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**DEVELOPMENT OF
THE ORDINATION LITURGY**

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Thesis Submitted In Partial Fulfillment
Of The Requirements For Ordination

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Summary of Thesis

This thesis reviews the history of the ordination ceremony and liturgy, exploring the idea of ordination, *Semikhah* in Jewish tradition, and arrives at an appropriate modern ritual for an ordination closely tied to our Jewish tradition of honoring the conclusion of a period of study. The purpose of this thesis is:

- To survey the current state of knowledge regarding Ordination (*Semikhah*) in antiquity
- To survey the state of Ordination in the Middle Ages, with special reference to the ordination controversy in Safed
- To survey Ordination in modern Liberal Academies
- To analyze the traditional *hadran* ceremony for concluding talmudic study
- Based on the research, and using theory from ritual studies, suggest an ordination/investiture ritual for HUC-JIR

Primary Sources:

Sefer Hadar Yitzhak – my primary source for information on *Hadran Alakh*

Documents from the HUC-JIR Archives about modern ordination ceremonies

Oral histories from rabbis, historians and HUC-JIR administrators who were present or were ordained in years past.

Secondary Sources:

Secondary literature on *Hadran* and ordination in late antiquity and the Middle Ages and Literature on ordination in modern times

This thesis contains 4 chapters and two appendices, divided in the following sections:

1. The History of *Semikhah*,
2. Sixteenth Century Controversy: Reinstating Rabbinic Ordination
3. Modernity – 19th/20th Century Reinstates Ceremony
4. Proposed Ordination Ceremony

Appendix 1. *Hadran Alakh*

Appendix 2. *Hadar Yitzhak*

Great thanks to my advisor, Dr. Lawrence A. Hoffman and all those who assisted me including Dr. Alyssa Gray, Rabbi Yehuda Sarna, Dr. Michael Chernick, Dr. Mark Kligman, and all those who spent time with me for interviews. Special thanks to Brian and Ben Siegal for helping me find time to work and to Josh Siegal for waiting until I was finished to be born!

Thesis: Development of the Ordination Liturgy

Introduction

This thesis reviews the history of the ordination ceremony and liturgy, exploring the idea of ordination, *Semikhah* in Jewish tradition, and arrives at an appropriate modern ritual for an ordination closely tied to our Jewish tradition of honoring the conclusion of a period of study.

There is a tradition of celebrating the conclusion of a period of study with a ceremony called *Hadran Alakh*, a ceremony with liturgy which is printed at the end of a tractate of the Talmud. Particularly, this thesis will examine a Hebrew text, called the *Hadar Yitzhak*, a commentary on the *Hadran Alakh* ceremony, with the goal of finding potential connections to our current ordination ceremony.

To become a North American Reform rabbi today, one must attend five years of rabbinical school at the Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, including one year of study in Israel. At the end of the five year course of study, with all required courses completed and internships and pulpits served, the student becomes a rabbi in a ceremony known as “Ordination.” There are currently four different campuses of the college, and each holds its own Ordination ceremony. The ceremony which concludes the period of study is done internally, when the students recite *Kaddish D'Rabbanan* as a class on the last day of school to honor their teachers. The public ceremony of ordination will be explored in detail in this thesis, and the final proposed liturgy is a possible ritual which could be used to combine the tradition of *Hadran Alakh* with the desire to have a *Semikhah* which will draw on Jewish tradition and symbolism.

***Hadran Alakh* ceremony**

The word *hadran* is Aramaic for "we returned" and indicates a celebration held upon the completion of the study of a tractate of Talmud. It also defines a type of discussion held on the occasion of this completion. These words are found at the end of the chapters of the Talmud tractates: *Hadran Alakh* "name of the chapter." The prayer to be recited at the end of the study of a tractate includes the listing of the ten sons of Rav Papa (Babylonian Amora, Fourth Century), perhaps a kind of incantation, and a version of the *Kaddish D'Rabanan*. The ceremony focuses on connecting the end of study of one tractate to the beginning of the next. Literature of this type (for the pilpulistic discourse at the ceremony) developed at the beginning of the 18th century.¹ Please see Appendix 1 for a copy of the *Hadran Alakh* text, printed at the end of *Berachot*, to be read upon the completion of the study of the tractate.

A book called *Hadar Yitzhak*, written in Hebrew by J. Vidler in 1940 offers an extensive commentary about the *Hadran Alakh* ritual, the ceremony commemorating an end of a period of study of a tractate of Talmud.² In Appendix 2, there is a translation of the first section of this commentary.

¹ "Hadran" Encyclopedia Judaica. P. 1054.

² Yitzhak ben Natan Neta Yerushalayim Vidler, Hadar Yitzhak (Israel: R.H. Hakohen, 1940).

Chapter 1: The History of *Semikhah*

Introduction

Consider the debate that exists regarding the use of the term *Semikhah* from its first use in the Torah to its modern usage. Many questions arise about what this term has meant at different time periods. Today, it is generally understood to mean “ordination” as in “rabbinic ordination” when a person becomes a rabbi through some kind of ceremony. Yet, that was not always the meaning of the word, and even today, its meaning is disputed. By looking at its usage in the Bible and Rabbinic literature, we can attempt to understand why this word has become a part of Jewish tradition and what it has meant through the ages.

Biblical

What does the term *Semikhah* mean? From where does it originate? The Torah first uses the term in describing the ceremony of Moses ordaining Joshua through *Semikhah* (וִיסְמִיךָ) in Numbers 27:22-23:

וַיַּעַשׂ מֹשֶׁה כְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֹתוֹ וַיִּקַּח אֶת־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ וַיַּעֲמֵדְהוּ
לִפְנֵי אֱלִעָזָר הַכֹּהֵן וּלִפְנֵי כָל־הָעֵדָה:
וַיִּסְמֹךְ אֶת־יָדָיו עָלָיו וַיְצַוְהוּ כְּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר יְהוָה בְּיַד־מֹשֶׁה:

*And Moses did as the Lord commanded him; and he took Joshua, and set him before
Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation;*

*And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the
hand of Moses.³*

³ Jewish Publication Society translation, as will be all translations that follow.

Also, in Deuteronomy 34:9, *semikhah* is described (סִמָּךְ):

וַיְהִי שֶׁעַ בֶּן־נֹחַן מְלֵא רוּחַ חָכְמָה כִּי־סִמָּךְ מֹשֶׁה אֶת־יָדָיו עָלָיו וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֵלָיו

בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּעֲשׂוּ כְאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה יְהוָה אֶת־מֹשֶׁה:

And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the people of Israel listened to him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.

These two instances of *semikhah* describe both the process and the result of some kind of ceremony. Numbers verses demonstrate three important elements of this ceremony: the presence of Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, Moses actually laying his hands on Joshua, and giving him a charge. In the Deuteronomy verse, we are told what the result of that ceremony was: after this process of *semikhah*, “the people of Israel listened to him.” Therefore, some kind of transfer of authority occurred in the process of “*laying of hands* upon him.”

However, after the ordination of Joshua, there is no record of the laying on of hands ever being practiced on the occasion of an ordination (The other uses in the Torah of the word סִמָּךְ are found in Leviticus 8:14 to describe laying the hands on a bull for a sin offering and in Judges 16:29 to denote Samson laying his hands on the pillars of the temple). Moses did ordain the 70 elders in Numbers 11:16 – 17, 24-25. God commands Moses to gather the 70 elders and “I will draw upon the spirit that is on you and put it upon them; and they shall share the burden of the people with you, and you shall not bear

it alone.” Yet, the term *Semikhah* is not used. The elders later ordained their successors in this way. Their successors ordained others. According to Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah* this chain of hands-on *semikhah* continued until the time of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the first century CE. After the destruction of the Second Temple and the dispersion of the Jewish people, the direct chain from Moses was broken, according to tradition.

There are no records of the laying on of hands occurring in any other place in the Bible or during the Rabbinic age. However, during the Rabbinic age, according to the opinion of one authority, something called “*Semikhah* was one of the most essential foundations upon which religious life of the Jewish people was built.”⁴ Whether or not the ceremony of *Semikhah* was ever executed by the laying on of hands, as in the case of Moses, is a discussion among scholars, but it is not proved either way in Rabbinic literature.⁵

There is almost “a complete scholarly consensus that early Jewish ordination included the laying on of hands” yet it cannot be proved either way. The confusion surrounds the term *Semikhah* and its use in the Bible versus its use in the Talmud. It is often assumed that the term means the laying on of hands in order to ordain a person into a new public role, such as a rabbi, though that is not necessarily so. Six examples are cited in the claim that the Talmudic term is semantically the same as the Biblical usage, yet in none of these instances does it explicitly say that the term means the laying on of hands, nor does it seem to be implied. In the whole *Mishnah*, forms of the word *Semikhah* (which can also mean the laying of hands on an animal in the sacrificial cult) appear 150

⁴ Rabbi J. Newman, *Semikhah: A Study of its Origin, History and Function in Rabbinic Literature*. (England: Manchester University Press, 1950) 102.

⁵ Newman 103.

times, yet nowhere is the word used specifically for the laying of hands in the context of rabbinic ordination.⁶

Here, it may be helpful to examine closely the first mention in the Talmud of the laying on of hands ceremony.

Talmudic - BT Sanhedrin 13b

The first reference in Rabbinic literature to the practice of laying on of hands is found in the time of Rabina (about 380), when he asks R. Ashi,

בִּידָא מִמַּשׁ סַמְכִין לִיה? - אָמַר לִיה: סַמְכִין לִיה בְּשִׁמָּא

"Is ordination performed by laying on of hands?" (BT Sanhedrin 13b) He is informed that this is not necessary, but that "Ordination is performed by proclamation."⁷

This same tractate raises the question if three people are necessary to confer *semikhah*. It is discussed as is the question can *semikhah* occur outside of the land of Israel. The heart of this matter is the question of why there must be a group of three to ordain. Why are the rabbis adamant about having three here? They make it clear that it is not a whole Sanhedrin (a group of seventy-one) that is necessary to ordain, but they refuse to allow it to happen with just one. Citing examples of these two extremes (one and seventy-one) is a typical way that the rabbis find a satisfactory conclusion. If neither extreme will work, some middle ground that will satisfy their concerns must be reached.

A single person is insufficient to grant the authority of ordination to another single person. Even though the *gemara* brings in Moses as an example, it also makes clear that the example of Moses ordaining is not the paradigm that we follow. Moses is

⁶ Lawrence Hoffman. "The Origins of Ordination." CCARY 90, 2 (1982) 73.

⁷ Newman 103.

an exception. According to Rashi, Moses was as great as the entire Sanhedrin, and so he may have been acting on their behalf rather than as an individual. However, the rabbis would not require the whole body of seventy-one, because practical realities would prevent this from effectively happening. Perhaps it would have been too difficult to convene seventy-one together or perhaps it would have been too difficult to come to any conclusions with such a large group. However, we are still left with the question of why three people are needed.

The fact that three are necessary is made clear by the statement that "R. Akiva ordained him (R. Meir), but his colleagues did not accept him. R. Yehuda ben Bava ordained him (with two others), and then he was accepted."⁸ Only after R. Meir was ordained by three would he be accepted by others. The issue here is acceptance by the community.

With three people in attendance, there would be a more objective view than if there were only one ordaining a Rabbi. If only one were required, the decision of who could be ordained would be completely depending on the relationship between the "ordainer" and "ordainee". There could be nepotism, favoritism, or many other reasons why a person would ordain someone who might not be qualified and accepted by the rest of the community. Because a Beit Din of three is required in cases other than ordination, we can deduce that three represent the larger community, and for someone to be ordained, it would be desirable for the entire community to approve. Therefore, the group of three is the representative of the whole community in choosing and ordaining rabbis. Because Rabbis held the role of judging the community, it was important that

⁸ BT Sanhedrin 13b

other rabbis who were trusted by the community to judge (and who held expertise in that area) represent the needs and wishes of that community.

Before looking further at Rabbinic evidence, we should be clear about what happened between Moses and Joshua. Assuming that Moses did ordain Joshua by laying on his hands, we should wonder why this action is not repeated anywhere else. Our question is what has changed from the time Moses ordained Joshua. In Numbers 27:23 when Moses grants Joshua authority and leadership over the nation, the passage is understood to mean that the mantle of leadership is transferred as a result of the word of God, giving Joshua's ordination a Divine element.

In that verse, it is clear that God is commanding Moses to ordain Joshua before the priest and the whole congregation of Israel. It says, "give him a charge" "before all of Israel." Not only is this ordination decreed by God, but it is intended to be done in front of everyone, so that all will know that he is the newly ordained leader. There are some similarities between this verse and what is discussed in the *gemara*, but there are also some significant differences.

In the Talmud, similar to this passage in Numbers, the people of Israel shall be obedient to the newly ordained rabbi, as they would be to Joshua. However, there is a clear difference in that the commanding power is God for Joshua's leadership, and it is humans who ordain rabbis. Hands are not laid on a new rabbi's head, according to the *gemara*, while God instructs Moses to lay hands on the head of Joshua before all the people. Again, a difference is that in the *gemara*, the ordination of a new rabbi is done before three people, not the entire community, but it seems to imply that all the people will abide by and be obedient under the decisions of the newly ordained rabbi.

Therefore, we have another clue that this ordination is done by representatives of the community.

Somewhere along the way between the verses in Numbers and this passage of the Talmud, an important element of ordination is lost. It is made clear in the Talmudic passage that the process of laying on hands, which implied the Divine connection in the Torah is no longer utilized at the time of Rav Ashi, as we saw above. He says that "they ordain one by a title. They call him Rabbi and they give him permission to adjudicate cases involving *Kenas*, monetary penalties."⁹ If no hand is laid upon the head of the new ordinee, then the person is only ordained by other humans, not by God's word. This is a tremendous difference in authority and power.

Additional Sources about the Laying on of Hands

The Dead Sea Scrolls utilize the word *samakh* (root of *Semikhah*) in an account of Abraham healing Pharaoh by prayer and laying his hands on Pharaoh's head. This use of the term, *Semikhah* for a healing ritual is not found anywhere in the Torah or Rabbinic literature, but is known to be practiced by pre-Christian Jews, and continued in the Christian tradition of healing. While the term became the technical term for ordination in Judaism, the idea in Christian usage was not to transfer authority but to confer a specified blessing in terms of the ailment, imparting something definite. Use of the hands symbolized power to heal.¹⁰ Therefore, the use of the hands in both Christian and Jewish rituals was connected to power, but for Jews, it was the mantle of authority, while for Christians, it was the power of healing. Yet both traditions associate the act with prayer.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Everett Ferguson, "Laying on of hands: Its Significance in Ordination" The Journal of Theological Studies 26 (1975) 1-2.

In both traditions, "It was a sign of favor, a personalized marking out of the individual as the object of the benediction requested from God."¹¹

Gregory of Nyssa, (Second Century), attributed to ordination the power to "effect a sacramental change in a person," but he associated this not with the laying on of hands but to the benediction given. By the fourth century, however, Christian theologians reflecting on ordination's meaning are clear in saying that the laying on of hands in ordination did signify a divine blessing.¹²

Three Phases of Ordination

Hoffman divides the history of ordination into three periods: Personal, Centralization, and Compromise. In PT Sanhedrin 19a, these stages are described: "Originally everyone used to ordain his own students...They changed matters and rendered honor to this dynasty...They said, 'if the court ordains without the concurrence of the Patriarch, the ordination is invalid; if the Patriarch ordains without the concurrence of the court, the ordination is valid.' Then they changed and ruled that the court should not ordain without the concurrence of the Patriarch, and the Patriarch should not ordain without the concurrence of the court."¹³

The "Personal" period, then, occurred when individual Rabbis would ordain their own students. The "Centralization" period was when the Patriarch (Civil official) could ordain alone and others could not. Sometime between the years 135 and 200, this

¹¹ Ferguson 10.

