with which Rabbi Yochanan was able to approach his God marked his working with the Torah. His immersion in study was deep and often he was carried away by the grandeur of the Bible personalities. He exalted Moses and placed him in the arms of the ministering angels. (116)

Of Jacob's strength he wrote, as the two pillars that were by the watering place in Tiberias, so were the arms of Jacob; (117)

and concerning Abner, he said: it was easier for a man to move a wall six cubits thick than to move one leg of Abner's. (118)

Despite these occasional hyperboles, Rabbi Yochanan viewed the Torah stories with an eye of realism. Using Biblical words and phrases, he constructed frameworks of true-to-life episodes, then built upon them with his imagination. A simple statement becomes in his hands a dramatic incident, alive with reality. (119)

Apparent contradictions he resolves by introducing new facts and new miracles. (120)

Even when one of Scriptures' characters acts somewhat out of accordance with his usual nature, Rabbi Yochanan displays his fine command of understanding the human personality and explains the reason underlying the change of heart. (121)

Aided by his reason and his insight and his imagination, Rabbi Yochanan infuses new vitality into old stories. It is his contention that the Torah is sound and void of contradiction; what may seem to us ^{as} contradictory will in the future be explained by Elijah. (122)

Rabbi Yochanan displays certain other tendencies in his treatment of Biblical matters. He was interested in the authorship of the various texts and concerning the Book of Psalms (123) declared that it was created by ten different men. ~~Samson~~ Concerning prophecy he reveals that what is important is not the personality of the prophet but rather the importance of his message for a particular time. Rabbi Yochanan did not feel that prophecy was exclusively within the hands of those men whose words are found in the Bible. Other prophets of equal merit uttered just as valid words of wisdom, and in the future to come these (124) too will be made public. If there is any indication of special merit due any of the prophets, it might be found in the unique fact that God spoke first with only four of the prophets: Hosea, (125) Isaiah, Micah, and Amos.

The language of the Torah must have caused some difficulty in Rabbi Yochanan's time as it does today, but the Torah was considered to be complete and unerring. To resolve any questions one might raise concerning the incorrectness of Bible language, Rabbi Yochanan declared that the language of the Torah is by itself (126) and the language of the wise men is by itself. There is a somewhat dogmatic insistence upon Torah perfection inherent in these statements and they mark Rabbi Yochanan as a faithful follower of Scriptures. To this uncompromising loyalty he added the quality (127) of tolerance. ?

(128)
This then was the Torah, God's binding gift to Israel. While it is incumbent upon each Jew to give up material things for the sake of Torah study, it is at the same time important that adherence to the Biblical command cause no physical discomfort. (129)

When the Torah is studied however, it must be studied in the spirit
(130)
of complete humility. The piety of Rabbi Yochanan was composed
of this rich combination of loyalty, humility and common sense.

V

ISRAEL AND THE COVENANT

Rabbi Yochanan's deep love and respect for Torah is made even more evident when he speaks of the nature of Israel's covenant with God. The pact is one of double choice: Israel and God finding favor with one another and binding themselves, one to the other. It was at Sinai that the covenant was presented and accepted. But it was not tendered to Israel alone. All seventy nations of the world were given the opportunity of participating in the Sinai covenant, but only Israel made the choice. ⁽¹³¹⁾ This universalism finds itself time and again in Rabbi Yochanan's utterances and demonstrates well the rabbi's concept of the "chosen people". It was not Israel that was chosen by God, but He, by Israel. All the nations heard the words of the Torah, the writ that would have united them to the Almighty, for it was spoken ⁽¹³²⁾ in the language of every nation. Israel made the choice and cemented it with their affirmation that there was no light, but the light of the Lord, there was no leader but their God. ⁽¹³³⁾ The full implication of their accepting belief in the one God, Israel could not then know. Later it was revealed to them. At the time of their appearing before the Holy Tribunal as they sought entrance into the world to come, the Almighty spoke up in their behalf. He argued that had Israel not accepted the Torah at Mount Sinai when the other nations rejected it, He would have reconverted the world into void and confusion. ⁽¹³⁴⁾ The acceptance of Torah was more than an incident related to the people Israel; it was the act since Creation that gave reason for the continued existence of humanity. No greater claim could any man dare make!

