

THE MASTER-DISCIPLE RELATIONSHIP
AS PORTRAYED IN THE TALMUDIC SOURCES

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
for the Master of Arts in Hebrew Literature Degree
and Ordination

Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion
New York, N.Y.

1962

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to thank Dr. Julius Kravetz, a faculty member of Hebrew Union College - Jewish Institute of Religion, for his assistance in the writing of this paper.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the relationship between master and disciple as expressed in the Talmud. The author has made a conscious effort to eliminate all material which, though dealing with master and/or pupil, does not illuminate the relationship existent between them.

Wherever practicable, in addition to citing the relationship, the author attempted to state and discuss its possible psychological origins. This very often led to a questioning of its ramifications.

An attempt has been made to explore the topic in all of the major aspects of the teaching situation (exempli gratia: classroom arrangement, method of instruction, questioning, discipline, teaching, et cetera). It is quite obvious that the master-disciple relationship was one of respect. How this respect manifested itself in rulings, actions, and placement is the major concern of this project.

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For the purposes of this paper, no distinction has been drawn between the master-disciple relationship existent in the elementary school, and that manifest in advanced schools. The terms "master" and "teacher" are used interchangeably. Similarly, terms such as "disciple," "student," and "pupil" are taken to have the same meaning.

The material dealt with is essentially that found in

the Babylonian Talmud. This paper is not an attempt to express the master-disciple relationship as it was finally codified in the halakah. It is, rather, a portrayal of the relationship as it appears in the Talmudic sources.

CHAPTER I

CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT

The usual physical positioning between master and pupil in the classroom was that of the master seated upon a raised platform, facing his disciples. The latter were seated about him in a semi-circle on a lower level (Megillah 21a). This particular arrangement had the advantages of enabling the master to be seen and heard with the least amount of effort. Also, in the instances where a point was to be visually demonstrated, this placement was quite suitable. In addition, not to be overlooked were the psychological implications of having the master seated upon a platform. This arrangement subtly engendered a respect for the master by placing a "distance" between his person and the disciple. This physical distance probably also had an effect upon the master, in that he who is elevated often rises to the occasion.

Mention should here be made of an opposing opinion which maintained that a master should not be seated upon a stool while his disciples were on the floor. Either all should be on stools or all on the ground (Megillah 21a). This positioning would seem to be well suited both for the sharing of ideas, and for the asking of questions. These are two vital elements in a learning situation, and especially in one dealing with material of such complexity.

Since there do exist opposing opinions as to the proper placement of the master and his disciples in the classroom, to say that each master followed his own personal inclination does not seem to me to be an unjustified inference.

CHAPTER II

METHOD OF INSTRUCTION

Instruction was carried on orally, thus enabling the master to rephrase points when necessary. A disputational method of instruction was followed in which theses were put forth, and objections posed and answered. This method should not be confused with that of Plato in which comments and answers were evoked very skillfully by the teacher, and then destroyed one by one. Finally, in the Platonic dialogue, the respondents were forced by logic to agree with the teacher's answer, one which was in the latter's mind from the very beginning.

The disputational method of instruction employed by the Rabbis allowed of objections which were not always refuted. This was so for there was far more concern with the discussion and disputation leading to the conclusion than with the conclusion itself.

There was, however, a marked similarity between the Platonic and Rabbinic learning situations in that in both, learning was a result of a life-long discussion. It was stated that it may take forty years for a disciple to know the mind of his master (Abodah Zarah 5a). The feeling was held that one must grow into knowledge and understanding, and that a life-long dialogue was the best means for the accomplishment of such. In connection with this learning

procedure, an opinion to be noted is that which maintained that a disciple should reside in the same place as his master (Berakoth 8a). It is appalling to think of how much knowledge and achievement have never been actualized because the teacher was not near, and nobody knew the answer. On the other hand, living in the same place as his master placed certain stresses upon the disciple in that he was at the constant intellectual mercy of the former. The Talmud noted this in saying that a disciple should live where his master resides only if the former were willing to have his faults pointed out (Berakoth 8a). There are students who, regardless of acumen or lack thereof, do not possess the psychological make-up which would enable them to absorb and benefit from a recitation of their faults. We thus have the obverse opinion that an individual should not live in the same place as his teacher (if not willing to have his faults pointed out) (Berakoth 8a). Embarrassment and humiliation can lead, in the case of some, to growth. For others, it may lead to bitterness and retardation. The Talmud took cognizance of individual differences, probably because of its notion as to what constituted teaching. Teaching was defined as the imparting of intelligent understanding, rather than a rote familiarity with texts (Baba Metia 33a). The suggestion was made, therefore, that for the learning of logical deductions, it was best for a disciple to learn from many masters.