¹² Ibid

¹³ PT Sanhedrin 19a

Centralization period began. It is unclear when it ended, but what is clear is that the Palestinian Amoraim claimed misuse of the power of ordination by the Patriarch.¹⁴

The other source which explicates the different stages is BT Sanhedrin 13b, which as we have already examined, has a debate about who can confer ordination – one or three. It also includes a section about personal ordinations under the Hadrianic persecutions.

There followed a period of compromise between the two parties, the Rabbinic authorities and the Patriarch, and the dates of this period are completely unknown. In fact, “by the late Middle Ages most Jews lived outside the Land, and therefore enjoyed no ordination at all. Their leaders went by a variety of titles, but were not called Rabbi, that being the designation reserved for ordinees properly speaking. Moreover, by the time of the Spanish expulsion, ordination had ceased even in the Land of Israel itself. Most eminent pre-expulsion Spanish authorities dated its demise there to the fourth century.”¹⁵

The Discontinuation of *Semikhah*

Most rabbinic literature expresses the belief that *Semikhah* ended near the time of Hillel (Nasi, from 320 – 370 C.E.), yet there is debate about this conclusion. Bornstein¹⁶ argues that *Semikhah* ceased only 800 years later in the time of Maimonides (1135 – 1205 C.E.). His main proof is that cases of *Kenas* were still adjudicated in Palestine until that time, and the only people who could have done that would have been ordained

¹⁴ Hoffman “The Origins of Ordination” 77.

¹⁵ Lawrence Hoffman, “Leadership and Tradition in Religious Communities” *Liturgy* 24:3 (May/June 1979) 18.

¹⁶ H.J. Bornstein, *Hattekufah*, Vol. 4 pps. 394 – 427, and also ‘Sefere Ha-Yobel; (Sokolov) pps. 19 – 190.

rabbis. Newman explains Bornstein's argument in great detail. Why, for example, if *semikhah* had not ceased by Maimonides's day, would he write in three different places about restoring it?¹⁷ Bornstein answers this as follows: Maimonides (who was in *Sepharad*) heard about doubts that rabbis in Palestine had about their own ordinations, and therefore, Maimonides wrote about how it would be restored. Alternatively, Bornstein suggests that Maimonides knew of the danger of ordination becoming extinct, and he therefore was acting preemptively by writing about its restoration before it had ceased. Nachmanides (1194 – 1270), who lived very shortly after Maimonides, wrote about *Semikhah* having ceased in the days of Hillel. This is considered additional proof that *Semikhah* could not have ceased shortly before his own time. The Rashba (1235 – 1310) also refers to the end of *Semikhah* at the end of the later Amoraim.¹⁸ Additional proof comes from Bazarli of Barceona, as seen on page ten.

It is possible that *Semikhah* ended after Hillel, because the powers of the position were diminished after he fixed the calendar for all times, an act that was an important part of the role of a Rabbi before that. No one, including the ordained had the right to make any change in the fixed system. While *Semikhah* may or may not have continued, it certainly had lost some of its significance from this time onward.¹⁹

However, Saadia Gaon, had a theory that was meant to be a solution to this problem. He contended that there was never a break in the rabbinic tradition, as the astronomically based calendar had always been the guide to fixing the months and that the intercalation of a leap year and the formal announcement by the court were merely a formality. Because this was so antithetical to what is written in the rest of Talmudic

¹⁷ Mishnah commentary Sanhedrin 1:2, Bekhorot 4:4, Yad, Hilkhoth Sanhedrin 4:11.

¹⁸ Newman 150.

¹⁹ Ibid.

literature, Hai Gaon and Maimonides both considered this to be an apologetic device not even taken seriously by Saadia himself.²⁰

It is significant to note that some form of ordination had not ceased in the fourth century as is generally understood. In the eleventh century in a Palestinian city, Daniel ben Azaryah bore the title of "Gaon" (from 1051 – 1062) and had been ordained. After Daniel Ben Azaryah died in 1062, his successor, Eliyahu Hakkohen Gaon unsuccessfully tried to restore *Semikhah* in 1083. Even the ordination of Daniel Ben Azaryah was not widely accepted by all Jewish communities.²¹

This all gives us a very rough timeline tracing *Semikhah* from the time of Moses until the fourth century, and from the time of R' Ashi (c. 350 – 420) and R. Hillel to the time of Maimonides and beyond. Yet, what we are left with is a diminished *Semikhah*, one that has a lesser importance and whose ordinees have lesser authority. What is important about ordination is who will accept the ordination and its authority.

Ceremonial Details and Development

While questioning the authority that is represented by *Semikhah*, we must also explore the ritual elements of the actual ordination ceremony, as they have developed through time. The ceremony in question highlights myths of origin, and myths may or may not be true. As we will see through the development of the details of the ceremony, there seems to be a need to connect the ceremony to history, to authenticate the ceremony

²⁰ Jacob Katz, "Rabbinical Authority and Authorization in the Middle Ages" Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature. Edited by Isadore Twersky Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass. 1979, 44.

²¹ Newman 152.

and create or embellish on the myth that this ceremony represents an unbroken chain of tradition.

According to both Newman and Hoffman, the elements of the ceremony which have developed include: ordination by proclamation or announcement, the wearing of special garments for the ordinand, the ordination as an occasion for special festivities such as a response or sermon, and a register of the ordained as well as a certificate. Each one will be examined.

Ordination by proclamation or announcement - According to the Rabbinic teachings there are three different kinds of consecration into priestly service: (1) The High Priest by anointment with oil being poured over his head at the ceremony of consecration (2) The appointment of a deputy High Priest by proclamation (3) The induction into office of the ordinary priests which involved them being clothed in the priestly garments. R. Zeira (who was the first to state that ordination can be performed by proclamation בפה) identifies these with the ceremony of Rabbinic ordination. R. Ashi thought candidates were called by name, given the title, "Rabbi" and the right to adjudicate cases of *kenas* or fines.²²

One particular explanation in the Talmud gives us an idea of the specific words spoken at the time of an ordination ceremony. In Sanhedrin 5a, an account of two students, Rav and Rabbah bar Hanah is given as follows: "When Rabbah bar Hana went to Babylon, Rabbi Hiyya said to Rabbi: My nephew is going to Babylonia, *yoreh yoreh yadin yadin yatir bekhoret yatir*....When Rav emigrated to Babylonia, R. Hiyya asked Rabbi, *yoreh yoreh yadin yadin yatir bekhoret 'al yatir*" These Hebrew words represent different juridical duties for which authorization was required, though their exact

²² Hoffman, "The Origins of Ordination." 78.

meaning is debatable. According to Hoffman, "Popular wisdom has converted this report of a conversation between the Patriarch and a rabbi into a formula for ordination."

However, it is not clear if these words were merely part of a conversation or were used liturgically.

Currently, the formula is:

"*Yoreh, yoreh. Yadin, yadin. Yatir yatir.* May he decide? He may decide. May he judge? He may judge. May he permit? He may permit."²³

There are a few different formulas that can be found for this same proclamation at the ordination ceremony. The Talmudic version is, "He (the ordinand) is designated by the title of 'Rabbi' and granted the authority to adjudicate cases of *Kenas*." Maimonides has slight amendments to this proclamation: " You are Rabbi, you are ordained, and you have the right to adjudicate *Kenas*."²⁴ Today, a form of this formula is found on the certificates of ordination for HUC-JIR ordinees.

The wearing of special garments for the ordinand - It seems as though those who obtained *Semikhah* wore special garments from the time of their qualification onward. There are some references to a "garment of honor" which is worn on the occasion of the ordination, called a **גולתא דדבבא**. As is discussed in BT Baba Metsiah 85a, this garment was a symbol of attaining the title "Rabbi" and was put on for the occasion. Later evidence of a special garment worn during ordination is found in a passage of R. Judah b. Barzaili of Barcelona in his book, *Sefer Hashetaroth*. It refers to those who receive *Semikhah* in the 13th Century as dressing like other learned men in a

²³ Hoffman, "The Origins of Ordination." 79.

²⁴ Newman 117.

distinguished manner.²⁵ Discussions about the wearing of special robes, whether white or black or dress clothes have occurred on all the campuses of HUC-JIR in planning the ordination ceremony, as well, as we will see later in this thesis.

The ordination as an occasion for special festivities and a sermon - The occasion of the conferment of *Semikhah* became a time for special celebration in the particular Yeshivah to which the ordinand belonged. Often, the occasion of *Semikhah* was combined with a wedding of the person being ordained or of another important person in the Yeshivah, to ensure a large number of witnesses. The Talmudic remembers this type of special combined celebration: "When R. Zeira was ordained, they sang of him thus: Not rouged, not painted and not bedecked and yet full of grace."²⁶ This seems to combine the description of the bride (rouged, bedecked and full of grace) with the description of R. Zeira, the one being ordained.

There is no evidence of a specific *seudat mitzvah* done at the time of the *semikhah* or anything like the *Hadran Alakh* ceremony described in Chapter one of this thesis and in the *Hadar Yitzhak* text. However, the occasion of the ordination was clearly to be celebrated in a festive way.

It is suggested by Newman's interpretation of BT Sanhedrin 7b that after the ceremony of ordination, the newly ordained person would deliver an oration on a Talmudic subject to the public with an interpreter to add to the dignity of the occasion.²⁷ However, Hoffman expresses doubt about this passage alluding to the ordination

²⁵ A lengthier discussion of the special garments can be found in Newman's book, *Semikhah*.

²⁶ BT Ketubot 17a, Sanhedrin 14a

²⁷ Ibid Page 122.

ceremony, because it does not include any of the terms usually referring to ordination, neither *semikhah* nor *minnui*.²⁸

A register of the ordained as well as a certificate - A debate exists among scholars Bachar and Newman about the written testimony of an ordinand's status. Bacher claims that a register was kept of all the names of those ordained and the dates of their ordination. Newman argues that there was a letter sent, or a certificate issued at the time to proclaim the ordination of a person. The term, *Ketab Beit Yisrael* can be understood as a certificate of ordination or a book/register of the community of Israel in which the names of the ordained were recorded. Much later, Maimonides, (*Yad Hazakah* 4:6) refers to a certificate of ordination, a document to which he attaches a greater importance than anyone had before him. According to Maimonides, the whole ceremony of ordination may be done in writing, by merely writing a certificate, as long as both the ordainer and ordinand are in the Holy Land. However, as Hoffman points out, this debate does not inform us about the ceremony or ordination.²⁹

Conclusion

Today, ordination is often called *semikhah*. Yet, ordination of rabbis has had different names at different times. In the Palestinian Talmud, it is known as *minnui*. The term *minnui* as "civic appointment" (for all different kinds of civic leaders) is used throughout Rabbinic literature before the year 70, yet it is only after that time that the term "rabbi" comes into being. There were Rabbis from the year 70 on, but no specific evidence of a ceremony, with someone receiving the title, "Rabbi." Rabbis must have

²⁸Hoffman, "The Origins of Ordination." 81.

²⁹ Hoffman, "The Origins of Ordination."82.

been seen as a kind of civil servant, with no more of an ordination ceremony than any other civil servant, and with certain responsibilities and duties. According to Hoffman, "to be sure, by the late second and early third centuries, rabbinic appointment became a political issue around which the relative strength of the Patriarch and the other rabbis in the scholar class revolved." The *Bavli* translated ordination as *semikhah* while the *Yerushalmi* kept the term, *minnui* but the ceremony was only to take place in the land of the Palestinian Talmud, making the discussion in Babylonia hypothetical.

Modern interpreters have attempted to find the roots of a traditional ordination ceremony analogous to the Christian ordination, yet there is no evidence to support it in Jewish texts. The English word, "ordination" comes from Christian culture. *Minnu* meant something else to the Palestinian Jews and *Semikhah* meant something else again to the Babylonian Jews.³⁰

In its modern form, ordination takes on many different methods and meanings depending on the religious movement and people involved in the ordination. Today, the most widely accepted Jewish ordinations in the United States are done by Jewish institutions of higher learning. Yeshiva University (where the very existence of *Semikhah* is denied) only holds a ceremony every four years, and it is more like a graduation where a certificate given after a series of tests. At Jewish Theological Seminary, a graduation ceremony takes place. Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion has different ceremonies on the different campuses, and we will examine these further in Chapter 4. The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College and the University of Judaism Rabbinical School also have a kind of ceremony. In the past decade, new institutions have emerged which are training rabbis (Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, The

³⁰Hoffman, "The Origins of Ordination." 89.

Academy for Jewish Religion, Hebrew College, and more). In addition, there have been private ordinations occurring throughout the United States in person as well as online! Many are skeptical of some of these ordinations and the type and amount of authority held by the ordinees. Just as in the passage of the Talmud, the deciding factor is whether or not the ordination is accepted by other rabbis and by the greater Jewish community.

One good example of the point that ordination is only as good as the authority that is accepted by the community is the ordination of women as rabbis. Although this particular kind of ordination is not accepted by many in the world Jewish community, the Reform, Reconstructionist and Conservative movements have accepted women's ordinations as valid. Therefore, within those communities, the ordination is respected. However, outside of those communities, the ordination would not be accepted as a valid one with any authority. In fact, non-Orthodox ordination is not recognized in Israel at all, outside of a small community of Reform and Conservative Jews. Therefore, we see a parallel example to the situation in the Talmud, where a person's ordination could be questioned by some segments of the community, but acceptance of that ordination by a particular community is sufficient to give the ordinee authority and validity.

Ceremonial aspects of ordination have always been a way to link the newly ordained rabbi into the chain of tradition. Though today's ordinations may not be strongly connected to the moment of Moses giving semikhah to Joshua, the function of the ceremony today, with its symbolism, liturgy, and created sacred space before a large number of people clearly has the intent to link today's rabbis to a tradition of authenticity, authority, and Jewish custom.

Chapter 2

Sixteenth Century Controversy: Reinstating Rabbinic Ordination

Introduction

In 1538, Jacob Berab attempted to restore traditional rabbinic ordination, *Semikhah*, in Safed, in the Land of Israel. He based his ideas on the legal opinion of Maimonides, that if all the scholars in the Land of Israel could sanctify someone, they could ordain one person as a leader in the Land of Israel, and that person could ordain others. Berab gathered together scholars in Safed and had himself ordained, later ordaining others. His attempt was strongly contested by Levi ben Habib in Jerusalem. This erupted into a controversy, as many questioned the validity of his ordination and the authority that bestowed ordination on him. A large part of this controversy was most likely due to the competing status of the Jewish community of Jerusalem with the emerging power of the Jewish community in Safed, most of whose population had emigrated from Spain after the Spanish Expulsion in 1492. There are different theories about why this controversy emerged at this time and place, which we will explore here.