Israel's choice of God was a reasonable one. While other nations of the world served the sun and the moon, stone and trees, Israel chose to serve the Creator of these. (135) Many benefits were derived from this choice. They became the special charge of God and His representative to the nations. (136) They were the messengers bringing His laws to the peoples of the world. (137) And they alone of the nations of the world were cleansed of all moral impurity. (138)

The original idea of universalism narrowed in Rabbi Yochanan's thinking until it became the very opposite, especially with regard to the place of Israel among the nations and in the sight of God. When they were in trouble, Israel enjoyed special privileges, which would be expected of a "pet" nation. But these privileges were denied them if they were in trouble together with another nation. (139) The effect that the strange nation had upon the Divine Aid given Israel was paralleled by the low station Israel held in the eyes of the nations. Rabbi Yochanan was of the belief that to the gentile, the Jew represented the most detestable of loathsome creatures. (140) The duality of God's relationship with Israel, one thing when Israel was alone and another thing when it was with another nation, was similar to the duality of personality that Israel possessed. To God and to the strange nations Israel became opposites: aggressive and beast-like to the gentiles: subdued and submissive before God. (141) Rabbi Yochanan strove to divide the profane of Israel's existence from the holy. This striving was not carried along hypothetical lines. His personal life was a vivid struggle to remove himself from the materialism of this world and to seek the sanctity of the world of Torah study. The covenant into which Israel entered at Mount Sinai was a binding upon Rabbi

Yochanan as it was upon the Israelites who stood with Moses.

A man, pious and alert as Rabbi Yochanan, filled with such consuming love for Torah, would necessarily reflect upon the problem of theodicy. If the relationship between God and Israel was of such benefit to Israel, how then to explain the long history of suffering? Rabbi Yochanan's answer to this eternal question is the answer of one who knows beyond doubt that God's actions are always right. If Israel is oppressed it must be concluded either that she has not fulfilled the contract of Sinai or that she must be oppressed for her own welfare. (142) If the wicked prosper in this world and the righteous suffer, then just rewards will be meted to both in the future to come. (143) Even death has a different meaning for both the wicked and the righteous: the death of those who practice evil and thus anger God means less trouble for God. The death of those who are righteous, and have suffered in their struggle to remain righteous means rest for their suffering selves. (144) Rabbi Yochanan had complete faith in God's justice, demonstrating that for the Almighty Judge even death, the great equalizer, is but a tool for administering justice.

VI

IMMORTALITY AND THE WORLD TO COME

Rabbi Yochanan's mention of death as the great equalizer leads us naturally to his concept of his life. Here there is some confusion. At various times Rabbi Yochanan expressed his belief in bodily resurrection, (145) in the immortality of the soul, (146) and in an immortality that is the reflection of the departed on his living offspring. (147) The last of these three reflections on immortality, despite its merit, is inconsistent with the total scheme of Rabbi Yochanan's thinking in this matter. It seems to have been an exegetical attempt to justify a Biblical verse, "Jacob our father did not die". Both the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul can be admitted into his plan of life after death despite the fact that Rabbi Yochanan declared that God would not return his soul to an evil person. (148) The ideas of man's immortality and the world to come are but two facets of one thought. Of the future world, Rabbi Yochanan permitted himself to speculate little. It was to be the inheritance of the righteous who are called in the name of the Holy One. (149) Among its advantages are the absence of death, (150) and the absence of evil. (151) Beyond this, Rabbi Yochanan would not venture, even as the prophets (152) dared not guess.

He speaks with more authority concerning the time of the coming of the Messiah. This idea is closely related to the exile of the Jews from Palestine, for the Messiah will herald a political restoration. Rabbi Yochanan details with careful accuracy the events that will precede the son of the stock of David. His coming will be the finale of a seven year program that will consist of famine

and death, satiety and rejoicing, Heaven sent disturbances and
 wars. The idea that distress and grief will herald his arrival
 (153)
 is an oft-repeated thought. (154) From these beliefs Rabbi Yochanan
 drew a cautious conclusion: in as much as the nation had under-
 gone and was undergoing such trial and tribulation, and since
 Tiberias, the seat of his authority was the profoundest of all
 academies, (fulfilling the words of Isa 29:4 "And brought down ,
 thou shalt speak out of the ground."), was it not possible that
 the day of the Messiah was near, very near? (155) To his listeners,
 the words of Rabbi Yochanan were encouraging. They meant, as he
 had taught, that the land would be returned to its rightful in-
 habitants, (156) and they would never again be enslaved. (157)