For the learning of oral traditions, it was recommended that he learn from but a single master (Abodah Zarah 19a). At first glance, this would seem to be incorrect, for one would think that logic would lead to but a single conclusion, and therefore it would be necessary to study logical deductions under but a single master. Oral traditions, however, differing as they do, one would say should be studied from many masters. Possibly the Talmudic opinion was based on the view that one should master the tool of logic (rather than its conclusions), and thus suggests studying under several masters. This could also be advocated on the ground that Talmudic logic, with its hermeneutical principles was not bound by Aristotelian logic, and could thus lead to differing conclusions under different masters. Even Aristotelian logic has its antinomies. On the other hand, since an oral tradition may be viewed as a set of axioms upon which proofs are based and from which conclusions are drawn, one should not attempt to operate with more than a single oral tradition. It could be objected that a student should first study many oral traditions and only later espouse the one he feels to be best. Possibly a disciple should study many oral traditions and then form eclectic one of his own. The author would favor this last view.

In addition to the actual time spent in the presence of the master, in the case of the young or of those with

learned parents, the lesson was to be reviewed at home with parental aid. (Abodah Zarah 120a). In Judaism, the responsibility of a parent to educate, or at least aid in the education of his child, was never forgotten.

The master would either instruct his disciples directly, or would speak through an interpreter. If the master spoke directly, the possibility of misunderstanding was greatly decreased. If, however, he chose to employ an interpreter, the master would, in a low voice, tell him the essence of his teaching. The interpreter would then expand and relate the teaching to the disciples. When a disciple wished to question his master, the query would similarly be routed through the interpreter.

CHAPTER III

FAILURE IN COMMUNICATION

The Talmud took cognizance of a potential breakdown in the learning situation, namely, a failure in communication and the ensuing misunderstanding. It was known that not all pupils could grasp ideas with equal facility, therefore, the factor of individual difference had to be taken into account. It was specifically stated that if a pupil did not understand, the teacher should not become angry, but should repeat again and again (Erubin 54b). One can but wonder as to what has been lost to the world because of teachers who thought it to be beneath them, or to be just too much trouble to repeat what was not understood. Teachers were enjoined to repeat again and again, which meant as many times as were necessary to make the point understood. On the other hand, a pupil was cautioned to never claim an understanding which he did not possess. Rather was he to ask repeatedly until the point was grasped (Erubin 54b). Accordingly, the shy pupil would often have difficulty in learning. It was assumed, of course, that he who was a disciple was a worthy pupil, for Torah should be taught only to such a student. (Taanith 7a; Makoth 10a). This did not mean that the seemingly "non-worthy" were forsaken. Judaism has never been quick to throw up its

hands in defeat. Accordingly, if a potential disciple were not worthy of being taken on as a student, it was incumbent upon the master to reclaim and give preliminary training to the individual. Once the potential pupil had achieved a given level, the master was to test him, and then admit him as a regular pupil. (Berakoth 25a). This in no way implied naive optimism upon the part of the Talmudic legislators. Rather was it an expression of the esteem in which learning of the Law was held, and of an optimistic viewpoint concerning human potentiality.

One should not get the impression that in all cases of non-understanding, the master was to patiently repeat and repeat. Repetition of teachings was always in order when the pupil was making a genuine effort to understand. If, however, it was seen that the pupil's lack of understanding was a result of his indolence or neglect, it was the master's right to shame him in order to stimulate him. One wonders as to how a master shamed a pupil out of his indolence, and still acted in an ethical manner. If he were shamed in front of his fellows, it would have been a wrong. If the master attempted to shame him in private, of what was the pupil to be ashamed? His indolence? He knew that his master was aware of it. His shortcomings in the eyes of his master? If this meant anything to the pupil, he would not have allowed them to become manifest. Perhaps the master had to content himself with scolding

rather shaming his pupil. Scolding, however, may not have been a sufficiently strong goad to cause the pupil to overcome his indolence. On the other hand, perhaps a scolding in front of his fellow pupils would have shamed him.

Possibly the answer lies in saying that the general prohibition against shaming a person in public did not apply when shaming was employed by a master as an educative device. Can shaming, however, ever be educative? It is quite probable that the master easily solved the problem by shaming the student and not worrying about its psychological consequences.

CHAPTER IV

THE ETIQUETTE OF QUESTIONING

Ideally speaking, questions should have been asked when they occurred, and should have received immediate, complete, precise answers. Unfortunately, the moment was not always opportune; therefore, certain regulations had to be instituted. Questions were not to be asked of the master as soon as he entered the school (Tosefta Sanhedrin 7:10), but he was to be given a period of time in which to compose himself. It must always have been a great temptation to commence questioning the master as soon as he approached. These questions may have occupied a pupil for days, but were probably far from the master's mind. Fortunately for the pupil, he was to receive the same immunity to immediate questioning as did the teacher (Tosefta Sanhedrin 7:10). One should not, however, receive the impression that there was an equality in the relationship. The master was not to be questioned upon a topic not pertaining to the lesson, so as to avoid embarrassment (Shabbath 3b). On the other hand, to stimulate diligence in the student, the teacher was allowed to question him on subjects other than the one in which the class was presently engaged. (Shabbath 3b). It would seem as though the master could require more immediate recall, if not knowledge, upon the part of his students, than he was responsible for

himself. It was also stated that in his questions and actions, a master should set pitfalls for his students. The purpose of this was to sharpen their wits and to see if they could remember what he had taught (Nedarim 45a).