More importantly, this controversy, like many others, is based on controversial historical events and documents. Maimonides himself, wrote different opinions about *Semikhah* in different sources at different times in his life. The writings that Berab based his ideas on are themselves controversial. Maimonides states in his Commentary to the Mishnah, Sanhedrin 1,3:

I am of the opinion that if all the students and scholars agree to the appointment of one to the academy that is, as its head, and on condition that this takes place in the Land of Israel, as I said earlier, then that person is so appointed he is ordained (samukh) and may ordain others.³¹

Maimonides seems to imply that the halakhic system must be headed by the Sanhedrin, which is manned only by ordained scholars. Yet, he also writes that the Court will precede the Messiah, and so it is human action which will bring the messiah. This is an idea that comes from the book of Isaiah: "I will restore your judges as of old...After that you shall be called the city of righteousness." (Isaiah 1:26). Therefore, it makes sense that his ideas would encourage Berab to act, for there must be a human role in the messianic process. Maimonides later indicates in his Mishneh Torah that he was not completely convinced by his own proposal, yet he did not revise his earlier Commentary, as he often did in such situations.³²

When the question of renewing *semikhah* arises in modernity, the issue again revisits past historical events. The debate itself about renewing *semikhah* has always been truly centered around something else, something greater – the messianic vision and the human role in bringing on the messiah and the question of authority within Judaism.

Sources

Henrich Graetz (1817 – 1891) provides the most complete description of the events of the Berab controversy.³³ However, Jacob Katz³⁴ points out that Graetz's

³¹ Gerald J. Blidstein, "Maimonides on the Renewal of Semikha" Jewish Political Studies Review Volume 10, Numbers 3-4, Fall 1998, 24.

³² Blidstein 25.

³³ Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews* (1887, published in German) in the sixth volume of the 1949 English version of his work.

treatment of the events place "excessive emphasis on personality-related causes, criticism and praise meted out according to preconceived biases, and, worst of all, a judgment that ignores the motivations of the two disputants."³⁵ According to Katz, Graetz recognizes messianic tendencies in the attempt to revive rabbinic ordination, for there was a traditional belief that *semikhah* would only be renewed in messianic times. Graetz also attributes the controversy to personal motives on the parts of both Berab and ben Habib. There is also a question of each of the writer's feelings towards mysticism and messianism and how much that plays into their ability to explain the situation objectively. The main source for this chapter is Katz's article, considered to be a classic, presenting the first comprehensive historical study of these events.

Historical Background

For generations, the Jewish tradition had been that proper rabbinic ordination was limited to the Land of Israel, and by the Middle Ages, most Jews lived outside the Land. Therefore, there was no ordination at all. Jewish leaders had a variety of titles, but were not called "Rabbi" since an ordination would be necessary to attain that title. By the time of the Spanish Expulsion, ordination had ceased in the Land of Israel, as well. Tradition viewed ordination as being awarded by people already ordained, who had all died out by this time period. Generally, scholars believe the end of ordination was in the fourth century (see chapter one for further details).³⁶

³⁴ Katz's article was first published in Hebrew in *Zion* 16 (1951), and appeared in a revised version in Katz's collections of historical studies, *Between Halakhah and Kabbalah*, Jerusalem: 1985 (Hebrew). The translation is by Roberta Bell-Kligler.

³⁵ Jacob Katz, "The Dispute between Jacob Berab and Levi ben Habib over Renewing Ordination" *Binah: Studies in Jewish History* 1, 7 (1989)120.

³⁶ Lawrence Hoffman, "Leadership and Traditions in Religious Communities" *Liturgy* 24:3 (May/June, 1979) 18.

Jews arrived in Israel, mostly in Safed, after the Spanish Expulsion with memories of forced conversions, torture and inquisitions. Many scholars were among them, who kept Jewish learning going throughout the tragic events of the time. Mysticism was a major trend that concerned them, along with the intense messianic fervor which accompanied it.

Jacob Berab (1474 -1546) was born in Spain, and he was a renowned teacher of Judaism in addition to engaging in business. After the expulsion, he traveled extensively, and he was appointed as a religious leader of Fez, because of his great knowledge and high esteem. Personally, he was perceived as having a domineering personality and a superiority complex, which created many conflicts along the way. Berab settled in Safed in 1524 and became involved in the messianic fervor. In 1538, he took the initiative to renew the institution of rabbinic ordination. He convinced other Safed religious leaders and scholars to support his effort, and he became the first ordaine (samukh).

Levi ben Habib (1483 – 1543) was known as the Ralbah, and he settled in Israel, by way of Salonka after the Expulsion. He was a famous Talmudist and served as a scholar in Jerusalem. The majority of the extant primary sources on these events consist of ben Habib's written objections and accounts of the episode.³⁷

Events

The discussion of renewing rabbinic ordination preceded Berab's attempt. Berab stated that "all the scholars I saw, especially after I came to Egypt, desired to come to the Land of Israel and perform it [ordination]."³⁸ Berab found a yearning for the revival in

³⁷ A list of the primary sources can be found in Katz's article.

³⁸ Katz 123.

those he discussed it with, and even ben Habib admitted to a yearning for it, at first. However, the halakhic aspect, was only discussed in 1538, after Berab did prevail on the scholars in Safed to renew ordination in accordance with Maimonides in his *Commentary on the Mishnah* (Sanhedrin 1:1), where it says,

*I deem it appropriate that when all the scholars and students in the Land of Israel agree to put forward one person as their head...this person can convene the assembly, and he will be ordained himself and qualified to ordain whomever he desires afterwards.*³⁹

This halakhic support was the main source in the debate over the validity of renewed ordination, and there seemed to be an immediate and general acceptance of the ordination. A messenger from Safed, Solomon Hazan, brought the news of Berab's actions to Jerusalem, and there, too, there was not an immediate opposition, even by ben Habib. It was only after some discussions with other scholars in Jerusalem, including his friend Moses de Castro that ben Habib reached a negative rabbinic judgment, leaving many in Jerusalem disappointed, perhaps even ben Habib.⁴⁰

It was during these two weeks, while Hazan was in Jerusalem, that Berab enjoyed the height of his status as an ordainee, acquiring the title of 'Nasi', 'Head of the next Sanhedrin.' He gave a Shabbat sermon to the entire city, and people flocked to different synagogues to hear his words, as he described to them the halakhic foundations of the decision and talked about the related messianic hopes. It was only Hazzan's return from Jerusalem with ben Habib's refusal to accept the ordination and de Castro's protestation of its validity, which dampened the mood in Safed. Ben Habib's argument was that Maimonides's condition had not been met, that "all scholars ...in the Land of Israel" be

³⁹ Katz 124.

⁴⁰ Katz 124.

consulted, as he, himself, ben Habib, had not been consulted. Berab had assumed that a majority opinion would suffice.

Berab attempted to have his ordination reaffirmed by the scholars of Safed in the face of ben Habib's rejections. He called them together, yet it was not the exact same group of people (some of the support had decreased), and Berab already knew that his vision of the Sanhedrin would not come to pass at this time. However, he sought a lesser goal – to ordain two colleagues and create a Beit Din with greater authority than a regular Beit Din, from which the Sanhedrin would eventually emerge. Yet, this attempt did not succeed, either. One of the colleagues to be ordained by Berab insisted on being ordained not by Berab, but by “all the scholars” as Berab had been. Maimonides's guidelines clearly negate that possibility. Therefore, the scholars established guidelines to legitimize ordination in the future, hinting that there would need to be unanimous approval. Berab's ordination remained intact.⁴¹

Joseph Caro (1488 – 1575) was the leader of Berab's supporters, and while Ben Habib did acknowledge the stature of Caro and the other scholars who supported Berab, he also defended the honor of the Jerusalem scholars. When a ‘court decision’ was sent to Jerusalem from Safed on this matter, Ben Habib continued to defend the Jerusalem scholars' decision, recording their reasons and intending to “divert the dispute to halakhic grounds.”⁴² Yet, their reasons were not immediately published for a variety of reasons. De Castro had been one of Berab's students and did not want to show his teacher great disrespect, even though he disagreed. Ben Habib wanted to avoid an out-and-out confrontation. His writing was addressed in general terms to the ‘rabbis of Safed.’

⁴¹ Katz 126.

⁴² Ibid

Months later, when Berab did view Ben Habib's letter, he answered the issues, point by point. He also wrote his Ordination Epistle, with the intent of bringing this discussion on a halakhic level to the public at large. However, Berab was forced to leave the Land of Israel, though the reason for his leaving is disputed by historians.

Outcome

This entire controversy lasted less than one year. Scholars outside of Israel stayed out of this issue completely, except for Ibn Abi Zimra and his Egyptian colleagues, to whom the Safed scholars wrote, and who gave their opinion to be that ben Habib had the halakhah on his side. Yet, the scholars of Safed did not admit failure. Berab died eight years after this episode, but those he ordained held onto their titles and exercised their right to ordain others. Caro ordained Moses Alsheikh, who ordained Hayyim Vital. Other scholars in Eretz Yisrael passed the title to their students through the first half of the seventeenth century. "However, an ordination carried no real authority; it became an honorific title that scholars gave to their outstanding students...ordination remained attractive as a mark of the great and special scholar."⁴³

Theories on the Motives for the Controversy

There are various theories on the motives for this controversy. The simplest explanation is a personal animosity between the two main participants in the dispute, Berab and Ben Habib. There was a previous friction between the two over a period of fourteen years. The personal psychology explanation does not explain the fact that it started out rather civilly and also does not explain the involvement of so many others.

⁴³ Katz 131.

Graetz proposes that a competition between Jerusalem and Safed is the explanation, which is supported by some contemporary scholars. The competition did exist. Safed had become an affluent center of Jewish life and a place rich in Jewish learning to rival Jerusalem during the sixteenth century. There was even a financial component to that competition, as the scholars tried to collect funds for their communities. Yet, there is no hint that Berab wanted to appropriate Jerusalem's holiness.

In the renewal of ordination, itself, can be found a reason for the controversy. Berab's main motive was messianic, basing his reasoning on Maimonides's idea that even if the chain of ordination had been broken, the process could be renewed by the agreement of all the scholars of the Land of Israel to ordain one person who would ordain others. Maimonides refers to a biblical passage for support of this idea: "I will restore your judges as of old...After that you shall be called the city of righteousness." (Isaiah 1:26) The return of the judges would precede Redemption. For Maimonides, this was a clarification of the halakhah for some unknown time in the future, but for the Safed community, who felt the messianic fervor tugging at them, they saw this as a magic formula to facilitate bringing on the messiah.⁴⁴

Graetz proposes that the year 1538 was chosen to renew ordination, because it was close to Solomon Molcho's prediction that 1540 would be the year of the Redemption. The messianic tendency is hinted at throughout the controversy and is spelled out by Berab, who identified his generation as the one that would witness the Messiah's appearance. Berab clearly believed, as did Maimonides, that it would be human actions which would begin the first stage of bringing on the Messiah. Ben Habib did not believe that Redemption depended on human actions at all. His hopes were more

⁴⁴ Katz 133.

passive. He had a halakhic stance, while Berab's opinion had motivations outside of the halakhah.⁴⁵

There were three main halakhic issues that were argued: Ben Habib claims that there is insufficient halakhic grounds for renewing ordination. The disagreement centered on an interpretation of some of the words in Maimonides Code, where it says, "the matter requires a decision." Ben Habib argues that Maimonides had reconsidered an earlier opinion of his, and the accepted rule for *halakhah* is that a later decision overrides a former one. Berab claims that those same words refer to a different law about ordination.

The second disagreement was over the authority of an ordained *beit din* over a regular *beit din*. As in the Bible, an ordained *beit din* would have the authority to impose fines (kenas), mete out lashes to a penitent, and absolve him of the fate of *karet* (being cut off from the community). The geonim had established substitutes for the laws of fines. Berab linked this issue to messianism, claiming the issue of fines was the "very essence of ordination."⁴⁶ Yet, it was the issue of the lashings and absolving one from Karet which really seemed to be the essence of this *halakhic* problem. For Berab, many of his contemporaries (penitent Marranos) had a desire and need for absolution and creating this ordained bet din probably convinced scholars in Safed out of need rather than out of purely *halakhic* grounds.⁴⁷

The third issue was the authority of an ordained *beit din* to proclaim the new moon and intercalate the months. The issue of a permanent calendar by Hillel the Second in the Fourth Century ended these matters being handled by an ordained *beit din*. If an ordained *beit din* came about again, the question would arise as to whether or not they

⁴⁵ Katz 135.

⁴⁶ Katz 136.

⁴⁷ Ibid

would have the power to undo the fixed calendar. Berab sided with those who wanted to limit the power of this ordained *beit din* and not allow a refixing of the calendar, and other scholars in Safed claimed that renewing ordination would have no implication for calendar order. De Castro and Ben Habib both announced that a renewing ordination opened up the possibility of changing the calendar in an erroneous way.⁴⁸

Beyond the three *halakhic* arguments, those who opposed Berab's attempt to renew ordination also cited a procedural flaw: the fact that not "all of the scholars in the Land of Israel" had been consulted, as stipulated by Maimonides. In response to this problem, Berab said, "Who would even think of something that would delay our Redemption...that all who hear of it would not come with drums and dancing to subscribe to it."⁴⁹ Clearly, Berab's messianic fervor heavily influenced his ability to focus on the purely *halakhic* issues at hand. Berab saw himself as a "leading actor in the messianic drama, that is, as the head of the Sanhedrin that would greet the Redeemer."⁵⁰

Conclusion

Debates on authority really are reflections of the community's self-perception and competing claims to authenticity. Each generation's search for authority depends on the previous searches. For example, Maimonides expressed different opinions at different times (and in different places: Spain and Egypt), and that is what this controversy is based on. Later generations based their debate on this one.

This issue of renewing ordination again came to the forefront of the Jewish experience during the time of Jewish national reawakening in the early part of the

⁴⁸ Katz 138.

⁴⁹ Katz 139.

⁵⁰ Katz 140.

twentieth century. "Halakhists and writers suggested it as a way to establish for the Jews in Palestine a central authority bearing the title and status of the Sanhedrin."⁵¹ This was merely a continuation of the same dispute between Berab and ben Habib.

⁵¹ Katz 121.

Chapter 3

Modernity – 19th/20th Century Reinstates Ceremony

Introduction

The Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) held its most recent ceremony of investiture and ordination for the New York campus on May 22, 2005 at Central Synagogue in New York City. This is a ceremony in which nine cantorial and eleven rabbinical students celebrated the completion of their studies and a level of achievement of skill and experience. They graduated from the school and became official cantors and rabbis recognized by the reform movement. It was the 130th Academic Year. This ceremony has taken place in some form every year since the school opened, yet many aspects have changed through time. I suggest that the character of each ceremony, including the liturgy, music, speakers, format, and the location, reflects certain aspects of the reform movement, the cantorate and rabbinate, the institution of HUC-JIR and the particular campus for which the ceremony is held. By examining at the ceremony through an ethnological lens, we can learn much about the cultures behind the ceremony.

Origins of Modern Ceremony

The origins of the modern ordination ceremony are somewhat unknown. I have found scant evidence of any kind of modern ordination ritual in Europe or anywhere else before the first American ordination. In fact, the only information I did find, includes the following quote, from a manuscript of a Parisian Sanhedrin:

*Since the revolution (1789), the majority of the chiefs of families names the Rabbi, wherever there is a sufficient number of Jews to maintain one, after precious inquiries as to the morality and learning of the candidate. This mode of election is not, however, uniform; it varies according to place, and to this day, whatever concerns the election of Rabbis is still in a state of uncertainty.*⁵²

Apparently, during that time, the rabbis exercised no manner of "Police Jurisdiction" among the Jews, and a "rabbi's" common qualification was his reputation and the opinion generally entertained of his learning.