VII

PALESTINE: EXILE AND RETURN

The return of Palestine to its rightful inhabitants was the culminating thought in Rabbi Yochanan's appreciation of his country merit and status. Rabbi Yochanan was a strong, outspoken nationalist. Palestine was as integral a part of his Judaism as was the Torah. By living in Palestine one was assured entrance into the world to come. ⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ The welfare of the country was so important to God, He even overlooked the evil of one's life if that person contributed in some way to the greater glory of Palestine. ⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ The leader of a conquering enemy was referred to in Scriptures as "great and noble", simply because he spoke of Palestine in complimentary terms. ⁽¹⁶⁰⁾ But the country did more than receive, passively, the tributes paid to it by others. It in turn bestowed glory. A ruler could be called by the title "king" only if he held sway within the domains of Palestine. ⁽¹⁶¹⁾ Palestine also placed a mantle of responsibility upon the shoulders of its non-Jewish inhabitants. A gentile who lived outside the country could not be called an idol worshipper, for he was naively following the traditions of his fathers..But a gentile within Palestine, ~~wikhi~~ subject to the prevailing monotheism, who still rejected the one God, ⁽¹⁶²⁾ was certainly an idol worshipper.

If both Palestine and the Jews were so closely related, why did God remove His people from their homeland? This question must have been a burning issue in the days of Rabbi Yochanan. His answer was forthright and simple. Palestine is a Divine gift that must be used properly; when it is abused, it is taken away. The Jews were not exiled until they had become a nation of heretics. ⁽¹⁶³⁾

The temple ministers were the worst offenders, violating the sanctity of Law out of sheer ignorance. ⁽¹⁶⁴⁾ Because of this abrogation of the Divine covenant, Israel suffered exile, a most harsh punishment. ⁽¹⁶⁵⁾ Yet even exile with its terror was a manifestation of God's mercy; He might well have destroyed the people entirely. ⁽¹⁶⁶⁾ Rabbi Yochanan was conscious of this fact and it stimulated him to ponder the deeper meaning of the exile in light of what could have been total extinction. The exile took on a new and bright meaning for him. It was the time when Israel could meet with the other nations' deities and so appreciate the greatness of her own God. ⁽¹⁶⁷⁾ It was the opportunity for Israel to bolster its religious strength and learn righteousness. This was the positive aspect of exile that provided an answer to the mockers of other nations who would ask, "why did God exile you from His land and why did He destroy His Temple?" ⁽¹⁶⁸⁾

The exile was but an interval of interruption to Israel's life in Palestine. To their country, ^{they} would soon return in greater glory. The enthusiasm which Rabbi Yochanan experienced in anticipation of this event led him to hyperbolize: the day of the gathering of the exiled ones is as the day on which were created both the Heaven and the earth. ⁽¹⁶⁹⁾ The old life would not be renewed; rather ~~would~~ there be a new life entirely. At that time the true Jerusalem would be recognized as a guiding post for the nations. ⁽¹⁷⁰⁾ And in their anxiety to win favor with the newly inspired inhabitants of the land, the nations will restore whatever wealth they formerly had plundered. ⁽¹⁷¹⁾ With the coming of the Messiah, Jerusalem will be opened solely to those who are invited and her boundaries will be hugely enlarged. ⁽¹⁷²⁾

VIII

RITUAL AND PRAYER

As a child Rabbi Yochanan's young mind must have been filled with stories of the Temple, its glory and its decline. His teachers quoted the experiences of their own grandparents and so the Temple was being rebuilt in memories constantly. Like the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple required explanation, ^{for} but why indeed would an Almighty God destroy His Own House? Rabbi Yochanan saw in the Temple the reflection of the tabernacle built by Moses in the wilderness. With the erection of this dwelling place of the Divine, jealousy and strife and enmity ended in the world and love prevailed. ⁽¹⁷³⁾ In the sight of God, the Temple assumed even greater importance, for it was by its very nature ⁽¹⁷⁴⁾ an atonement for all Jews. It was glorious and unique; even the wood that went into its construction became taboo for other ⁽¹⁷⁵⁾ use. But the Temple was destroyed; destroyed, explained Rabbi Yochanan, partially by the hands ^{of those} who served it, by their corruption ⁽¹⁷⁶⁾ and by their ignorance. But there were other contributing causes. Unable to believe that the Temple could have fallen because of temporal sins alone, Rabbi Yochanan borrowed reasons from early Israelite history, from the day that the spies entered Palestine ⁽¹⁷⁷⁾ and brought back false reports. He cited Scriptures to prove that the destructions of both Temples were predetermined, resulting ⁽¹⁷⁸⁾ from the vain lamentations of the Jews while in the wilderness. It is as if, disbelieving that priestly corruption could have brought on such calamities, Rabbi Yochanan had to turn back in time for more convincing arguments.