Naturally, all questions were to be put in a respectful manner (Tosefta Sanhedrin 7:7). Examples of disrespect would be the posing of a question by a student while he was on an elevation, was standing a distance from his master, or was behind the elders (Tosefta Sanhedrin 7:7). One can but wonder whether the ruling applied to a master seated upon an elevation, who wished to question a student. Did he descend prior to posing the query? Did the ruling at all apply to the master? Was the ruling concerned with respect, rather than politeness, in which case it might have bound only the pupil? The whole question of respect is discussed in a different section of this paper.

There was the opinion that neither was any question to be asked, nor answer given, while standing (Tosefta Sanhedrin 7:7). It would seem to me that the ruling about queries and answers was formulated out of respect for learning. Constant rising and sitting can be disruptive in a learning situation. The Talmud gave a theological rationale for this in saying that a scholar may rise before his master only morning and evening, that the latter's glory may not exceed that of heaven (Kiddushin 33a).

Ideally, there can never be too many questions asked, but they should not all be asked during one session, nor

by one person. We therefore find the ruling that one should not ask concerning more than three halakot (Tosefta Sanhedrin 7:7). This was undoubtedly an instance of the ideals of pedagogy adjusting to the dictates of every-day teaching.

Another general rule of questioning was that if the disciple knew that the master was capable of answering a particular question, then he could ask it (Hullin 6a). It would seem that this applied even in instances when the question was on a topic not currently being discussed by the master. Naturally, this put the burden of decision upon the student as to whether his master was capable of answering a given question. If the question were posed, and the master could not answer it, the pupil would have, in effect, shamed him. We could say that there were degrees of shaming. For example, there was an opinion that disciples should raise critical points daily, but not at lectures on Festival Sabbaths when many strangers would be gathered to hear the master (Moed Katan, 5a). It is possible to infer from this the view that being shamed in front of one's "own" was not as bad as having such done in front of strangers. Be that as it may, it was explicitly stated that if it were obvious to a disciple that his present master was unable to answer questions, he should study under another master (Hullin 6a). It did not say, however, that he should shame his current one. Could we

not say that changing masters would be prima-facie evidence of a disciple's dissatisfaction with the intellectual ability of his master? If so, changing to a new master would result in shaming the former one. The answer is that changing to a new master could be the result of any number of causes, while the shame caused by posing a question which the master could not answer possessed a determined cause.

CHAPTER V

TEACHING

A. The general rule relating to a disciple giving a legal decision in the presence of his master was that he was not allowed to do so. Any disciple who violated the rule was deserving of death (Erubin 63a). The Talmud stated: How can one ignore the views of the master, and listen to those of the disciple (Nedarim 14b). This made it quite clear that it was the master who rendered legal decisions. It was taken for granted that he was better qualified than his disciple. Obviously, situations did arise in which the disciple possessed greater mental ability than his master. It is possible that the disciple remained with that master until he had learned all that he could from him, and then was allowed to join with his teacher in the rendering of legal decisions. It is also possible, however, that when the disciple's intellectual attainment reached a level equal with his master's, the pupil would continue his studies under another teacher.

It is my opinion that when a master discerned in his disciple an intellect greater than his own, it was his obligation to immediately send his pupil to a master of greater intellect. By so doing, greater ends could be achieved with reference to rapidity, thoroughness and

depth of learning. Granted that it may have been embarrassing for a master to admit his intellectual limitations, yet such should have been done in deference to learning. In examining the relevant Talmudic passages, I received the impression that honor was to be accorded to learning more than to the transmitter of learning.

B. An exception to the rule that a pupil should not give a decision in his master's presence was an instance where in rendering such a decision, he could save a man from doing what was forbidden (Erubin 63a). The best procedure was to ask permission of the master. If he did not give his assent, independent judgment was still permissible in the circumstances just mentioned. It would seem that the disciple was faced with a dilemma. If he pronounced judgment without permission, he would not be showing proper respect; if he did not act independently, he would be leaving a stumbling block before the blind. The disciple, however, had to make a decision in the presence of his master, even without the latter's permission. To not do so would have been to ignore an accepted scale of values in which respect was first due to God, and then to the master. For the pupil to allow an individual to transgress a point of the Law, which was promulgated by God, would have been tantamount to displaying irreverence for the Deity. The honor usually due to a master was

foregone to save God's name from being profaned. The master's honor, however, was not readily subordinated. We thus find the caveat that decisions by the disciple in the presence of the master should not be rendered on a regular basis, but must be truly ad hoc (Erubin 63a).