Since the French Revolution, a rabbinical tribunal called a Beit Din (which apparently was common before the revolution) was totally suppressed in France, and in Italy. The function of Rabbis was then limited to preaching morality in the temples, blessing marriages, and pronouncing divorces after the revolution, but there is no evidence of any kind of ceremony for rabbis to be ordained, nor was there any standard of required qualifications.⁵³

At the time of the first ordination exercises of the HUC-JIR class on July 11, 1883 in Cincinnati, Ohio, four men were ordained at the Plum Street Synagogue, and it was the first ordination ceremony in American history. Isaac Mayer Wise placed the *neshikat semikhah*, kiss of ordination upon each forehead, gave each one his blessing and proclaimed them to be rabbis of the Jewish faith. There are many questions about where this tradition came from originally, and Kaufmann Kohler (the subsequent president of the school) did not do the same thing when he ordained rabbis.⁵⁴ Each ordinee of Wise received a *smikhat hora'a*, document of ordination in Hebrew and English. According to

⁵² "TAMA, Transactions of the Parisian Sanhedrin" Readings in Modern Jewish History. Rivkin, Ellis.. Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion: Cincinnati, OH May 30, 1806, 24.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ According to a phone interview with Dr. Jonathan Sarna September 12, 2005.

David Philipson, one of those first ordinees, who gave the response and valedictory at the ceremony, the words that Isaac Mayer Wise said at the time of the ordination were as follows:

*In the name of God and by the authority of the Governors and of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, and in the name of all good men, I declare you to be rabbis of the Jewish faith, that you may preach the Word of God to the people, that you may be patriots in America and the standard-bearers of the people...I declare before all the people and in the presence of this congregation that you are ratified rabbis in Israel. May God's blessing be upon you and the charge of God through Moses to Joshua be verified in you. 'Be strong and courageous.'*⁵⁵

After these words, Kaufmann Kohler gave a closing address.⁵⁶ Three hours after the first ordination was the infamous "Trefa Banquet" in the basement of the Mound Street Temple, where the ordinees and distinguished guests were served all kinds of blatantly unkosher foods (shellfish). Wise was not a party to the feast. It was organized by lay leaders and caterers.⁵⁷

One of the questions this leaves us with is from where did Wise develop the ordination ritual? Was the same type of ceremony done for him? We do not know. Having spoken to many different rabbis and scholars, including Rabbi Michael Meyer, Dr. David Ellenson, Rabbi Gunther Plaut, Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, Dr. Jonathan Sarna, the Center for Jewish History, and the American Jewish Archives, there seems to be no recollection or knowledge of any ceremony done in Europe aside from private ordination. According to Dr. Alex Guttman, the late Talmud professor at HUC-JIR in Cincinnati,

⁵⁵ David Philipson, My Life as an American Jew, an Autobiography Cincinnati: John Kidd and Son, Inc. 22.

⁵⁶ James G. Heller, Isaac M. Wise: his life, work and thought. (New York:) Union of American Hebrew Congregations, (1965). 451.

⁵⁷ Samuel E. Karff Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion At One Hundred Years. Hebrew Union College Press, 1976.

rabbis were ordained privately by their own Talmud teacher in Europe.⁵⁸ Similarly, it is reported that Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel was ordained privately in Europe, as well.⁵⁹

According to Rabbi Laureate Wolli Kaelter, said to be one of the oldest living rabbis ordained at HUC-JIR, "There was nothing moving about my ordination ceremony. It was only moving because I was moved." He was ordained at HUC-JIR's Cincinnati campus in 1940 by Dr. Morgenstern in the chapel of the school. He said it was a great relief to have completed his studies, and that he owed a great deal to the school, as HUC-JIR had invited him along with four other students from the Liberal School in Berlin, the Hochschule, to study at HUC-JIR, ultimately saving them from the Holocaust. As far as he remembers, there was not any kind of special ceremony for ordination in Berlin (Rabbi Gunther Plaut also has no recollection of one), and his own ceremony was very simple, with Dr. Morganstern placing his hands on Rabbi Kaelter's head and saying a few words to him.⁶⁰

The following words from Dr. David Ellenson, the current President of HUC-JIR, elucidate his personal and institutional connection to past teachers in the *shalshet hakabbalah*, chain of tradition, that he feels a part of at the time of his own inauguration in 2002 as president of the school:

I stand as well upon the shoulders of my predecessors who have served in this office. Isaac Mayer Wise, Kaufmann Kohler, Stephen Samuel Wise, Julian Morgenstern, Nelson Glueck, Alfred Gottschalk, and Sheldon Zimmerman all gave vision and direction to our school. I thank them for all their accomplishments and I pray that the College-Institute today proves capable of building upon the foundations they have established.

⁵⁸ Reported by Dr. Larry Hoffman September 2005. Also reported by Dr. Jonathan Sarna September 2005.

⁵⁹ Interview by phone with Dr. Jonathan Sarna September 2005.

⁶⁰ Interview by phone with Rabbi Laureate Wolli Kaelter. September 12, 2005.

Each in his singular way was a giant, and I stand in respect and wonder as I survey the heritage they have bequeathed us.

As I conclude my remarks today, I would turn for inspiration and guidance to the words of Rabbi Leo Baeck, a man for whom I have always felt a special affinity. Rabbi Baeck was the last duly-elected leader of the Jewish people in Germany during the cruel era of Nazi rule. He was the teacher of my teacher Fritz Bamberger, and his direct interventions saved the lives of countless Jews. One of them was Rabbi Wolli Kaelter, who bestowed his blessing upon me today. Rabbi Kaelter was a young rabbinical student at the Hochschule when Rabbi Baeck directed him to Cincinnati to enroll at the Hebrew Union College in the 1930s. My link to Rabbi Baeck is personal and direct.⁶¹

While Dr. Ellenson's comments do not directly relate to the ordination ceremony, they do teach us that the president of the institution that ordains rabbis does feel a connection to the past, even if the particular ceremony of ordination may not have that unbroken connection. This very much mimics the aspect of the ceremony of Hadran Alakh, in chanting the names of the sons of Rav Papa, connecting to past tradition and intending to recall or conjure an image of an unbroken chain of tradition.

Different campus, Different ceremony

Because there are three different state-side campuses of the HUC-JIR institution and one in Israel (though I will only focus on the state-side campuses for this paper), there are four different places where the ceremonies are held, and each one has some different traits, though it is the same person (Dr. David Ellenson) doing essentially the same thing (ordaining the rabbis and investing the cantors) at each one. The Rosh Yeshivah, president of the College, Dr. David Ellenson, lays his hands on each person's shoulders who is ordained or invested. The name is called out in Hebrew and English in

⁶¹ Dr. David Ellenson "Inaugural Address" Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion October 13, 2002 - Plum Street Temple, Cincinnati, Ohio <http://www.huc.edu/inauguration/address.shtml>

front of an open ark, and he speaks to the individual privately in front of the congregation gathered, giving each person a ceremonial kiss on the forehead (a tradition described in the Talmud). The participant then receives a document which is called "semicha" for the rabbis and a document of "investiture" for the cantors. This year, eleven rabbis (6 men and 5 women) were ordained in New York and nine cantors were invested (4 men, 5 women). In addition, 8 rabbis (6 men, 2 women) were ordained in Los Angeles on May 15 and 8 rabbis (5 men, 3 women) were ordained in Cincinnati on June 4.⁶²

Location, Location, Location

The most obvious difference between all the ceremonies is the location. Not only are these ceremonies held in different cities and states (Los Angeles, CA; Cincinnati, OH; New York, NY; and Jerusalem, Israel) but the site of each ceremony is also very different in aesthetics and is quite reflective of the priorities and characteristics of that particular campus. In the following descriptions, it is clear that each location reflects different priorities of the particular campus.

Cincinnati Campus

The ceremony for the Cincinnati campus takes place at the Isaac M. Wise Temple, historically known as the Plum Street Temple and the true home of the reform movement, dating back 160 years. It is considered by some to be the fountainhead of Reform Judaism in America.

It was from this building that Rabbi Isaac M. Wise founded the institutions of Reform Judaism, which prior to his active career, had consisted of ideology without an institutional structure. The founding of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (1873), the Hebrew Union College

⁶² www.huc.edu

(1875) and the Central Conference of American Rabbis (1889), representing the structure of Reform Judaism, was accomplished from the Plum Street Temple by Rabbi Wise who served as founder and president of these three institutions while Rabbi at K.K. B'nai Yeshurun until his death in 1900.⁶³

The following description of the building and its history is helpful in understanding the significance of the actual edifice in relation to its bearing on the ceremony:

Designed by James Keyes Wilson, a prominent American architect and first president of the Cincinnati Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, the building reflects a synagogue architectural style that had emerged in Germany in the nineteenth century, a Byzantine-Moorish style. It hearkens to a previous era of the Golden Age of Spain in Jewish history, and reflects Rabbi Wise's optimism that the developing American Jewish experience would be the next Golden Age.

The complex design of Plum Street Temple mirrors many cultures: from the outside the tall proportions, three pointed arched entrances and rose window suggest a Gothic revival church; the crowning minarets hint of Islamic architecture; the motif's decorating the entrances, repeated in the rose window and on the Torah Ark introduce a Moorish theme; the 14 bands of Hebrew texts surrounding the interior were selected by Rabbi Wise and are chosen primarily from the Book of Psalms.⁶⁴

The point that the design mirrors many cultures is noteworthy. This was the first building considered to be the home of Reform Judaism, yet it was housed in a building that, while "reflective of the Golden Age of Spain" also looked like or had elements of many other cultures. At the time of the first ordinations, for which the liturgy was very much based on what other religions did for their own ordination of priests, it tells us something about the original character of Reform Judaism that this momentous occasion was not held in a building that looked especially "Jewish." It was still a time when Jews

⁶³http://www.wisetemple.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=home.viewPage&page_id=2A5EEBE9-5004-D739-A5518D005D2FD108

⁶⁴ *ibid*

did not necessarily want to stand out as being different from their neighbors in America. As that has changed, and the ceremony in Cincinnati today is so infused with Jewish tradition that the original ordinees might not even recognize it, the fact that it is held in this historic building still makes a kind of statement about the connection to the roots of Reform Judaism. Perhaps, the strong tie to the founding of Reform Judaism is important for newly ordained rabbis to feel a connection not only to Jewish tradition but also to Reform Jewish roots, which is facilitated by being in this particular building.

The ceremony in Cincinnati stands out as being the only one with a full Shacharit service with a Torah service and sermon in addition to the actual ordination. The names of the ordinees are listed in the program, but with no description of the individuals. The music is directed by Dr. Richard S. Sarason.

New York campus

For the New York campus, the location of the ceremony has traditionally been Temple Emanu El in Manhattan, but this year, due to renovations in that historic congregation, the ceremony was held at Central Synagogue in Manhattan. It, too, has a significant history which impacts the ceremony. Due to an accidental fire in 1998 which consumed the roof and most of its wooden truss supports, the historic interior has been recently renovated and restored to the paint patterns established in 1872, documented through photographs. The following is a detailed description of the building:

The sanctuary celebrates worship with a dramatic deep blue ceiling, stencil work in 69 colors, molded-plaster patterns, and carved wood in walnut and ash...Of all the buildings constructed in New York in the late-19th century none conveys greater optimism about the future of America than Central Synagogue. Built at a time of great expansion, 1870 through 1872, it was consecrated before the financial panic of

1873, Central Synagogue was designed by Henry Fernbach, often cited as the first Jewish architect in America...

By seizing upon Moorish precedent, Fernbach gave New York a synagogue whose exterior form and detail were—and still are—in sharp contrast to most other religious structures in the city. It remains a distinctive presence next to surrounding buildings.⁶⁵

In contrast to the Plum Street Synagogue, it is important to note that this building is described as standing out compared to other religious buildings in the city. It is not made to look like other churches or religious buildings. Similar to Cincinnati, it also does feature a rose window and is also said to reflect hope for the future of America, hope for the future of Jews in America.

Comparatively, the usual and location for the New York campus ceremony has been the historic Temple Emanu El sanctuary, and according to the administration of the New York campus, it will continue to be held there after the construction is complete. The following brief history of Temple Emanu El elucidates the connection between the physical building, its history, and what might be reflected in a ceremony held within the Temple.

The history of Temple Emanu-El is a reflection of the Jewish historical experience in America. Though the first Jews to arrive in the New World came as early as 1654, their numbers reached significance only at the midpoint of the nineteenth century. It was during this time that Emanu-El was founded. Thirty- three immigrants from Germany, part of a wave of Western European Jews who came to these shores to escape the rigid conservatism of post-Napoleonic Europe, established the Temple in 1845.

As did many of their fellow immigrants, these thirty-three men sought to adapt their lives, including their religious practice, to the new environment. In 1844 they formed a cultural society, or Cultus Verein, for

⁶⁵ "The Restoration Of Central Synagogue" Hugh Hardy, FAIA, Architect, Central Synagogue Restoration Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates LLP
http://www.centralsynagogue.org/downloads/cs_restoration.pdf

this purpose. From that society their new temple -- a Reform congregation -- was born.

Emanu-El, meaning "God is with us," was established, simultaneously the first Reform congregation in the city of New York and the third in the nation...An imposing sanctuary was erected on the northeast corner of Fifth Avenue and Forty-third Street, of which a contemporary critic wrote, "[the new Temple Emanu-El] is the finest example of Moorish architecture in the Western world." This magnificent building remained the Congregation's house of worship until the late 1920s. Thus, in less than twenty-five years, Emanu-El's rise to eminence -- a microcosm of the success of the Western European immigrant in general and the German Jewish immigrant in particular -- was nothing short of extraordinary.

In 1995 Emanu-El, the largest Reform congregation in the world, housed in the largest synagogue in the world, marked its sesquicentennial anniversary. Throughout the Temple's 150 years, its members have served as the finest examples of what the Jew in America could strive to be. In this new millennium Emanu-El will continue to uphold the traditions that have placed it among the preeminent exponents of Liberal Judaism.⁶⁶

Compared to the location of Central Synagogue, where the ceremony was held this year, the imposing sanctuary and building of Emanu El is daunting, if not majestic. As can probably be discerned from the brief description, there is a tremendous difference in the two locations, and while both are grand and majestic, they create a very different feeling for the ceremony. This was noted by many participants and attendees at the most recent ceremony, including the Rosh Yeshivah. The change of location as well as a drastic change in the actual ceremony has lead to a remarkably different ceremony from years past.

The ceremony, which at all three American campuses is created with the cooperation of students, faculty and administration of the schools (with varying balances of input from each), changes slightly from year to year at each campus. In New York, for this year, it was determined for a number of reasons to make changes including

⁶⁶ <http://www.emanuelnyc.org/> by Dr. Ronald B. Sobel, Senior Rabbi Emeritus

separating the ceremony of investiture and ordination from the bestowal of any honorary degrees, which took place in a separate graduation ceremony. There were also no other speakers aside from Dr. Ellenson and the recipient of the prestigious Roger E. Joseph Award for Humanitarian efforts. In years past, there has been at least one additional speaker. The additional change of completely removing a Shacharit service (also done on the L.A. campus) made the ceremony literally hours shorter than it had been in the past, leaving participants with a feeling of relief and surprise when the ceremony ended in only two and a half hours.