On the day that the Temple was destroyed Israel was stripped both of the cloak of priesthood and of the cloak of sovereignty. (179) What remained was the cloak of prayer and good deeds. There was no longer to be service at the altar in the Temple; now there was to be service to God through prayer and the fulfilling of commandments. (180) Rabbi Yochanan laid stress upon certain fundamentals concerning these, the most important of which is intention. One who fulfills a commandment for its own sake is accounted meritorious, while one who performs it for the material benefit he may derive is discredited. (181) Rabbi Yochanan reasonably asserted that one who prays with the hope that the wish expressed in his prayer will be answered often receives nothing more than heartache as his reward, for (Prov 13:12) "hope deferred maketh the heart sick". This person must be advised to occupy himself with the Torah and (182) this will provide him with the satisfaction he seeks.

(183) Rabbi Yochanan provides examples of what to pray and instructions where to pray. When one prays alone he is permitted to do so within the periphery of his own home; (184) and when he prays together with others he must do so in a place specially set aside for prayer. (185) In any event, the praying person must not stand in a high place, rather should he demonstrate his humility by choosing a humble spot. (186) Prayer will be effective only when it is offered in the sacred tongue, which automatically ruled out the request of those who were more familiar with the jargon than with the Hebrew language. (187) Rabbi Yochanan taught that a man who raises his voice to praise God publicly must be accepted as a true believer, despite whatever suspicion of doubt the public might have. (188) Prayer

in public thus becomes an automotive affirmation of faith. This can be overdone, however. There are those who by the very nature of their exaggerated protestations of faith must be doubted and their end is death. (189) Only through humility can one approach God.

The fulfilling of the commandments ^{is} are as integral a part of the life of the religious Jew as is prayer. When the understanding of these commandments is lost and their merit destroyed, God will seek vengeance upon his people. (190) For this reason, a man should always be on the lookout for the performance of a religious act, directing his life to it as a steersman directs his ship. (191) The importance of the performance of a commandment can best be understood when we compare two utterances of Rabbi Yochanan. As we noted before, he stated that one who is suspected of idol worship and raises his voice in prayer publicly is freed from suspicion. Now he says: all who observe the Sabbath according to the Law, even if he be an idol worshipper for almost a generation, he is forgiven. (192) The performance of ritual is equated to the utterance of prayer and both are required for religious life. (193) Although Rabbi Yochanan looked with disdain upon the corruption of the Temple servants, he continued to hold in high regard the Temple service. He insisted that study of Temple ritual be continued at all times. (194) There must have been a reticence on the part of the people to continue the Temple practices after the destruction of the Temple, for Rabbi Yochanan felt compelled to point out the importance of the counting of the Omer, a practice that was falling into rapid disuse. (195) Yet even while he insisted upon the preservation of practicing the commandments, he was aware of the multitude of laws they encompassed and the difficult religious burden they placed on the shoulders of the average Jew. (196) Only the fact that the

IX
Ethical
THE WAY OF LIFE

The religion that Rabbi Yochanan preached was not a composition of abstract theological ideas; it was considerably more. It was a thorough and practical pattern which utilized kindness, benevolence, humility and respect in attaining the good life. Rabbi Yochanan illustrated his ideas with experiences from everyday living and outlined a man-to-man relationship just as he had planned the man to God relationship. We shall deal only briefly with these ideas, highlighting those which we feel best portray the spirit and character of their author.

WOMANHOOD AND MARRIAGE --- Rabbi Yochanan esteemed women as paragons of virtue and nobility. (198) Even inanimate objects respond to this noble creature to serve her. (199) Her chastity is a lesson to the world teaching the fear of sin, (200) and no man dare even consider violating her. (201) The Holy One enthroned on high, too, is especially fond of woman, and when he punished her it is to hear the sweet voice of her prayer. (202) But greater than woman alone, was the union of woman and man. (203) Rabbi Yochanan recognized the difficulties of matching husband and wife properly; (204) but he labeled divorce as hateful in the eyes of God. (205) There is a sanctity to marriage unequalled in other relationships, and the man who marries in the name of God is greatly blessed. (206) When he treats his wife with proper respect, he is called righteous; (207) but if he is unfaithful to her, she retaliates by being faithless to him. (208) The influence that a husband wields over his wife is so complete that she becomes a reflection of him. (209) For this reason

Rabbi Yochanan would permit a man to marry the daughter of a harlot, hopeful that his goodness will develop her potential good. (210)

SCHOLARS AND STUDENTS --- Rabbi Yochanan taught reverence and respect for one's teacher. It is as improper for a student to attempt to teach Law before his teachers (211) as it is to address one's teacher by name. (212) To these proprieties practiced by the student, Rabbi

Yochanan added numerous standards to which the teacher must adhere. (213) A teacher must not prevent his pupil from serving him. He must

perform the commandments with zeal, tempered by logic, lest the performance interfere with his work of holy instruction. (214) In

bodily appearance, a teacher must be clean and neat, and morally he must be respectable. One should seek learning only from him who is upright, (215)

While the slovenly mannered teacher is liable to death. (216) The teacher must be a true messenger of the Holy One.