G. One should note the opinion which maintained that a disciple who was present when his master judged a case should not keep silent if he saw a consideration which would tell in favor of a poor man or against a rich man (Sanhedrin 6b). This was not an instance of a disciple rendering legal decisions in the presence of his master, but rather was one in which he acted as an amicus curiae. In this capacity, he brought to his master's attention either a heretofore unconsidered point, or a previously considered point in a new light. The master then, weighing all the factors, rendered his decision. The fact that the disciple was to speak up for the poor and against the rich does not necessarily mean that he was not to speak up for the rich and against the poor (Exodus 23:3). There does, however, seem to be a probability of such. Since the instructions distinguish between individuals' financial standing, they implied a difference before the bar of justice. Shall we say that justice was subordinated to economic considerations? If a disciple were enjoined to speak only on behalf of the poor, it would be understandable on quasi-ethical grounds. That he was to also speak against

the rich seems to negate any worth contained in the first clause. Perhaps we should interpret "poor" and "rich" as referring to an individual's ability to carry on legal argumentation. The opinion could then be taken to mean that a disciple would aid a litigant in need of legal help, since the master was pledged to impartiality (Aboth 1:8). The actual resolution of the moral problem posed by the Talmudic ruling is not essential. The opinion was cited by this writer as an imperfect exception to the general rule that a disciple was not to make decisions in the presence of his master.

D. A general rule was that a disciple could never make decisions without his master's permission (Sanhedrin 5b). We have already noted an exception in the case where the potential performance of a forbidden act was involved. A second exception was that a disciple was allowed to teach without permission from his master if he were separated from him by a distance of twelve miles (Erubin 63a) (1 mil = 2,000 cubits; 1 cubit = 17"-21"). Another source stated that a distance of three parsasot (circa 150 cubits) would suffice (Sanhedrin 5b). In addition, the question posed had to be concerning a rule of practice (Sanhedrin 5b). One could say that this was meant to limit the answers of the disciple to those questions which were of a mundane, practical nature. One could also say, however, that the purpose of stipulating certain distances was to eliminate

competition for a master's school in a given geographical area. This factor can be discounted to some extent by noting that many of the masters did not teach for a living. To receive monetary recompense for teaching and studying God's Law did not seem to be right. Equally wrong was the employment of the rationalization that any monies received or charged were not for the teaching but for the time spent in teaching. Such time could have been used by the master in pursuing his livelihood. Nevertheless, the factor of elimination of competition by means of various geographical regulations is not to be disregarded. One finds it stated that a pupil should not study with someone who teaches for money (Yerushalmi Baba Kamma 3:3). The very existence of this statement implies the existence of masters who did charge for instructions. One is not cautioned against the non-existent. Also, there was a statement that a charge was made for instruction in Scripture. The fee was supposedly for guarding the children and/or teaching accentuation (Nedarim 37a). (This statement, however, probably referred only to the teaching of basic knowledge to young children.) Perhaps we should say that the geographical considerations concerning a disciple rendering decisions without permission from his master, were grounded in a feeling of respect for the master. It was not that the respect for the master decreased as the distance from the disciple increased, but rather that certain outward manifestations of this respect had little

meaning over a middle or far distance. It would seem that the prohibition contained in the general rule could not have been based upon qualifications of intellect and knowledge, since geographical distance had no effect upon these factors..

E. The Talmud expressed the opinion that if a disciple set up a college, held sessions, discourses, and instruction without his master's permission during the latter's lifetime, this constituted an instance of disputing the master's authority. This applied even if the disciple were resident in another country (Erubin 62b, 63a; Sanhedrin 5b). At first glance, this would appear to be contrary to the view which maintained a disciple may teach if he were located at a given distance from his master. The contradiction can be resolved by saying that the latter opinion referred to the teaching of mundane, practical concerns; the former was either a general rule, allowing of exceptions, or a specific rule referring to the teaching of recondite matters. I in no way wish to imply, however, that the contradiction need be resolved. Even in the realm of ideas, de gustibus non est disputandum.

We have noted the opinion that during the lifetime of a master his disciple must gain his permission to teach. Shall we say that this was merely a hyperbolic statement expressing the care which one should exercise in showing

proper respect to one's master? Possibly we should say that this was a vital matter, and actual permission had to be granted by the master. We could say that this was a live issue between a young disciple and an older master, but little more than a formality between a mature pupil and his teacher. Whichever explanation is espoused must take into account that there seems to have been no penalties for a violation of the ruling, save moral blame. It seems plausible that the opinion was put forth as the ideal of deference. If so, it should not be construed as being either a complete or a completely accurate description of the real situation.