Because of the different location than in the past, the music also had to be adjusted and adapt to the new space, giving the ceremony a different feeling. Whereas at Temple Emanu El, the student cantor choir usually is seated hidden from the congregation in a choir loft above the bimah, in this location, they were seen seated in a choir loft behind the congregation but in plain sight from the bimah. According to Cantor Israel Goldstein, Director of the School of Sacred Music, this presented some new musical challenges while at the same time solving others. One obvious difference was the fact that the choir could be seen by the congregation during the ceremony, eliminating some of the ethereal qualities of the invisible choir of past ceremonies. There was also a new musical piece which was sung by the newly invested Cantors, which was commissioned by the parents of one of the cantorial students being invested, said to be a highlight of the ceremony, musically.⁶⁷

First, it should be noted that the most obvious difference from the other campus ceremonies is that New York is the only one that has an investiture ceremony and the only one that has a School of Sacred Music at all. Therefore, the choir of student cantors

⁶⁷ Interview with Cantor Israel Goldstein May 24, 2005

is a radically different group from the choirs who sing in Cincinnati and L.A. and the music is chosen with the help of cantorial students, attempting to represent a wide variety of styles taught by the school. In L.A., there are cantors from the community and lay singers from congregations around L.A. who come together to sing for this ceremony. In Cincinnati, there are professional singers hired for the occasion (both Jewish and non-Jewish).⁶⁸

L.A. Campus

The ceremony for the L.A. campus is the newest ceremony. Only ordaining rabbis since 2002, the ceremony has been held in the Wilshire Boulevard Temple in L.A., a place known for its majestic beauty and designed and decorated by people who create sets for movies in Hollywood. It has been called the “most majestic sanctuary in the city” and it also has a history of having HUC-JIR classes held in the building, itself. Chartered as Congregation B’nai Brith in 1862, Wilshire Boulevard Temple has been an institution with a sense of its responsibility and importance to Los Angeles.⁶⁹

According to Rabbi Richard Levy, Dean of the Rabbinical School in L.A., the L.A. campus was created in 1954 not intending to ordain rabbis. It was to be a school for first and second year students who would later transfer to another campus for the completion of their rabbinical studies. Once the year-in-Israel began to be the automatic first year of study for rabbis, the L.A. campus was an option for students for second and third years of studies in addition to the Rhea Hirsch School of Education and School of Communal Service. However, as the programs expanded and political disagreements

⁶⁸ *ibid*

⁶⁹ “A History of Wilshire Boulevard Temple: The First 50 Years” compiled by Wilshire Boulevard Temple.

abated over whether the L.A. campus should have a complete program to ordain rabbis. Rabbi Sheldon Zimmerman, Rosh Yeshivah of HUC-JIR at the time, announced in 1999 that L.A. would host its first ordination ceremony in 2002, and Dr. Richard Levy, Director of the Rabbinical program in L.A. and Dr. Lewis Barth, Dean of the L.A. campus got to work on creating a ceremony with the cooperation of the students who would be ordained in that ceremony.⁷⁰

Both Levy and Lewis were themselves ordained in Cincinnati and had attended the ceremony in New York, and they admittedly borrowed some elements from those ceremonies as well as omitted sections and elements of those ceremonies. An example is their reaction to the lengthy duration of the New York ceremony, and as a result, they have strictly adhered to a two-hour limit to the L.A. ceremony every year. Part of the way this is ensured is by having a separate Shacharit service for ordinees only before the ordination ceremony.⁷¹

There is symbolism infused in every aspect of the ceremony to make the most of every moment. As the class does the processional walk and the recessional walk, important symbolism is evident as each person carries in a Torah, which is placed in the ark and then carried out of the sanctuary at the end. This shows that the Torah has joined them coming from their studies and leaves with them out into the world. In the ceremony's program, there is an explanation that each person has chosen a particular passage to which the Torah is rolled in the Torah he/she carries which is of particular

⁷⁰ Interview with Rabbi Richard Levy, June 3, 2005.

⁷¹ *ibid*

meaning to that person. Each student has taught that section of the Torah to the class during a seminar in the previous semester.⁷²

There is also symbolism in what the ordinees wear, white robes, separating them from the other people in attendance, as kadosh, holy or separate. This, among some other traditions, was adapted from the University of Judaism (UJ) ordination ceremony, in which participants wear regular clothes, with the hope that at the HUC-JIR ceremony, the idea of separateness was an important symbol of this ceremony. Also borrowed from the UJ ceremony, each ordinee is presented by someone in the community, a rabbi with whom the person has a personal connection with. The intent is to emphasize the nature of individuals, unlike the feeling of anonymity one might get from the New York or Cincinnati ceremony. Each presenter speaks for a short time about the ordinee being presented.⁷³

The addition of a beautifully crafted artistic chuppah on the bimah in front of the ark is a special touch that adds to the symbolism of the ceremony. Without being explicitly explained, the image conjures a marriage – perhaps a marriage between God and the Jewish people or even more specifically as a celebration of the commitment these individuals are making to the Jewish people or to God. The chuppah has symbolic images on it and text, with ideas of continuity, the values which come of lives of righteousness, and the names of patriarchs and matriarchs. A picture of that chuppah adorns the cover of the Ordination program, handed to each attendee. It was donated by

⁷² ibid

⁷³ ibid

the Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis and created by artist, Peachy Levy upon the first ordination ceremony.⁷⁴

Musically, the ceremony in L.A. has commissioned a new piece for each year to add to the repertoire of Jewish music, to celebrate this long awaited event, (not only for the individuals being ordained but also for the institution as a whole), and also with the purpose of showing how important Jewish music is to this institution. This year's ceremony marked the 50th year anniversary of the founding of the LA campus, so the commissioned piece was entitled "yovel" or "jubilee" to honor the accomplishment of the "jubilee" Rabbinic class.⁷⁵

Cantor Evan Kent (faculty member of the LA campus and Cantor at Temple Isaiah) chooses the musical selections each year for the ceremony in consultation with Cantor Samuel Radwine. Co-cantor Susan Karol also sings, and there is a choir made up of cantors and lay choir members from the community who sing. The choir is seated in the back right section of the sanctuary facing the ark, and soloists come to the bimah to sing. An additional musical aspect which is unique to the L.A. ceremony is the blowing of shofarot as a cue for the procession, adding another element of connection to Jewish custom and tradition.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ ibid

⁷⁵ ibid

⁷⁶ ibid

What does each ceremony say about the institution?

The ceremony in L.A. seems to reflect very clearly the care the school has for each person as an individual. There is a lot of emphasis on meaning, symbolism, and making this ceremony something special for the individuals who are being ordained. In looking at the program for the ordination ceremony, where each ordinee has a full page with a photo and personal words and a text teaching, in comparison to the other programs (where in New York, each person has a short paragraph with a line of text and in Cincinnati, the individuals are only listed by name in Hebrew and English) is an indication of the great concern the L.A. campus seems to place on the individual for this ceremony.

The ceremony in Cincinnati seems to indicate that the school is more focused on infusing Jewish tradition and emphasizing reform tradition over the need to recognize the individual. From looking at the program and knowing about the building, we can see that tying this ordination to Reform Jewish traditions is very important at the Cincinnati campus.

The ceremony in New York seems to have a focus on the greater community. The humanitarian honor bestowed focuses outside of the HUC-JIR community towards the larger society. It also reinforces the notion that each person can make a difference in the world. Also, the fact that the New York campus is in close proximity to the Union for Reform Judaism means that there are a lot of people attending who are involved in the Reform Movement, giving the ceremony a feeling of one large Jewish community. The music was largely choral music, sung by a community of cantors and cantorial students,

and the last song of the ceremony was a participatory song, with the congregation singing as the ceremony ended.

Commemoration Ceremonies

Let us look at the language used to describe the ceremony. The term "ordain" means "to admit to religious ministry; confer holy orders upon, decree, enact, destine." The most common English translation and understanding of the Hebrew term "semicha" is the laying on of hands as done in the Bible when God instructs Moses to pass his authority down to Joshua (see Chapter One). This term has historical significance and is meant to connect the present day ceremony to the historical, centuries old tradition of laying on hands to pass on leadership and authority.⁷⁷

The term "investiture" is "the formal installation of person in office or rank." The term investiture was first used to describe the bestowal of the cantorial honor by Dr. Paul Steinberg, dean of the New York school at the time, partly in order to allow Cantors to benefit from tax laws which assist clergy members.⁷⁸

The term "commemoration" is defined as "celebrate, keep in memory by ceremony; be a memorial of."⁷⁹ These are three different goals which are all sought by the ceremony of investiture and ordination at HUC-JIR. While it celebrates the completion of a period of study and the entry into a new phase of an individual's life and career, it also keeps the memory of Jewish history and traditions within the ceremony itself. It could even be said that the ceremony is a memorial of not only those of our

⁷⁸ Phone conversation with Dr. Paul Steinberg, June 2005.

⁷⁹ Webster's Dictionary, p. 89.

loved ones who have died and are specifically mentioned during all of the ceremonies, but also a memorial of all those who have come before us to lead us to this point – those who spent their lives furthering Reform Judaism, those teachers who have helped these newly ordained and invested rabbis and cantors along the way, and before that, those who died because they were Jewish or in tragedies of our people's history. Therefore, this ceremony is truly a memorial in addition to being a celebration – a true commemoration.

Commemoration ceremonies connect the present with the past through a founding myth. For the ordination ceremony, the founding myth is that the laying on of hands which will be done at the modern day rabbinic ordination connects these rabbis to the authority and authenticity of the mantle of leadership passed down in the same way from Moses to Joshua in the Torah. Yet, as we have seen, myths can be partly true and partly untrue at the same time. Myths are a way that we can draw on the past, while twisting the facts to suit our own purposes. In fact, the whole idea of having rabbis, also, seems to be an idea which is built on myth to some degree, for the responsibilities and roles of a rabbi have changed dramatically from generation to generation. The ordination ceremony, then, is a recollection of origins and myths of the origins of rabbis. In determining what an appropriate liturgy would be for this ceremony, perhaps we can turn to the commemoration ceremonies of Israel, which similarly are based on the myths of origin.

Commemoration ceremonies often do remember tragedies while celebrating the present accomplishments at the same time. By examining a commemoration ceremony in Israel, it can be seen how this type of ceremony can reflect much about a society. The ceremony commemorating the Bar Kochba Revolt held in Israel on the Lag B'Omer

festive day was integrated into national Hebrew culture during the prestate period. This day became a part of Israeli national tradition after the foundation of the state in 1948. Jewish settlers used this as well as Masada as mythical events to inspire and later to celebrate Zionist national revival. Archaeology played a role in both, as the discovery of Bar Kochba letters in 1960 and excavation of Masada in mid-60's provoked closer scrutiny of the commemoration of events. The government's involvement in the creation of ceremony highlighted the significance in contemporary Israeli politics. The question was, had there been a reconstruction of events to serve the purpose of the current government in creating a false myth? This became a matter of great public debate.⁸⁰

In 1980, Yehoshafat Harkabi, a professor of international relations at Hebrew University published his critique of the Bar Kochba revolt and its commemoration in modern Israeli culture. He claimed that the commemoration did not recognize the terrible consequences of the revolt and that this omission is dangerous: "cheering for a national suicide" He applies this lesson to the current Israeli-Palestinian conflict (although he denies making a direct comparison). This is an example of the power of a commemorative event to affect a current situation. Likewise, a ceremony for the HUC-JIR investiture and ordination could impact the current status of the cantors, rabbis and the reform movement as it reflects the culture of the institution.⁸¹

The state funeral ceremony was designed to reinforce the established commemoration of the Bar Kochba revolt. A eulogy at the ceremony addressed "our glorious fathers" whose remains were buried. It focused on their heroism and courage

⁸⁰ Yael Zerubavel, Recovered Roots. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press (1995) 178.

⁸¹ Zerubavel 179.

and avoided mentioning the outcome of that revolt. The connection between the ancient and contemporary symbolized continuity, just as the ordination ceremony attempts to do.⁸² An important aspect of the ordination and investiture ceremony is its link to tradition, the feeling of authenticity and connection to the Jewish tradition which the participants have been studying.

A question of when to hold the commemoration of Bar Kochba ceremony arose. It was decided to be on Lag B'Omer, reinforcing the activist reconstruction of the historical event that emphasized the rebels' courage and commitment at Bar Kochba and ignored the outcome of their revolt. Another date was suggested, the 16th of Av, a date appropriate for burial according to Jewish tradition, but the choice of activist agenda won over the religious considerations, showing how this commemoration ceremony reflected the current needs and desires of the society, while drawing on traditions of the past at the same time.⁸³

Another type of ceremony in Israel is highly symbolic of a modern culture as it connects to ancient tradition. Military rituals atop Masada emphasize the continuity between the ancient and present defenders of the nation.⁸⁴ Masada became an important point of pilgrimage in Israel in the 1940s. In order to heighten the dramatic affect of climbing to the top, there had to be something at the top which was a climax: a beautiful sunrise or sunset was often that highlight. The ruins also needed a dramatic story to make them come to life. Reading Josephus's account at the top of Masada while looking at the ruins developed into a ritual reading with fire-torches or fire inscriptions.

⁸² Zerubavel 189.

⁸³ Zerubavel 190.

⁸⁴ Zerubavel 130.

particularly the words "Never again shall Masada fall." This type of ceremony transforms a moment into something more transcendent, meaningful, symbolic, and memorable, something we would perhaps like to emulate in creating an ordination liturgy.⁸⁵ The IDF swearing-in Ceremony atop Masada accentuates and perpetuates the emphasis on "heroism, patriotic sacrifice, and renewal promoted by activist narrative."⁸⁶ Ideally, the moment of ordination, with its use of tradition, symbols, music and space also could bring this same kind of transcendent, meaningful and symbolic feeling to the moment.

Commemorating a period of study: Hadran Alakh and Hadar Yitzhak

In Jewish tradition, we have precedent for celebrating and commemorating the completion of a period of study. The term "hadran" (Aramaic for "we returned") describes "both the celebration held on the completion of the study of a tractate of the Talmud and the type of discourse delivered on that occasion...The celebration and feasting held on such an occasion are mentioned in the Talmud (Shabbat 118b-119a)."⁸⁷ There are some essential elements of prayer recited at the conclusion of the study of a tractate, including the naming of the ten sons of Rav Papa as an incantation. There is also an expanded version of the Kaddish d'Rabbanan, honoring and remembering one's teachers. There is a connection made between the end of one period of study and the beginning of the next.⁸⁸ This, too, can be a model or possibly a direct part of a

⁸⁵ Zerubavel 127.

⁸⁶ Zerubavel 175.

⁸⁷ "Hadran" Encyclopedia Judaica p.1053.

⁸⁸ *ibid*

meaningful ordination liturgy. The liturgy of the ceremony connects the present with the past through a founding myth

Transformation through ritual

Not only is the investiture and ordination ceremony a commemoration of a period of study, but it is also a ritual in which there is an expectation of actual transformation. In the most basic sense, the person being invested or ordained undergoes a transformation during the ceremony from student to professional, but there is much more involved. During the ceremony, there is actually a perceived change in the person. There is a mystery involved in the silent moments spent with the president of the college privately speaking to each student in front of an open ark, in which no one knows what transpires but the two standing there, though everyone in attendance witnesses it. There is clearly a moment of transformation which occurs. One rabbi reported that during his moment of ordination, he was told that at each step on the ladder, there was an opportunity to meet God, and then he was asked, was he ready to meet God, to which he enthusiastically replied, "Yes!" while another rabbi's reaction was to hug and kiss the Torah resting in the open ark when asked the same question. Transformational moments are perceived of in different ways.