Only when he fulfills this requirement should one seek instruction from him. (217) Rabbi Yochanan added words of practical, pedagogical

advice to the teachers of his time, admonishing them not to use a strap on their charges, (218)

and suggesting to them under what conditions they should demand payment for their instructions. (219)

He advised further, that a teacher should bring his pupil to the synagogue where he would see the practical application of what he had learned, and thus, better retain it. (220)

YOUTH AND OLD AGE --- Rabbi Yochanan preached that it is the duty of the leaders of the community to sustain the young. (221) At the same time, he taught, a youth is never too young to bestow kindness upon, and so bless, an aged person. (222)

SLANDER --- Few things irritated Rabbi Yochanan more than did the

practice of slander. He stated that ^{penalty} reward for this practice was death, (223), while the reward for not speaking slander was blessing. (224) One who speaks slander cannot conceivably be a religious person for such conduct is ^{penalty} militantly not in consonance with our religious principles. (225)

ROBBERY --- One who steals, robs or profits by dishonest gain is as guilty as one who takes another's life. (226) It makes no difference how much was involved in the theft; the act of robbery itself is worse than murder. (227)

HAUGHTINESS --- Since a humble and contrite heart is the principal requirement of religion, (228) one who is haughty thereby denies his religion. (229) The Holy One so enjoys the acts of the Humble that He proclaims daily concerning him. (230)

RIGHTEOUSNESS --- The greatest performance of righteousness is when an anonymous donor extends charity that is received by an anonymous recipient. (231) The one who performs this deed is considered higher than the angels. (232) Unfortunately there are those who act in a totally unrighteous manner and because of them the whole world suffers. (233) God recognizes the ³depth of righteous men in the world, and so He apportions a share of them to each generation. (234) The world will never be devoid of righteous doers. Of the many other ways to act righteously, Rabbi Yochanan cites particularly the admission of wayfarers into one's home. A man's table is his altar; by ~~d~~feeding the hungry at his table he does atonement for his whole household. (235) (236)

DAILY BEHAVIOR --- One should visit the sick, (237) demonstrate his affability, (238), and repay a kindness with added measure. (239)

X

CONCLUSION

What we have detailed in the foregoing pages has given us some insight into the personality of this great rabbi and preacher. By joining the various character traits that we have noted to those that we have not detailed but which are found in rabbinic literature, we may arrive at this thumbnail sketch of the great Amora of Palestinian academies:

Rabbi Yochanan bar Nappacha was physically, a large man, whose ^{improving} ~~pretentious~~ appearance attracted immediate attention. He possessed unusual beauty, a brilliant mind and a strong, pleasant voice, a combination that thrust him into communal leadership. Although he was conscious of his own merit, Rabbi Yochanan was deeply humble, constantly aware of his infinitesimally small role in God's great universe. His faith in the Almighty was unshakable, but he subjected it constantly to his own penetrating inspection. As a result, the religion he professed and preached was belief predicated on logic and founded on trust. It was a religion that went far beyond principles for it emphasized practice and application. Rabbi Yochanan recognized the duties he had to fulfill during his lifetime and he acted in accordance with them in his relations with man as well as with God. He firmly believed that all creatures were equal in the sight of God, so much the more so must they be in man's view. He despised those who practiced social inequality, (240) and relished social protocol that brought respect to persons who deserved respect. Rabbi Yochanan was a keen student of psychology and applied this ability to his understanding of Biblical personages as well as of the people with whom he associated.

He judged the actions of a person in light of ^{the} ~~that~~ ^{his} one's total personality; if there was a noticeable discrepancy, he weighed the evidence carefully to determine the truth. He was a strong believer in the influence of practice and habit, and credited ¹ environment (241) with much of the shaping of the personality. And he understood (242) the workings of a guilty conscience. 2