F. There was a more stringent opinion that even after the death of his master a disciple was not entitled to make legal decisions on a regular basis. This applied unless he was qualified to teach by virtue of his standard of knowledge (Erubin 63a). It would seem that we are to assume that throughout his lifetime, the master consistently withheld permission because he did not consider his disciple knowledgeable enough to render meaningful, logical, equitable decisions. If this were so, the ban should rightly have continued even after the master's death. It was a restriction based upon a level of knowledge, a factor in no way altered by the demise of the master. When an adequate level of knowledge was reached by the disciple,

possibly by additional study under a qualified master, the restriction was removed. It is possible, however, to ascribe the restriction to one or several of those weaknesses to which human beings are heir (exempli gratia: professional jealousy; envy; fear of being overshadowed by a gifted disciple). One could attempt to discredit this last interpretation by quoting the opinion that a man is not jealous of either his son or his disciple (Sanhedrin 105b). I do not believe, however, that this opinion was an accurate description of the real situation, especially concerning a man's disciple. Let us bring this discussion to a close by saying that possibly one clause ("Even after the death of the master, no regular decisions are to be made by the disciple") was a statement of the ideal. As such it was instructive as to the respect owed a master by his disciple. The other clause ("...unless qualified to teach by virtue of his attainments") possibly was a statement of a real case. It is not unimaginable that a disciple was qualified to teach prior to the decease of his master, but that for one reason or another permission was not granted.

G. Related to the dictum prohibiting the independent rendering of decisions by a disciple was the question of the recitation of accepted teachings in the presence of the master. An opinion was given that in these instances

where a disciple was reciting dicta in the presence of his master, he was to use the formula: Thus, our master, hast thou taught us (Berakoth 27b).

Shall we say that it was merely a traditional phrase which originated in the distant past, and whose original significance was no longer remembered? If so, it was of little consequence whether or not it was employed. Shall we say that though the original meaning had been forgotten, the phrase had become a means of showing respect? If so, any phrase showing respect would have sufficed. Shall we say that since this formula was to be employed in instances where the disciple was reciting in his master's presence, when the same dicta were recited in the presence of another master, the formula need not have been employed? Or did a similar phrase have to be employed? Or was the original formula to be used nevertheless? Did the phrase have to be employed when reciting dicta before someone who was not a master? Or in such a case, did he specify his teacher by name? When a disciple who was alone recited dicta taught by his master, was it proper to altogether dispense with the attributive phrase? If a disciple were the sole pupil of a master, should the phrase "my teacher" be employed? Shall we say that the attributive phrase was used when reciting in the classroom, but not while teaching outside of the classroom? Was the purpose of the phrase to ensure that thoughts and decisions be

ascribed to their authors? If so, shall we say that the individual was more to be respected than his learning? The author admits that the questions posed here cannot be definitively resolved on the basis of the material given in the sources. They are included to show the virtually endless ramifications and corollaries which attend even a minor point.

H. Also to be considered is the opinion that one should never quote a dictum not heard from his master, without giving the authority for it (Berakoth 27b; Sukkah 27b). Possibly such an opinion was necessary to enjoin disciples from quoting, without stating their authority, teachings original with them. By implication, the teachings would have been attributed to the master, and thus have attached to them all of his prestige. Possibly the giving of due credit was the motivating factor behind the opinion.

I. There was another teaching that one who reported a dictum in his master's name which he had not heard from his master's lips, caused the Presence of God to depart from Israel (Berakoth 27a). We have here a warning against a disciple reporting, either explicitly or by implication, his personal teachings in the name of his master. We also have here an admonition against reporting in the name of

a master a dictum authored by another master. A disciple might have done such a thing out of a misguided respect for his master in which the former felt that all great thoughts and decisions should be attributed to his teacher. Another possible interpretation of the opinion is that only dicta which had been heard from the master directly could be attributed to him.

J. It was also taught that he who opposed the opinions taught by his master's school caused the Presence of God to depart from Israel (Berakoth 27a). This is a surprising statement, for the Talmud itself contains extensive disputation and opposition of viewpoints. It seems to be most un-Jewish to say that intellectual opposition can effect the departure of the Spirit of God. One could say that the opinion was merely a statement advocating the showing of extreme respect by the disciple to his master. If so, we must then decide whether in our scale of values primacy should be given to respect for one's master or to learning.

A second possible explanation is that the opinion refers to a manner of opposition. A disciple was enjoined to oppose the dicta of his master's school in a respectful manner. Of course, it could be maintained that if this was what was meant, it would have been so stated, and not couched in devious terms.

Another explanation is that the opinion applied to a

case of opposition to those thoughts which were axiomatic to the School. If a disciple's thinking were in basic disagreement with the principles upon which a given school was founded, he should have changed to another school rather than attempt to destroy the present one ("causing the Shekinah to depart from Israel").

Still another explanation might be that an honest diversity of opinion was welcomed, but that the dangers inherent within excessive divisiveness were recognized.