Arnold van Gennep (1960) defined rites of passage as: "rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age." Each change is characterized by three stages or phases: separation, margin, and aggregation. Separation involves the detachment of the individual or group from a fixed point in the social structure or from a set of cultural conditions, or from both. During the following liminal phase, the

characteristics of the ritual subject are ambiguous, and in the third phase, the passage is consummated. The "passenger" undergoing the transformation is in a relatively stable state and has rights and obligations to others of a clearly defined and "structural" type. The expectation is that the passenger behaves in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of that social position in a system of such positions.⁸⁹

All this applies directly to the process of becoming a rabbi or cantor. The separation occurs as the first year requires students to spend a year in Israel. Geographically, the students are clearly separated and this gives an opportunity for learning in a new environment, separate from their regular lives. The liminal phase occurs throughout the years in school, as students feel different – not yet a rabbi or cantor, but often called so by the congregations they serve. Lastly, it is during this ceremony that the final phase begins, when the passage is consummated and the newly titled "Rabbi" and "Cantor" can begin their new lives (which usually involves moving to a new city and beginning a new job) as Rabbis and Cantors serving Jewish communities around the world.

Community recognition of accomplishment

There is a certain element of the ceremony which is really intended not just for the "passengers" but for their families, friends, and the greater Jewish community. The recognition of accomplishment is an important part of the ceremony, and according to Jeanie Rosensaft, Senior National Director For Public Affairs And Institutional Planning

⁸⁹ Victor W. Turner The Ritual Process. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1969, 194.

for HUC-JIR, the school sends out a press release and national press advisory telling the public how many and who has been ordained and invested each year. There is a press release sent to the home congregations of the newly ordained rabbis and invested cantors. This not only lets the public know about what is happening, but it also extends the visibility of the college.⁹⁰ According to one of the College's press releases in 2005:

*In total, the international College-Institute will ordain 27 rabbis (17 men, 10 women) and invest nine cantors (four men, five women) in Cincinnati, Los Angeles and New York this year. These new rabbis and cantors will be serving Reform Jewish congregations and community organizations around the country; and in so doing, share the skills and knowledge of an unparalleled Jewish education.*⁹¹

Conclusions

The HUC-JIR Investiture and Ordination ceremonies across the country have changed through the years and on each campus in different ways. By looking at the details of the different ceremonies, we can learn about each campus, its priorities, and its values in relation to the rabbis and cantors who are being recognized. From this year's ceremonies, the values that stand out include New York's focus on the larger community, Cincinnati's focus on Reform Judaism, and Los Angeles's focus on the individual. These differences are seen in the locations of the ceremonies, the music, the programs, and the details of the ceremonies themselves. As the HUC-JIR institution as a whole attempts to become more unified and more consistent across the different campuses, it will be interesting to see how the ceremonies reflect the differences, similarities, and changes in the institution as a whole. Next year, for example, there will be one invitation which

⁹⁰ Interview with Jeanie Rosenshaft May 24, 2005.

⁹¹ <http://huc.edu/newspubs/pressroom/2005/5/NewRabbiOrdination.shtml>

incorporates all three campus's ceremonies in an attempt to reflect the unification which is occurring. In the years to come, what will be the traits which continue to distinguish one campus from another?

The ordination ceremony has been built on a founding myth, connecting the past with the present. The challenge we now face is the question of how a ceremony for ordination could include the sacred myth, the rite of passage and transformation, commemoration, and the community recognition of the accomplishment, and still be concise and relevant. In creating an ordination liturgy, we must transform a moment into something more transcendent, meaningful, symbolic, and memorable.

Chapter 4

Proposed Ordination Ceremony

Creating Ritual and Tradition

In creating a new or revised ceremony for ordination, it is important to ask the question, Why? Why do we need a new ritual? Why do we need new liturgy? Should we not rely on what is considered by now to be the 'traditional' liturgy for ordination? Anecdotally, from the interviews I conducted as well as from the research presented in this thesis, it seems that the current ordination ceremony is unsatisfactory. In New York and Cincinnati, at least, people do not tend to find the ceremony meaningful, because of its tremendous length and opaque meaning. Why do we even want to perpetuate a false myth of continuation of something that may not ever have been done in antiquity, anyway?

Actually, invented ritual is not new! Eric Hobsbawm explains: "'Traditions' which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented."⁹² He goes on to explain that "invented tradition" ...seeks to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."⁹³ But, the fact is that the implied continuity is fictitious in many 'invented traditions' as it is in an ordination ceremony. New traditions may be invented in part, because old ways of defining things are deliberately not used. The "nineteenth-century liberal ideology of social change systematically failed to provide for the social and

⁹² Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger, The Invention of Tradition. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983. 1.

⁹³ Ibid

authority ties taken for granted in earlier societies, and created voids which might have to be filled by invented practices.”⁹⁴ Additionally, these invented traditions (like Ordination) serve a purpose: to establish and legitimize an institution (in our case, HUC-JIR), status (Reform Rabbis in America) and authority (of those rabbis). I would add that in our modern day ceremony, we want to create something that is meaningful for the institution, the individual ‘passengers’ as well as the larger community, marking this time as an end of a period of study while recognizing a transformation, of sorts, and linking the moment to the past to infuse it with a greater significance and sense of history.

Step-by-Step: *Hadran Alakh* and *Hadar Yitzhak*

In developing an ordination liturgy, we begin by looking at the *Hadran Alakh* ceremony, with the commentary from *Hadar Yitzhak* for guidance (Appendix 1 and 2 of this thesis).

A modern ordination ceremony could follow the format of the *Hadran*. The *Hadran* liturgy seems to be directed towards the words of the tractate, personifying the tractate in order to thank it, ask it not to forget us, and tell it that we will not forget the tractate. Personalizing the text adds an element of personal connection, causing the text to seem more like a friend to the person who has studied it. Likewise, the ordination ceremony should personify the material studied for the five years of preparation, thanking the actual teachings and texts in a poem, prayer or song.

For example, as new music was created in both New York and Los Angeles, a melody could be composed for the words, “*Hadran Alakh, V’hadrach Alan*” and these could be the opening words and song of the ceremony. In the program book, given out at

⁹⁴ Hobsbawm and Ranger, 8.

the ceremony, there could be an explanation of these words, followed by a personal choice of text from each ordinee (as in the Los Angeles ordination), next to a picture of each ordinee. At the top of the pages of the program, could be the actual words from *Hadran Alakh* in watermarked text. This would link the ordination ceremony to the centuries-old Jewish tradition of saying "*Hadran Alakh*".

The next part of the inherited *Hadran Alakh* is the repetition of the names of Rav Papa's sons. That hardly fits our own time, but our ceremony could include a similar element: the names of those the ordinees themselves wish to remember at this important time of their lives – enhanced by a musical interlude in the background from the *Hadran Alakh* melody.

The suggested ceremony would look something like this:

Introduction

Processional, "*Baruch Haba*"

Welcome from Dean

Opening Music: "*Hadran Alakh, V'Hadrach Alan*"

Presidential Charge

Moment of Remembrance (our equivalent of Rav Papa's sons)

Presentation of Candidates

Introductory interlude: Praise of God –perhaps, *Shiru Ladonai*

Granting of *Semikhah* and Investiture

Concluding interlude: Perhaps *Halleluyah* (Psalm 150)

Kaddish D'Rabbanan – Aramaic and English

"Thank you" prayer to teachers, families and friends with participation/response

Teachers' prayer to ordinees

Shehechayanu

Prayer for Peace in Israel

Conclusion

Closing Benediction

Recessional

Conclusion

This ceremony integrates aspects of the Biblical, Rabbinic, and post-Rabbinic ideas of Semikhah, creating a ritual which combines the modern meaning of Rabbinic ordination with aspects of tradition which make the ritual feel special to participants and observers. It is my hope that this thesis can be a guide for those in the years ahead who create the ordination ritual in their attempts to bring together tradition, relevance and meaning into the moment of ordination.

Appendix 1

Hadran Alakh⁹⁵

We shall return to you, Tractate Berachot, and you shall return to us.⁹⁶ Our thoughts are on you, Tractate Berachot, and your thoughts are on us. We will not forget you, Tractate Berachot, and you will not forget us – neither in This World, nor in the World to Come.

May it be Your will, Adonai, our God, and the God of our forefathers, that Your Torah be our preoccupation in This World, and may it remain with us in the World to Come.

Chanina bar Pappa, Rami bar Pappa, Nachman bar Pappa, Achai bar Pappa, Abba Mari bar Pappa, Rafram bar Pappa, Rachisch bar Pappa, Surchav bar Pappa, Adda bar Pappa, Daru bar Pappa.

Please, Adonai, our God, sweeten the words of Your Torah in our mouth and in the mouths of Your people, the House of Israel, and may we all, we, our offspring [the offspring of our offspring] and the offspring of Your people, the House of Israel, all of us – know Your Name and study Your Torah. Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is forever with me. May my heart be perfect in Your statutes, so that I not be shamed. I will never forget Your precept, for through them You have preserved me. Blessed are You, Adonai, teach me Your statutes. Amen. Amen. Selah! Forever!

⁹⁵ Translation altered to Sephardit

⁹⁶ This could also be translated to indicate bringing glory and splendor to the tractate, as described in the Encyclopedia Judaica, page 1054.

We express gratitude before You, Adonai, our God, and the God of our forefathers, that You have established our portion with those who dwell in the study hall, and have not established our portion with idlers. For we arise early and they arise early; we arise early for the words of Torah, while they arise early for idle words. We toil and they toil; we toil and receive reward, while they toil and do not receive reward. We run and they run; we run to the life of the World to Come, while they run to the well of destruction, as it is said; But You, O God, You will lower them into the well of destruction, men of bloodshed and deceit shall not live out half their days; and I will trust in You.

May it be Your will, Adonai, my God, that just as You have helped me complete Tractate Berachot, so may You help me to begin other tractates and books, and to complete them; to learn and to teach, to safeguard and to perform, and to fulfill all the words of Your Torah's teachings with love. May the merit of all the Tannaim, Amoraim, and Torah scholars stand by me and my children, that the Torah shall not depart from my mouth and from the mouth of my children and my children's children forever. May there be fulfilled for me the verse: When you walk, it (i.e. the Torah) will guide you when you lie down, it will watch over you; and when you wake up, it will converse with you. For because of me (i.e. the Torah) your days will increase, and years of life will be added to You. Long days are in its right hand, and in its left hand are wealth and honor. Adonai will give might to His people, Adonai will bless God's people with peace.⁹⁷

If a minyan is present, a special version (also found at the end of a tractate of the Talmud) of the Rabbis Kaddish (Kaddish D'Rabbanan) is recited by one or more of those present.

⁹⁷ Translation of *Hadran Alakh* text from end of *Tractate Berachot*, Schottenstein edition.

Appendix 2

Hadar Yitzhak

Introduction

The custom of our ancestors is Torah as the Tosafot say in Menahot 20, Pesachim 20, Pesachim 50. It is the custom for people to say the names of the ten sons of Rav Papa whose names are customarily mentioned in the manner of the *Hadran Alakh* ceremony, which is said at the conclusion of a volume of Talmud as is explained in *Sefer Ha Eshkol* and in the responsa of Rav Moshe Isserles and in the Book *Yam Shel Shlomo*. Also in the books of the *Rishonim*, and the *Achronim* there are reasons and allusions for mentioning these names for the great glory of the Torah. Through the glory of the Torah wisdom in *masechta*⁹⁸ *Derech Eretz Zutah*⁹⁹ *Perek Hey*.¹⁰⁰ I am here going to give the second degree reason to praise, elevate, exalt, and glorify in the manner of *Hadran Alakh* to bless. We bless the memory of the names of the sons of Rav Papa who are exalted and praised by the mouths of those who study a word of *halacha* as it is said in Yevamot 97. that statements from the 10 sons of Rav Papa are scattered throughout the Bavli and Yerushalmi, both in *Halakhic* and *Aggadic* texts. In congregations of the nation of Israel there is a joy of Torah in the conclusion of the volume of *Gemara* since they have been worthy to be remembered, we will say their names. Also something will be said from Shabbat 33 and Bava Kama 89. In their praise in the conclusion of the volume of

⁹⁸ *Masechta* the Aramaic term for the Hebrew *Masechet* and is defined in Jastrow as a text, treatise or legal topic p.808

⁹⁹ A minor tractate of the Babylonian Talmud

¹⁰⁰ This passage briefly discusses the "*Hadar*" or the glory of Torah study

Gemara. Rashi explained with regard to Noah since the Torah mentioned him in a book praising him. "For it adds to the importance of these men (to mention their names)."¹⁰¹

To publicize this matter, it occurred to me to do an inclusive composition which adds glory and explanation to all the words of the manner of *Hadran Alakh* which is said at a conclusion of a volume of *gemara*:

1. An explication to glorify and explicate all the words of the manner of *Hadran Alakh*
2. A collection of statements from the Talmud of these ten sons of Rav Papa scattered in both the Bavli and Yerushalmi according to the order that they are brought in formulation of a *hadran*.
3. Explications and ideas of all statements of the sons of Rav Papa.
4. Reasons and allusions for the mention of these names.
5. New matters to derive from the statement of the sons of Rav Papa in the conclusion of a volume.
6. Genealogy of the ten sons of Rav Papa.
7. Genealogy of Rav Papa himself.
8. The ancestors of Rav Papa
9. The teachers of Rav Papa
10. The colleagues of Rav Papa
11. The *yeshivah* of Rav Papa
12. The students of Rav Papa
13. The *halakhot* of Rav Papa
14. The greatness of Rav Papa

¹⁰¹ BT Yevamot 45, Bava Batra 36

15. The work of Rav Papa
16. The qualities and deeds of Rav Papa
17. The wives and members of the household of Rav Papa
18. The years of Rav Papa's life and his death and the place of his burial
19. How many times Rav Papa is found in the Gemara
20. If all the sons of Rav Papa were one
21. From which Rav Papa were the ten sons
22. If there is found in *gemara* more than ten sons of Rav Papa
23. Why we mention ten sons of Rav Papa and not more
24. Why we mention especially these ten sons of Rav Papa
25. From which time were these sons of Rav Papa
26. A comprehensive index of all these sons of Rav Papa scattered throughout the Bavli and Yerushalmi and from all types of *midrashim* also according to the version and the opinions of the *Geonim*.
27. Explanation of all the words in the *nusach* of the *Kaddish* "B'Almah Dahu Atid Lithadta, etc...."
28. Reason that they fixed the *Kaddish* in the Aramaic language.
29. Reason that it is called *Kaddish D'Rabbanan*
30. Reason that it is customary to say the word "*Tovim*" in the *Kaddish D'Rabbanan*
31. Reason that it was fixed to say the line "*Oseh Shalom*" at the end (of the *Kaddish*)
32. On the issue of the *drasha* and the *Kaddish* containing the section beginning with "*Atid*"

33. Conclusion of our Rabbi "Ha Rabah" (Abraham Ben Isaac Of Narbonne) in his book the *Eshkol Hilkhos* 60:400
34. Conclusion of Ha Rama (*Rama* - R' Moshe Ben Yisrael Isserles, Cracow, 1530 – 1572)¹⁰² in his book *Questions and Answers* at the end of the last discussion
35. Conclusion of our Rabbi Maharashal in his book *Yam Shel Shlomo* in the last *perek* of *Meruvah* (name of a chapter).
36. Conclusion of our Rabbi Mahariach (Rav Chayim ben B'tzalel z"l, the brother of the Maharal z"l of Prague) in his book *Sefer HaChayim*--Part One Section Two.
37. Laws of conclusion and festive meal that are done in a conclusion for a volume of *Gemara*
38. If one can join who did not study the volume.
39. If one can do one festive meal for two *masechtot*.
40. The reason that we don't say that "the *Simcha* in God's presence" in the *Birkat Hamazon* (which is said at a *Sheva Berachot*)
41. The reason the *Shehechayanu* blessing is not said at the end of the book of a volume of Talmud.
42. Reason that it is customary for those who study in the *Pil-pul* method to *drash* and to stick the end to the beginning which is called "*Hadran*"
43. Reasons and allusions of the symbols of the ceremony, the symbols of the *masechta*, the symbols of *gemara*, the symbols of forgetting, the symbols of strength, the symbols of the Talmud.
44. Reasons to call the names of each and every volume and for their order.