Rabbi Yochanan esteemed ^{practical (?)} wisdom highly, (243) and encouraged his listeners to face problems squarely, seeking to understand them (244) and so answer them. Prayer and ritual practice were essential components of his religion, but he could not stand the haranguing that took place in the academies over petty details. To avoid these, he suggested that we look to nature for a proper pattern of (245) behavior. The quality of leadership that he possessed he tried to impart to others; he preached that the Lord will help those who intimate that they are willing to make the initial attempt (246) to help themselves. Rabbi Yochanan was candid in his dealings with his followers and he preached directly to them. As a teacher, he was kind and tolerant and understanding, beloved in his generation. As a preacher, he was outstanding not ~~at~~ only in his own time but for all time. Alert and imaginative, sensitive and resourceful, he has contributed a treasury of homilies as an inheritance for all generations.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

PAGE TWO

- (1) Even the name of this great teacher is expressed in at least two different forms: bar Nappacha appears in Ketuboth 25. Sanhedrin 96., Makkoth 5. etc, while ben Hanappach is the name by which he called himself in Jer Roeh Hashano 92:2.
- (2) Kiddushin 31.
- (3) Jer Maaseroth 1:2
- (4) Hullin 137: Jer Betza 73.
- (5) Numbered among his teachers were: R. Yannai and R. Chanina, both of Sepphoris, possibly R. Chiya; R. Hoshaya of Caesarea.
- (6) Jer Horayoth 83:
- (7) Taanith 24. Sotah 21. Baba Bathra 91:

PAGE THREE

- (8) Berachoth 5. -- BB 116.
- (9) Ber 31.
- (10) Eliezer Zota 23
- (11) Ber 5:
- (12) Rabbi Yochanan's self castigation seems to be reflected in several of his homilies. In San 22. he states: to a man whose first wife dies it is as if the Temple was destroyed in his days; while in Kid 29: he retorts to the statement of Shmuel that a man should take a wife and then study Torah: grindstones upon his neck and then work in the Torah! He also notes that whoever begins a commandment and fails to carry it out, buries his wife and children (Ber 38: Genesis Rabbah 5) This is remarkably close to Rabbi Yochanan's own life situation.
- (13) Pesikta 178:
- (14) Jer Terumoth 88:
- (15)

PAGE FOUR

- (15) Koheleth Rabba to this verse
- (16) Proverbs 22:22 this is found in Tanhuma - B.B'midbar 22.
- (17) Jer Ber 2:
- (18) Ber 5:

PAGE FIVE

- (19) Jer Ber 9.
- (20) Ber 23:
- (21) Song of Songs Rabbah 4:11
- (22) In the following study we have employed the terminology of Dr Israel Bettan (STUDIES IN JEWISH PREACHING: Middle Ages, HUC Press, 1939, Pages 15 through 39) to describe the exegetical techniques.
- (23) For a complete analysis of these five categories see Studies in Jewish Preaching. Compare preceding note.

PAGE SIX

- (24) Megillah 19.
- (25) Shabbath 118. Exodus Rabbah 25
- (26) Baba Mezia 85.
- (27) Ber 51.

PAGE SEVEN

- (28) Ecol R to 9:16
- (29) Tanh B Chaye Sarah 6
- (30) Leviticus Rabbah 13
- (31) Gen R 70

PAGE EIGHT

- (32) Sos R to 8:8

PAGE NINE

- (33) Ber 63.
- (34) Taan 7.
- (35) Erubin 54.
- (36) Menachot 53:

PAGE TEN

- (37) Gen R 6
- (38) Meg 11.
- (39) These categories and their definitions are also derived from "Studies in Jewish Preaching." Compare note 22.

PAGE ELEVEN

- (40) Pes 123.
- (41) Ex R 2
- (42) Gen R 22
- (43) Pes 144

PAGE TWELVE

- (44) Sos R
- (45) Gen R 3

PAGE THIRTEEN

- (46) Gen R 93
- (47) Pes 55.
- (48) Esther Rabba 1:9
- (49) Ex R 2

PAGE FOURTEEN

- (50) Lamentations Rabbah 1:1
- (51) Ibid. Rabbi Yochanan enjoyed explaining "Lamentations" by means of numbers and letters; a splendid example of this is found in Sam 104:
- (52) Gen R 30 Lev R 11
- (53) Gen R 44 Sam 95.
- (54) Erub 63:

PAGE FIFTEEN

- (55) Pes 169.
- (56) BB 110.
- (57) San 19:
- (58) Jer Sotah 5:1 Jer Nazir 5:1
- (59) Jer Ber 2:3

PAGE SIXTEEN

- (60) Gen Rab 27
- (61) Shab 105.

PAGE SEVENTEEN

- (62) Jer Ber 5:1
- (63) Shab 156. Succah 29:
- (64) Setah 42:
- (65) Midrash Shmuel 5
- (66) Gen R 12
- (67) R H 18.
- (68) Shohar Tob 84:12
- (69) Mid Sh 12.
- (70) Sh Tob 31
- (71) Meg 31.