A final consideration is one of temporality. Before an individual could intelligently oppose an opinion, he first must have studied its bases, its ramifications, and its logic. This being so, it was virtually impossible for a disciple to intelligently oppose the opinions taught by his master's school prior to his being exposed to them for a reasonable length of time. Such time possibly ran into years. After those years, what was the disciple to do? Study under another master? Remain in the school, and squelch his opposition? Oppose the teachings of his master's school? Let the question stand.

CHAPTER VI

PRIORITY OF RESPECT

A disciple unquestionably owed great respect to his master. What priority, however, was accorded the latter in the domain of deference? First let us note three levels of respect:

1. that due to people in general
2. that due to masters in general
3. that due to one's particular master

I shall not here discuss the first. Concerning the second, the topic has been touched upon throughout this paper.

With reference to the last, there was virtually no alternative between showing respect for one's master and ignoring him. The former was obviously obligatory. The case was not as simple, however, when the choice was to be made between showing respect to one's master and to one's kin. There was an opinion that one should honor and revere one's master even more than one's father (Baba Mezia 33a). The opinion enumerated three cases:

1. both are each carrying a burden
2. both have each lost an article
3. both are in captivity

It was stated in each case that priority in aid was to be given to the master. Shall we say that the master took

precedence only in the cases enumerated? Possibly the cases were instructive for all other instances? It would seem to the author that the latter was the case. The instance of captivity was decisive here, for if a disciple were enjoined to ransom his master prior to redeeming his father he would surely be expected to accord the master priority in lesser instances. One can conceive of emergencies more severe than captivity, which seemingly might have reversed the priority. Captivity, however, was sufficiently severe to include, by implication, those few additional situations. Shall we say that the ground for the priority was that learning, which opened the door to everlasting life, was superior to existence and material well-being? This would seem what the Talmud meant in saying that the father brought the child into this world, but the master brings him into the future world (Baba Mezia 33a). It could be argued that the parent was a necessary cause, but not a sufficient cause. Even though life and its needs had to be satisfied first (Aboth 3:21), it was not necessary to accord them priority in the area of deference.

How can one reconcile the preference of master to parent with the Fifth Commandment? One way is to say that the parents referred to in the Commandment are one's spiritual parents, namely, one's masters. Another way would be to say that since both father and son were obliged

to honor their respective masters, it is implied that respect for one's father was subordinate to that of one's master.

An exception to the opinion was the case in which the biological father was also a scholar. One version holds that the father had to be at least equal in learning to the master (Baba Mezia 33a, Munich Codex). Another reading implies that the father had to be a scholar, but not necessarily of the same academic stature as the master (Baba Mezia 33a). Since the opinion and its exception employed the word "father," where was the mother to be placed concerning the priority of respect? Judaism's early view of women being what it was, it is obvious that the mother would follow the father. An exception to this was made in the case of redemption from captivity (Horayoth 13a; Yerushalmi Horayoth 3:7), for in such instances there existed the possibility of bringing moral degradation to the woman. In such a case, the woman was redeemed first of all.

Aside from the exception just noted, one's primary responsibility was to one's self (Baba Mezia 33a; Horayoth 13a). If this was so, it would seem as though learning were subordinate to biological necessity. Before, however, when we said that one's master took precedence over one's father, it seemed as though there were a subordination of the biological to the mental. Perhaps we should say that

a disciple took precedence over his master for all human beings are equal in their humanity. Since all beings are equal, some criterion had to be selected, and one of enlightened self-interest was chosen. Possibly the reason the disciple took precedence was that, by virtue of human foibles, he was prone to claim such rights anyhow. Sometimes it is best to sanction the inevitable. Perhaps it was ruled that the disciple first looked out for his own welfare, for only then would he be able to aid his master.

There was an opinion which maintained that a disciple who contended or expressed resentment against, quarrelled with, or imputed evil to the ruling of his master was by so doing perpetrating the same acts against the Presence of God. If we assume the following points, it would seem that a list citing priority of deference in descending order should have read: God, master, et cetera. In reality, however, it read: God, the individual, the master, et cetera.

1. Contending, quarrelling, resenting, and imputing evil were examples of disrespect.
2. Disrespect by a disciple toward his master was likened to disrespect to the Shekinah.
3. By the term "Shekinah," God was meant.
4. If disrespect for one entity was likened unto disrespect for another entity, then respect for the former would be likened unto such for the latter.

5. Respect was due first and foremost to
God.

It would then follow that respect for one's master should have been second only to that due to God. Sparing ourselves the dubious inspiration of homiletic answers, let us allow the question to stand.