¹⁰² <http://www.torahlearning.org/nidah/Glossary%20of%20Terms.html>

The words of Ha Rabah (Abraham Ben Isaac Of Narbonne) in his book the *Eshkol*

In the book of the *Eshkol*, *Hilkhot Sefer Torah* Numbers 19, Rav Hai Gaon asked with regard to the ten sons of Rav Papa that are ordered as wise scholars in their names, when their study is concluded. Are they sons of Rav Papa and is their father one person or many? And their symbol as it is said, "And you will keep my covenant" (this is thought to be a pneumatic to remember their names in Hebrew) What does this mean? He answered, "No, they are not all the sons of Rav Papa but Gaon students of Rava. The sons of Rav Papa were called 'Aba Mar – Father, Mister.' Really, there were only two or three sons and they are in their graves on the Euphrates River above the Bavel bridge near Rav Papa's grave and there are lectures heard of them from Rav Chisda, and Rav Papa himself did not live at this time but later and the sign is a pneumatic of these four words:

"And you will keep my covenant" we have not heard. But, enough, there were ten of them. And there was another sign that ordered them according to great sages and young ones and they said that because there was a tradition about this to remove forgetfulness therefore when a man learns a section, that he returns to it as is the regular tradition of the Rabbis to say: "*Hadran Alakh, V'Hadrach Alan*/Return Sir over it: And it will return to You" After that, this formula (as an acronym) was said with the names of all the sons in it:

חננא רמו ליה נהמא לאחוי אבא דבביה דאפיה לריכשיה סרהביה

אדא לבי דרו

"Chaninah gave him bread and to his uncle he whispered that the bakers are delicate and quick to the flame"

And these are their names: Hanina Bar Papa, Rami Bar Papa, Nachman Bar Papa, Yitzhak Bar Papa, *Aba Mari Brei D'Rav Papa*, Rafram Bar Papa, Rachish Bar Papa, Sorchav Rav Papa, Ada Bar Papa, Darei Bar Papa. And by establishing that we mention the sons of Rav Papa the rabbis were accustomed to say, "We return to you, sir" We return to you and your knowledge to us. Do not forget these, and they shall not forget you. Not in this world nor in the world to come: May it be Your will, Adonai our God and God of our Ancestors that we will be faithful to Your Torah in this world and You will not forget it forever!"

(Page 5) The Words of Ha Rama (*Rama* - R' Moshe Ben Yisrael Isserles, Cracow, 1530 – 1572)¹⁰³ in his book "Questions and Answers" at the end of the last discussion

Behold that which we customarily mention at a *siyum* for each tractate, Rav Papa with his ten sons that were great luminaries in Torah. Because of this, we make for them a feast at the conclusion of the tractate for they were rich and we were to support one who engages in Torah because it was merited. That they mention him with his ten sons is alluded to as if with the solemnity of the Ten Commandments for the word of Rav Papa was an allusion to the greatness of *Moshe Rabeinu*, peace be on him, as it is said, "You are with us and we listen." The essence of the great stature of *Moshe Rabeinu* is with the words of God blessing "mouth to mouth". These are the acronyms of Rav Papa. And

¹⁰³ <http://www.torahlearning.org/nidah/Glossary%20of%20Terms.html>

there is a *midrash* that one who said the first is not included in the counting and in the opening it is only the first one who makes known who is commanded. Therefore, a word of refute comes to contradict the same person in the *midrash* because an abbreviation of Papa. It was mentioned to state clearly who is speaking. Start with "*Anochi*" which has the numerical value of the first and last letters of "Papa" (letters "*Peh-Aleph*").

"*Anochi*" = "*Papa*"

1. Representing the commandment, "You shall have no other gods...(1st commandment)" as it is said, on the issue of idol worship don't have mercy on them and it is the opposite from the rest of humanity which is worthy to have grace and mercy upon them as our sages taught. And you shall go in the way of God. Just as grace, and you will be grace, and therefore the first son is called **Chaninah** (the word for grace is Chanun).
2. Symbolic of "You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image" that in the final analysis after making repentance over what one has done, he sees that they have a mouth but do not speak, things are manufactured from only simple raw wood. And the other is called **Nachman** from the language "I have remorse for what I have done..."
3. Symbolic of "You shall not take the name (of God in vain)" This is about exultation and raising oneself up, that one should not think that he is raised up and by mentioning the name of God in an oath in God's name is like the oath of Joseph on the life of the Pharaoh. And this we find when an oath is made on the life of the king. This other one is called **Rami** – and it from the language of aggrandizement (the Hebrew for aggrandizement is *romemut*).

4. Symbolic of the command, "Remember the day of Shabbat" one is called **Ada**, which is the gammatria for six representing the six days of creation.
5. Symbolic of the command, "Honor (your father and mother)" one is called **Aba Mare** like the honor of a son calling his dad, "Dad, My teacher."
6. Symbolic of "You shall not murder" one is called **Achai** from the language of brotherhood for when one thinks each of his fellows is like his brother he will not murder. And like it is said, "And you shall love your neighbor as yourself." Even though murder was the first that was in the world between two brothers when Cain murdered his brother Abel.
7. Symbolic of "You shall not commit adultery" that the way of adulterers is to wink and to hint with their eyes as it is said, "he winks with his eyes" one is called **Rifram** from the language of fluttering (*rifraf*) his eyes.
8. Symbolic of "Do not steal" one is called **Rackish** from the language of property (*rachush*), for the thief even in stealing a soul (kidnapping) in order to make a profit.
9. Symbolic of "You shall not bear false witness..." one is called **Sorchav** from the language of Serach Bat Asher who witnessed life from Jacob to Joseph, as it is said, "So shall you live."
10. Symbolic of "You shall not covet..." as it is said in it "house and wife of your neighbor" one is called **Diro** from the language apartment of the house and also the wife is called home as it is said by Rav Yose "I never called my wife anything but my home."

And like when one begins another conclusion of study, in the joy of Torah, from Bereshit (in the beginning), do not stop until the part which concludes the Torah and don't stop so as not to give an opening to Satan to find fault or accuse you, saying, "they already finished the Torah and they are dismissing it, God forbid!" Therefore, begin immediately and return to occupy yourself with Torah reading from Bereshit, and this is hinted at in the names of Rav Papa and these, his ten sons.

The statements with which the world was created for the sake of Torah called, "*Reshit*" (the beginning). The sages said *Bereshit* is included in the first of the ten statements.

1. In so far as "because the world was created with grace and mercy by God as it is said, "Your steadfast love is confirmed forever..." (Psalms 89) therefore the first is called **Chaninah**.
2. And corresponding to "And God said, let there be an expanse..." (Gen. 1:6) The sages said that the light that was created for the first day was set aside for God to separate the Righteous for the time to come. One is called **Rami** from the language of *Terumot* (the sacrificial gifts set aside for the priest).
3. And corresponding to "And God said let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water" that the sages said that the waters at the bottom cried until they were consoled (*sh-Nachman*) by the Holy One blessed be God and he said to them that their sacrifice is offered on the altar called **Nachman**.
4. And corresponding to "And God said, let the water below the sky be gathered into one area...." The sages said that God put the ocean surrounding the land and The

Land (*Hu Aretz*) is seen within it, and another is named **Sorchav** from the language of an excess (*Serach*) of the Tabernacle.

5. And according to "And God said, let the earth sprout vegetation: seed-bearing plants, fruit trees of every kind..." it is said "that each bush and grass will not yet be in the land until a mist went up from the land" and another is called **Ada** from the language of mist (*Ad*).
6. And according to "And God said, let there be lights in the expanse of the sky to separate day from night..." it is said that the two big ones were created at one time hinting at Jacob and Esau who were to be brothers. Therefore the goyim base their calendar on the sun, and Israel bases it on the moon. And upon this, Hazal said, that the light will eclipse the second and blood of the brothers (*Achim*) would be spilled simultaneously, therefore another is called **Achai**.
7. And according to the verse, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures..." the many and various fish were more than all the animals therefore another is called **Rifram** from the language of "produce and multiply."
8. And according to the verse, "Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature..." and they were created to do the work of hauling with a shoulder to bear all of human's needs. Therefore, another is called **Daru** from the language of the *Aggadah*.¹⁰⁴
9. And according to the verse "Let us make man in our image after our likeness...."
That man was only created and he was father of all that came after him, another was called **Aba Mari**

¹⁰⁴ This could be a reference to an ancient *Midrashim* called *Batei Midrashot*, where the word "*Midaru*" is used to mean that all clean birds live in the habitation of the *Tzaddik*, but the reference is not clear. The word "*Daru*" is an Aramaic verb, meaning to carry or to bear.

10. And according to the verse "See I give you every seed-bearing plant that is upon all the earth..." and this is the essence of prosperity and property (*reckusham*) of mankind that the grasses and seeds were to be eaten by them. Therefore another was called **Rackish**. To this point is a quote.

(Page 7) The words of Maharshal (R' Shlomo Luria) in his book *Yam Shel Shlomo* in the last section

We have learned according to tractate *Kol Kitvei* (Shabbat 16) that Abaye said "I have it as tradition that when we see a rabbi's apprentice who completes a *masechta*, we make a *yom tov* (holiday) for the rabbis. From here it is usual for all of Israel to finish that section of learning and to give praise and thanks to God publicizing this *simcha* (joyous occasion) that he has merited this level of achievement and one makes a big meal at the time that he finishes the *masechta*. There is proof that he brings also at the beginning of Chapter "*Yesh Nochlin*."¹⁰⁵ There were no days as joyous for the people Israel as the fifteenth of Av and Yom Kippur. The *Gemara* continues that Yom Kippur is a day on which God pardons and forgiveness is granted. But what is the special joy of the fifteenth of Av? And from the commentary, there are a number of reasons, Rabah and Rav Yosef, both of them say it is the day on which they stopped cutting down trees (for the fires that had to burn on the altar because they had finished that day completing a mitzvah – this is a reference from *Taanit*).

If so, the completion of the book is a greater mitzvah particularly where it is in his mind to begin another book after this one and thus it is written in the name of Rav Nachman from where we learn that is the custom of Israel to celebrate and make a *Yom*

¹⁰⁵ Chapter 4 Taanit and Bava Batra Chapter 4

Tov upon the completion of the mitzvah. And from Perek Kol Kotvei, we learn that even he who does not complete a *masechta*, it is still a great mitzvah to celebrate with the one who makes the completion. For according to Abaye, even though he himself did not complete it, even so, he makes a *yom tov* for the rabbis and we learn that he would invite others with him. Behold, it does not say that we make a *yom tov* only for the rabbis as it is said.

And what Rashi interpreted there, the reason Abaye made the party for everyone because Abaye was a Rosh Yeshiva. Not that another person who was not a Rosh Yeshiva would not – wasn't there someone else there who would have done the glory of the mitzvah other than Abaye since it was such a great mitzvah? And here open your eyes and see that even though Abaye was one of the sick who held back as we learn in the chapter of "*Bameh Madlikin*" Abaye felt pain of (a sickness called) dropsy said Rav, and "I know a Nachmani who practices hunger (as a form of asceticism).¹⁰⁶ Even so, they made a *yom tov* of the rabbis because of the great love of the mitzvah. We learn also from Abaye that even a single person makes a feast and others are obligated to make it with him. This is what Abaye did. Abaye said to them, he argued that an apprentice to the rabbis should have a *siyum* (feast of conclusion) with all of the *yeshivah* in that fashion he made a *siyum*. This is said in sharp language the apprentice to the rabbis (makes a *siyum*) from a well known, older, wise scholar (even if not a rabbi) not only for the head of the Yeshiva. If not, he should have said "Head of the Yeshiva." And further from the *Stam*, it is argued similarly as others. It continues, "May I be rewarded for that when I saw that a disciple had completed his tractate, I made it a festive day for the

¹⁰⁶BT Shabbat 33a

scholars.”¹⁰⁷ If this is so, in speaking about a disciple of the scholars, and we know this disciple from the fact that “Raba said: A rabbinical disciple may assert, I am a rabbinical disciple; let my business receive first attention...”¹⁰⁸ If the expression “*Tzurbah D'Rabbanan*” (rabbinical disciple) is a name known throughout the *Yeshivah*, then if so, what is the need to make himself known to other scholars? Don't we already know him? Rather, the main idea is as I've already explained it.

(Page 8) The words of our Rabbis Mahariach (Rav Chayim ben B'tzalel z"l, the brother of the Maharal z"l of Prague) in his book *Sefer HaChayim*--Part One Section Two

It is explained nicely and the reason for the *Hadran Alakh* as it is said at the conclusion of a *masechta* from the time of the great Gaon, scholar and master of tradition Divine who traveled, the honorable Mahariach son of Rabbi Betzelzel, may he be remembered for blessing, the brother of the great rabbi Mohai Levy, may he be remembered for blessing, nicknamed with the holy name Maharal of Prague. He was a colleague and friend of the holy Rabbi Ha Rama (Isserless). In his book, *Sefer HaChayim*, in his meritorious book, section two it says in this language, “They were called true scholars. For as the truth will light his way and all the world can not throw away the truth.” The scholar explains this because it is truth that is intrinsic and has endured even though all nations mock it, even thus, it is accepted as good and nice this thing on us and on our children for it to be this way forever.