PAGE EIGHTEEN

- (72) Jer Taan 2:1
- (73) Sos R 5:16
- (74) Pesachim 87:
- (75) Tanh Tazria 11 We gain further insight into Rabbi Yochanan's concept of the merciful God in two important references: Tanh B Beshallah 15 and Taan 5.
- (76) Tanh Tazria 12 Gen R 3
- (77) San 103.
- (78) BB 15:
- (79) Jer RH 1:3

PAGE NINETEEN

- (80) Gen R 69, 89
- (81) Sos R 1:2
- (82) Pes (Chadtaw) VI, 41. An opposite point of view may be noted in BB 16.

PAGE TWENTY

- (83) Pes 20., 61:
- (84) Ber 10.

PAGE TWENTY-ONE

- (85) Ex R 43
- (86) Note also Jer Taan 2:4 and Gen R 56 for similar examples.
- (87) Tanh Tezave 4 Sh Tob 25:4

PAGE TWENTY-TWO

- (88) Sh Tob 22 :31
- (89) Tanh Tazria 9.
- (90) Pes 166.

PAGE TWENTY-THREE

- (91) Pes 139:
- (92) Mak 10.
- (93) Eru 100: Chul 57:
- (94) Gen R 6 Ex R 41
- (95) Yoma 72:
- (96) Eru 54.
- (97) Sh Tob 17:7
- (98) Shab 83.
- (99) Sos R 6:2
- (100) Pes 200.
- (101) Jer Shab 12:3 Meg 28.
- (102) Men 110.

- (103) Shab 114. But the force of his original statement concerning the high priest cannot be glossed over lightly. It is indicative of the candor and honestness of Rabbi Yochanan and testifies to his willingness to live in the present despite the long ties of tradition that were constantly sweeping about him. He was a strong critic of Temple times and so expressed himself on numerous occasions.

PAGE TWENTY-FOUR

- (104) Ber 14.
 (105) Men 99:
 (106) Ibid
 (107) BB 79.
 (108) Ber 5.
 (109) Lev R 35. RH 23.
 (110) Nedarim 62.
 (111) San 74.
 (112) Jer Meg 1:70

PAGE TWENTY-FIVE

- (113) Meg 19:
 (114) JJer Peah 2:4 Gittin 60:
 (115) Jer Ber 3:2 Jer San 30:1 This anxiety to exalt the Oral tradition seems to have been a result of an attempt to thwart the Christians who were developing so rapidly at that time. In the same Midrash in which Rabbi Yochanan emphasizes the distinct characters of both the oral and the written Laws (Ex R 47:) there is included the following: why did God not want to write the Oral Law? Since it was revealed to Him that in the future the other nations would dominate the Jews and take the Torah from them and ridicule them, He gave them the Torah in writing. But the Mishnah, Talmud and Agad^a He gave orally. Even if the other nations took the Torah the Jews would still be distinct in that they would have the rest.
 (116) Sotah 13:
 (117) Tanh Vayehi to Gen 48:17 --- note also Gen R 70 and 74
 (118) Eccl R 9:11
 (119) San 49.
 (120) Ex R 13 Gen R 65
 (121) Sotah 36:
 (122) Men 45.

PAGE TWENTY-SIX

- (123) Sos R 4:4
 (124) Sos R 4:12
 (125) Pesah 87.
 (126) Avodah Zarah 58:
 (127) Av Za 26: Jer Yoma 8:8
 (128) San 59. tells that a gentile ^{who} occupies himself with Torah is liable to death.
 (129) Jer Demai 7:4

PAGE TWENTY-Seven

- (130) Sotah 21:

PAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

- (131) Ex R 5
 (132) Shab 88. Av Za 2:

- (133) Pes 144. Sh Tob 4:7
- (134) Ruth Rabbah, beginning

PAGE TWENTY-NINE

- (135) Lam R 3:25 Deut R 2 In name of R. Yitchak, student of RY
- (136) Lev R 6
- (137) Sh R 2, near the end
- (138) Shab 145:2 Yebamoth 103:2
- (139) Deut R 2
- (140) Esther R 2:3
- (141) Ex R 21 Sos R 2:14

PAGE THIRTY

- (142) Men 53:
- (143) Pes Kahana 161:
- (144) Gen R 9

PAGE THIRTY-ONE

- (145) San 91:
- (146) Tan B Gen 40
- (147) Taan 5:
- (148) Tan B Gen 40
- (149) BB 75: also note Shab 127. & Pesahim 113. & Ber 33. & 51.
- (150) Eccl R 1:4
- (151) Pesahim 50.
- (152) Ber 35.