CHAPTER VII

GREETING AND LEAVE-TAKING

Upon the meeting of master and disciple, there was to be a mutual greeting (Baba Kamma 73b). Since it was assumed that master and disciple were not possessed of equal learning, one might think that the greeting was that of one human being meeting another. In such a case, the greeting would be because of what they have in common, rather than out of respect for greater learning. There was the statement, however, that a disciple may neither greet nor return a greeting (of his master) as people are wont to greet companions (Berakoth 27b). One could say this opinion was given to exclude greetings which were of a flippant, off-hand nature, but was not meant to exclude the mutuality of the greeting. There was, however, the statement that in greeting his master, a disciple should bow to him and address him with reverence and deference. He should then say: Peace be unto thee, my teacher (Berakoth 27b). There was also the statement that if a master greeted a disciple, the latter was to respond: Peace to thee, my teacher and master (Berakoth 27b). In addition, one could cite the opinion that he who greeted his master or returned his salutation, without giving him his title of respect, caused the Shekinah to depart from Israel (Berakoth 27a). Though

admittedly it is, in part, an argument from silence, since directions are generally given for the inferior in a relationship, the existence of instructions for the disciple and the absence of such for the master hint towards a superior-inferior relationship, rather than one of mutuality. As further evidence, the opinion can be cited that he who greeted his master is as he who greeted the Shekinah (Yerushalmi Erubin 5:1).

Concerning leave-taking, it was stated that a disciple who had taken leave of his master, and remained overnight in the city, must needs take leave of him once again (Moed Katan 9a). Also given was the opinion that when a disciple left his master, he retired either sideways or backwards, but never with his back to the master (Yoma 53a). Here too, instructions were to be found for the disciple alone.

In general, there seems to have been an arrangement similar to that found in the military:

The subordinate had an obligation to initiate the greeting to the superordinate, which the latter was obliged to return.

The superordinate could initiate the greeting, in which case the subordinate was obliged to respond.

In greeting, or returning the salutation of the superior, a title of respect had to be employed.

One could ask the question as to what procedure was followed in greeting a master other than one's own, or in greeting one's former master. Such questions are best answered by saying that an individual recognized to be a master was undoubtedly greeted as such.

ADDITIONAL SUBJECTS

TREATED IN BRIEF

CHAPTER VIII

OBLIGATIONS OF A MASTER TO HIS DISCIPLE

1. A teacher should study the temperament of children (Erubin 54b).
2. In the presence of his pupils, it is improper for a teacher to indulge in frivolity, or to jest, eat, or drink (Kethuboth 103b).
3. Let the honor of thy disciple be as dear to thee as thy own (Aboth 4:12).
4. A teacher should be impartial concerning award of merit (Shabbath 10).
5. Throw gail among the pupils (to stimulate them) (Kethuboth 103b).
6. Push the pupils away with the left hand, and draw them near with the right (Sotah 47a).
7. It was said of Rabbi Jehanan ben Zakai that no one but himself ever opened the door to his disciples (Sukkah 27b).
8. If a disciple is worthy, the master should reveal the secrets of Torah to him (Taanith 7a).
9. If a student finds his studies as hard as iron, it is because his teacher does not encourage him (Taanith 8a).
10. A master who deprives his disciple of the privilege of attending him acts as if he deprived him of an act of kindness (Kethuboth 96a).

11. A master should rebuke his disciple (Baba Metia 31a).
12. Whoever withholds a halakah from his disciple is as though he had robbed him of his ancestral heritage (Sanhedrin 91b).

CHAPTER IX

OBLIGATIONS OF A DISCIPLE TO HIS MASTER

1. A disciple should stand in awe and reverence of his master. (Shabbath 30b).
2. A student who remains silent under his master's rebuke of him is worthy (Berakoth 63b).
3. A disciple is obliged to pay his respects to his master on the Festivals, New Moons, and Sabbaths (Sukkah 27b; Rosh Hashannah 16b).
4. A disciple carries out his master's injunctions (Rosh Hashannah 25b).
5. All the work which a slave must render to his owner must be done by a disciple for his master. In situations where the student might be mistaken for an actual slave, an exception is made concerning the removal of his master's shoes (Kethuboth 96a).
6. A student should not remove his phylacteries in his teacher's presence (Berakoth 27b).
7. A pupil who neglects the courtesies due his master causes the Shekinah to depart from Israel (Kethuboth 27b).
8. A pupil who sees his master violating an ordinance should say: Our master, thus and thus hast thou taught us (Kiddushin 32a).
9. When warranted, a rebuke should be given one's master (Baba Mezia 31a).

10. One's chief teacher can free any or all of his pupils from any or all observances (of deference, et cetera). However, even at the moment when the master explicitly dispenses with them, basic courtesy must be shown. (Kiddushin 32a, b).
11. If any scholar sit before his master and his lips do not drip bitterness (caused by his awe and reverence) they shall be burnt (Shabbath 30b).
12. A disciple's reverence for his master should be as his fear of heaven (Aboth 4:12).