¹⁰⁷BT Shabbat 118b

¹⁰⁸BT Nedarim 62a

Because the scholar is only exalted in Israel and also Israel is only praised before God for the sake of the Oral Torah. This is a distinctive and glistening sign which divides between Israel and the other nations as I will soon explain. Therefore, it is our custom to say at each conclusion of a *masechta*. "*Hadran Alakh V'hadrach Alan*" also there is none who gives focus on the Oral Torah that should forget this, God forbid, only for us is this our focus. Therefore, it follows that the Oral Torah protects Israel and for this it is called "*Gemara*" which is the acronym of Gabriel, Michael, Raphael and Ariel saying that because one studies *Gemara*, the four angels camp around him and saves him from his right, Michael, and from his left, Gabriel; from before him, Ariel, and from behind him, Raphael; and on his head, the presence of *Shechina*. In the words of the wise, this protects them, as it is said, "Providence be on them." And since Israel and the Oral Torah they are two twin fawns that do not forget each other in this world or in the world to come in as much as the scholar is only dear and exalted by being Master of Torah but not by dwelling in the corners (wasting time). Therefore, we are thankful that this is our portion, to dwell in the house of study and that it is not our portion to dwell in the corners. For we saw that the first tablets that God wrote on were broken and that only the second tablets endured that Moses wrote, hinting that the words of Torah are bound to endure only by the means of writing of flesh and blood that is the writing of the Oral Torah. And is it not said, "this is good" only on the second creation as it is said of them, "that it may be good for (well with) you." (Deuteronomy 5:16, 6:19)

(Page 9) Rules of the Conclusion and the Feast to be done upon the conclusion of a section of Gemara

Conclusion: The completion of a book or Masechta of Talmud is called "Siyum" and the conclusion of all of Gemara is called "Siyum Hugadol/Great Conclusion." Siyum is what closes at the end of Berachot 16, Baba Batra 22¹⁰⁹

In *Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah Siman 245 Paragraph 26* the Rama brings forward that one who finishes with a *masechta* says it is a mitzvah to be happy and to make a feast, considered a "*Seudah Mitzvah/Commanded Feast*."¹¹⁰ (*Nimukei Yosef Chapter Yesh Nochlin* in *Bava Batra* and the statement of Abaye in *Kol Kitvei*) As it says in *Baba Batra 121B*, and *Rashbam* there with the words beginning "*MiNisan*" because "for on that day..."¹¹¹ And see further in *Orech Chayim (Shulchan Aruch) Siman 669* in the notes (*Haga*) of Rama. And in the Rama's notes at the end of *Succah*, the *Vilna of Gaon* explains about *Shabbat 118a* in the *Shach (Siftei Kohen (1621-1662) Rabbi Shabbetai Kohen*; known as the "SHACH," based on abbreviation of the expression "*Siftei Kohen*." His commentary covers the sections of the *Shulchan Aruch "Yoreh Deah"*) he brings a response from the *Marhah of Minsk* that to the end of the *masechta* let him leave over a little bit at the end until the time is opportune and the day is worthy of making a feast, and they shall chase after a *minyan* to say "*Kaddish D'Rabbanan*" and the (names of the) ten sons of *Rav Papa* and it will be a *seudah mitzvah*. Also, *Maharashal* wrote in *Perek Merubah, Siman 30:7* that the conclusion of a *masechta* is a *seudah mitzvah*. A question of whether one can join in who did not complete the *masechta* is brought in the *Shach* by

¹⁰⁹These are references to ending something with a blessing

¹¹⁰This is a category of a feast with certain *halakhot* attached

¹¹¹This references a passage about the day they stop cutting the branches of trees and they were happy because they finished a great mitzvah

the Maharashal that even one who does not complete the *masechta*, it is a great mitzvah to rejoice with the conclusion feast, and even if only the one who completes it, they are obligated after it to celebrate with him. Proof of this as he who writes the great Gaon, the Rabbi Maharaz Beingim. The Rav who is the head of the *Beit Din* in the holy city of Jerusalem, may it be rebuilt in our days. In the introduction of his book to a certain group of people¹¹² in Chapter 1, in the opening words as it is said, it is as important of an issue of partnership, according to what is written in *Yoreh Deah, Siman 246* in a side comment that it is possible to impart a portion of your learning to your friend learning there, and one joins from the beginning with this intention knowing that each person will have a share in what his friend is learning, even if one from them is distracted at which time his portion is not diminished. Because he wants to impart it, he does impart it.

And as it says in *Ketubot 93* that if you put two in a common pocket, this one is 100 and that one is 200, they balance each other out. (*Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 176*, where it says that if partners put in 100, 200, and 300 respectively, then they each take out an equal share) Also, even those who come intermittently to the feast are counted as doing the mitzvah of rejoicing. In the joy of conclusion ceremony, it is only with more friends standing and watching the regular study some who study a lot and some who study a little, that in all this their intention is on in and is sincere with God and God's Torah in God's name.

A hint of this is in the letters from the conclusion that the value of that which is revealed is equal to the value of that which is hidden. If you spell out each letter in the word

¹¹² This is a questionable reference to a group of people called the פ"ר

Siyum, the sum of the spelling of the last two letters equals the numerical value of that letter. (For example, the numerical value of the letters מן from סמן is 20 + 40 which equals 60, the numerical value for the letter סמן.) It hints that the unknown one can join the lesson of the *masechta* as if he is undiscovered also the section (of Talmud) on the smaller section, "And place on Aaron and his sons your hands on the head of a ram in joy and on that same day make a Holiday." A story is told of a person who pays off his debt and makes a holiday then because it purifies himself and sanctifies the instruments he is using. He makes a holiday on that same day. From here, the sages based it that all of those who complete a *masechta* need to make a holiday with his friends at that same hour when he completes his studies. And thus, it was that the *Kohen Gadol* made a holiday for his friends in that hour that he came out in completion from the *Mikdash*. (This is the end of a reference to a quote). And this is written in a responsum of *Chavot Yair* (by Rabbi Yair Bachrach in the 17th Century) Chapter 70 that the feast of the conclusion is called "*Seudah Mitzvah*" by the virtue of the joy of the conclusion not because of the wise sages gathered together.

Do they make one feast for two *masechtot*? In *Bisdei Hemed* (a Halakhic Encyclopaedia) under the heading *Aleph*, in general principles he brought that which the Rabbis were perplexed about in the responsum of *Kiryat Aleph*, someone who finished two *masechtot* if they could make one holiday for the two or could they package together the two *mitzvot*?¹¹³

It was written on the authority of their words, the bundled *mitzvot* does not apply here that the Rabbis were careful in their language that's when you don't bundle your *mitzvot* when you are doing two discreet mitzvot (paraphrased from Berachot 49a) but

¹¹³ BT Berachot 49a

the person who makes one Feast and intends for it to apply here, it does not apply because of the bundled *mitzvot*.

If it is said, "the happiness is in where God resides"¹¹⁴ (*Shach Siman 246 Yoreh Deah*) it is written in the name of Maharashal that concluding the *masechta* with a *seudat mitzvah* concludes in any event. There is not need to bless "the happiness is in where God resides." The reason it is said, according to what it says in *Hagigah* 10:2 that "Resh Lakish said: [There are] seven [heavens], namely, *Wilon* (Curtain), *Rakia* (Expanse, Firmament), *Shehakim* (Clouds), *Zebul* (Elevation, Lofty abode), *Ma'on* (Dwelling, Habitation), *Makon* (Fixed or established place), *Araboth* (thick darkness). "*Ma'on*" is that in which there are companies of Ministering Angels, who utter [divine] song by night, and are silent by day for the sake of Israel's glory." And it is know that in the hour that Moses went up to *Ma'on* to receive the Torah, they said before him Moses found a hidden treasure.¹¹⁵ You sought to give flesh and blood. "What is man that you are mindful of him?" (Psalms 8:5) "for You have covered the heavens with your splendor" (Psalms 8:2 and BT Shabbat 88). Also, it is said by *Rabbah* (*Nitzavim* 88) "The Rabbis said that The Holy One blessed is God said that if you bless the Torah for yourself you are a blessing."¹¹⁶ If you said there to the evil ones of you, I gave to you the Torah, do not give it only for your good angels sent...." It is found that the angels were jealous at the time of the receiving of the Torah. And in the heaven called *Ma'on*, there in that place

¹¹⁴ This quote is part of the prayer said in the blessing after a wedding meal, a *brit milah*, or a *seudah mitzvah*

¹¹⁵ This is a reference about a story that the angels were jealous and were criticizing the Jews at the time they received the Torah and one of the heavens called *Maon* is a place where the angels live and for this reason, one does not say this blessing at a *siyum* – alliteration of the word *Maon/B'Mono* – from the wedding blessing

¹¹⁶ Deuteronomy Rabbah

the angels (*Rashi Hagigah* 14) and because of this, the words "the happiness is in where God resides" are not said at the conclusion ceremony for a *masechta* of *Gemara*.

If they say "*Shehecayanu*" at the completion of a book or a section (of *gemara*)

In *Chavot Yair* (commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch*), in the commentary to *Orach Chayim Siman* 38, it is cited that if a man dons *tefillin* even if he has never donned *tefillin* before, should he say the *Shehecayanu*? He should not say the *Shehecayanu* blessing, because it will be his regular custom. The same applies for a completion of a book that one does not say *Shehecayanu*. The reason is that also with the completion of a book there is joy of doing a mitzvah, but in *Masechta Succah* Page 46, it is written in the *Tosafot* that any mitzvah that has in it joy it is established that one says *Shehecayanu*, but Rav Sherirah Gaon wrote which is brought in the *Tosafot* there that we need to say the *Shehecayanu* blessing only when it is something that will be done seasonally (repeated – not a one time thing and not a regular custom). For study of Torah, there is not in this a time to become exempt from it as it is written in the *Tosafot* of *Berachot* 11. A man makes one blessing (per day) over the Torah, but why not bless it every time that one starts to learn? Because one's mind never leaves the Torah. A man is obligated to learn as it is written, "It shall be on your lips day and night..." And in the *gemara Menahot* 99, Shaul Ben Dama says to Rav Ishamel, "One like me who has learned all the Torah entirely, may I learn the Wisdom of the Greek?" "This Book of the Torah shall not depart from your mouth; but you shall meditate on it day and night..." (Joshua 1:8) Go and check to find any hour that is neither day nor night.

The reason why it is customary to study in the *pilpul* method and to *drash* and stick the end back to the beginning is called "*Hadran, Return*" This is hinted at in letters of the *Masechta* that our Torah (study) does not end. Therefore, each part itself does not end and always is connected at its end to its beginning like the work of a web or weaving (*Masechta*) when you get to the end, you return to the beginning. Therefore, it is the custom of Israel upon completion to say which *drash* and to stick it to the beginning and say "*Hadran Alakh.*" Reasons for the custom, the reason to call each *masechta* by its name, the names of those reading, the order of these names - all of this is explained in a book called "The Joy of Wisdom."

(Page 12) Explanations and Ideas about all the words of the tradition of "*Hadran Alakh*" After the completion of a *masechta*, one says this for the benefit of remembering with the help of God, one blesses: "1) *Hadran Alakh* 2) *Masechet* 3) *V'Hadrach Alan Datan Alach*"

1) "*Hadran Alakh*" "We return to you" in the book "*Hatishbi*" the letters "*Hey, Dalet, Resh*" are written as is the custom to write at the end of the gemara of each *perek* "*Hadran Alakh.*" It means to return to the beginning and do it again (in Aramaic) and in the Book of Daniel (which is written in large part in Aramaic) "and for the glory of my kingdom, my majesty and splendor returned to me..." and in the *Gemara* wherever it is written "*Hadar*" in the Aramaic, it means "*Hazrah* – Return" as in *Berachot, Succah, Ktubot, Nedarim, Baba Metziah, Chulin, Niddah* and others. And we find in the *gemarah* of *Berachot* 38 Rashi, "Chiya Bar Aba gave all of his

days to return/review to his studies in front of his Rabbi Yohanan. Also, in *C'hulin*, as in other sources in the *Tosafot* (specific examples) as in *Taanit* 5, Reish Lakish organized the *mishnah* forty times like the Torah was given in forty days and only then would he stand before Rav Yohanan. Rav Ada Bar Ahava ordered the *Mishnah* 24 times like the Torah, Prophets and Writings in order to stand before Raba, and in The Book of Questions and Answers of Rav Hiya Gaon in section 8 it is found: Rav Ashi was sixty years old and each year reviewed his studies two times a year during the "*Kallah*" time before *Nisan* and *Tishrei* (Before Pesach and Rosh Hashanah). And it took him thirty years to finish all his studies. And Rashbam in *Baba Batram*, And in *Eruvin* 21, "Anyone who meditates on these things it tastes so good it is as if you are eating meat." This means that anyone who studies it again he finds new enjoyment in it. And in *Eruvin* 54, "Why is Torah like a breast?" Like the breast to the baby always is ready to give milk each time, so is the Torah each time a person comes to it, he will find enjoyment. The Maharash wrote "Each time a man comes to it...if he returns to it again he will always find more pleasure and something new." And in *Kidushin* page 30, "Our Rabbis taught: And thou shalt teach them diligently, that the words of the Torah shall be clear-cut in your mouth, so that if anyone asks you something, you should not show doubt and then answer him, but [be able to] answer him immediately" The words of Torah should be clear in your mouth so that if someone asks you, do not mumble but rather tell them right away, as it is said, "Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister (from Proverbs)" Review them and check them thoroughly so that if one asks you do not delay or mutter but rather you answer them immediately. (other examples cited) And in *Rashi Mishlei* 24, "a fence of stone is

built around one who does not review his studies at the beginning forgets the titles and at the end forgets who said what and he calls the pure impure and through this he destroys the world.”

And it is known that Torah was given as a gift. In the beginning Moshe was learning Torah but he forgot it. When he was given it as a gift, it was different. Regarding the law of a present, if you give a gift that has to be returned, the person who receives the gift is considered to own it. We will come back and learn it again and through completing it, one is not free of it, like the one before who asked about going to study Greek Wisdom, you never leave the Torah.

2) “*Masechet*”

According to the language of the *gemara*, in a number of places in Shabbat 3 and Shabbat 114, Eruvin 53, Bava Kama 102, Bava Metziah 23, Avodah Zarah 7, Horayot 10, and *Perush HaAruch* (a dictionary of Rabbinic Literature). All these explain the word “*Masechet*. Hear what it means. “*Haschet*” (Silence!) Hear, Oh Israel...” (BT *Berachot* 16a) because the words of the Oral Torah were received from hearing what was heard (an aural tradition) and this is the matter of the tradition. And in PT Sanhedrin 2:5, according to David, “and Father David did not drink nor did he want the *Halachah* to be said in his name, fixing the *masechet* for generations. The commentary *Pnei Moshe* explains the use of *masechet* in the *Gemara*: According to *Bavli Bava Kama* 61, the reason that our holy rabbi, Yehuda Hanasi, called each part of the order “*Masechet*” was because *Masechet* is what the instruments that the

weaver sent with the thread. "Of the two within the evening" from the East across and after that through the East and every time the weaver returns, the garment gets more woven. Like this it is called in each portion from the Oral Torah by the name "*Masechet*" to teach that it should not be said that man already finished this portion and that there is not a need to return to it, only the opposite that one returns to it and each time finds in it something new that the *masechet* did not teach before. Each time, the weaver returns to more (in the flavor of our tradition).

3) "*VHadran Alakh*" Please answer us according to the study of His Torah. The wisdom of the Tur brought by the *Magen Avraham* (a commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, Siman 196*) asks, where is it fixed to say that "*Avinu*" ("Our father" which is said in the *Avot* prayer) should be said here as it says in the rest of the (*Avot*) blessing. The reason is that we mention before God that the father is obligated to teach his son. Therefore, we say "Return us, our Father, to Your Torah," and in Abudraham (14th Century) he brings forth the argument that it is told to us in the *Sifrei* to Deuteronomy and in *Shemot Rabbah*, "The Torah we have received through Moses" is the legacy of the congregation of Jacob. There is a story that a son of a king who was captured in a far off land when he was little, and if he asked to return even after so many years, he was not ashamed to return.

(page 14)

because as it says, "to my inheritance I will return." Therefore, with a scholar when he separates from the words of Torah and he went and engaged in the idle words if he asked to return, even after so many years he should not be embarrassed to return

because as it says "to my inheritance I will return" and therefore our Father said
because the son returns to his inheritance, his inheritance is from his father. And this
is the matter of "*V'hadrach Alan.*"

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