PAGE THIRTY-TWO

- (153) Sos R 2
- (154) Pes 51: San 98.
- (155) RH 31:
- (156) Ber 58:
- (157) Jer Shveeth 6:1

PAGE THIRTY-THREE

- (158) Sh Tob 17:1
- (159) San 102:
- (160) San 94.
- (161) Tanh Mishpatim near the end.
- (162) Hul 13:
- (163) Jer San 29: 3

PAGE THIRTY-FOUR

- (164) Tanh Teruma beginning
- (165) BB 8:
- (166) Sh Tob 6:2 or 79:6
- (167) Ber 9: and 19:
- (168) Sos R 8:8
- (169) Pesahim 88.
- (170) Sos R 1:5
- (171) RH 23.
- (172) BB 75:

PAGE THIRTY-FIVE

- (173) Pes 7.
- (174) Moed Katan 9.
- (175) Gen R Top of 15
- (176) Yoma 9. Jer Yoma 1:1x

- (177) San 104.
- (178) Sotah 35.

PAGE THIRTY-SIX

- (179) Sos R 5:3
- (180) Sh Tob 65
- (181) Nazir 23.
- (182) Ber 32:
- (183) Ber 11: Jer Ber 4:2
- (184) Jer Ber 5:1
- (185) Jer Ber 4:4
- (186) Jer Meg 1:9
- (187) Shab 12:
- (188) Shab 119:

PAGE THIRTY-SEVEN

- (189) Meg 18:
- (190) Esther R 1:1
- (191) Lev R 21.
- (192) Shab 118:
- (193) Ber 14:
- (194) Men 110.
- (195) Lev R 28
- (196) PEs 21

PAGE THIRTY-EIGHT

- (197) Erub 55.

PAGE THIRTY-NINE

- (198) Gen R 71 near end
- (199) Gen R 74
- (200) Sotah 22.
- (201) Gen R 60:
- (202) Gen R 45 Because he appreciated the adornments that a woman required for her greater attractiveness that were not required by a man, Rabbi Yochanan decreed that it was permissible to instruct one's daughter in the Greek language, similar instruction was unequivocally denied the son. (Jer Peah 1:1).
- (203) Eccl R 4:9
- (204) Sotah 2.
- (205) Git 90:
- (206) Sotah 12.
- (207) Gen R 74
- (208) Sotah 12.
- (209) Gen R 54 top

PAGE FORTY

- (210) Sotah 27:
- (211) Erub 63.
- (212) San 100.
- (213) Ketub 96.
- (214) Jer Demai 7:3
- (215) Taan 7.
- (216) Shab 114. Rabbi Yochanan considered the wise man who walked with patched shoe in the market place as a disgrace (Ber 43:). He interpreted Isa 20:3 "As my servant Isaiah walked naked and barefoot." to mean that the prophet was dressed shabbily with clothes and shoes patched. This epitomized the impression

that Isaiah sought to convey more than the literal words
"naked and barefoot", according to the concept of our rabbi.

- (217) Haggigah 15:
- (218) Eccl R 1, end of three
- (219) Ned 37.
- (220) Jer Ber 5:9
- (221) Jer ~~Bar~~ RH 2:8
- (222) Ruth R 3:10

PAGE FORTY-One

- (223) Lev R 33 Gen R 73
- (224) San 101: Pesachim 87:
- (225) ~~Erakin~~ 15:
- (226) Lev R 33
- (227) Baba Kammah 119.
- (228) Sotah 21:
- (229) Sotah 4:
- (230) Pesachim 113:1 Because of their utter humility, Moses and Aaron were worthy to be called to do God's work (Hulin 89.). Rabbi Yochanan practiced such humility (Gen R 96:5). Rabbi Yochanan believed that evn a king who enjoyed certain royal privileges (San 22.) was confronted when advancing to the throne by the greatest test of all, that of humility. (Pes 7;).
- (231) BB 10.
- (232) San 93.
- (233) Taan 8:
- (234) Yoma 38:
- (235) San 103:
- (236) Ber 51.
- (237) Ned 39.
- (238) Ket 111:
- (239) Gen R 38

PAGE FORTY TWO

- (240) Hul 84:

PAGE FORTY THREE

- (241) ~~BM~~ 85. Hag 5. Yoma 38:
- (242) San 102:
- (243) Meg 16.
- (244) Jer Peah 2:4
- (245) Sh Tob to Ps 19:3
- (246) Tanh B Lech L'cha 26....