CHAPTER X

POSITIONINGA. Concerning Praying

1. A disciple may pray behind his master (Berakoth 27a).
2. A disciple should never pray in front of or behind his master (Berakoth 27a).
3. He who prays behind his master causes the Shekinah to depart from Israel (Berakoth 27a).
4. A disciple should not recite his prayers while standing in front of, or behind, or at the side of his master (Berakoth 27b).
5. A disciple must not step (backward or forward) side by side with his master, but should stand at a distance in the rear. Then he may offer up his devotions. He is not, however, to stand exactly behind his master (Berakoth 27b).

B. Concerning Walking

1. If three walk along a road, the master is to be in the middle with his senior disciple on the right and his junior on the left (Yoma 37a).
2. One who walks in front of his master is a boor; beside him, arrogant (Yoma 37a).

C. Concerning Reclining

1. One should recline in his master's presence (Pesahim 108a).
2. It is not necessary to recline in the master's presence, because fear of your master is as the fear of heaven (Pesahim 108a).
3. Do not recline in your master's presence, but sit respectfully as before a king (Berakoth 27a).

CHAPTER XI

RISING

1. A scholar may rise before his master only morning and evening, that his master's glory may not exceed that of heaven (Kiddushin 33a).
2. A disciple should rise when his master approaches within four cubits, (another source says: ...from the moment the master is seen...), and remain standing until the latter has passed out of sight (Kiddushin 33a, b).
3. A disciple should not rise for his master in a bath-house or latrine, for rising must be such as to express honor (Kiddushin 33b).
4. A disciple should rise when a master rides by, but it is improper for a master to inconvenience people by deliberately passing before them (Kiddushin 33a, b).

CHAPTER XII

EXCOMMUNICATION AND BANISHMENT

1. It is taught in twenty-four places that a Beth Din can excommunicate a man for lack of respect to a teacher (Berakoth 19a).
2. A master, to safeguard the honor due him, can excommunicate an individual. In such a case, it is the duty of all his disciples to treat that person as under the ban (Moed Katan 16a).
3. When a disciple excommunicates an individual in order to maintain the honor of the former, the master is not bound to respect the ban (Moed Katan 16a).
4. A disciple who goes into banishment is joined in exile by his master (Makkoth 10a).
5. A master who goes into banishment is joined in exile by his college (Makkoth 10a).

CHAPTER XIII

DISCIPLINE

1. Discipline is most effective beginning with the age of puberty. Forbearance with pupils is therefore recommended until they have reached twelve years of age. Thereafter, strictness is to be practiced, for it is at that age that youths begin to show mental capacity and acumen (Kothuboth 50a).
2. Only in a case of persistent inattention should a teacher inflict punishment with a strap of reeds (Kothuboth 50a).

CHAPTER XIV

MOURNING

1. Even for a master who taught him wisdom, a disciple sits but one day during Intermediate Days (Moed Katan 25b).
2. Even if a disciple learnt but one small item from a master, upon his teacher's death he must rend all his garments to his breast, and never sew them up (Moed Katan 26a).

CHAPTER XV

USE OF A MASTER'S PROPER NAME

1. A disciple is forbidden to call his master by name, even when the latter is not present (Sanhedrin 100a). This applies, however, only if the name is unusual and all hearers would know who was meant.
2. In his presence, the master's name must never be mentioned by a disciple. This applies even if the latter wishes to call another person who bears the same name (Sanhedrin 100a).
3. In referring to a master after his demise, use only a descriptive title (exempli gratia: "my honored teacher") (Sanhedrin 100a).
4. An epikoros calls his teacher by name (Sanhedrin 100a).

MISCELLANEA

MISCELLANEA

1. Happy the disciple to whom his master yieldeth (Berakoth 32a).
2. Before a wise child people should rise (Berakoth 48a).
3. He who breaks bread puts forth his hand first. If, however, he wishes to show respect to his teacher, he has the power to do so (Berakoth 47a).
4. Singing before one's master is as singing before the Shekinah (Yerushalmi Erubin 5:1).
5. A disciple must not bathe with his master except if the latter needs him (Pesachim 51a).
6. Rabbi Hanina said that he learned from teachers and colleagues, but from disciples more than all of them (Taanith 7a).
7. On one occasion, Rabbi issued an order that disciples should not be taught in the open market place (Moed Katan 16a).
8. A disciple must not sit in his master's seat (Kiddushin 31b).
9. A pupil is not to go with his teacher into the same bathroom (Pesachim 51a).
10. Courtesy must not be shown a disciple in the master's presence unless the latter himself is wont to show courtesy to him (Baba Bathra 119b).

11. A disciple increases a master's wisdom and broadens his mind (Ta'anith 7a).
12. A trust (concerning secrets) is to exist between master and disciple (Sanhedrin 31a).
13. Instruction is not to be received from a master who does not walk in the right way (Moed Katan 17a).
14. A teacher is one who opens beginnings for another individual (Yerushalmi Baba Mezia 2:11).

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